



GLOBAL SUMMIT

on

RELIGION, PEACE AND SECURITY

Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies by fostering religious freedom and preventing violent extremism and atrocity crimes

Geneva, Palais des Nations, Conference room XVII,
23-25 November 2016

CO-ORGANIZERS

United Nations Office
on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

International Association
For the Defense of Religious Liberty (AIDLR)

Concept note

Background

Recent years have seen an increase in the perpetration of atrocity crimes in situations around the world, both by States and non-State armed groups. At the same time, we have witnessed the spread of violent extremism, which misuses religion to justify brutal violence against civilians. In parallel, we have also seen how these phenomena - which in many situations represent threats to international peace and security - can easily be manipulated to justify limitations of fundamental rights and freedoms, including the rights to freedom of religion and belief and freedom of expression and opinion.

In these difficult times, it is important that international, regional and national actors, including Member States, international and regional and civil society – in particular religious leaders, academics and the media - coordinate their responses to these phenomena in order to foster respect for fundamental freedoms, prevent and respond to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that could constitute atrocity crimes, and prevent and counter violent extremism, with the objective of protecting populations and promoting international peace and security, as well as peaceful and inclusive societies.

For this purpose, the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty and the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect are convening a Global

Summit on Religion, Peace and Security. The purpose of the Global Summit is to discuss how different actors can work together effectively to implement strategies that can foster peace and security and share best practices. The Global Summit will aim to establish an international platform on “Religion, Peace and Security” in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16 on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and Goal 17 on the revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development.

The Global Summit is organized as a follow up to previous events organized by the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, including the “First international conference on religious liberty and religious minorities, held in Madrid in January 2014; the side events hosted during the 26th Session of the Human Rights Council in June 2014 on: “Human rights and religious liberty worldwide” and the international conference on “Freedom, religion, security: antagonistic terms in the context of international insecurity?”, which took place in Madrid in May 2016¹.

Methodology

Member States, international and regional organisations and civil society play a fundamental role in fostering religious freedom, preventing atrocity crimes and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. To avoid a silo approach and increase collaboration and coordination among these actors, the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty introduced the “dialogue five framework”, an approach based on linking the special contributions of diplomats, politicians, religious leaders, scholars and NGOs, and from the perspective of Member States, regional and international organizations.

Focus

The purpose of the Global Summit is to discuss how these different actors can effectively work together and complement each other’s work. In addition, the Summit will provide an opportunity for participants to share information, experiences, expertise and best practices on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, fostering respect for religious freedom and promoting resilience to atrocity crimes and violent extremism.

Objective

The main objective of the Global Summit is to establish an international platform on “Religion, peace and security: promoting peaceful and inclusive societies by fostering religious freedom and preventing violent extremism and atrocity crimes”. The platform aims at supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular Goals 16 and 17, which call for “Peace, justice and strong institutions”, and to “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.” These goals are dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, sustainable development and building effective and accountable institutions at all levels - global, regional, national and local that respect the rule of law and human rights of all populations. The achievement of these goals requires a partnership among different stakeholders. This partnership needs to be built on a shared vision which places the respect of fundamental principles and values at its core.

¹ See these events at: www.aidlr.org

Outcomes of the Summit

The output of the Summit will be a written report that reflects the Summit's discussions, conclusions and recommendations for follow up.

The Summit will also serve to launch the "Jean Nussbaum and Eleanor Roosevelt" international Award on Liberty and Peace. The award will recognize efforts made by individuals or organizations that have played or are playing a particular role in promoting religious freedom, preventing violence and atrocity crimes and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Other

At the Summit, the most recent publications of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, from the 'Conscience and Liberty' collection will be also launched. These include "A History of Liberty and Respect for Differences", "Agents and Ambassadors of Peace – Protecting Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Expression Against Violence in the Name of Religion" and the new, special edition journal to mark the 70th anniversary of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (1946-2016): "Ambassadors for Liberty, Hope and Peace"².

The Global Summit will include a concert to honor the conference guests.

Important questions the Global Summit will aim to answer

1. How to improve cooperation and coordination among the three categories of actors in order to better foster religious freedom, prevent violent extremism and atrocity crimes and promote peaceful and inclusive societies?
2. What best practices or lessons learned can participants share at the Summit on fostering religious freedom, preventing violent extremism and atrocity crimes, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies?
3. Violence and atrocity crimes justified in the name of religion have consequences for religious freedom and freedom of expression and can entail particular risks for religious minorities. What can State and non-State actors do to counter these risks?
4. The crimes linked to violent extremism have a negative impact on peace, security and the right to life. What role can be played by education and diplomacy to better protect populations by preventing and countering violent extremism and preventing atrocity crimes committed in the name of religion?
5. How can the Sustainable Development Goals support the international debate on fostering religious freedom, preventing discrimination, persecution, violence, terrorism and atrocity crimes?

² All publications edited by Liviu Olteanu