

Joint Statement by United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (IATF) with the endorsement of the IATF Multi-Faith Advisory Council

The following joint statement is issued by the Principals of the rotating IATF co-Chairs (UNAOC and UNOSAPG) and Executive Secretariat (UNFPA) on behalf of the members of the IATF and endorsed by the co-Chairs of the IATF Multi-Faith Advisory Council (MFAC) on behalf of the MFAC:

For the IATF:

H.E. Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, High Representative of the UN Alliance of Civilizations
H.E. Mr. Adama Dieng, UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide
Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director UNFPA

For the MFAC:

Dr. Husna Ahmad, CEO Global One 2015
Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, General Secretary, Act Alliance
Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations
Gopal D. Patel, Director, The Bhumi Project

In the face of the global crisis unleashed by COVID-19, unprecedented in recent history, the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development expresses its deep concern about the enormous challenges that this situation presents to the most vulnerable around the world, including the elderly, refugees and migrants, people living in conflict contexts, people with disabilities, young people, religious minorities, women and children at risk of domestic violence, groups that face discrimination and stigmatization, and all other vulnerable groups.

Unity, solidarity, international cooperation and global coordinated action, as called for by the United Nations Secretary-General¹, are essential to address the pandemic. A comprehensive approach, taking into consideration the complex and multidimensional nature of this crisis, is crucial to addressing immediate and future challenges in a manner that ensures that no one is left behind. The IATF, therefore, calls upon all relevant stakeholders to address all implications of this crisis through a whole-of-society, human-centered approach that prioritizes health safety, the right to access health services, social protection and cohesion.

In response to COVID-19-related disruptions, the IATF calls on governments and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the respect and protection of international human rights standards remain the overarching framework for their policies and actions, and that the promotion of gender equality, women's and girls' empowerment, and the fight against all forms of gender-based violence² is an integral part of the multi-faceted responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IATF is committed to working closely with all relevant stakeholders to stand up against stigma, hate speech and hate crimes, xenophobia, racism and all other forms of discrimination.

In this time of upheaval, sorrow and distress, religious leaders and faith-based organizations play a unique role in bringing people together around the common values of our shared humanity – solidarity and compassion. Solidarity and compassion should be promoted both within and between communities of faith. In this context, the IATF appreciates the strong engagement of its Multi-Faith Advisory Council (MFAC) and calls upon its members to remain strongly engaged with their respective constituencies to assist them in preparing for and responding to the current crisis, including by disseminating science-based information, facts, and evidence in accordance with UN policies and frameworks, and in particular with the guidance of the World Health Organization on COVID-19. IATF members look forward to working closely with the MFAC in this regard.

IATF members call on religious leaders and faith-based organizations to extend their support and – within their respective spheres of influence and authority – promote and advocate with

¹ Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. Secretary-General's Special Appeal to Religious Leaders, 9 April 2020.

² United Nations Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.

Member States and other stakeholders for the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and to help implement the Plan so that essential humanitarian relief operations can reach populations in the most fragile and vulnerable contexts. IATF members also urge all relevant stakeholders to expeditiously implement the United Nations Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire, which would allow humanitarian workers to provide life-saving assistance during the pandemic to populations affected by conflicts.

We stand ready to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders to collectively address the COVID-19 pandemic and all related challenges.

Members of the Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development

ILO (International Labour Organization)

UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS)

UNAOC (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations)

UNCTED (United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate)

UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs)

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)

UNDPPA (United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs)

UNDGC (United Nations Department of Global Communications)

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme)

UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)

UN Habitat (United Nations Human Settlements Programme)

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR)

UNOSAPG (UN Office of the Secretary General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect)

UNSSC (United Nations System Staff College)

UNV (United Nations Volunteers)

UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)

WBG (World Bank Group)

WFP (World Food Programme)

WHO (World Health Organization)

Endorsed by the members of the Multi-Faith Advisory Council to the Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development

ACT Alliance

Adventist Development & Relief Agency

Al-Azhar University

Arigatou

Baha'i International Community

Bhumi Project, Oxford Center for Hindu Studies

Caritas Internationalis

Church of Latter-Day Saints

Church of Sweden

Finn Church Aid

Global Interfaith WASH Alliance

Global One

Green Faith

International Network of Religious Leaders
Living with and Impacted by HIV and AIDS
Islamic Relief
Jewish Theological Seminary USA
Joint Learning Initiative
KAICIID Dialogue Center
Musawah
Muslims for Progressive Values
Nahdlatul Ulama
Parliament of the World's Religions
Religions for Peace
Sant Egidio
Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society
Tanenbaum
The Archbishop of Canterbury
The Focolare Movement
The Interfaith Center of Sustainable Development
Religion and Diplomacy
The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers
Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation
United Religions Initiative
World Council of Churches
World Evangelical Alliance
Sustainability Center
World Jewish Congress
World YWCA
World Vision