

THE AMMAN DECLARATION

OF THE

SEVENTH WORLD ASSEMBLY



1999

The Seventh Assembly of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, meeting in Amman, Jordan, had as its theme “Action for Common Living.” The Assembly brought together delegates and participants from 15 religious traditions drawn together from 70 countries, carrying on a tradition begun in Kyoto, Japan, in 1970.

Coming together at the end of the 20th century, on the eve of the 21st Century and the Third Millennium as represented in the common calendar, the members of the Assembly commit themselves to join together for common living and to build a global culture of peace. Whereas the millennium represents a symbolic marking of time, it has the potential to be a turning point—a time for renewal and recommitment. In fostering a culture of peace, the diversity of cultures and traditions can be affirmed and celebrated, just as the commonalities are also recognized, shared and celebrated. Acknowledging that such has not always been the case, the religious communities recognize a renewed opportunity to present to a pluralistic world models of peace and reconciliation in keeping with their sacred texts, teachings and warrants. In such a world, the responsibilities of the religious communities include not only expanding the essential dialogue among civilizations but also to commitments to common action

Common Humanity

Religions for Peace affirms a common humanity in which men and women are recognized first as human beings with dignity and integrity, and rights and responsibilities, whether these are perceived as God given, a reflection of a divine nature, derived from cosmic laws, inherent sacredness, or oneness with the universe. When we affirm our common humanity, we are then able to affirm our other forms of identity, such as race, religion, age, gender, ethnicity, and status, as part of the wonderful diversity of human life. Religions for Peace realizes that socially recognized divisions can set individual against individual, group against group, majorities and minorities against each other, resulting in inclusion or exclusion, privilege or denial, dignity or deprivation. The rights embodied in the International Bill of Rights, with its inclusion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, can never be realized apart from the actualization of the common ethical concerns embodied in all religious traditions. These call us to be individually and socially responsible for our neighbors and those in need. They help us draw on the sources of love, duty and responsibility as the foundations that undergird the establishment of justice.

“Common living requires not only the transformation of cultural, social, economic, civil, political and military institutions, but also of religious institutions...[These institutions] possess social and moral resources that give them the potential to promote peace, and to prevent violent conflict, through enabling direct communication and dialogue, education and training. True reconciliation requires the painful acknowledgment that both religious patterns and the actions of religiously motivated people have also caused conflict, suffering and pain...[and] confession of our culpability and proactive efforts to restore broken human relationships. Reconciliation requires the search for truth and the acknowledgment of accountability, processes that can be liberating.”

Common Security

Religions for Peace asserts that the achievement of common security for humanity and all forms of life requires a holistic understanding of the nature of security as well as a comprehensive commitment to action. On the one hand, there must be the elimination of militarism and militarization in all their manifestations, including developments in space.

On one level, Religions for Peace calls for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical and nuclear; on another level, we call for the elimination of conventional weapons that can take their deadly toll, individual by individual, in any environment of violent conflict. These activities must be paralleled with the development of non-violent methodologies of conflict resolution. Further, the gross distortion of social priorities resulting from the inordinate expenditures on military establishments and weapons must be ended. Just as peace is more than the absence of war, so security is more than the elimination of armaments.

On the other hand, instruments to preserve just order and compassionate governance must be developed to incorporate the interrelated aspects of community security, social, economic and environmental security, all of which are interactive in the development of the sense of common human security. Insecurity and fear have been identified as among the causes of conflict, reliance on armaments and the instrumentality of war. Freedom from fear and freedom from want are linked. The security of some can never be permanently achieved by creating insecurity for others. A proper sense of security requires both trust and the risk of shared vulnerability.

Common Interdependence

Religions for Peace recognizes that the peoples of the world are interdependent, existing within a web of economic and environmental realities, made more urgent by the dynamics of globalization with both its positive and negative impacts. A concept of just and sustainable human development, holistic in its nature, is dependent on the development of equitable and fair systems of production and distribution, capable of providing for the material survival

and needs of all persons and accessible to all. Such systems must enable the elimination of the poverty and powerlessness that characterizes the lives of a major proportion of the human family. Eradicating poverty in the first decades of the 21st century is feasible, affordable, and a moral imperative for humanity. Developmental and environmental challenges cannot be separated because of the depletion of non-renewable resources, global warming, and all forms of environmental pollution and degradation. These weaken the capacity of the ecosystem to produce and regenerate, particularly as population growth multiplies the demands. Exploitative patterns threaten not only the ecosystem, but also increase the hardships and suffering of the marginalized and portend a damaged if not destroyed planet for future generations.

Common Future

Religions for Peace asserts that our common future is embodied in our children. It is the responsibility of religious and civil communities to assure the entitlement of children to achieve the fullness of life. Our children are the most visible sign of that which binds us together in the human family. Their welfare and future make the most demanding claims on our human and material resources. Our children deserve to be protected from diseases that are preventable; from the ravages of war and violence that are inexcusable and that exact their heaviest toll on women and children; from all forms of exploitation, whether manifest in child labor, in the use of children as soldiers, or in the victimization of commercial sexual exploitation. They are to be spiritually, intellectually and physically nurtured in supportive families and communities, which in turn need the social, institutional and economic backing that makes such nurture possible. They are to be enriched through educational systems that provide literacy and the skills necessary to insure the achievement of their highest potential, not bounded by artificial or traditional limitations based on gender, class or other forms of identity. Religions for Peace calls for a new paradigm for children from needs to rights, from vulnerability to strength. Common Living Religions for Peace believes that common living requires not only transformation of cultural, social, economic, civil, political and military institutions, but also of religious in-

institutions. Such transformation must also be reflected in the conversions of individual hearts, minds and spirits. Religious institutions can and must be part of a renewing process. The process must begin with their own reconciliation. They possess social and moral resources that give them the potential to promote peace, and to prevent violent conflict, through enabling direct communication and dialogue, education and training. True reconciliation requires the painful acknowledgment that both religious patterns and the actions of religiously motivated people have also caused conflict, suffering and pain. Perpetuation of the memory of grievances and suffering is constantly recalled and even exploited. Reconciliation therefore requires confession of our culpability and proactive efforts to restore broken human relationships. Reconciliation requires the search for truth and the acknowledgment of accountability, processes that can be liberating. The requirements of justice include holding individuals, civil society and states responsible for their actions. However, acts of vengeance and retribution simply perpetuate the cycles of violence. We know that the past cannot be undone. Restitution and restoration, insofar as they can be realized, must be part of the process of reconciliation because they contribute to justice and healing. The past, however, should not be forgotten in order to ensure that it not be repeated.

Comprehensive Education For Peace

Religions for Peace commits itself to the promotion of comprehensive education for peace and common living. Education involves the transmission of the values and heritage of our traditions. If that transmission focuses on the grievances of the past, or is distorted by exclusive tendencies, then the seeds of discontent and intolerance are perpetuated. The transmission of values into the third Millennium must include a broader understanding and respect for the values and contributions of diverse religions and cultures, in order that a shared culture of peace may be the beneficiary of not just one tradition but of the rich legacy of our diverse heritages.

Education also involves the preparation of the individual to participate and contribute to society, to the well being of all, to act for common living. Hence the skills

of listening and hearing, of promoting tolerance and understanding, of healing and of reconciliation, and of building a culture of peace must be ongoing elements of learning at all levels of education and all social means of communication. Most particularly within our respective religious communities, we are called to witness for justice and peace.

Hope And Commitment

Religions for Peace's vision and hope are for common living in the 21st century. Hope because the vision of a just and peaceful world is attainable. Hope because we know both the challenges of the world and the possibilities for their solutions. Hope because the resources for meeting humanity's basic needs are available if only we have the will to use them appropriately. Hope because all of our religious traditions claim commitment to peace and the achievement of the common good.

Hope, however, must be manifest in action. Religions for Peace therefore commits itself to work for the achievement of these common goals in the new millennium. Religions for Peace calls upon all religious communities to bear witness through education, advocacy, and action for the common good.

The one place where all peoples presently come together is the United Nations. Its charter mandates the achievement of peace, the fulfillment of human rights, the institution of the rule of law, and the promotion of better standards of life for all people. One finds at the United Nations, symbolic testimony to our spiritual commitments. It is found in the artistic and cultural artifacts that are visible in its corridors. The world can read there the words that we are to beat our swords into plowshares, our spears into pruning hooks; that we are to do unto others what we would have others do unto us; and that we have been made of a common humanity and that the most honored among us are the most righteous. May our global actions for common living find fulfillment in the new millennium, that hearts and minds may be converted as instruments of peace and wisdom, that the value of human life is manifest in our treatment of all people, and that we may be honored as among those who are righteous.

Religions for Peace 