Declaration on the International Day of Tolerance
Mandalay, Myanmar | November 16, 2019

1. The United Nations (UN) International Day of Tolerance was established by the UN General Assembly in 1996 and is annually observed across the globe on November 16 to educate people about the need for tolerance in society and to help them understand the negative effects of intolerance.

2. Religions for Peace, in partnership with the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs, celebrates today the first-ever Myanmar national observance of the International Day of Tolerance here in the historic city of Mandalay, a cultural centre that embodies unity in diversity.

3. Tolerance is an active recognition of diversity. It means respecting, with compassion and benevolence, the other with whom we differ religiously, culturally or otherwise.

4. Tolerance is not only a cherished principle, but also a necessity for peace and for the social and economic advancement of all people.

5. The full implication of the true nature of tolerance is best understood by seeking to overcome its opposites: intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, marginalization and deprivation.

6. One of the roots of intolerance is ignorance – lack of knowledge about the teachings of our faith as well as the faith of others. But also, ignorance about what matters in human relations, such as respect, recognition, and the joy of being together.

7. We acknowledge that religious people and institutions have not always honored this important principle and at times fostered intolerance. In order to contribute to the building of a cohesive and peaceful Myanmar, religious people and institutions must also engage in self-critical scrutiny.

8. Religions are sources of ethical thinking and conduct and have broad and deep social networks in our societies which contribute to promote justice, equality, sharing, and a culture of peace that should influence governance, laws and regulations.

9. Tolerance drives us to speak openly and freely against injustice, oppression, violence and everything that violates human dignity. We will speak clearly and publicly against that which fosters intolerance and discrimination. We will do all we can to counter any form of hate speech or other hate crimes especially when such acts are presented as religiously motivated.

10. Religious moral imperatives both include and go beyond tolerance. Religions enjoin their believers to be in solidarity with others. Solidarity expresses an existential identification with and commitment to the well-being of the other. Solidarity calls us to make the other person’s well-being our own vital concern, and act accordingly. In the solidarity of love and compassion, we may experience our own well-being as connected to the well-being of others.

11. Recognizing that promoting tolerance and a culture of peace is a long-term task involving the formation of new generations, we will encourage and support teaching for tolerance in educational institutions, including those run by religious institutions and organizations.

12. We will continue to explore our faiths and traditions to celebrate what we have in common and establish understanding when we disagree. We will act together when possible and develop ethics of disagreement, so that our differences do not impede the work for peace.