

# *Special Message from* *H.E. António Guterres*

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

MESSAGE TO CONSCIENCE AND LIBERTY 2026 CONFERENCE

Toledo, 24 March 2026

I am pleased to send my warm greetings to all those taking part in the *Conscience and Liberty 2026 Conference*, and extend my congratulations to the International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty on its 80th anniversary.

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief is a cornerstone of human dignity – and a litmus test. Where this freedom is respected, diversity can flourish. Where it is suppressed, fear, exclusion and violence too often follow.

Today, this fundamental freedom faces mounting pressure. We see it manifested in many ways – belief being manipulated to incite hostility; religious groups being targeted in the name of identity or security; and digital surveillance and artificial intelligence being deployed without sufficient safeguards for human rights.

These challenges require a renewed commitment to multilateralism, international law, and dialogue across differences. They require defending the equal rights of all people – believers and non-believers alike.

Thank you once again for your commitment and best wishes for a successful conference. Together, let us keep working to reaffirm inclusion, pluralism, understanding and solidarity as guiding principles for a more just and peaceful world.

\*\*\*