

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace Global Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL



Dear Friends,

Last month, world leaders at the United Nations approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. This decision calls all to help end extreme poverty and promote sustainable development in a peaceful, just and healthy world.

In response, the *Religions for Peace* Executive Committee issued an important [statement](#) that noted that each religious community can fold these vital goals into its own holistic notion of human flourishing.

Moreover, by advancing cooperation across our traditions and with others, *Religions for Peace* believes that the best fruits of the modern sciences can be combined with the tested wisdom of millennia of religious experience in the service of sustainable development.

As we commit ourselves to implement the SDGs, we recall that our respective religious traditions point—each in its own way—to a vision of "shared well-being" based on the profound reciprocity between human dignity and the common good that is anchored in each religion's respective experience of the Sacred. Indeed, this notion of shared well-being was unanimously affirmed by over 700 diverse senior religious leaders—including men, women and youth—during the *Religions for Peace* World Assembly in 2013. We are convinced that advancing shared well-being can powerfully support sustainable development.

Let us, then, choose solidarity over narrow self-interest, true values over fleeting and self-centered satisfactions, and "welcome" over "exclusion." Let us honor deeply—each in his or

her own way—the mysterious beauty of human dignity and the priceless wealth of our common good.

In partnership for Peace, I remain

Sincerely,



Dr. William F. Vendley
Secretary General



IN THE NETWORK

GLOBAL: MULTIRELIGIOUS PUSH FOR DECISIVE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Photograph: Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images

"As responsible citizens of the world—sisters and brothers of one family, the human family, God's family—we have a duty to persuade our leaders to lead us in a new direction: to help us abandon our collective addiction to fossil fuels. We can no longer continue feeding our addiction to fossil fuels as if there were no tomorrow. For there will be no tomorrow," commented **Rt. Rev. Desmond Tutu**, Archbishop Emeritus of South Africa; **[Former President of RfP South Africa]** who is helping to lead the **Religions for Peace (RfP)** Faiths for Earth campaign.

On 27 August, **RfP** launched the Faiths for Earth Climate Change campaign in 195 countries. The first phase is to amass signed [petitions](#) from all around the world to present to world leaders just prior to their convening this December in Paris.

In light of these upcoming climate negotiations—the last real chance to reach agreement on carbon emissions before we pass the point of no return—**RfP** regards this campaign as a top priority. [Join the Faiths for Earth Campaign and sign the petition here.](#)

Other senior religious leaders who are leading the campaign in their respective countries and regions, include: **H.M. Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar IV**, Sultan of Sokoto, Nigeria **[Co-President of RfP]**; **H.E. Raymundo Cardinal Damasceno Assis**, Archbishop of São Paulo, Brazil **[Co-President of RfP]**; **H.E. Luigi Bressan**, Archbishop of Trento, Italy **[Co-President of RfP]**; Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino, O.P, Founder of Liberation Theology Movement and Professor, University of Notre Dame; Sheikh Ali Gomaa, Former Grand Mufti of Egypt; **H.E. Dr. Mehmet Görmez**, President of Religious Affairs, Turkey **[Co-President of RfP]**; **H.E. José Francisco Cardinal Robles Ortega**, Archbishop of Guadalajara, México **[Co-President of RfP]**; **H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria **[Co-Moderator of RfP]**; **Chief Rabbi David Rosen**, KSG, CBE, International Director of Interreligious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee **[Co-President of RfP]**; **Bishop Gunnar Stålsett**, Bishop Emeritus of Oslo, Church of

Norway [**Honorary President of RfP**]; H.E. Prof. Dr. Din Syamsuddin, President, Muhammadiyah, Indonesia [**Co-President of RfP**]; and H.H. Tep Vong, Supreme Patriarch, Cambodia [**Co-President of RfP**].

GLOBAL: **RfP OFFERS EDUCATIONAL VIDEO ON ENCYCLICAL**



Bono, lead singer of U2

As a complement to its Faiths for Earth Campaign, **RfP** in partnership with the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences/Social Sciences is offering a free online course on *Laudato Si': On Care of our Common Home*, the encyclical of Pope Francis.

The Pope's encyclical appeals to women and men of all religious traditions to unite and take action to heal and protect the earth, our common home.

Bono, the lead singer of U2, narrates the introduction to each chapter, and also narrated a short trailer for the course, which you may access [here](#).

Presenters of the online course include: H.E. Peter Cardinal Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; **Dr. Jeffrey Sachs**, Director of The Earth Institute, Columbia University and Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [**International Trustee of RfP**]; Bishop Marcelo Schez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences/Social Science; **Dr. Anthony Annett [Climate Change and Sustainable Development Advisor of RfP]**; and **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]**.

This educational video can be accessed through this [link](#).

Kindly disseminate the educational video within your communities.

GLOBAL: **RfP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RELEASES STATEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



The *RfP* International Executive Committee has issued an important statement-*Shared Well-Being: Multi-Religious Values for Sustainable Development*. Click [here](#) to read it.

It outlines a basic moral case for the SDGs. It also builds a profound connection between the notion of "shared-well being" and the SDGs.

The notion of "shared well-being" was affirmed in the last *RfP* World Assembly by over 700 diverse religious representatives from all continents.

GLOBAL: A MULTIRELIGIOUS PRAYER FOR EVERYONE

RfP composed a multi religious prayer for "Project Everyone," a global campaign designed to reach seven billion people on the SDGs. The multi religious prayer can be found [here](#).



UNITED NATIONS: UNITING FAITHS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Rabbi Rick Jacobs (L) and Mr. David Donoghue (R)

While advancing sustainable development requires the best of science, technology, and practical problem solving, it also requires a strong ethical foundation-and religious communities can make irreplaceable contributions to it.

In the run up to the 25-27 September UN Summit for the Adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), *RfP* hosted a consultation on *Shared Values for Sustainable Development* on 17 September.

Speakers at the event included H.E. David Donoghue, Ambassador of Ireland to the United Nations, and one of the co-facilitators of the UN Sustainable Development Goals negotiations.

The following *RfP* Co-Presidents outlined religious support for the SDGs: **H.E. Cardinal John Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja [**Co-Moderator of RfP**]; **Dr. Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad**, Head of the Islamic Studies Department at the Academy of Sciences [**Co-President of RfP**]; **Dr. Vinu Aram**, Director of the Shanti Ashram [**Co-Moderator of RfP**]; **Rabbi Rick Jacobs**, President of the Union for Reform Judaism [**Co-President of RfP**]; **H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel**, Vice President of the Conference of European Churches [**Co-President of RfP**] and **Dr. William Vendley** [**Secretary General of RfP**].

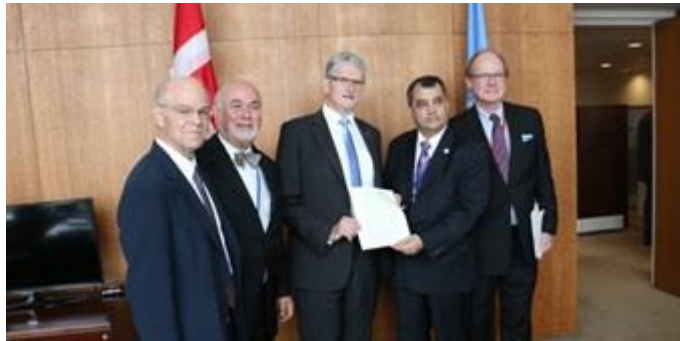


Dr. Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad

Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University [**International Trustee of RfP**], noted that "our best science demonstrates that with sufficient political will sustainable development is possible. *RfP* Co-Presidents agreed that the fact that it is possible contributes to the moral obligation to do so.

UNITED NATIONS: ADVANCING SUPPORT FOR NUCLEAR ABOLITION

Responding to the continuing risks of a nuclear catastrophe whether by accident, miscalculation or intent, *RfP* with parliamentarians and mayors presented their [joint statement](#) to the President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mogens Lykketoft, as world leaders gathered at the UN for the 70th anniversary opening session.



(L-R) Dr. William Vendley, Mr. Jonathan Granoff, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, Mr. Saber Chowdhury, Mr. Randy Rydell

The delegation included **Dr. William F. Vendley** [**Secretary General of RfP**]; Mr. Jonathan Granoff, Council Member and President of the Global Security Institute; Mr. Saber Chowdhury MP, Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament and President of the Inter Parliamentary Union; and Mr. Randy Rydell, Senior Adviser for Mayors for Peace.

Co-sponsored by [Religions for Peace](#), [Mayors for Peace](#) and [Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament](#), the joint statement was adopted in Hiroshima on 6 August, the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of that city.



NEW YORK, USA: **SUPPORTING WOMENS' RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**



Dr. Vinu Aram

Women and girls often experience violations of religious freedom distinct from males having the same religious beliefs.

To highlight women of faith roles in advancing religious freedom, a major United Nations General Assembly side event was held on 17 September.

The discussion focused on i) state laws/regulations that restrict women of faith, ii) traditional and cultural practices oppress women, and iii) next steps.

H.E. David Saperstein, U.S. Ambassador at Large

for International Religious Freedom, stated that "The international community can and should play a larger role in amplifying the female voices of faith that are at the forefront of promoting religious freedom."



(L-R) Mr. David Saperstein, Dr. Vinu Aram and Dr. William Vendley

Dr. Vinu Aram, Director, Shanti Ashram, India [**Co-Moderator of RfP**], co-moderated the discussion and drew out the connection between protection of freedom of religion, respect for women's rights, and how advancing these can expand women's roles in peacebuilding and development.

NEW YORK, USA: **ADVANCING FREEDOM OF RELIGION FOR ALL**



H. E. Metropolitan Emmanuel (left 1), Dr. William Vendley (left 2), and Ayatollah Seyed Damad (right)

Violations of freedom of religion or belief are having a devastating impact, and compliance amongst states to uphold these rights has declined in the last decade.

In response, *Rfp* co-sponsored *Multinational Efforts to Promote*

Freedom of Religion or Belief: Joint Action for the Common Good organized by the International Panel of Parliamentarians of Religion or Belief and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on 16-19 September.

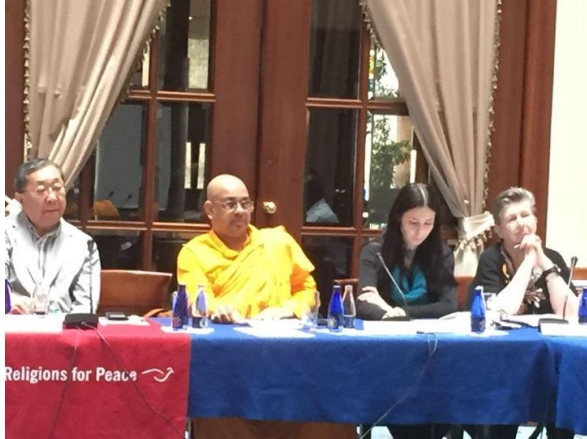
Addressing more than 130 parliamentarians, diplomats and civil society representatives, **H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria [**Co-Moderator for Rfp**], stated that "We need to intensify a genuine multi-religious cooperation that presupposes a recognition of religious pluralism, between and within faiths, between and within nations. It is only then that we shall all be able to work together and effectively, joining hands to uphold and defend freedom of religion for every religion in particular and for religion in general."

In his opening remarks, **Ayatollah Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad**, Head, Islamic Studies Department, The Academy of Sciences, Iran [**Co-President of Rfp**], stated "there is no alternative than humane coexistence, and acceptance of one's freedoms."

Other outstanding contributions were made by *Rfp* Co-Presidents: **H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel**, Vice President, Conference of European Churches, France; **Rabbi Rick Jacobs**, President, Union for Reform Judaism, United States; and **Dr. Vinu Aram**, Director, Shanti Ashram, India.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: SCALING UP COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR PEACE

RfP International, in collaboration with the **Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina (RfP-BiH)**, co-convoked an expert group meeting: Reflection on Best Practices and Scaling-up Multi-Religious Action, in Sarajevo on 24-26 July 2015.



Rev. Yoshitaka Hatakeyama, Ven. Dhammajothi, Ms. Nataliya Pylypiv, and Mrs. Paddy Meskin

30 **RfP** affiliated IRCs from Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America participated in the meeting, together with NGOs, foundations, and some governments.

The goal was to rigorously evaluate the best multi-religious action programs that could be scaled up.

As one example, the Inter-religious Council of Liberia reported on how its work to mainstream orphans into society also equipped it to provide frontline services during the Ebola crisis and again

to assist in educating for childhood immunizations. The case illustrated religious communities' capacities for action with relatively small financial costs and the fact that action on one project positioned the group for even more efficient actions on other fronts. The Liberia projects are being scaled up further.

In addition to attending to the evidence for effective action programs that could be scaled up, the participants reflected on the ways in which multi-religious cooperation transforms those engaged.

Participants noted that after participating in multi-religious cooperation, their "images of the other" dramatically improved, as did their willingness to engage in multi-religious cooperation. In addition, participants confirmed that these experiences deepened their commitment to their own faith, and that this, in turn, helped them to see one another in an even deeper light. The participants reflected on how these experiences of "transformation" could be made available to their wider religious communities.

RfP is being enabled to inventory its own projects for "best practices," as well as to take steps to scale up these practices by the GHR Foundation.

Read more about [the session and the presenters](#).

[Read more about the IRC Bosnia Protection of Holy Sites Project](#)

MYANMAR: PROMOTING INTERRELIGIOUS COOPERATION

In response to rising nationalism and religious tensions in Myanmar, *RfP* has launched the "Welcoming the Other" project in target regions.

The project engages senior religious leaders and the Women of Faith networks in Kachin and Rakhine states, as well as Meikhtila in the Mandalay region.

In Meikhtila, Venerable U Withudda, an Abbot at Yadanar Oo Monastery, who offers shelter and food for approximately 800 Muslim villagers in his Buddhist monastery to protect them from communal violence, is helping to lead the project.



Members of *RfP* Myanmar and *RfP* International Secretariat Staff

In Myitkyina, Kachin State, Venerable Sandawara is also taking leadership in this initiative.

Read the rest of the [Press Release](#).

NIGERIA: TACKLING GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

RfP leaders **H.E. Cardinal John Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria [**International Co-Moderator of *RfP***] and the **Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III** [**Co-President of *RfP***] joined UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights, Development, Climate Change and Countering Violent Extremism, held in Abuja.

Cardinal Onaiyekan's and the **Sultan of Sokoto** highlighted pressing issues facing the country, including the numerous cases of oil spills that have damaged Nigerian soil.



H.E. Cardinal John Onaiyekan (L) and Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto (R)

They noted that investments in reforestation, and new methods of agriculture along with solar and wind energy can be key in advancing sustainable development.

Cardinal Onaiyekan and the **Sultan of Sokoto** are together leading *RfP's* Faiths for Earth campaign in Nigeria to encourage Nigerians to commit to a hundred percent renewable energy by 2050.

Read more [here](#).

Read Cardinal John's [Speech](#).

UNITED NATIONS: THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ART



Ms. Idanna Pucci



Sculptures from Exhibition

Mme. Idanna Pucci [International Trustee of RfP] recently curated the art exhibition, "The Transformative Power of Art," at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The exhibit is designed to raise awareness about climate change and our fragile ecosystems. The artists used natural materials to create sculptures that emphasize the power and beauty of the natural world, and also to paint portraits of deep thinkers and artists who have contributed to the common good.

GLOBAL: ADVANCING EQUITY FOR CHILDREN



Dr. William Vendley

Due to **RfP** and UNICEF's vigorous 25-year history of working together, **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]**, was invited to attend the recent UNICEF Executive Board meeting at the United Nations in New York.

UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake summarized UNICEF's progress and gaps, and reviewed the case for equity among children being central to successful implementation of

the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr. William Vendley noted that the *Rfp* Partnership with UNICEF has resulted in major actions and materials to equip religious communities, including: "[*From Commitment to Action: What religious communities can do to eliminate violence against children.*](#)"

LIBERIA: SUPPORTING ORPHANS AND FAMILIES IN POST-EBOLA RECOVERY



The Inter Religious Council of Liberia Staff meeting

The **Inter Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL-Rfp)** partnered with UNICEF to deliver essential services related to the Ebola epidemic.

Hardest hit by the outbreak are the over 4,500 orphans, who lost their parents to the deadly disease. Already vulnerable, they are facing additional hardship and exclusion from stigmatization and possible institutionalization.

The **IRCL Women of Faith Network** is responding by providing care, material support, educational access and alternative learning opportunities for those who cannot attend school.

Several members of the **Women of Faith Network** have taken personal guardianship and care of over 200 children and Ebola survivors. The women are supporting: 20 orphans in Banjour; 76 children in Careysburg; 40 widows and 40 orphans in Jacob-town; and 8 orphans and widowers in Jacostown.

Through the good offices of the GHR Foundation, *Rfp* is able to strengthen work in Liberia to support vulnerable children.

VATICAN: PROMOTING CHRISTIAN-BUDDHIST DIALOGUE



Rev. Kyoichi Sugino with Pope Francis

Buddhist and Catholic leaders from the United States were invited by the Vatican to discuss "Suffering, Liberation and Fraternity."

Pope Francis, who was in attendance, observed: "It is a visit of fraternity, of dialogue, and of friendship... And in these moments, which are wounded by war and hatred, these small gestures are seeds of peace and fraternity."

RfP leaders who attended the consultation included: **Deputy Secretary General Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**; **Ven. Chung Ohun Lee**, President of Won Buddhist International [**Co-President of RfP**], and **Dr. Anthony Cirelli** [**Member of Executive Council of RfP USA**].

Rev. Sugino noted, "It is significant that Buddhist and Catholic leaders made a commitment to strengthen their collaborative action on climate change, youth outreach and resources for migrants and the homeless.

Watch the [video](#) of the encounter

Read the [Joint Statement](#)

INDONESIA: STRENGTHENING MULTI-RELIGIOUS ACTION TO OVERCOME VIOLENT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM



Ven. Chung Ohun Lee with Pope Francis



Prof. Dr. Din Syamusuddin (Left) addressing at the *RfP* Asia International Seminar; Foreign Minister Retno L.P. Marsudi of Indonesia (4th from the left) offered her keynote address

The Executive Committee of the **Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (RfP Asia)** and its special international seminar were convened in the historic hall of Gedung Merdeka, Bandung, Indonesia on June 3, 2015, 60 years after the Bandung Asian-African Conference in 1955.

The meeting was attended by representatives from 18 Asian and the Pacific countries and over a hundred Indonesian local religious and political leaders.

Under the theme "*Asian Multi-religious Action to Overcome Violent Religious Extremism*," Indonesia's Vice President H.M. Jusuf Kalla and Foreign Minister Honorable Mrs. Retno L.P. Marsudi opened the gathering.

Prof. Dr. Din Syamsuddin [Moderator of RfP Asia] stated in his remarks that "religious leaders in Asia should join forces in overcoming violent religious extremism and *RfP* Asia should serve an important instrument through which we translate our shared values and commitments into concrete action on the ground."

Faced with Buddhist extremism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, **Al Haj U Aye Lwin**, Chief Convener of the Islamic Center of Myanmar [**Co-founder of RfP Myanmar**] and **Most Venerable Dhammajothi**, [**Sri Lanka Council of RfP General Secretary**] presented examples of multi-religious responses to the message of hate and exclusivity advanced by extremist groups in their respective countries.

Dr. Haider Al-Hussaeima [**RfP Iraq Coordinator**] shared how Sunni, Shia and Christian communities are cooperating to support internally displaced populations in Northern Iraq. **Dr. Lillian Sison** [**Secretary General of RfP Philippines**] reported on **RfP's** multi-religious diplomacy with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and its pastoral psychosocial support for the victims and perpetrators of conflicts.

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino [**Deputy Secretary General of RfP International**] explained the political, socio-economic, cultural, religious and psychological drivers of violent extremism and the role religious leaders can play in countering violent extremism.

Under the new leadership of **Rev. Yoshitaka Hatakeyama** [**Secretary General of RfP Asia**], **RfP Asia** produced a statement on combatting violating extremism and adopted its strategic plan for 2015-2018. During the **RfP** Asian meeting a report was received from **Ms. Deepika Singh** [**Director of Programs and RfP Asia and International Joint Representative for Nepal on RfP Nepal's multi-religious relief and reconstruction work in the aftermath of devastating earthquake**]. **Mr. Terence Ward** [**RfP International Trustee**] attended the meeting as a special guest.

GLOBAL: PRESERVING THE SANCTITY OF OUR SANCTUARIES



Holy sites like the Christ our Savior Cathedral in Moscow, Dome of the Rock Mosque in Jerusalem, and Sri Ranganathaswami Temple in Srirangam, represent important markers of faith, history, and art.

From an increasing number of suicide bombings that have destroyed mosques and churches in the Middle East, to the vandalism and desecration of temples and shrines, sanctuaries have become pawns of conflict.

RfP is working to protect holy sites, in partnership with the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, One World in Dialogue and Search for Common Ground.

In Indonesia, **Dr. Din Syamsuddin**, Leader of Muhammadiyah [**Co-President**

of RfP] is helping to advance action programs to address this issue and is laying the

groundwork for an Indonesia-sponsored UN General Assembly resolution on the protection of Holy Sites.

In Nigeria, **H.E. Cardinal John Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria [**International Co-Moderator of RfP**] and the **Sultan of Sokoto** [**Co-President of RfP**] are promoting together interfaith initiatives to protect holy sites.

In Sri Lanka, the **Sri Lanka Council of RfP** is working hand in hand with the Sarvodaya Movement and Search for Common Ground to advance multi-religious projects for peaceful co-existence, especially through work with youth, women and media.

RfP, as a partner in the Code on Holy Sites Working Group, is working to advance a UN resolution designed to protect holy sites.



Dr. Din Syamsuddin

To learn more, read the [Progress Report](#).

HEADQUARTERS: RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL PEACEMAKERS NEED TO BE BETTER SUPPORTED



Mr. Antti Pentikäinen

RfP is pleased to welcome back Mr. Antti Pentikäinen to the International Secretariat.

Mr. Pentikäinen is serving as the Executive Director and Convener of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers Secretariat.

He previously served as **RfP**'s Conflict Transformation Director from 2010-2011.

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers was initiated in 2013 as a joint effort by Finn Church Aid, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and **RfP**, with strong support from the UN Mediation Support Unit and the UN Alliance of Civilizations. The objective of the Network is to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of mediation efforts through strengthening local ownership and supporting the positive role of religious and traditional leaders in mediation.

Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP] stated: "We found it natural to host Antti, since we together have been developing the Network. **RfP** how important it is to support religious leaders in peacebuilding. The Network will provide a framework of cooperation in areas of great interest for **RfP**."

"Religious and traditional peacemakers are well equipped to bridge the gap to communities in fragile states. They can also address issues of violent extremism. Many problems are caused by marginalization and lack of political will to engage properly with conflicting parties. So there is a lot of work to do," explained Mr. Pentikäinen regarding the tasks ahead within the Network Secretariat.

Recent Publications

APPROACHING RELIGION IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: CONCEPTS, CASES AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

[Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation](#), written for policy makers and conflict transformation practitioners working on conflicts with religious dimensions, includes a chapter on the role of the **Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone-RfP** in helping to negotiate a cease-fire to the devastating civil war of the 1990s. Mr. Antti Pentikäinen contributed the forward. [Download the Publication](#).



2015 GLOBAL PEACE INDEX



Mr. Steve Killelea

becoming increasingly divided, with some unprecedented levels of peace, while and conflict. The report was released by and Peace, whose founder is **Mr. Steve Treasurer and Trustee of RfP**. [Download](#)



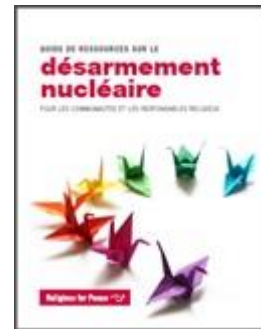
The 2015 Global Peace Index shows that the world is countries experiencing others spiral into violence the Institute of Economics **Killelea [International**

RFP NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

RESOURCE GUIDE NOW

Our Nuclear Disarmament Resource Guide is now available for download in multiple languages here:

- [Arabic](#)
- [English](#)
- [French](#)
- [German](#)
- [Japanese](#)
- [Spanish](#)



IN MEMORIAM



Sheikh Kafumba Konneh

RfP received news of the passing of **Sheikh Kafumba Konneh [President of Interreligious Council of Liberia-RfP]** at age 71 with sorrow.

RfP extends heartfelt condolences to **Sheikh Konneh's** family in their time of loss.

Sheikh Kafumba Konneh was a beloved friend, a devout Muslim and a distinguished public servant, who co-founded the **Interreligious Council of Liberia-RfP**.

A strong voice of Peace especially throughout Liberia's Civil War, **Sheikh Konneh** worked tirelessly with religious leaders of diverse faiths for peace and reconciliation. He led efforts to engage warring factions in the Liberian civil crisis towards a peaceful resolution. He was instrumental in negotiating numerous peace agreements, including the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement that finally brought peace to Liberia.

He was appointed Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, mandated to investigate the root of the Liberian crisis and to reconcile victims and perpetrators. **Sheikh Konneh** is said to have attended all of the hearings of the Commission, both in Liberia and abroad.

Sheikh Konneh held several additional positions, including Secretary-General and Managing Director of the Liberian Muslim Union and Secretary-General and National Chairman of the National Muslim Council of Liberia.

As a mark of last respect and tribute to the late Sheikh Konneh, the Republic of Liberia mandated that the national ensign be flown at half-mast from public buildings.

As we mourn the loss of **Sheikh Konneh**, we are heartened by his many years of faithful service and commitment to multi-religious dialogue and cooperation in **RfP** through the **Interreligious Council of Liberia-RfP**.

RfP also received news of the passing of **Mr. François Max-Gesner Beauvoir [Founding Member of RfP-Haiti]** on 12 September at the age of 79.

RfP extends heartfelt condolences to **Mr. Beauvoir's** family in their time of loss.

Mr. Beauvoir was known as a passionate guardian of the Vodoo faith, which has often been sensationalized and misunderstood.



Mr. Francois Max-Gesner Beauvoir

He was also fundamental in the launch of the Federasyon Nasyonal Vodou Ayisyen, now called the National Confederation of Haitian Vodou, 2005. The President of Haiti, Michel Martelly, described Beauvoir's death as a "great loss for the country."

The Haitian government held a tribute in honour of **Mr. Beauvoir** on 23 September at Champs de Mars square in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

[Read more.](#)

Read about his [tribute](#).

IN THE NEWS

Articles in this section are taken from independent news sources. The content and opinions expressed do not represent the views of RfP.

Sultan, Others Seek Probe of Saudi Tragedy

Blessing Olaifa
The Nation Online
28 September 2015



The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III [Co-President of RfP] as well as President General of the Jama'atu Nasril Islam requested an investigative probe into the stampede which killed 768 pilgrims in Mina during the stoning of the devil. Iran and the Muslim Rights Concern also insisted on a probe of the tragedy.

In addition to the confirmed dead, many pilgrims are still missing. The Sultan expressed sadness over the sheer number of victims and prayers for the repose of their souls in a

statement.

Calling it "one tragedy too many," the Sultan called for an investigation in order to ensure that the hajj runs as smoothly as possible. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani called for an investigation during a speech at the United Nations.

[Read More](#)

Muslim-Jewish Leadership Council in Europe Launched

Chief Rabbi David Rosen [Co-President of RfP]

AJC Monthly Highlights
13 October 2015

The King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue convened an historic gathering of rabbis and imams to establish a Muslim Jewish Leadership Council to work together on Religious Freedom in Europe-in particular on the right to provide and obtain kosher/halal products, conduct ritual circumcision and maintain other religious ritual traditions.



This cooperation agreement is on the basis of a joint commitment to European civil law and a joint commitment to repudiating and combatting prejudice, bigotry, violence and terror.

The two partners in establishing this Council who approached KAICIID to facilitate this meeting are the Conference of European Rabbis and Islamic Relief Worldwide.

The KAICIID Board of Governors from the Muslim faith and the Jewish faith (i.e. me) were invited to participate in the meeting accordingly. Read More [Rabbi Rosen's Monthly Highlights](#).

[Read More](#).

The Story Behind Pope Francis's Multi-Faith Service at Ground Zero

Michelle Boorstein
The Washington Post
25 September 2015

Friday September 26th, Pope Francis welcomed different faith leaders for a multi-faith ceremony in the lower level of the Ground Zero museum, exploring the presentation of religion as a force for tolerance at a time of religious violence.



Other spiritual leaders who would be at the event said they felt Francis has unique stature at a time when people are losing faith in institutional religion, which is in turn splintering as a societal structure.

Some are investing a huge amount in the visit of Francis. "To be able, on that spot, to have a service with interfaith leaders, and this pope, to try and figure out: How do we craft a world where religion is the glue that holds our moral fiber together-not this battering ram of ideology and ethnocentrism and hatred" said **Rabbi Rick Jacobs**, President of Judaism's largest denomination, the Reform movement, **[Co-President of RfP]**. "I can't help but think, what would the experience of World War II have been if Pope Francis had been pope?"

[Read More](#)

RfP UK Leaders among Those Leading Project to Change Perceptions of Religion and Armed Forces through Football

David Holland
This is Lancashire
22 September 2015



The Changing Perceptions Initiative has been launched to unite people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and educate them about armed forces and religions.

The conversation will be facilitated to build understanding, challenge misconceptions, and build relationships between communities.

Religions for Peace UK has lent its support to the initiative. **Mr. Jehangir Sarosh [Moderator of the European Council of Religious Leaders-RfP]** has said, "This notion of peace is multi-dimensional, and we work with all religions to ensure better understanding of 'the other', whether civilian or military, and to emphasise what we all have in common.

Religions for Peace UK is delighted to support the Oppo Foundation and the Changing Perceptions project." Joining him in support is **Dr. Mohinder Singh**, Chairman of the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewa Jatha **[International Co-President and Trustee of RfP]**, "As a Sikh I welcome this great initiative, as we are all part of the Lord's infinite creation it is important we understand each other."

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Interfaith Leaders Declare "Indonesia Moves to Save the Earth" or EARTH ALERT

Bayu Hermawan

Tree Angle
21 September 2015



Inter-Religious Council Indonesia Chairman **Prof. Din Syamsuddin [Moderator of Asian Conference of RfP]** led numerous interfaith leaders in declaring the formation of "Indonesia Moves to Save the Earth" or EARTH ALERT.

The declaration coincided with the commemoration of World Peace Day on September 21st. According to **Dr. Syamsuddin**,

the world is not facing war, but it is facing the absence of peace as manifested in poverty, ignorance, inequality, discrimination, and the damage to the environment.

The EARTH ALERT movement comprises many different religious organizations working in cooperation with one another and also with other less religious organizations.

With the movement's focus on faith, one of these projects is promoting the concept of ecologically friendly houses of worship. Another is the concept of a "green hajj," where those on pilgrimage use reusable tumblers for water, or use Smartphone apps for their hajj rehearsal scripts instead of physical books.

[Read More](#)

Religious Council Grants Scholarship to Ebola Orphans in Bong County

Micat Liberia
2 September 2015



In the wake of the Ebola crisis, the **Inter-Religious Council of Liberia-RfP** and the U.N. Children's Fund are working together to keep Liberian children in school. Over 15 scholarships have been bestowed to those who were orphaned by the Ebola Virus Disease.

The beneficiaries were selected from different areas of Gbarnga in Bong County, Liberia, and the scholarships will support them until they graduate high school. The scholarships are part of a larger effort to

reach out to these children; the **IRCL-RfP** has also given the beneficiaries a network of support for reporting cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, and other violent acts committed against them. Besides the scholarships and network, the **IRCL-RfP** provided over US\$700 to the children's guardians so that they may prepare for a September school commencement.

The **Council** is seeking additional support to enable it extend the scholarships to Bomi, Gbarpolu, Nimba, Lofa and Montserrado counties to ensure that other Ebola orphans in those areas remain in school.

[Read More](#)

To make a donation to the **IRCL-RfP**, go to [here](#).

Standing Up for Faith is Significant Part of Reconciliation, says Archbishop of Dublin

Anglican News
2 September 2015



Gathered in Dublin, the Provincial Secretaries of the Anglican Communion held their eighth periodic meeting, with the theme 'Peace and Reconciliation.' In addition to uniting the Provincial Secretaries, the conference welcomed addresses from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of Armagh.

The Most Reverend Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin [**Member of the ECRL**], led a Bible Study on the conference's theme and referred particularly to Ephesians 6.13-14 which reads, "Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything,

to stand. Stand firm then ..."

In his reflection, **Archbishop Jackson** applied the verses to redefine how to understand reconciliation, saying, "Often we think of reconciliation somewhat romantically as breaking down the dividing walls of enmity, and this is good, but there are other considerations and to my mind this passage introduces us to the idea of standing as a significant part of reconciliation. Standing is a witness in itself and in the world of today we see every day those who stand and witness and die for their principles and for their faith."

[Read More](#)

Read the [full text of Archbishop Jackson's reflection](#)

Islamic leaders Issue Bold Call for Rapid Phase out of Fossil Fuels

Arthur Neslen
The Guardian
18 August 2015



Islamic leaders have issued a clarion call to 1.6bn Muslims around the world to work towards phasing out greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and a 100% renewable energy strategy. The Grand Mufti's of Lebanon, His Eminence Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Qabbani, and Uganda, **His Eminence Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubajje [Co-Moderator of RfP]**, endorsed the Islamic declaration on climate change, along with prominent Islamic scholars and teachers from 20 countries, at a symposium in Istanbul.

Their collective statement makes several detailed political demands likely to increase pressure on Gulf States ahead of the Paris climate summit in December. "We particularly call on the well-off nations and oil-producing states to lead the way in phasing out their greenhouse gas emissions as early as possible, and no later than the middle of the century," it says.

Leaders from major organizations and academic institutions were also present, including **Dr. Din Syamsuddin**, Leader of Muhammadiyah [**Co-President of RfP**] who stated that "Despite being one of the countries under serious threat from climate change due to its geography, the majority of people [in Indonesia] are still oblivious to the challenge." Although he saw these initial efforts as "embarrassing" on the part of Muslim communities around the world, he recognized the importance of having religious communities tackling this issue together. "We will spread the word all around the world. I will declare it in Indonesia," Din said.

[Read More](#)

Read the [Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change](#)

Religious Leaders Form Forum to Promote Peace Ahead of 2016 Elections

Article by Innocent Anguyo, New Vision
Video by NTV
18 August 2015

Religious leaders under their umbrella group, the **Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU-RfP)**, have launched a peace and conflict forum to promote peace across the country ahead of next year's general elections.

The clergy under their umbrella body, the **Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU-RfP)** want the recently passed constitutional and electoral reforms to be stayed until after the 2016 elections."



The constitutional and electoral reforms passed by Parliament last week only await assenting of the President for them to come into force.

Msgr. Charles Kasibante [Chairperson of IRCU-RfP] board took a swipe at Parliament, saying the reforms were "hurriedly done." "As faith leaders, we take note of the acrimony in the passing of the constitutional and electoral reforms by Parliament last week. It is our considered view that peace and stability are buttressed by consensual negotiation and compromise over contentious issues in a win-win spirit, where even the interests of the minority are accommodated."

[Read the article.](#)

[Watch the video.](#)

USA: Earth, Faith and Peace 2015

Focolare Movement Website
10 August 2015

Young people from five religions and several Christian denominations, specifically chosen as emergent leaders in the environmental field, met at [Mariapolis Luminosa](#) of the Focolare in the State of New York, USA, to reflect on safeguarding the planet, our common home.



Guided by the ideals of RfP and of the Focolare, the Teach-in began with an analysis of the current situation of the environment and the strong link between global stability and climate change. Despite the variety of their beliefs, they came to the same realisation that every effort in favor of the environment will be more efficacious inasmuch as it is done together.

[Read More](#)

A Signature for the Climate | *Una firma per il clima*

Augusto Goio
Vita Trentina (Original article in Italian)
6 August 2015



Religions for Peace and its Faiths for Earth campaign are reaching many people in Italy thanks to the efforts of **H.G. Archbishop Luigi Bressan**, Archbishop of Trento [**Co-President of RfP**]. **Archbishop Bressan** was interviewed in an article and on video for an Italian news agency called Vita Trentina. A section of the article has been translated:

The appeal of **Bressan** begins with a global initiative coordinated by **World Conference of Religions for Peace**, the global multi-

religious movement created to promote peaceful co-existence based on mutual respect and a better distribution of the earth's resources.

With the campaign "Faiths for Earth", *Religions for Peace*-of which **Bressan** is a **Co-President**-identifies climate change as "one of the greatest moral challenges of the present age."

"We ensure," **Bressan** concludes "that the strength of our voices to be heard around the world, in all centers of power and especially the forthcoming talks in Paris on the climate." where world leaders will have one last chance to reach a global agreement on reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, before it's too late.

"I do not despair," notes **Bressan**. "I know that when we move together for a good cause, we can become an irresistible force. I have experienced in my life. I know that by working together, we can change the world for the better." Read the article (In Italian) and watch his video interview here: [Read More](#)

Religious Leaders Recommit to Improve Maternal and Child Health

NTV
23 July 2015

Religious leaders under the **Inter-Religious Council of Uganda-RfP (IRCU-RfP)** have converged to discuss and agree on ways in which they can work to improve reproductive, maternal, child, and newborn babies' health.



One of the speakers, the Bishop of Mityana Diocese, **Rt. Reverend Stephen Kazimba [Member of the IRCU-RfP]** asked his comrades to work together for this cause, while the state minister for Primary Health Care Sarah Opendi emphasized the need for recommitment from the different stake-holders to improve maternal and child health as a way of sustaining the millennium goals of which many have not been achieved yet. The meeting is being held at Serena Conference in Kampala, together with several other stake-holders.

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Top Cop Joins IRO Peace Walk

Anna Ramdass
Daily Express
12 July 2015



There was a walk for peace in Enterprise [Trinidad and Tobago] yesterday under the vigilance of a large army of fully armed police officers.

The walk, organised by the **Inter Religious Organisation-RfP (IRO-RfP)** saw members of various religious faiths in this country walking the streets of Enterprise and asking for peace and for the criminals to abandon their life of crime and give up the guns.

Before the walk, acting Commission of Police, Stephen Williams disclosed that people of Enterprise were crying out for help.

"Trinidad and Tobago can only become a better place when we the citizens come forward and do whatever we can to improve our security. I need to thank the **IRO** for this initiative, to express our full support, give the community the assurance that the Trinidad and Tobago police supported by the Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force will continue to focus on policing this community" said Williams.

[Read More](#)

Burning of Churches in Jewish State? Impossible!

Ron Kronish [Former President of Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel-RfP]

Huffington Post

23 June 2015



Is it really happening? Are we actually witnessing the burning of churches and mosques on a regular basis in the Jewish state? Impossible! It can't be happening!

Jews, who have suffered so much persecution and pogroms in their own history, could not possibly do such things. Jews-- whose Torah clearly teaches them to be kind to " the stranger", the minority in your midst, for "you were strangers in the land of Egypt"--should not be able to even imagine themselves as people who could burn churches or mosques indiscriminately.

But it is happening! During the past 3 1/2 years, 43 churches and mosques have been vandalized. And what is even more amazing is that not a single culprit has been caught, arrested or brought to justice! Whoever is doing this has apparently outsmarted all the security forces in the state of Israel! They are geniuses and succeed in covering their tracks in every case!

[Read More](#)

European Bishops Call on EU to Welcome Migrants Fleeing War, Poverty

Simon Caldwell
Catholic News Service
23 June 2015

Bishops across the European Union are calling on member states to be generous toward tens of thousands of migrants flooding across the Mediterranean.

French, German and Italian bishops have issued formal statements in response to a crisis that has seen more than 100,000 migrants, many of them refugees from wars in Syria and Eritrea, cross into Italy, Greece and Malta from North Africa and Turkey.

Bishop Kenney [Member of European Council of Religious Leaders-*RfP*] told CNS that "people do just not realize the horror and the poverty that these people are fleeing from."

"We have an obligation to look after these people ... the reason being that they are men and women made in the image of almighty God," he said.

[Read More](#)



German Envoy Hold Talks with Mubajje

Newvisicn.org
12 June 2015



The German Ambassador to Uganda His Excellency Peter Blomeyer on Thursday visited His Eminence the Mufti of Uganda **Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubajje [Co-President of *RfP*]** at the UMSC Headquarters Old Kampala. The Ambassador was received by the Mufti in his office and the two discussed a range of issues which included the UMSC unity and development programs, the murder of Muslim clerics, the growing threat of extremism and the UMSC relations with other faith based

organisations.

The Mufti singled out the **Inter Religious Council of Uganda-RfP**, the **African Council of Religious Leaders-RfP** and **Religions for Peace International** which he said has played an outstanding role in promoting co-existence not only among members of different faiths but also members of difference political affiliations locally and internationally.

[Read More](#)

THE POPE IS NOT ALONE: When it comes to Climate Change, Pope Francis and Many Other World Religious Leaders are cut From the Same Cloth.

Nicole Greenfield
OnEarth.org
June 2015

When Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio became pope in 2013, the new pontiff took the name Francis in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, the 13th-century preacher known for a great love of animals and nature. So maybe it's no surprise that yesterday Pope Francis delivered the Roman Catholic Church's [first-ever encyclical on the environment](#)-most notably, on climate change.



"The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all," he wrote. On that note, he is not the only faith leader who's got climate on the mind.

Many Jewish groups and individuals have been addressing environmental issues for years, but they have only started making official statements and calls to action on climate change in the past several years. In 2009, **Rabbi Rick Jacob's [Co-President of RfP]**, Commission on Social Action to the Union for Reform Judaism [issued a resolution](#) on the "unprecedented challenge of climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions" and need for urgent action.

[Read More](#)

RfP WELCOMES NEW
Consultant and Interns

Religions for Peace Welcomes New Staff



Ms. Emma Bausert is an intern at *Rfp*. She is an undergraduate Pre-Law student at Fordham University, studying International Political Economy with minors in Spanish and International Humanitarian Affairs. She recently studied in Spain to expand her language expertise, as well as the diverse logistics and policies of European countries. Emma plays an active role in Fordham's Global Outreach community, an organization that facilitates international and domestic service-immersion trips. She has immersed herself in the cultures of Bethel, Alaska and Les Cayes, Haiti. Though the combination of her studies and her travels, Emma has developed a passion for assisting humanity. Through her past internships, studies, and travel experience, Emma is eager to learn how religion serves as a force of peace in the international arena.



Ms. Amy Endres is an intern at *Rfp* this fall. She is an undergraduate at Fordham University, studying theology and religious studies with minors in biology and bioethics. Amy places importance on service to communities around her; in the past year, she has been involved with both secular and religious outreach to the ill, to the elderly, and to other marginalized populations in New York City and northern New Jersey, USA.

With her studies and personal spirituality, Amy is interested in a career in ministry and non-profit work. Her personal love for rational science as well as deeply-held faith has kindled a passion for difficult questions as well as a respect for diversity in possible answers. She hopes that her internship with *Religions for Peace* can help her to learn about the nuances surrounding international conflicts, particularly when they intersect with faith. She also hopes that she can use her experience to become a more understanding and more globally aware individual in ministry and service work.



Ms. Marissa Hutton is an intern at *Rfp*. Marissa is currently an undergraduate student at Seton Hall University, studying Diplomacy and International Relations with a minor in Russian. Through service experiences with Habitat for Humanity, the Division of Volunteer Efforts at Seton Hall and as a member of the executive board of her service fraternity, Marissa fulfills her passion of service to all humanity. As a member of the religiously diverse Seton Hall community, she has cultivated an appreciation of the power of faith.

Arriving at **RfP** from a previous internship with the House of Representatives, Marissa is excited to utilize her skills in the pursuit of multi-faith common action. She is certain her experience at the organization will further amplify her ideals of the potential for multi-religious cooperation as well as provide her with the knowledge and tools to create paths to peace.



Mr. Tahil Sharma is a communications consultant at **RfP**. A recent graduate from the University of La Verne, majoring in Spanish with a Minor in International Studies, he currently serves as a Youth Representative for the Parliament of the World's Religions to the United Nations and worked as the Event Co-Lead and Fund the Mission Lead for the Claremont and La Verne Relay for Life, sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

As an active proponent of religious and secular pluralism, he has done extensive work with the Parliament, the Interfaith Youth Core and was also named a member of the Future50, a collaborative by the Interreligious Council of Southern California and USC's Center for Religion and Civic Culture.

Born in Los Angeles, California to an inter-religious Hindu and Sikh family, he has traveled immensely between India and the United States, but calls the city of Claremont his home. He has contributed blogs and articles to IFYC.org, The Interfaith Observer, LinkedIn and the CPWR Blog. He enjoys learning about the diversity the world has to offer and how he can serve it, enough to make him the Newman Civic Fellow for fight against prejudice and discrimination while fighting for food security in his local community. Tahil is fluent in Spanish, Hindi-Urdu, and Punjabi, and is learning Japanese, Korean, and Arabic.

UPCOMING EVENTS

14-17 October 2015 - Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament 2015 Assembly, Czech Republic

19-25 October 2015 - Launch of the **RfP Women of Faith Network**, Sri Lanka

28 October - 1 November 2015 - **RfP** European Assembly 2015 "*Welcoming Each Other in Europe - From fear to Faith.*" Castelgandolfo, Holy See

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YOUR WORK, YOUR SUCCESS

Send us your news and work, and we will include it in the next Newsletter

Questions, comments, or news?

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