

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL



Dear Friends,

While the process for setting a post-2015 Development Agenda should be completed at the UN in September, meeting the challenge of achieving a more sustainable and fairer world where no-one is left behind will be hard.

It will take more development and we are already pushing against the physical limits of our planet. But, it must and can be done.

There has been a solid multi-religious consensus in **Religions for Peace (RfP)** that the basis for holistic development is community. Community means fellow feelings, shared meanings and values and a shared commitment to work for the common good. Community is the basic underpinning for all of the institutions that are to serve the common good: families, schools, towns, nations and notably the United Nations.

Those social institutions, including the UN, cannot function, and in the end, cannot survive without a large measure of community.

Take, for example, governments. Even if there are good leaders, good policies and even sufficient resources, without a healthy society rooted in genuine community there is little likelihood of serving the common good. Resources can be scarce, adequate or lavish, but without a healthy measure of community they cannot be easily and efficiently deployed for the common good.

So, we have to ask ourselves, what are the enemies of community? These are the profound enemies of development that lie-so to speak-beneath the technical problems of development.

Let me name three major ones: 1. ignorance, 2. individual egoism and 3. group egoism.

Today the question to the diverse religious communities is: What gifts of virtue does your community have to share to help us all build the sense of community essential to advancing holistic sustainable development?

In this edition of the Global Newsletter, you will find examples of your colleagues in **RfP**

around the world who are reaching across their differences with increasing trust and even gratitude to forge concrete partnership to advance Peace.

Today the challenge of sustainable development cannot be reduced to our growing and important technical abilities. There remains the question of value, of what's deemed "worthwhile." True community is based on a consensus that honoring human dignity calls us all to advance holistic development.

In partnership for Peace, I remain

Sincerely,



Dr. William F. Vendley
Secretary General

IN THE NETWORK

UNITED STATES: **RfP** JOINS WHITE HOUSE SUMMIT ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM



Mr. Emir Kovačević

In 1995 Bosnia was a fragmented place. Four years of vicious interethnic strife had left over 250,000 people dead, over 3 million forced from their homes and hundreds of holy sites destroyed.

At the request of the four heads of major religious traditions in Bosnia, **RfP** assisted them in establishing the **Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina (RfP-BiH)** to heal their society and re-build a single, multi-ethnic Bosnia.

While many of the wounds of the Bosnia war have healed, attacks on religious buildings, religious ministers and believers continue. Since 2010, **RfP-BiH** has been monitoring these attacks as part of the Universal Code on Holy Sites-co-founded by Search for Common Ground, the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, One World in Dialogue, and **RfP**.

The **RfP-BiH** protection of holy sites project has garnered international attention as an

effective peace building model. The project's success is reflected in the systematic reporting and recording of desecrations, joint visits of religious leaders to sites, multi-religious condemnation followed by repairs to sites and the active engagement of multi-stakeholders including police, media and municipality leaders.

Based upon on this successful track record, the **RfP-BiH** was invited to participate in the Countering Violent Extremism summit held 18-20 February 2015, at the White House, Washington, D.C., United States.

RfP-BiH General Secretary Mr. Emir Kovačević represented **RfP-BiH** in the Summit which drew global leaders from 60 countries, representatives from the private sector, nongovernmental organizations and social media organizations in discussions on a broad range of measures to counter hateful extremist ideologies that radicalize, recruit or incite to violence.

Mr. Kovačević said in a telephone interview from Washington, DC, following the conclusion of the Summit, that "it was important for **RfP** to be represented because countering violent religious extremism is at the core of **RfP**'s efforts. I am pleased to have represented **RfP** and the **RfP-BiH** in the summit because it allowed me share about our successful local model to counter violent extremism-the protection of holy sites which is rooted in interfaith collaboration." [Read More](#)

INDONESIA: OVERCOMING EXTREMISM AND ADVANCING PEACE WITH JUSTICE



Dr. Din Syamsuddin

RfP is committed to mobilizing the great resources of our respective religious traditions to take action together to help overcome intolerance and violence.

Such was the case recently in Yogyakarta and Borobudur Temple, Indonesia, 3-4 March, where a high-level delegation of Muslim and Buddhist leaders from 15 countries in South and Southeast Asia committed together to affirm the importance of peace, mercy, and

compassion in both Buddhism and Islam, and reject the abuse of these religions in support of discrimination and violence.

The gathering, *Overcoming Extremism and Advancing Peace with Justice* featured **RfP** leaders including: **Prof. Dr. Din Syamsuddin**, Chairman of Muhammadiyah [**Co-President of RfP**]; **Ven. Dr. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Anunayaka Thera** [**President of Sri Lankan Council of RfP**]; **Mr. Moulavi Athambawa** [**Vice-President, Sri Lankan Council of RfP**] and **Rev. Kyoichi**

Sugino [Deputy Secretary General of RfP].

Convened by the International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations-International Network of Engaged Buddhists; International Movement for a Just World; Muhammadiyah and **RfP**-and hosted by Indonesian Buddhist Association and Indonesian Council of Ulama, the gathering produced the Yogyakarta Statement.

Signatories of the Yogyakarta Statement committed to having their communities and congregations serve "as a platform for intra-religious and inter-religious initiatives in education and advocacy."

The [Yogyakarta Statement](#) on Shared Values and Commitments been translated into 9 languages. "It is not for Buddhists and Muslims only. It is for the whole world," commented **Dr. Din Syamsuddin**.

UNITED NATIONS: ADVANCING MULTIRELIGIOUS ACTION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



L-R: H.E. Cristina Gallach; H.E. Sam Kahamba Kutesa and Dr. William F. Vendley

RfP advances sustainable development around the world, revealing the capacity of religious communities to bring the full weight of their moral authority to bear on behalf of the poor and the voiceless, and to efficiently deliver services directly to those most in need.

"It is our collective obligation to give all persons the chance to both better develop themselves and to better contribute to our

shared well-being," declared **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]**, in his [opening remarks](#) before the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week Commemoration on 6 February in New York.

"Multi-religious Partnership for Sustainable Development" was the theme for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2015, chosen as the international community prepares to implement a new set of Sustainable Development Goals.

Co-Convened by the Committee of Religious Committee of NGOs at the United Nations, under the leadership of **Dr. William Vendley**, and the Office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly, this year's World Interfaith Harmony Week Commemoration

attracted a multi-stakeholder coalition of over 300 senior religious leaders, youth and women of faith representing the world's religious traditions, representatives of United Nations agencies, member states, civil society, foundations, corporations, research institutes and academic institutions.

"2015 is a year of hope and opportunity. This task ahead of us is enormous, and will require profound shifts in how we think, and how we act. To succeed in this ambitious endeavor, we will need to harness resources and knowledge from all corners of society," stated H. E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the United Nations General Assembly, as he welcomed guests to the United Nations.

The high-level panel of speakers explored religious and inter-religious actions for sustainable development.



L-R: Rev. Dr. Usman Fornah; Rabbi Roger Ross; H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza; H.E. Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu; Imam Shamsi Ali; Dr. Uma Mysorekar

Rev. Dr. Usman Fornah, President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone, Chairman of the Board of Directors for The Evangelical College of Theology [**General Secretary of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone-RfP (IRCSL-RfP)**], emphasized the need for establishing more interfaith organizations, like the **IRCSL-RfP** to provide social services in health, education and other development programs. In his remarks, he drew from his

experience coordinating multi religious action with the **IRCSL-RfP** to tackle the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone.

H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, reminded that "no serious efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals will be successful and lasting if religions and faith-based organizations are not actively engaged in policy discussion and implementation."

H.E. Ambassador U. Joy Ogwu, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the United Nations, highlighted the need for diverse religious communities and governments to work together to address common challenges.

H.E. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, thanked those gathered for "joining forces to build a sustainable future based on our shared principles of tolerance and respect for diversity." His remarks were read by H.E. Christina Gallach, Under-Secretary-

General of the United Nations.

Rfp affiliates in many countries held events to commemorate World Interfaith Harmony Week. **Rfp Australia's** gathering drew over 80 leaders of diverse faith traditions to Parliament House in Canberra.

The **Inter-Religious Council Indonesia-Rfp** held their celebration 6 February in the Main Hall of Indonesian Parliament in Jakarta, where religious leaders prayed for justice and peace in the country. In his remarks, **Dr. Din Syamsuddin**, President of Muhammadiyah [**Co-President of Rfp**], called on religious leaders to fight hand in hand to address the country's many problems of social injustice.

The United Nations proclaimed World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2010 to enhance mutual understanding and interreligious dialog as a means to promote harmony among all people, regardless of their faith. [Read More](#)

INDIA: PROMOTING BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION



Buddhist and Catholic religious leaders discussing strategies for promoting inter-religious cooperation Bodhgaya

The 5th Buddhist Christian Colloquium at Bodhgaya, India, the sacred site of Buddha's enlightenment, demonstrated that when religious communities recognize their shared values, mobilize their collective assets, and work together, they can have a decisive impact that benefits the greater society.

Rfp, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PICID), and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India co-organized the colloquium on 11-14 February 2015 to provide a broad platform for over 60 Catholic leaders, Vatican officials and Buddhist leaders from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions to jointly discern shared values, identify common challenges and constructive approaches to address contemporary challenges.

"Dialogue of collaboration among Buddhists and Christians could help the plight of many children today throughout the world, including orphans and those deprived of parental love

and affection, the bonded labors, those forced to participate in brutal wars, those lured to participate in trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, those used as drug peddlers, those who become victims of arms dealers," stated Archbishop Felix Machado, Chairman for the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue in India and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, as he highlighted the fundamental importance of interreligious cooperation.

Addressing the Colloquium's theme "*Buddhist and Christians Together Promoting Fraternity*," **Venerable Prof. Medawachchiye Dhammajothi [Secretary General of Sri Lanka Council of RfP]**, lifted up, as an example, the **Council's** multi-religious pre-school for children of all religions and ethnicities in Vavunia, Sri Lanka, a place devastated by that country's civil war.

Representing the Mahayana tradition, Rev. Munehiro Niwano, President, Rissho Kosei-kai Gakurin Seminary in Japan, stated that "fraternity" should be exemplified through our concrete practice of Bodhisattva and revering Buddha nature of all human and sentient beings.

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino [Deputy Secretary General of RfP], highlighted the history and evolution of the **RfP**-PCID partnership, starting from PCID's first President Paolo Cardinal Marella inviting a Buddhist leader and one of the founders of **RfP**, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, to the Second Vatican Council in 1965 where Pope Paul VI stated that "Christians should pray for Buddhists and Buddhists pray for Christians in our shared commitment to peace." That historic encounter paved the way to the ultimate birth of **RfP** in 1970.

The **RfP**-PCID partnership has evolved into various joint initiatives on global challenges including the contemporary challenges of violent religious extremism, climate change, and sustainable development

The colloquium's deliberations resulted in a final statement, an action plan and a commitment among participants to develop concrete measures to cultivate "fraternity" between the two religious traditions in their respective communities, countries, and globally.

LIBERIA: RESILIENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST EBOLA



Rev. St. John York at ceremony for removal of cremated remains

Religious networks are the largest and best-organized civil institutions worldwide, and uniquely equipped to meet the challenges of our time.

In the face of the recent outbreak of Ebola, which has caused over 10,000 deaths in West Africa, we have seen how multi-religious communities working together can be powerful actors in addressing the needs of their communities.

In Liberia, one of the hardest-hit countries, with over 4000 deaths, the **Inter Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL-Rfp)** played a key role in fighting the spread of this disease by facilitating cooperation between the government and the people. Traditional burial practices in Liberia can spread the disease, and it was the intervention of the interreligious community that convinced Liberians to agree to put their religious activities on hold.

"There were a lot of myths, a lot of rumors about Ebola," explained **Rev. St. John York [Secretary General of IRCL-Rfp]**, in a recent interview with *Rfp*. "Things were confused, and the only people who could call the communities together were the religious leaders."

Radio recordings allowed the trusted voices of religious leaders such as **Archbishop Jonathan B.B. Hart**, Archbishop of the Episcopal Church in Liberia and the Province of West Africa, President of the Liberia Council of Churches [**Vice President of IRCL-Rfp**], **Archbishop John Kromah**, Aladura Church Community of Liberia and Sierra Leone [**Executive Member of IRCL-Rfp**], **Sheikh Kafumba F. Konneh**, National Chairman of the National Muslim Council of Liberia [**President of IRCL-Rfp**], and the Grand Mufti of Liberia, Sheikh Abubakar Sumaworo to reach people in rural areas.

Rev. York described how, in the initial confusion of the epidemic, there had been "no one to care for these bodies. The bodies were all flung in the streets of Monrovia." Over 3000 bodies were cremated in 17 drums and buried in haste. "How will you separate the ashes of the Christians to give them a Christian removal service? And how will you separate the Muslims?" asked **Rev. York**. "It's practically impossible."

So the **IRCL-Rfp** designed an unprecedented interfaith ceremony to accompany the transfer of the ashes from the cremator's site to a grave site. "And it was shocking that we all had this service together," noted Rev. York. "We had to give dignity to those ashes." The interfaith ceremony took place with participation from Muslim, Christian, and Traditional Religious leaders.

Rev. York was honored for his outstanding leadership role in the fight against Ebola by Media Against Disease in Liberia (MADIL), a group that closely follows activities of the country's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

He continues to be busy in his work. At the time of his interview with *RfP*, he was in the midst of preparing a schedule for the training of 2000 religious leaders on safe burials, with 100 leaders already trained, each prepared to train 20 more at the district level.



Rev. St. John York receiving award from MADIL for outstanding leadership

Liberia had zero cases of Ebola, but **Rev. York** remained cautious and concerned about the porosity of Liberia's borders. These were "communities that have lived together for centuries," that were "so close, you could hardly tell the difference," and so he was advocating for training religious leaders in communities across border areas.



Rev. St. John York speaking at the Community Dialogue attended by Orlando Bloom

He had also just finished coordinating the visit of UN Goodwill Ambassador Orlando Bloom, taking him to areas that were badly hit, and accompanying him to a community dialog between Christians and Muslims. "He promised to tell our story to the international community," said Rev. York.

In his interview, Rev. York stressed the importance of religion in Liberia. "Now the challenge that we have," noted Rev. York, is that "people try to downplay the role of religions. But religion in Liberia is very key.

Because that is the characteristic of us that gives us that resilience. That resilience that people talk about. It is religion that we crave and religion that is the source of that energy. And people wonder why Liberians are resilient. But that's what it is. It is because Liberia is a highly religious country."

WASHINGTON, D.C.: *RfP* LEADERS WORK WITH WORLD BANK TO FIGHT EXTREME POVERTY



Dr. William Vendley

Our faith traditions and our values call us to be outraged at the on-going tragedy of global poverty, inseparably linked to economic inequality.

"By next year, the 80 richest people will control the wealth equivalent to the bottom 2.5 billion persons. Also by next year, the top 1% will control half of global wealth," declared **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]** in a recent address at the

United Nations. He pointed to the figures to demonstrate that global markets alone cannot address this grave challenge.

On 18 February, World Bank President Dr. Jim Kim hosted a dialogue of approximately 20 leaders of international faith bodies and FBOs on the topic of ending extreme poverty by 2030.

Representing **RfP** at the Roundtable were **Dr. William Vendley**, **Dr. Ismail Serageldin**, Director of the Library of Alexandria, Egypt [**Honorary President of RfP**], and **Dr. Anthony Annett**, **RfP Climate Change and Sustainable Development Advisor**.

During the gathering, Dr. Kim explained that the World Bank defines "extreme poverty" as living on less than \$1.25 per day, and he noted that today there are about one billion people living under these extremely difficult conditions. Dr. Kim remarked that extreme poverty can be essentially eliminated by 2030. However, he noted that this cannot be done without the direct engagement with religious communities.

Participants in the meeting gave feedback on a draft pledge, *Ending Extreme Poverty: A Moral and Spiritual Imperative*, for faith engagement in ending extreme poverty, prepared by a diverse faith-based drafting team.

The pledge outlines moral arguments for ending extreme poverty that are deeply held and widely shared by the world's diverse religious communities. It also underscores the specific roles and responsibilities of the faith communities.

"Ending extreme poverty is not beyond our reach. Rather, it is well within our ability to achieve within this generation. This is the clearest of moral imperatives-because we now have the capacity to end extreme poverty, we now have the corresponding responsibility to do so" said **Dr. William F. Vendley, Religions for Peace International Secretary General**. [Read More](#)

EUROPE: ECRL-RfP WELCOMES NEW INTERIM GENERAL SECRETARY



Mr. Jehangir Sarosh

Seasoned **RfP** activist **Mr. Jehangir Sarosh OBE** is the new interim General Secretary of **European Council of Religious Leaders-RfP (ECRL-RfP)**. He replaces **Mr. Stein Villumstad** who has stepped down to become the Country Representative of Norwegian Church Aid in Malawi.

When asked about his major achievement as a promoter of interfaith cooperation, **Mr. Sarosh**, a Zoroastrian, declared, "I'm proud of the fact that I invited five of the most prominent religious leaders from different faiths for a meeting and, with them as the founding members, we started a process leading to the inauguration of **ECRL-RfP**."

The newly-appointed General Secretary saluted his predecessor. "**Mr. Stein Villumstad** has been a good friend and a joy to work with, and he leaves a legacy that

will be hard to follow."

In its meeting last year, the **ECRL-RfP** Council and Executive Committee members also expressed appreciation for **Mr. Villumstad**, stating "we are grateful for the outstanding skills Stein offered to **ECRL-RfP**."

Under the leadership of **Revd Dr. Thomas Wipf [Moderator of the ECRL-RfP]**, Council members

stated that **Mr. Villumstad** "brought his international experiences in interreligious partnership and dialogue in his work for **ECRL-RfP**. He was an excellent global and European networker for the vision and presence of **RfP International** and the **ECRL-RfP**. We thank him for his loyal and devoted service while working for the common good of all."

When asked about **Mr. Villumstad's** departure, **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]** responded: "Stein has achieved several significant accomplishments during his tenure. We will remember his wise and innovative leadership and wish him great success in Malawi."



Mr. Stein Villumstad

The **ECRL-RfP** Secretariat was relocated to London, United Kingdom from Oslo, Norway and will hold its first Council meeting of this year in Frankfurt this May, under the theme "Tackling Violent Extremism." [Read More](#)

GLOBAL: **RfP TO LAUNCH INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR ADVANCING PEACE**

The **RfP** 5-year Strategic Plan addresses the violent threats to Peace and the rising social hostility faced today. In particular, it calls on **RfP** to work to prevent violent conflicts, including war, terrorism and related misuses of religion.

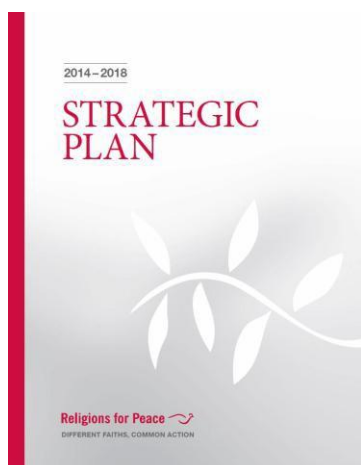
To scale up the capacity of **RfP** to achieve its strategic objectives, **RfP** and the International Shinto Foundation (ISF) have partnered to create an International Center for Advancing Peace. The Center will be housed in the **RfP** International Secretariat. It will be called The Handa Center for Advancing Peace, named after the ISF President **Dr. Haruhisa Handa [International Trustee and Patron of RfP]**.

The Center will set forth bold global multi-religious actions to counter violent religious extremism and advance shared well-being, as part of our commitment to build Peace.

To carry out its goals and have the broadest impact, the Center will provide education, training, analysis and resources to the global **RfP** network of 90 national and 6 regional affiliated Inter-religious Councils, Women of Faith and Youth Interfaith Networks working for Peace. Multi-faith, multi-lingual toolkits and faith-based educational materials on preventing and resolving violent conflicts will be developed and distributed worldwide throughout the **RfP** networks. The Center will also convene trainings and meetings to prepare faith leaders for frontline engagement in peacebuilding activities in their communities.

The Center will enable **RfP** to further uphold its commitment of translating shared moral concerns into concrete multi religious action in some of the most challenging places around the globe.

GLOBAL: **RfP'S 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**



RfP five-year Strategic Plan is available for download [here](#).

The Plan outlines the vision, mission, strategy and priorities of **RfP** for the upcoming years before the next World Assembly. The Plan positions **RfP** to address the violent threats to Peace and rising social hostility and **RfP**'s vision of welcoming the other and advancing a positive vision of Peace through multi-religious cooperation.

The Plan will provide highly useful guidance to the entire **RfP** movement, as many regional and national affiliates build their own strategic plans in relationship to the International Strategic Plan.

GLOBAL: **RfP ANNOUNCES NEW INTERNATIONAL TRUSTEES**

Two distinguished individuals have recently joined **RfP** as International Trustees.

"We are so pleased to welcome **Sir Babatunde Lucky Omoluwa, KSS** and **Dr. Haruhisa Handa** as International Trustees of **RfP**. Their outstanding contributions and achievements as a businessmen coupled with their philanthropic acts offer true reflections of their integrity, clarity of purpose and goodwill.

They will bring great strength to our mission of advancing principled multi-religious action among the world's religious communities for peace," said **Dr. William Vendley [Secretary General of RfP]**.



Sir Omoluwa is an illustrious entrepreneur and founder of Pinnacle Communications Limited, a Nigerian broadcast engineering company, which he still heads. He was recommended for service as a Trustee by **H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria [**International Co-Moderator of RfP**].

Sir Lucky paid an official visit to the **RfP** International Secretariat in New York on 4 March.

As a new Trustee, the aim of the visit was to get more familiar with the current projects and activities of **RfP** and exchange views on areas of cooperation. [Read More](#)



Dr. Haruhisa Handa is the President, Founder and Chairman of the International Shinto Foundation. **Dr. Handa** is also the Managing Director of B.C. Consulting Ltd and manages over a dozen companies in Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom. He is also an author and has written more than 220 books that have been translated into seven languages. Some of the best sellers include "Secrets for running a Small Business", "Understanding Japan" and "Lucky Fortune" - of which more than a million copies have been sold. In Cambodia, **Dr. Handa** was conferred the title of Commander of the Royal Order of Sahametrei. He is also the recipient of the Medal with Dark Blue Ribbon of Japan. **Dr. Handa** won the Honorary Award of Contribution towards the Chinese Choral Enterprise, and he has received a distinguished service medal of the State of Western Australia, as well as the keys to the City

of Perth and the City of Swan.

Sir Omoluwa and **Dr. Haruhisa Handa** join an outstanding circle of women and men serving as International Trustees of *RfP*. Trustees mobilize new resources, provide needed expertise and make a substantial annual contribution to support *RfP*'s work. [Read More](#)

JORDAN: *RfP* LEADERS ENGAGE IN ACTION TO PROTECT RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

In too many places around the world, victims of hostility are often vulnerable populations, including members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons.

Addressing the protection of religious minorities requires forging bolder and stronger multi stakeholder partnerships. Such an approach was at the center of the high-level consultation convened in Amman, Jordan, 8-9 February.

The gathering occurred under the patronage of HM King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan in coordination with the HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales; HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, Chief Advisor to HM King Abdullah II.

RfP religious leaders and experts engaged in discussions regarding HM King Abdullah II's vision of a United Nations resolution to protect religious minorities.

RfP representatives, including **H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria [**Co-Moderator of *RfP***]; **Dr. Mohammad al-Sammak**, Secretary General, Islamic Christian National Dialogue Committee [**Co-President of *RfP***]; **Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit**, General Secretary, World Council of Churches [**Co-President of *RfP***] and **Dr. William F. Vendley** [**Secretary General of *RfP***] offered counsel and guidance on the content of the draft resolution and appropriate next steps for securing its adoption.

HIGHLIGHT OF A RELIGIOUS LEADER

Chief Rabbi David Rosen is International Director of Interreligious Affairs of American Jewish Committee and its Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding.



In *RfP*, **Rabbi Rosen** serves as an **International Co-President of the World Council** (since 2006), **Member of the International Executive Committee; Member, International Finance Committee** and **Founder, Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel-RfP**.

He is a past chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, the broad-based coalition of Jewish organizations representing World Jewry to other religions. Rabbi Rosen is Honorary Advisor on Interfaith Relations to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel; serves on its Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, and represents the Chief Rabbinate on the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. Rabbi Rosen was a member of the Permanent Bilateral Commission of the State of Israel and the Holy See that negotiated the establishment of full diplomatic normalization of relations between the two. In November 2005 he was made a papal Knight Commander of the Order of St Gregory the Great for his contribution to promoting Catholic-Jewish reconciliation and in 2010 was made a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II for his contribution to interfaith relations.

What has your work with RfP meant to you and your community? What has it allowed you to do that would have otherwise been more challenging without RfP?

RfP is the most significant global interfaith body that I have been associated with. It has both enabled me to establish deep bonds of friendship throughout the different faith communities of the world; it has given me a platform to represent my own faith community to the others. It has also enabled me to do so on a regional level in its MENA initiatives which have a special importance both because of the negative stereotypes that prevail and the significance of this region globally. On a local level *RfP* has provided sterling support for interreligious initiatives in the Holy Land which even if they have not brought an end to local conflict, serve as enormously important testimony of hope and of what is possible.

When you look at the challenges we are facing now, in your community and beyond your community, what are some things RfP can help you do now and in the future?

One of the notable aspects of the global interfaith movement which has burgeoned in our times, is the recognition that divisions today are less between religious communities than within them, The division is between those whose spirituality compels them to an embrace of others, seeing religious and cultural diversity as a manifestation of the Divine among us; and those whose religiosity expresses an insular self-obsessed separation from the rest of the

world. In *RfP* people of the "expansive spirit" from the religious traditions of the world strengthen one another by their very presence as well as their collaboration. This global support is invaluable for those who often labor in a lonely local vineyard. One of the most important tasks ahead is to leverage modern technology and media capacities to make the work, locally, regionally and globally, more well known.

One of the concerns we hear is that multi-religious work diminishes one's own faith. How would you respond this concern?

The allegation amuses me because my experience is so totally the opposite. However I am reminded of the claim that "familiarity breeds contempt"; and the riposte "only in one in whom there is something contemptible". In the same way one may say that "Interfaith work diminishes the faith only of those with little faith in the first place!"

Of course, any engagement with those who are different opens us up to the possibilities of change. If our roots are shallow, then not only can new winds uproot us, but even rainfalls of sustenance can wash us away. But if our roots are deep and strong, then the new waters enable us to flourish far more and new winds enable us to pollinate and spread goodness. It is important that people who come to interreligious engagement do so from a sense of deep particular religious identity and commitment. Indeed I believe strongly that only a universality that is made up of serious particularities is sustainable and can legitimately appeal to our respective Traditions.

Personally I can say that the need to represent my heritage and its teaching to others has been invaluable in deepening my own Jewish identity and devotion to the tenets and teachings of my own religious Tradition.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto

RfP mourns the passing of Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Founder of Arigatou International and Leader of Myochikai [**Member of RfP Japan**], who passed away on March 26 at 3:50 am in Tokyo at the age of 97. He will be deeply and dearly missed.

Rev. Miyamoto was a true pioneer of compassion and a rare spiritual leader who had the gift of inspiring people to go beyond all the usual limits in order to care for others, especially children.

In 1990, Rev. Miyamoto established the Arigatou Foundation (now Arigatou International) "in response to the terrible suffering of so many children around the world" and gave it the mission of creating a better environment for children everywhere. Then, in the year 2000, he inaugurated the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), bringing together diverse people of faith from around the world to commit themselves to "making a contribution from the religious perspective to the promotion of child rights in the 21st century."

In 2002, Rev. Miyamoto was selected to address the General Assembly on behalf of people of faith around the world, and he pledged to bring diverse religious communities together to do more for ethics education, child rights, and ending child poverty.

Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto is survived by two daughters, and one son, **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto**, President of Arigatou International [**International Trustee of RfP**].

A memorial ceremony for the family will take place on April 2, and a public event honoring his life and contributions is scheduled for May 14 in Tokyo.

Reverend Father Constantine Kaswaya



RfP mourns the passing of Reverend Father Constantine Kaswaya on 17 February. Fr. Kaswaya served as Chairperson of the Malawi **Public Affairs Committee**, an affiliate of *RfP*, for two terms. He held several positions within the church, including head of the Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi, Diocesan Secretary, Vicar General, and Revered Father. Fr. Kaswaya died on 17 February.

He was ordained as a priest in 1979 and became very popular during his tenure with the Malawi **Public Affairs Committee** for, among other things, spearheading efforts against the rise in state-sponsored political violence in the country.

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.

British Imams Have Launched A New Magazine to "Reclaim The Internet" From ISIS

Hussein Kesvani
BuzzFeed
27 March 2015



Some of Britain's leading Muslim scholars have launched a new magazine to combat Islamic extremism on the internet. Haqiqah, which means "The Reality" in Arabic, is designed to educate young people about the dangers of extremist ideology such as that pushed by ISIS.

More than 100 of the world's most respected Islamic scholars gathered in London to mark the magazine's launch.

Some of the attendees included the American imam Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, co-founder of Zayatuna College, and **Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah from the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies [International Co-Moderator of RfP]**.

Qari Asim MBE, Imam of the Leeds Makkah Masjid, said the magazine "urges imams to use the digital space to provide a counter-narrative to ISIS, and those who are attracted to romantic images. "We cannot be complacent to combat radicalisation," he stated. [Read More](#)



Nigerian Cardinal: Priorities for Nation's New President

Vatican Radio
Susy Hodges
31 March 2015

The **Head of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, Cardinal John Onaiyekan Archbishop of Abuja [International Co-Moderator of RfP]**, says this week's presidential elections had a higher degree of transparency than the past but warns there's always a risk of post-election violence.

In his assessment of the electoral process, Cardinal Onaiyekan hailed the much higher "transparency."

When asked if he feared the risk of post-election violence by supporters of the losing candidate, Cardinal Onaiyekan conceded that this is "always a danger" in Nigeria, a country where the 2011 elections were marred by violence after the results were announced.

Turning to the urgent issues facing Nigeria's new president, Cardinal Onaiyekan said he believed there are three main priorities: restoring stability to the nation by dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency, tackling lawlessness and stamping out corruption and bad governance.

"We have a very bad record on corruption ... and there's no doubt this is pulling our nation down." The Nigerian Cardinal said another urgent priority was the need to promote "national cohesion" between the nation's many different ethnic and religious groups.

Listen to the [full interview](#) with Cardinal Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja

Abd el-Kader's Jihad Of Compassion and Courage By Dr. John Kiser [International Trustee of RfP]

The Rappahannock News
15 January 2015



With radical Islam once again dominating the news, this time in France, it is important more than ever to know about the Islam of a great human being who was a Muslim and an Arab: Emir Abd el-Kader al Jazairy, the 19th-century military leader, peacemaker, reconciler, holy man, philosopher and statesman whose conduct, on and off the battlefield, remains an ever more relevant model of courage, compassion and chivalry.

Abd el-Kader protected thousands of Christians during a Turkish-inspired pogrom intended to punish them for not paying the head tax. His life reminds Muslims that true jihad, or "holy exertion," lies not in the zeal of bitterness to fight at whatever the cost, but in living righteously in accordance

with Divine Law.

Unlike ISIS and al-Qaeda, Abd el-Kader treated his French prisoners respectfully, according to Islamic rules of warfare. The emir would be horrified by what is being done today in the name of Islam, just as he was in 1861, when he rescued Christians from death at the hands of an ignorant mob. Is the emir an exception? [Read More](#)

Having been engaged in work aimed at promoting harmony and reconciliation among various religious and ethnic groups in Syria and Iraq, *Religions for Peace* is planning to deliver its message to around 100 faith leaders in the region as a way to explore a channel of negotiations for the captives' release.

"Such an act of blackmail by holding innocent lives hostage is utterly impermissible, and we feel strong indignation against this act," Yoshifumi Okamura, a Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations, said at a meeting of the General Assembly. "Japan will not give in to terrorism and such violence," he said. "We ask the United Nations and its member states to stand by us" in the fight against terrorism. [Read More](#)

ELCJHL Synod Adopts Gender Justice Policy

27 February

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land Website



The Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, headed by Rt. Rev. Dr. Munib A. Younan [**Member of RfP MENA Council**], voted to adopt a Constitution for their Ecclesiastical Court - a court that was given authority to deal in family matters starting on January 1st, 2015 by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas - based in

gender equality.

The Constitution voted on by the Synod accepted equality in family life, including equal inheritance between male and female members in a family.

The prevailing constitutions for Ecclesiastical Courts often give women 1/8th of the inheritance of men. Through the good work of the Women's Desk of the ELCJHL and the entirety of the ELCJHL in regards to women's issues and gender equality, the Lutheran Church has adopted the gender justice policy - the only Constitution of its kind in the Middle East. [Read More](#)

Brussels: Members of Interreligious Council in BiH presented at the EU Parliament

Sarajevo Times
23 March



On the call by the **RfP Europe**, the inter-faith body affiliated to **RfP International**, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition, members of the **Interreligious Council in BiH** spent four days on the conference in Brussels. The conference was attended by **Olivera Jovanovic**, the senior adviser in **Inter-religious Council in BiH**.

The Conference named "Welcoming each Other in Europe: a Call to Non-Discrimination" started on 19th and lasted until 23rd March. The first day was characterized by the series of presentations held by representatives of different ethnic and religious communities all around Europe. The presentations and panel discussions were held at the European Parliament in Brussels and were hosted by **Ms Yolande Iliano [President of the RfP Europe]**.

Ms Olivera Jovanovic presented on behalf of the **Interreligious Council of BiH (IRC)** on the topic of the sharing of best practices in Europe, where she explained the structure of **IRC**, aims and recent successful projects in more detail. In the end, **Ms Jovanovic** gave a brief report on the laws and projects that the **IRC** successfully implemented. **Ms Jovanovic**, the leader of the Women of Faith Network in BiH, gave additional presentation on the topic of the Potential Role of Women of Faith in Tradition, Transmission and Transformation Process.

The Inter-religious Council in BiH has been in existence since 1997 through joint commitments by **Reisu-l-ulema Mustafa ef. Cerić**, Islamic Community in BiH [**Honorary President of RfP**]; Metropolitan Nikolaj of Dabar-Bosna, Serbian Orthodox Church; **Vinko Cardinal Puljic [Honorary President of RfP]**; Archbishop of Vrhbosna-Sarajevo, Roman Catholic Church; and **Mr. Jakob Finci**, Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) [**Honorary President of RfP**]. The **IRC's** work is based on existence and activities of 5 working groups: legal experts group, media group, education group, women's group and youth group.

The main aim of the **IRC** is to decrease religious prejudice and raise awareness of the importance of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation through developing relationships between churches and religious communities throughout BiH. [Read More](#)

Catholics and Muslims Celebrate Annunciation

The Tablet
Tom Heneghan
27 March 2015



French Catholics and Muslims held a joint prayer service near Paris to celebrate the feast of the Annunciation, taking a similar tradition from Lebanon as their model and planning to make it an annual event in France.

Plans for the two-hour service at the Notre Dame de Bonne Garde (Our Lady of Safekeeping) basilica in Longpont-sur-Orge south of Paris began last year and took on added significance as grassroots groups

sought ways to promote understanding following the Islamist killings of Charlie Hebdo cartoonists and Jewish shoppers in January.

The large church was full on 21 March for the two-hour service of hymns to Mary in French and Arabic, reading of the Annunciation accounts in the Gospel and the Qu'ran, statements by people of both faiths about Mary's place in their lives, and a period of silent prayer.

Bishop Michel Dubost of Evry, head of interfaith relations for the French bishops' conference, and **Ghaleb Bencheikh [Muslim Chairman of RfP France]**, were among faith leaders attending the "Together with Mary" event.

Rabbi David Rosen: Don't Blame Muslims for the Paris Terror Attacks

Paige Lavender
The Huffington Post

22 January 2015



DAVOS-**Rabbi David Rosen [Co-President of RfP]**, International Director of Interreligious Affairs at the American Jewish Committee, spoke with Huff Post Live at Davos about the recent attacks in Paris, and condemned those who blamed the Muslim community for the act

of terror.

"The guy who basically took on, who protected, most, many people who would have been victims of that was a Muslim," **Rosen** said, referring to Lassana Bathily, who hid customers from a gunman at a Paris kosher market where he works." **Rosen** said there's a "very clear double standard" when it comes to the Western world's reaction to the Paris terror attacks versus the Boko Haram murders.

"The kind of coverage we give, or the kind of reaction we have, is very different," **Rosen** said, noting he thinks "we are closest to that which is closest to us."

Rosen also spoke to Huff Post Live about religious issues around the world, saying "secular" and "religion" shouldn't be seen as "antithetical."

"Religion is unhealthy without secular society because the most dangerous thing for religion is when it's married to political power," **Rabbi Rosen** said. Watch the [Full Interview](#)

Religious Leaders Task Force on Ebola Distributes Food and non-Food Items to Quarantined Homes and the Disabled

Sierra Express Media
SEM Contributor
21 January 2015



The task force that was formed in June last year started its history with Ebola-related sensitization, fasting and prayers throughout the country. It trained well over 500 religious leaders of both faiths on Ebola in the South East and in the Western Area in July and August last year. With the support of World Vision from mid December 2014 to early January 2015 the task force embarked on distribution of food and non-food items to quarantined homes donated by some mosques, churches, faith based organizations and individual Sierra Leonean Muslims and Christians.

The Chairman of the task force, Bishop Yambasu of the United Methodist Church, in the handing over ceremony of the items said: "Ebola is a national epidemic that kills our people across the board regardless of region or religion and it must be dealt with in the same manner. Government alone cannot do it without our help", he said.

The distribution was supervised by officials of the **Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone-RfP (IRCSSL)**, namely **Sheikh Abu Bakar Conteh**, Chief Imam of Freetown Municipality [**President of the IRCSSL-RfP**]; **Alhaji U.N.S. Jah**; **Professor Baba Tunde Karim**; **Hajiahs Saminatu**; **Halima**

Abudullah; Rev. Speck; Rev. Sutton Koroma; Mrs Ebom James; Rev. Alimamy Kargbo; Sheikh Alhassan Kargbo and others. [Read More](#)

Muslim Community Hopeful about President Sirleaf's 'Ebola Must Go' Campaign

Wilfred Gortor
All Africa
17 December 2014



The Secretary General of the National Muslim Council of Liberia has described as optimistic President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's recent launch of the "Ebola Must Go" campaign.

Speaking at the Ministry of Information daily Ebola press briefing in Monrovia Wednesday, Sheikh Akibu Sheriff described the President's campaign as a step in the right direction to eradicate the deadly disease from Liberia.

He pledged the Muslim community's cooperation to ensure that the president's campaign becomes a reality.

According to Sheriff, the Muslim community is the most vulnerable in the ongoing Ebola crisis in the country, noting that some religious and traditional practices, especially the bathing of dead bodies, contributed immensely to the loss of many lives in the Muslim community.

According to Sheriff, awareness campaigns and support from government, **Inter-religious Council of Liberia-RfP** as well as philanthropic organizations averted the death of more Muslims. [Read More](#)



HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal's WANA Institute

Laith Abou-Ragheb
Venture Magazine
4 February 2015

HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal [Moderator Emeritus of RfP] launches the WANA Institute this month.

The think tank aims to come up with new ways of tackling some of the most pressing development issues facing the region.

Why have you decided to re-launch the WANA Forum as the WANA Institute?

If we are going to make a real impact, we need to begin the process of building a regional knowledge base. That is why the WANA Institute will be undertaking regionally-focused, ground breaking research on development challenges.

What topics will the institute focus on and why?

The WANA Institute has three focus areas: human security, social justice, and the green economy. We feel strongly that any post 2015 agenda for the West Asia-North Africa region, and indeed regions across the world, must combine economic, social, and environmental sustainability, with human dignity as their primary focus.

Many of the issues being examined by the institute are relevant to Jordan. What are the main challenges facing the country today, and how intractable are they?

Jordan houses one of the largest refugee populations in the world, placing a strain on our infrastructure, resources, and essential services. We are the second water-poorest country in the world. Our unemployment rate is in double figures, and is much worse for our younger workers, and our economy took a hard hit as a consequence of the global recession. While our education rates continue to grow and surpass many others in the region, our educated youth leave en masse to find work and provide valuable skills to other economies. In almost every direction, religious-based violence and long-running conflicts threaten to spill across our borders, or at the very least involve our own military and resources. [Read More](#)

Faith Organizations Assess COP 20 on the Way to Paris

World Council of Churches
28 January 2015



GENEVA - Outcomes, disappointments, as well as encouraging signs from the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 20) and the Peoples Summit held late last year in Lima, Peru, were discussed at length by representatives of faith communities in a panel hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The panel was moderated by **Beatriz Schulthess [Co-President of RfP]** from Costa Rica, President of the Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council. In her remarks at the session, she highlighted the work done by **RfP** in Lima, including a joint side event held by the organization in cooperation with the WCC.

Participants, including mainly representatives of Geneva-based diplomatic missions, NGOs and faith-based organizations, stressed the relevance of having a closer look at the process

and further engagement in the preparations for COP 21 in Paris. [Read More](#)

ISIS Destroys Ancient World Heritage Site of Hatra in Iraq

BuzzFeed
David Mack
7 March 2015



The ruins of Hatra, an ancient city in Iraq that once withstood attacks from the Roman Empire, have been destroyed by ISIS militants, according to local officials and the United Nations.

A joint statement condemning the destruction was released by the Director-General of the U.N.'s cultural body UNESCO, Irina Bokova, and **Dr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwajiri, Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) [International Trustee of Rfp].**

"The destruction of Hatra marks a turning point in the appalling strategy of cultural cleansing underway in Iraq," the pair said. "This is a direct attack against the history of Islamic Arab cities, and it confirms the role of destruction of heritage in the propaganda of extremists groups."

"The delay in international support for Iraq has encouraged terrorists to commit another crime of stealing and demolishing the remains of the city of Hatra," the statement read.

The UNESCO and ISESCO chiefs said the destruction of Hatra marked a new act of "barbarism." "With this latest act of barbarism against Hatra, [ISIS] shows the contempt in which it holds the history and heritage of Arab people, which had been rightly recognized as a World Heritage site."



"UNESCO and ISESCO are fully mobilized to respond to this emergency and stand ready to assist the Iraqi authorities in any possible way," the pair said. [Read More](#)

Why the Sustainable Development Goal Matter

By Jeffrey Sachs
Project Syndicate
30 March 2015

ROME - Following the progress made under the Millennium Development Goals, which guided global development efforts in the years 2000-2015, the world's governments are currently negotiating a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the period 2016-2030.

The MDGs focused on ending extreme poverty, hunger, and preventable disease, and were the most important global development goals in the United Nations' history.

The SDGs will continue the fight against extreme poverty, but will add the challenges of ensuring more equitable development and environmental sustainability, especially the key goal of curbing the dangers of human-induced climate change.

But will a new set of goals help the world shift from a dangerous business-as-usual path to one of true sustainable development? Can UN goals actually make a difference?

The evidence from the MDGs is powerful and encouraging. In September 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the "Millennium Declaration," which included the MDGs. Those eight goals became the centerpiece of the development effort for poor countries around the world. Did they really make a difference? The answer seems to be yes.

There has been marked progress on poverty reduction, disease control, and increased access to schooling and infrastructure in the poorest countries of the world, especially in Africa, as a result of the MDGs. Global goals helped to galvanize a global effort.

How did they do this? Why do goals matter? [Read More](#)

Archbishop Lwanga Consoles Muslims after Killings

Juliet Lukwago
New Vision: Uganda's Leading Daily
3 January 2015



KAMPALA - The Archbishop of Kampala Archdiocese, **His Grace Dr. Cyprian Kizito Lwanga** [Co-Chair of Council of Presidents, Inter-Religious Council of Uganda-RfP] has consoled the Muslim community following the killing of two prominent clerics in a space of four days.

The Archbishop condemned the killings, along with other related acts including child sacrifice, defilement, rape, robbery with aggravation, intentional infection with deadly diseases such as HIV/Aids through blood transfusion.

In his condolence message in Kampala, **Lwanga** said killers should stop committing crime.

"The Catholic Church feels great sympathy for all Muslims in the country upon losing such prominent clerics under such deplorable circumstances. Such murderous acts should be condemned in the strongest terms possible. We call upon the killers to stop, as no one is at liberty to take away another person's life," he said. [Read More](#)

Kenya: Religious Leaders Pledge to Fight Maternal Mortality in Kenya

All Africa
2 April 2015

In Kenya, religious leaders are often the first people consulted when families face important life decisions - including health decisions.

Because of this, UNFPA and the Ministry of Health have started working with faith leaders like Pastor Ochiel to combat Kenya's high rate of maternal death.

A Kenyan woman's risk of dying from causes related to pregnancy or childbirth is 1 in 53, much higher than the global risk of maternal death.

UNFPA and the Ministry of Health are working with the Inter Religious Council of Kenya-RfP to engage a broad range of faith leaders in 15 counties, including those from Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Hindu communities, on improving maternal health.

A meeting of these faith leaders, along with officials from the government, UNFPA and other partners, took place in Nairobi early March. The religious leaders signed a call to action, pledging to incorporate positive health messages into their work. They also pledged to help change attitudes and behaviours that are harmful to women and children, including by "advocating against harmful traditional practices that infringe child survival and maternal health."

Geoff Tunnicliffe Bows Out Of World Evangelical Alliance Leadership

Peter Kenny
Ecumenical News
24 December 2014



EDINBURGH - **Rev. Geoff Tunnicliffe [Co-President of RfP]** finishes 10 years as World Evangelical Alliance Secretary General and CEO and members of the WEA family have paid tribute to his work.

WEA said in a statement on December 22. "Today, the WEA represents more than 600 million evangelicals to governments, the United Nations, media, and other global faith bodies."

In an interview with [Christian Today](#) on March 25, 2014 **Tunnicliffe** said, "Religious liberty,

which continues to be under threat in many parts of the world, is important to us. But there are also new areas like peace building and reconciliation, nuclear weapons issues, the arms trade, extreme poverty issues. In his final address, **Tunncliffe** said he is hopeful for the future of the WEA and will remain a life-long champion for its mission." [Read More](#)

RfP WELCOMES NEW STAFF

Religions for Peace Welcomes New Staff



Dr. Anthony Annett is the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Advisor, leading efforts at **RfP**, in partnership with the Earth Institute at Columbia University, to strengthen the engagement of religious communities in climate change and sustainable development. He served sixteen years at the International Monetary Fund, including over five years as speechwriter to two successive Managing Directors- Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Christine Lagarde. An Irish national, he holds a B.A. and an M. Litt from Trinity College, Dublin and a Ph.D. in economics from Columbia University. He has a keen interest in Catholic social teaching and the intersection of ethics and economics. He is also a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, a papal order of chivalry.



Ms. Mary Rose O'Brien is the Program Manager at **RfP**. She has more than ten years' professional experience working across six continents. Ms. O'Brien has extensive experience working in active and post-conflict countries including Iraq, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka and Uganda, with a particular focus on ethnic and religious conflicts. She has managed multi-million dollar reconciliation and reconstruction projects for USAID and US Department of State programs as well as worked at the grassroots level with local NGOs. She has worked in South America in post-disaster relief and elections issues and conducted research in Palestine, Israel, Cyprus, the Balkans, and Northern Ireland. Ms. O'Brien also has a strong background in organizational and capacity development through her experience as a management consultant implementing ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems and performing organization assessments for both US and foreign government entities and NGOs. Ms. O'Brien holds a Master of Science degree from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Boston College with a minor in Faith, Peace and Justice. She is an avid traveler and has visited more than 70 countries and all seven continents.



Ms. Isabella Calder is a Communications Consultant at *RfP*. A native New Yorker with many interests, Ms. Calder received a M.S. in Education from Bank Street College of Education, with a focus on international issues. She has taught English in Cambodia and Peru, and French and Spanish in New York. Prior to that, she worked in editorial for the book publisher McGraw-Hill. She has a B.A. in French Civilization from Brown University, where she also greatly enjoyed studying Religious History and Religious Theory.



Mr. Francisco Chaparro is an intern at *RfP*. A practicing Roman Catholic, Mr. Chapparo is native of Morris County New Jersey. He is an undergraduate student at Fordham University, Bronx, New York, where he is studying for Bachelor's degree in International Political Economy and Theology. Mr. Chaparro is a strong advocate of enacting positive social and economic change through multi-religious collaboration. These sentiments are expressed in his academic works, which have focused primarily on topics within the fields of Religion and Economics. Mr. Chaparro is also a reporter at WFUV radio, a

National Public Radio affiliate station in the Bronx, for which he covers local New York City-area political and cultural news events. In the future, Mr. Chaparro hopes to work for a major news network or an international political organization. He is certain that his time with *RfP* will provide him with a solid foundation from which he can enter any altruistic vocation.



Mr. Kevin Lynch is an intern at *RfP*. Born and raised Roman Catholic in the Philadelphia area, Mr. Lynch grew up with the mindset that the true message of religion is about the promotion of peace. He a senior at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, where he is studying Diplomacy and International Relations with a minor in Russian. Mr. Lynch has a passion for travelling and studied in Prague this past summer. He enjoys studying history, geography and violent religious extremism.

He believes in interfaith dialogue's potential to not only combat violent religious extremism, but also to establish a greater sense of peace in the world. Mr. Lynch is a brother of the national service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, and hopes to pursue a career in Humanitarian aid.



Mr. Max Weisman is an intern at *RfP*. Mr. Weisman grew up in a conservative Jewish household in Monmouth County, New Jersey. He is a graduate of the School of Communication and Information and School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Communication with a minor in Sociology, while also studying political science. Mr. Weisman plans to work in the non-profit

field after interning with **RfP**. An avid follower of socio-political topics and events, Mr. Weisman desires to one day work as a political consultant/ strategist/ activist. He is currently studying to become a socio-political/ economic talk show host.

UPCOMING EVENTS

18 April 2015 - **African Council of Religious Leaders-RfP** Governing Board Meeting; Cape Town, South Africa

19 April 2015 - International Shinto Foundation Consultation on **RfP** Conflict Resolution Successes in Africa; Cape Town, South Africa

21-22 April 2015 - UN High-Level Thematic Debate: Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation. Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism; UN Headquarters, NY

28 April 2015 - High-level consultation on the Moral Dimensions of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, organized by RfP, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Pontifical Academy of Science; Vatican City State

29-30 April 2015 - Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies Consultation; Abu Dhabi, UAE

1-3 May 2015 - **RfP Quebec** and **RfP France** Conference on Light in Religious and Spiritual Traditions; Montreal, Canada

11-13 May 2015 - **European Council of Religious Leaders-RfP** Council Meeting on Tackling Violent Religious Extremism; Frankfurt, Germany

12-17 May 2015 - 20th Annual Festival of Faiths; Louisville, Kentucky, USA

18-19 May 2015 - Third World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue; Baku, Azerbaijan

25-28 May 2015 - Co-exist (Multi religious Dialogue and Cooperation); Cotonou, Benin

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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?

Kindly contact:
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