

World Interfaith Harmony Week Observed at the UN in New York

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New York, United States—The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and The Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN celebrated World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016 by co-hosting a panel discussion and dialogue, in partnership with NGOs and faith-based organizations, including UPF, at the UN headquarters on February 3, 2016.

The event, entitled, “Interfaith Harmony: Implementing the Transformative Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals,” highlighted the role that faith communities are playing in helping to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Five hundred members of the UN community, including diplomats; representatives of the UN Secretariat; and NGO and faith-based organizations, attended the celebration. In addition, millions joined the celebration online. Partner organizations of the event also included the World Peace Prayer Society; United Religions Initiative; the Interfaith Center of New York; We the World; Parliament of the World’s Religions; and the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-NY. For several years, faith-based organizations have contributed to the UN in the fields of mediation, humanitarian actions and community building, and in addressing extremism.

H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, high representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, inaugurated the celebration by underscoring the urgency to evaluate, understand and tackle the multiple crises in the world as a common interfaith community. Mr. Al-Nasser also emphasized that the daunting challenges facing our world, from violence and false narratives of extremist groups, to inequalities and poor governance, can be solved by going back to the vision of World Interfaith Harmony Week, a vision that promotes tolerance, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and the culture of peace, and combating the blight of violent extremism.

World Interfaith Harmony Week was first proposed by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan at the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2010. Less than a month later, on October 20, 2010, the week was proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 65/5, and adopted by the UN. Since 2011, it has been observed annually during the first week of February.

The program also included a ceremonial presentation of the 17 sustainable development goals by religious leaders and faith representatives, as well as two panel discussions. UPF Secretary General Tageldin Hamad moderated the first panel, entitled “Interfaith Harmony as a Key to Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.” The second panel, “The Future of Cooperation Between Religious Communities

and the United Nations,” discussed the contributions religious communities within the UN family have made and continue to make.



World Interfaith Harmony Week stems from the idea that humanity is bound together by the two shared religious commandments of ‘love of God and love of the neighbor,’ as well as ‘love of the Good, and love of the neighbor.’ This formula includes all people of goodwill. It includes those of other faiths, and those with no faith.

World Interfaith Harmony Week provides a platform for all interfaith groups and other groups of goodwill to show what a powerful movement they are. The thousands of events organized by these groups often go unnoticed, not only by the general public, but also by other groups themselves. This week allows these groups to become aware of one another and strengthen their work by building ties and avoiding duplicating each other’s efforts.

It is hoped this initiative will provide a focal point from which all people of goodwill can recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have, and thus advance peace and harmony in their communities.