

# Religions for Peace

## ***Religions for Peace* International Executive Committee**

### Statement on Commitment to Eliminate Violence against Children

On the Occasion of the

Roundtable Discussion with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and

UNICEF

November 2, 2010 | New York

*“The child has the breath and spirit of life. The child, present here and now, is the past embodied and the future becoming.”<sup>1</sup> Each of our religious traditions sees the beauty of child, manifest in openness and trust. This beauty, so elemental and yet so fragile, leaves the child especially vulnerable to violence.*

Painfully conscious of the plight of the child around the world—victimized by violence, savaged by the brutalities of war, and traumatized by sexual abuse—our common voice resounds despite differences in our traditions, practices, beliefs and despite our inadequacies. The sacredness of life, honoured in our religious traditions, founds our belief in the ultimate meaning and value of the child. This sacredness of life compels us to be a voice of conscience. If we fail to protect the child, we deny our humanity, risk our future and betray our beliefs.

We—senior religious leaders who serve on the *Religions for Peace* International Executive Committee—commit to taking new steps to protect children against violence.

We note in particular our “*Multi-religious Commitment to Confronting Violence against Children*” adopted by over 800 religious leaders at the *Religions for Peace* VIII World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan in August 2006. Related partnership with UNICEF has resulted in thousands of religious communities being equipped with the resource guide “*From Commitment to Action: What religious communities can do to eliminate violence against children*” and the launch of the *Religions for Peace-UNICEF* multiple-year *Global Partnership on the Protection of Children Affected by Conflict*.

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<sup>1</sup> Supplications for “*The World’s Religions for the World’s Children*,” Princeton, New Jersey July 25-27, 1990 organized by *Religions for Peace* in collaboration with UNICEF.

We commit to doing more to create greater awareness in our communities about the impact of violence against children, and to change norms, attitudes, and practices that perpetuate violence in homes, families, schools, institutions and communities. We especially commit to supporting, educating and training parents, teachers, religious leaders and others who work with children to find non-violent forms of discipline and education.

We support and join the efforts of the United Nations and civil society organizations to advocate for universal ratification by 2012 and effective implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the involvement of children in armed conflict.

We advocate for the adoption of national strategies and legislation on the ban of violence against children, accompanied by budget allocations to fund prevention strategies, and the protection, recovery and reintegration of child victims. We urge governments to establish appropriate mechanisms for the effective implementation of these laws. We also seek the assurance that religious communities are enabled to participate formally in these mechanisms. Our religious communities are ready to serve as monitors of implementation, making use of national and international bodies to maintain accountability.

We ask the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF and *Religions for Peace* to continue to assist our communities to more effectively address violence against children. We commit to follow this work and share related progress on an annual basis.

As we reject violence against children, we commit ourselves to lead our religious communities to protect and promote the sanctity of life of the child in every stage of his or her development.

## ***Religions for Peace International Executive Committee***

1. Mrs. Farida Ali, Muslim, PAKISTAN
2. Dr. Vinu Aram, Hindu, INDIA
3. Mr. Simon Xavier Guerrand-Hermès, Protestant, MOROCCO
4. Ms. Mehrézia Labidi-Maiza, Muslim, FRANCE
5. The Grand Mufti Sheikh Shaban Mubaje, Muslim, UGANDA
6. Ms. Stellamaris Ndinda Mulaeh, Roman Catholic, KENYA
7. Rev. Nichiko Niwano, Buddhist, JAPAN
8. His Grace Archbishop John O. Onaiyekan, Roman Catholic, NIGERIA
9. H.E. Archbishop José Francisco Cardinal Robles Ortega, Roman Catholic, MEXICO
10. Chief Rabbi David Rosen, Jewish, ISRAEL
11. Priestess Beatriz Schulthess, Indigenous, COSTA RICA
12. H.E. Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Sherif, Muslim, LIBYA
13. Bishop Gunnar J. Stålsett, Protestant, NORWAY
14. Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Muslim, INDONESIA
15. Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*