



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



## The Annual Kofi Annan Faith Briefings

### Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: The Role of UN and Multi-Faith Collaboration

July 15, 2019

Ford Foundation, Center for Social Justice  
320 East 43rd Street, New York



وزارة الخارجية  
المملكة العربية السعودية  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Members of the Multi Faith Advisory Council of the United Nations  
Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development

Finn Church Aid



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation



Greenfaith



KAICIID



ACT Alliance



World Young Women's  
Christian  
Association/YWCA



Global Interfaith WASH  
Alliance



Global Interfaith Wash Alliance  
Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for all

Tanenbaum, Center for  
Interreligious Understanding



WorldYWCA

World Vision International



Adventist Development and  
Relief/ADRA



Network of Religious and  
Traditional Peacemakers



Lutheran World Federation



Al-Azhar University



Network for Religious and  
Traditional Peacemakers

United Religions  
Initiative/URI



Global One



World Council of Churches



Parliament of the World's  
Religions/PWR



Arigatou International



Church of Sweden



Musawah



Islamic Relief Worldwide



Islamic Foundation for  
Ecology and Environmental  
Sciences



UN Multi faith Advisory Council's Kofi Annan Faith Briefings — UN HLPF — July 15, 2019

Latter Day Saints Charities



International Network for Religious Leaders Living with HIV and AIDS /INERELA



World Evangelical Alliance



Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network



The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development



Alliance of Religions and Conservation



Bhumi Project



Rose Castle Foundation



Rabita Muhammadiya



The Archbishop of Canterbury



Sant'Egidio Community



Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue



Muslims for Progressive Values



## CONCEPT and AGENDA

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*"The 2030 Agenda is our roadmap and its goals and targets are tools to get there." - UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres*

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The UN Interagency Task Force involves 20 UN system entities, each participating at different levels of intensity within the Task Force. The one thing these otherwise very diverse UN offices share is their engagement with religious actors, and/or their awareness, and action, around religious intersections with their respective organizational strategic objectives.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2010, the UN Interagency Task Force Members have been convening policy roundtables, workshops, seminars, and joint initiatives around key UN intergovernmental fora (CSW, CPD, HLPF, and UNGA), around religion and religious engagement, and several reports, policy outcomes and initiatives are produced as a result of these consultations<sup>2</sup>.

In 2018, the UN Interagency Task Force convened the first ever **United Nations Multi-Faith Advisory Council (AC)**. The Council is composed of the CEOs of the UN's top global faith-based partners. The AC is committed to “uphold multilateralism and international human rights through multi-faith collaboration around/for Agenda 2030”. The CEOs of the FBOs were selected according to nominations from across the UN system entities members of the UN Interagency Task Force. To date, each major faith tradition is represented on the Council.

## BACKGROUND

The late and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was the first to host a Millennium Peace Summit, in September 2000, in which 1,000 religious leaders were invited to stand with the United Nations. This was the largest gathering of religious leaders inside the

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<sup>1</sup> Every year since 2012, the UN Task Force produces an Annual overview, or Report, of respective member entity activities involving religion and/or religious actors. Over the last 5-7 years, the CSW alone has attracted – and hosted - ten times the number of faith related initiatives which took place since 2001. This alone shows a significant increase in the interest around the intersections with religion.

<sup>2</sup> See for example the oldest report in 2009 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/proceedings\\_fbo.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/proceedings_fbo.pdf) and the flagship initiative led and managed by the UN Office for Genocide Prevention – *[the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders, Actors on Preventing Incitement to Violence](#)*.

United Nations since its founding. This seminal gathering was a show of this important constituencies' commitment to the first global Development goals agreed by the UN Member States: the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs.

Mr. Annan's legacy is therefore worth 'celebrating' in the context of UN-hosted faith-related Briefings on Sustainable Development, organized by the unique Multi-Faith Advisory Council, formed and launched last year.

## **THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2019 UNDER THE AUSPICES OF ECOSOC**

The meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2019 convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, will be held from **Tuesday, 9 July, to Thursday, 18 July 2019**; including the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum from **Tuesday, 16 July, to Thursday, 18 July 2019**.

The theme will be "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*". The set of goals to be reviewed in depth is the following:

- **Goal 4.** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- **Goal 8.** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- **Goal 10.** Reduce inequality within and among countries
- **Goal 13.** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- **Goal 16.** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- **Goal 17.** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

For more information on Thematic SDG Reviews, [click here](#).

## **RATIONALE FOR THE KOFI ANNAN BRIEFINGS**

Due to the combined rising relevance of religious actors on the geopolitical scene, and the systematic engagement of many FBOs around sustainable development and humanitarian related initiatives in, around and by the UN Task Force, a larger number of NY and US-based NGOs are also attending HLPF-related initiatives. In other words, these are human, technical, cultural and political resources "walking the UN's corridors", at this time.

The purpose of the Kofi Annan Faith Briefings is:

1. To provide a dedicated and ‘regular’ space, during a key intergovernmental moment (in this case the High Level Political Forum/HLPF) capitalizing on the unique constellation of geopolitical and socio-cultural human capital, well-versed in religion and religiously related affairs, which is capable of informing, and being informed by, UN system deliberations.
2. To uphold the importance of strategic partnerships by the UN system with faith-based and faith-inspired civil society actors, around the world for specific SDGs;
3. To present and assess the diverse range of partnerships between different faith entities and between them and the UN and its member states, as a means to realising the SDG goals;
4. To thereby showcase the multi-faith civic support for multilateralism which is dedicated to the service of human rights, sustainable development and peace and security.

### **Format**

- The Kofi Annan Briefings are organized by a committee of volunteers from among the Members of the Faith Advisory Council, which is supported administratively by the UN Task Force members.
- The Briefings would also be the once-a-year face-to-face meeting of the Advisory Council.
- Each year the Faith Advisory Council Chairs, will reach out to at least two Member States (from the North and from the South) as ‘governmental stewards’ of the Briefings.
- The Briefings would include a dinner the evening before, a full day’s meeting – including a lunch meeting 2 tea/coffee breaks in between.
- The UN Advisory Council members convene the evening before and after the Briefings.

### **Themes and Principles**

- The Multi-Faith Advisory Council decided that the Kofi Annan Faith Briefings should take place at the times of the UN's largest intergovernmental gathering. In 2018, this took place around the UN General Assembly. In 2019, the Briefings will take place around High Level Political Forum/HLPF.
- The reason for this decision is that having a major intergovernmental UN moment (like the UN General Assembly/UNGA) gives the Advisory Council’s convening and leadership direct multi-lateral relevance, and can add legitimacy, support and endorsement for its collective work.
- The themes of the Kofi Annan Briefings are connected to the main themes of the HLPF. As with the Kofi Annan Briefings in 2018 hosted alongside the UN GA, the theme then was "Making the United Nations Relevant to All People: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable

Societies". Thus, the Kofi Annan Briefings also focus on: 'Making the United Nations system "more relevant" (see attached Report).

- Given the HLPF in 2019 will focus on reviewing a set of SDGs, as its main theme - which is: "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*", the theme/title of the Kofi Annan Briefings on July 15 will be "***Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: The Role of UN and Multi Faith Collaboration***".
- There are a set of **principles** to be adhered to throughout the preparation, hosting and reporting of these briefings:
  - All Member States, all religions and religious entities, and each individual mentioned, are respectfully referenced;
  - The key focus is not on individual NGO/FBO representation and activities, but rather on highlighting the partnership initiatives between NGOs and between FBOs and the UN system.
  - Human Rights are a cross-cutting feature of all presentations, and therein, gender equality is and women's empowerment are not overlooked or assumed.
  - Presentations shall seek to highlight the intersectionality of the diverse SDGs under review with/to the diverse partnership efforts.
  - Member States shall be invited by the Advisory Council members to cosponsor/co-convene.
  - The Faith Briefings would harvest -and celebrate - the diversity and inclusion opportunities presented by key FBO and political leaders already in NYC for the UN High Level Political Forum.
  - Invitations will also be extended to ***academia, policy think tanks, and human rights NGOs and Foundations based in NYC***.

Thus, these Briefings provide an opportunity to:

1. ***Continue and build a shared UN system wide legacy of UN-FBO consultations*** which we have now done since 2010, at different moments (including side events at CSW, CPD, HLPF, the DUF<sup>3</sup>, PaRD, the Strategic Learning Exchanges/SLEs, the Annual Symposia on Religion and International Affairs, the Interfaith Prayer Services around HIV/AIDS, etc.). At the same time, strategically position this Annual Briefing moment to deliberately expand the attendees to include the secular communities.
2. Serve as a Forum for **information, celebration, and consultation – around partnerships with FBOs directly around the work of the United Nations FOR the UN and for multilateralism**; as well as also an opportunity to speak to one another with some candor and informed engagement – a gentle but real space to hold one another to our professed truths and commitments.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5567251a4.html>

**AGENDA**

**KOFI ANNAN FAITH BRIEFINGS - Monday, 15 July**

**Venue:**

**FORD FOUNDATION Center for Social Justice**

**320 East 43rd Street**

[Ford Family Auditorium](#)

**8:30 - REGISTRATION and Refreshments**

**08:45 - Welcome**

- Welcome on behalf of the multi-Faith Advisory Council of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion, by the Co-Chairs- Ms. Tarja Kantola and Mr. Faisal Bin Muaammar

**08:55 - Opening Remarks from the United Nations entities**

- Opening remarks on behalf of the United Nations Secretary General, Mr Antonio Guterres and as Under Secretary General and High Representative of the **UN Alliance of Civilizations**, H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos
- Opening remarks by Mr. Dereje Wordofa, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programmes)

**09:15 - Opening Remarks from UN Co-Sponsoring Missions**

- H.E. Ambassador Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain
- H.E. Ambassador Abdullah bin Yahya Al-Muallami, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- H.E. Ambassador Jukka Salovaara, Permanent Representative of Finland
- Mr. Michael Suhr, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**09:35 - Keynotes**

- Shaykh Abdallah bin Bayyah, President, Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies
- Professor Ana Renata Dias, Fordham University, and the *Focolare*
- Dr. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Member, Board of Directors, Center for Strategic Development, Former Member of the Shura Council in Saudi Arabia, and former Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund



**10:00-11:05 - Role of multi-faith collaboration in strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development**

***Co-Moderators: Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky (Milstein Center) & Samuel Rizk, Ph.D.***  
**UNDP**

Guiding Questions:

- *How do FBOs partner with the UN system? How do these partnerships address issues of women's empowerment, children's rights, youth, employment?*
- *What are some of the challenges to partnerships (both interfaith/multifaith and with the UN) around the SDGs this HLPF is assessing?*
- *And what are some of the success stories of overcoming and consolidating partnerships in spite of the challenges [of inequalities - SDG 10, economic growth - SDG 8, societal conflicts including atrocity crimes - SDG 16]?*

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Husna Ahmed, Global One
- Ms. Dana Buzdacea, World Vision
- Mr. Elias Szczytnicki, Religions for Peace Latin America and the Caribbean
- Rev. Carlos Tamez, ACT Alliance
- Ms. Debra Boudreax, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
- Ms. Bani Dugal, Bahai Interfaith Community
- Dr. Mohammed Said Al-Mamari, Ministry of Waqf, Oman
- Mr. James Patton, ICRD (International Center for Religion and Diplomacy)

**11:10 - 12:30 - Intergenerational Gender dialogue: Realizing equality now, leaving no one behind**

***Co-Moderators: Dr. Nasser Haghamed, IRW + Lopa Banerjee, UN Women***

Guiding questions:

- *How can intergenerational alliances be strengthened to advocate against discriminatory laws and practices that stand in the way of gender equality (e.g. child marriage laws, land rights, inheritance laws, equal pay, family laws, etc).*
- *How can young women's leadership be strengthened to break stereotypes that promote discrimination?*
- *How can young men and boys and young women and girls be integrated into different alliance structures to promote new ideas of equality and solidarity?*

**Speakers:**

- Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster: Deputy Director, T'ruah's (T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights) and Board Member, Alliance for Fair Food and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
- Ms. Toni Kruger-Ayebazibwe: Executive Director, GIN-SSOGIE/Global Interfaith Network for People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identities and Expressions
- Ms. Alyssa Mottahed: Baha'i International Community
- Ms. Margareta Grape: Former Head of UN office of the World Council of Churches and International Director of the Church of Sweden
- Ms. Jillian Abballe: UN Advocacy Officer and Head of Office for the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations

**12:30 - 13:15 — LUNCH (2 rooms)**

**13:15 - 15:15 - Multi-Religious Perspectives on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

**Opening Remarks:**

- Ms. Henrietta Fore, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNICEF Executive Director
- Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International and Spiritual Leader of Miyochikai
- Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children
- H.E. Ms. Sima Sami I. Bahous, Permanent Representative of Jordan
- H.E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia

**Panel 1:** Shared Values Between World's Major Religions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Moderator:** *Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Senior Advisor, KAICIID*

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Savitri Goonesekere, Emeritus Professor of Law, University of Colombo
- Rev. Olav Fykse-Tveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches
- The Most Rev. Julio E. Murray, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Central America, Bishop of Panama
- Dr. Mustafa Ali, Secretary General, Global Network of Religions for Children, Director, Arigatou International, Kenya

**Panel 2:** Discussion will focus on good practices and evidence on actions taken by religious leaders to safeguard children's rights

**Moderator:** *Dr. Azza Karam, Chair, UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development*

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Amanda Rives, Regional Policy and Advocacy Director World Vision International,
- Ms. Jean Duff, President, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities,
- Mr. Nasser Haghmad, CEO, Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Sadviji Bhagawati Saraswati, Secretary-General, Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, Representing *the UN Task Force Multi-Faith Advisory Council*

**Closing of Session:** Ms. Paloma Escudero, Director, Division of Communication, UNICEF

**Coffee Break**

**15:15-17:15 - Role of Multi-Faith Partnerships to Combat CLIMATE CHANGE and its Impacts**

What are some successful flagship programmes/projects of inter/multi-faith collaboration around climate change and its impacts?

***Co-Moderators: Mary-Evelyn Tucker (Yale) and Rev Victor Kazanjian (URI)***

**Guiding questions:**

- *What are some challenges of multi-faith and UN collaboration in this area and what are some success stories?*
- *What are some of the partnership efforts in this area which also tie in concerns about peace and inclusive societies? educational dynamics? reducing inequalities?*
- *What Commitments the interfaith community is/will be making/announcing to advance climate action.*

**Opening Remarks:** Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat

**Speakers:**

- Jamil Ahmad (Director of Intergovernmental Affairs- UNEP's New York Office), Presentation on UN Environment [Faith for Earth](#) Strategy and UNEA [Faith for Earth Dialogue](#) that has mobilized 135 faith leaders representing 56 FBOs –
- Mary-Evelyn Tucker (Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology) - Presentation on the [Rainforest initiative](#) as an interfaith practical initiative with several FBOs
- Gopal Patel - [GreenFaith](#) Interfaith work
- Audrey Kitagawa (Chair of the Parliament of Worlds' Religions and member of the Advisory Council) - Presentation on the [Climate Action Interfaith project](#)
- Rev. Ken Kitatani, Forum 21
- Karena Gore - [Engagement on Climate Action](#)

**17:15-18:00 — Summing Up**

Advisory Council Chair(s) address: *“What can my organisation commit to doing in partnership with other faith NGOs and the UN?”*

Mr. Jonathan Duffy, Advisory Council Vice-Chair, to lead this with the Advisory Council Members.