Dear Faith Leader:

It is our privilege to invite you as a representative of your faith community to join us at the **UN-Habitat Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Campus** entitled, *Faith and the Path Towards a Better Quality of City Life*, at the **Royal Geographical Society** in London on the **23rd and 24th of November 2019**. UN-Habitat’s World Urban Campaign, together with World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the Urban Shalom Society (USS), and a number of local partners are hosting a series of Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Campuses around the world—Africa, Asia, Oceania, Central and South America, North America, and the UK/Europe—aimed at encouraging faith communities to work for the common cause of cities and urban environments where all can flourish. We invite you to attend and to contribute to this working conference for the UK/Europe region, which we are also combining with the Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Campus for the North American region.

**Background**
This initiative is the outcome of faith-based engagement at Habitat III in 2016. In 2017 the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the Urban Shalom Society (USS), and several other hosts, convened the first ever UN-Habitat Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Campus (UTC) in Singapore. The outcomes and insights from this event were fed into UN-Habitat’s World Urban Forum (WUF 9) held in Kuala Lumpur in February 2018, which included convening a group of faith-based urban academics led by Dr. Chris Ives (University of Nottingham) and Dr. Grace Dryness (University of Southern California) who met to consider what different faith perspectives offer to disciplines connected with urban development.

All of these gatherings were motivated by Habitat III in Quito, 2016. The Habitat conferences happen every 20 years and are a United Nations initiative that is intended to guide urban development for the next 20 years. Towards the end of the conference in Quito the New Urban Agenda (NUA) was ratified. This document, which was approved by all UN member states, sets out the global blueprint for the future of cities. That is, cites are to be “just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable . . . [and] foster prosperity and quality of life for all.” Many of the tenets or values that we hold as faith communities are reflected in this statement and throughout the NUA. Participation and representation, however, of faith communities in the civil society dialogues and conversations leading up to Habitat III that produced the NUA was extremely low.

**The Need**
The input of people of faith into city and social developments has never been more urgent. As you would be aware the world is experiencing rapid urbanisation with over half the population currently living in an urban context. This is set to rise steeply in the next thirty years to a point where over two-thirds of the global population will reside in a city. A core question we must ask from a faith perspective is “what will be the quality of life for those residing in the world’s growing cities?”

The faith-based UTC initiative is a great opportunity to come together with leaders from your own faith tradition to collaborate, network, and work together to advance your tradition’s knowledge, understanding, and work in cities while at the same time engaging with global frameworks for urban development like the New Urban Agenda and global institutions like UN-Habitat. As a stakeholder in the future of cities, participation also enables you to share your faith’s perspectives with UN-Habitat. You will also have the opportunity to meet leaders from other faith traditions who will be doing the same, to share insights, dialogue, and where common cause is found to work together for the common good.
How to be involved
The UN-Habitat Faith-Based UTC will be held in London at the Royal Geographical Society on 23-24 November 2019. There is no cost to attend and it is open to representatives from the UK, Europe, and North America.

To register for the event please go to: https://utc-uk-europe.eventbrite.com.au

Once registered, you will be kept informed of more specific details in the lead up to the event.

The aims and format of this event will be similar to those already held in Central/South America, Oceania, and Africa. Our hope in holding UTCs in different regions is that we will attract a greater number and diversity of participants and faiths, and to give voice to region specific urban issues perspectives while at the same time producing a Global Faith-Based Urban Thinkers’ Campus Report by compiling the outcomes of the regional UTC’s.

**Faith and the Path Towards a Better Quality of City Life**, aims to;

- Prepare communities of faith for active engagement at the next World Urban Forum (WUF 10) to be held in Abu Dhabi, February 7th – 13th 2020, including the possibility of a “WUF10 Global Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Academy.”
- Engage academics, practitioners and leaders from different faith perspectives in conversation and action towards a better quality of life in cities.
- Review, evaluate, and contribute inputs from faith-based perspectives on UN-Habitat’s new strategic plan (2020-2023) and implementation of the New Urban Agenda. To review UN-Habitat’s new strategic plan go to this link: http://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/13555_1_596472.pdf
- Gather data (stories, knowledge, learnings) from different faith perspectives around engagement with and transformation of the city
- Develop cooperative strategies for faith communities to work together, with others for the development of cities where all can flourish.
- Explore opportunities associated with FaithInvest—an international faith-based investment organization supported by UNEP and other organizations. These include engagement with “Local Investment Forums” and “FaithCities”.
- Produce both regional Faith-Based UTC reports and a Global Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Campus Report by compiling the outcomes of the regional UTCs to be presented at the 10th World Urban Forum in Feb. 2020 at Abu Dhabi.

We look forward to your reply to this invitation.

Kind regards,

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