

Regional Intergovernmental Interfaith Dialogues

Regional Interfaith Dialogues on Cooperation for Peace and Harmony, bringing together religious leaders of the Asia-Pacific region, have been part of the agenda of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade since 2004. The first, attended by a delegation of 10 Australian faith leaders was held in Yogyakarta in 2004. Others have followed in Cebu (2006), Waitangi (2007), Phnom Penh (2008) and Perth 2009.

The Dialogues show a belated but growing recognition of the part that religion and spirituality play in the lives of the majority of people and in world affairs. Since religion and culture are seen as core components of civilization, their contribution is needed to solve problems and built a more harmonious and peaceful future for the region.

Areas commonly mentioned are the need for tolerance and “a culture of acceptance”, the significant role of media and the importance of formation for young people. It is also acknowledged that peace and harmony will only result from a justly ordered society, one based on just relations between nations and peoples.

The Dialogues have addressed the potential for evil that exists when religion is misused, but religion is also seen as a powerful force for good. Religions contain resources for binding people together to work selflessly for a better world.