

# Religions for Peace

Press Release: African Religious Leaders Commit to Action, 1 June 2012



Nairobi, Kenya - Over 100 senior religious leaders from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, and other religious communities convened in Nairobi, Kenya, 16-17 May 2012, to launch a child survival and maternal health pan-African initiative.

The gathering, organized by the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, in partnership with UNICEF, the Government of Kenya, the African Council of Religious Leaders-Religions for Peace (*RfP*) and *RfP International*, was held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre - the historic venue of the *RfP* 4th World Assembly. Representatives from independent national inter-religious councils and women of faith and youth networks affiliated to *RfP* were extremely well represented among the major participants, who also included the Secretaries General from *RfP* affiliated regional Council from Africa, Europe and Latin America and Caribbean.

*RfP International* Secretary General Dr. William Vendley praised the leadership of the Inter-religious Council of Kenya's "Faith for Life" Program, saying that its efforts to advance behavior changes that can save lives by engaging religious leaders and their communities would provide a model for other *RfP* affiliated inter-religious councils in Africa and around the world.

Every year around eight million children needlessly die of preventable causes, and more than 350,000 women die from preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Reaching the targets for MDG 4 (a two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality) and MDG 5 (a three quarters reduction in maternal mortality and universal access to reproductive health) would mean saving the lives of 4 million children and about 190,000 women in 2015 alone.

African religious leaders present in the gathering called upon "all African governments to implement actions agreed at the 1999 Abuja Conference, with respect to Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on child survival and maternal health, to provide 15% of national budgets for the provision of health care services."

United in their spiritual and moral consensus that human life has inalienable

dignity and recognizing that religious communities possess spiritual, moral and social assets to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable among us, the religious leaders committed to taking a comprehensive advocacy and action for the health and wellbeing of our children and mothers.

The participants committed to forming an action-oriented network to launch a multi-religious campaign on child survival and maternal health, and they requested UNICEF and *Religions for Peace* to assist them. Grateful for the initiative of its Kenyan partner, *Religions for Peace* is committed to advancing this work in African and around the world.

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*RELIGIONS FOR PEACE*—the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition—advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than eighty national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Interfaith Youth Network.

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