

Press Release | 5 Oktober 2021

“Religions are not the enemies of science” - World Council calls on religious leaders to get behind vaccination campaigns at Lindau conference

- World Council of *Religions for Peace* announces statement on human rights and vaccine justice
- 130 people in Lindau and 1700 online viewers participated in opening ceremony of conference
- Filippo Grandi, Jayathman Wickramanyake and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stress importance of conference in messages to participants

LINDAU. "Never before religions around the world have worked so closely together as is currently the case," emphasised Rabbi David Rosen after the meeting of the World Council of *Religions for Peace* on Monday at Lindau on Lake Constance. The meeting of the World Council kicked off the "Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue". This international conference revolves around issues of faith and diplomacy and will be held in the Lindau Inselhalle from 4 to 7 October. "And we also have a responsibility to work together to protect our homeland, to improve the well-being of humanity and to create a better world for all," said Rosen who is a member of the World Council.

After the meeting, the World Council as the main decision-making body of *Religions for Peace* – bringing together 61 religious leaders from around the world and from all faiths – announced the release of a statement in which members specifically advocate for human rights and global justice in the distribution of vaccines. No one, they say, should be discriminated on the basis of race, colour, gender, ethnicity, nationality or religion.

In their statement, World Council members also call on religious leaders around the world to stand behind the scientifically proven effectiveness and safety of vaccines. "We have a responsibility to communicate to our faith communities that religions are not the enemies of science. Science and religion are essential partners for the well-being of humanity," Rosen said on behalf of the World Council. Other members of the World Council include Margot Käßmann and Renz Argao, coordinator of the Religions for Peace Youth Network. The full



 Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace, New York, USA:

Generalsekretärin / General Secretary
Prof. Dr. Azza Karam

www.rfp.org



Ring for Peace, Lindau, Germany:

Geschäftsführer / Managing Director
Ulrich Schneider

Vorstand / Board
Prof. (em.) Dr. h.c. Wolfgang Schürer

Stiftungsratsvorsitzende /
Chairperson Board of Trustees
Dr.h.c.mult. Annette Schavan

www.ringforpeace.org

Pressekontakt | Press contact:

presse@ringforpeace.org

Dr. Jessica Knall
Michael Scheyer

Presseinfos, Fotos & Videos
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ringforpeace.org/presse

statement will be released on Thursday, 7 October, at the end of the four-day conference.

The World Council meeting was followed by the official opening ceremony of the "Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy", themed "Generations in Dialogue". High-ranking UN representatives sent video messages. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, called for the integration of refugees: "Be sisters and brothers to those who have less, and use the power of your youth, your energy and creativity to reach out and welcome refugees." The UN Special Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake, called for young activists to be given easier access to financial support. And Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Secretary-General of WHO, thanked Religions for Peace for making vaccine equity an important theme of the conference: "Initiatives like this make a difference because they stimulate dialogue between people and nations and promote understanding and trust and seek solutions."

Among many others, speakers included Gilles Carbonnier, Vice-President of the International Red Cross, and Anna-Nicole Heinrich, President of the Synod of the Evangelical Church, or the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu.

The conference is taking place in Lindau until Thursday, 7 October. 130 people, speakers and members of the Religions for Peace Network, will be there in person and about 1700 people will follow the virtual event via the livestream and video conferences. The conference is organised by the Lindau Foundation for Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society with the support of the Federal Foreign Office. The conference programme is organized by the New York-based non-governmental organisation Religions for Peace with its global network of faith communities.