

KAICIID: Religion should be part of solution to conflicts



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The first global forum organized by the Vienna-based King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) called for finding ways to end religious conflicts. “Religion should be part of the solution, not part of the problem or conflict,” said Faisal bin Muammar, secretary-general of KAICIID.

Addressing the forum’s opening session, Muammar, who is deputy education minister of Saudi Arabia, denounced the call for the clash of civilizations. “Such calls have no future. We should encourage cooperation between religious and cultural groups to tackle pressing human issues instead,” he added.

Muammar also emphasized the need to develop a culture of human rights to combat extremism, racism and discrimination by raising the cultural level of peoples around the world through dialogue. The forum, titled “Image of the Other” was attended by more than 500 religious leaders from around the world.

In his keynote speech, the Saudi official hoped that KAICIID, which was established last year at the initiative of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, would become an incubator for international dialogue organizations and an open forum for dialogue to promote global peace and stability.

“We all understand the cultural value of our diversity and peaceful coexistence,” Muammar told the gathering which included Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist leaders. Speakers at the forum stressed the importance of peaceful coexistence between followers of different faith communities, an organizer said. The participants reiterated their support for the center as they believed it would narrow the differences between the followers of various religions and bring them closer.

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue at the Vatican, urged religious followers to respect one another.

“Each one of us is a citizen and a believer,” he said. “All of us belong to the same human family, which means that, we share the same dignity, we are confronted by the same problems, we enjoy the same rights and we are called to accomplish the same duties.”

Over the past 12 months, KAICIID has taken a proactive approach to research and training in the fields of interreligious and intercultural education. The Global Forum is the culmination

of a series of four regional conferences started on May 13 in Vienna, Addis Ababa, New Delhi and Buenos Aires.

“Over the next two days, we have a unique opportunity to extensively explore best practices in dialogue and existing standards in education, as well as to examine how followers of different religions can contribute to shared learning,” said the secretary-general. The opening ceremony gave way to an exemplary panel discussion that took the form of a practical interreligious dialogue on the Image of the Other, bringing together leading academic experts. It was followed by closed-door working group sessions, which focused on topics ranging from interreligious understanding and seminary training, to best practices in education, to the role of religion in conflict and peace-building.

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran's Address at KAICIID Global Forum

Vienna, November 19, 2013 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))

Here is the address given by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president for the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, at the Global Forum sponsored by the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

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We are living in a changing world. We are living more and more in a ‘provisional’ world. But many people rediscover that we cannot live without reference to history and especially without relation to our contemporaries, their joys and hopes, their griefs and anxieties. In such a context religions are called to propose – not to impose – reasons for living.

What is at the centre of our concern is the human person, man and woman. The human person is the object of the attention of political and religious leaders. Each one of us is a citizen and a believer. All of us belong to the same human family. It means that we share the same dignity, we are confronted by the same problems, we enjoy the same rights and we are called to accomplish the same duties.

But unfortunately, we have to recognize that too often: we judge people on their appearance or on their ‘production’, even though every human person is much more than how he or she appears or is able to produce; we reduce the human person to an object (I am thinking of all the problems raised by bio-technology), while the human person transcends his/her material dimension;

Interreligious dialogue teaches us: to be careful not to present the religion of the other in a bad light in schools, universities, the mass media and, in particular, in the religious discourse; not to demean the religious convictions of the others, especially when they are not present; to consider diversity – ethnical, cultural, vision of the world – as richness, not as a threat.

Interreligious dialogue impels us: to listen and to better know each other; to think before judging; to present the content of our faith and our reasons for living with “kindness and respect”.

Therefore, interreligious dialogue can contribute to: give to God again the place which He deserves; to inspire fraternity; to give the wisdom and courage to act.

To look at the theme "The Image of the Other" is also to look within ourselves in order to purify all that makes us closed to what is new and true; to look at the other means also to accept being questioned by him about our faith and to be ready to give an account of it; to look at the other is to be available to work with all persons of good will for the common good.

One of the tasks of KAICIID could be the promotion of what I dare to call, "the intelligence of the heart", which inspires us to respect what God is accomplishing in every human being and at the same time to respect the mystery that every human person represents. What we have to avoid absolutely is that religions engender fear, attitudes of exclusion or of superiority in people.

In concluding, I express my heartfelt wishes for the success of this meeting. It will send a very significant message if KAICIID can become a place where we can take time to look at each other, to better know each other and to share all our abilities in order to make this world more secure and enlightened, with all its inhabitants living in the spirit of respect and friendship that Pope Francis has repeatedly said, "To encounter all because we all have in common our having been created in the image and likeness of God." (To Participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 14 October 2013)