Meeting of World Leaders on Faith and Development
Canterbury, England
October 6-8, 2002

In the third meeting of its kind, leaders from many of the world’s major religions and key development institutions gathered in Canterbury, on October 6-8, for a meeting hosted jointly by His Grace George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank. The meeting was structured around the nexus of issues relating to globalization and poverty alleviation, with a sharp focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and practical measures for joint efforts to ensure their realization.

Background

Efforts to forge partnerships between the World Bank and the world’s faith communities around key issues of poverty alleviation and social justice date back almost five years to a meeting in 1998, at Lambeth Palace in London, jointly convened by Mr. Wolfensohn and Archbishop Carey. This event gathered leaders from the world’s major religions and the development community in an effort to explore common ground in the search for sustainable measures to combat poverty. Since then, this partnership has evolved, not always smoothly and not without controversy, but it has endured because of a growing recognition, all the more so in the wake of September 11, 2001, of the urgent and shared responsibility to eradicate poverty around the world.

Canterbury, October 6-8, 2002

In the context of these efforts, periodic Leaders’ Meetings have been convened, hosted jointly by Mr. Wolfensohn and Archbishop Carey. The most recent was in Canterbury, England from October 6-8, 2002. Against the awe-inspiring backdrop of Canterbury Cathedral, a widely diverse and highly qualified group of development and religious leaders gathered together to engage in broad ranging deliberations. The agenda was structured around the challenges of poverty, globalization and social justice, with a particular focus on the Millennium Development Goals, HIV/AIDS, community empowerment and conflict. (The full agenda and list of participants is attached.)

The participants were a unique gathering of leaders from many worlds. From the development community came, among others, Mark Malloch Brown (Administrator, UNDP), Enrique Iglesias (President, Inter-American Development Bank), Michel Camdessus (Former Managing Director, International Monetary Fund), Clare Short (British Secretary of State for International Development), Olara Otunnu (Under Secretary-General, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict), Thoraya Obaid (Executive Director, UNPFA) and Dr. Mabid Al-Jarhi, Director of the Islamic Research and Training Institute, Islamic Development Bank). Representatives from the world’s major faiths included, inter alia, Cardinal Theodore Cardinal McCarrick (from Washington, D.C.) Swami Agnivesh (Hindu activist from India), Akbar Ahmed (noted
Islamic scholar and Professor at American University), Dr. Hisham Khatib (Representing HRH Prince El Hassan Bin Talal), Sulak Sivaraksa (Buddhist activist from Thailand), Archbishop Anastasios of Albania (Albanian Orthodox Church), Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndugane (Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town), Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau (Chief Rabbi of Israel), Canon Gideon Byamugisha (Anglican priest from Uganda), and Singh Sahib Jathedar Manjit Singh. The worlds of business, foundations and the arts were represented by Count Auletta (Italian philanthropist), Countess Setsuko Klossowksa de Rola (widow of the French painter Balthus), and Bono (lead singer from the Irish rock group U2). Other notable participants included Prince Turki bin Talal from Saudi Arabia and Lord Moynihan, member of the British Parliament.

Despite (and because of) the great diversity in viewpoints, perspectives and ranges of experiences, a clear hallmark of the meeting was a profound commitment to seeking solutions to poverty and social injustice, within a context characterized by morality, compassion, ethics, human dignity and international solidarity.

The meeting was memorable and inspirational. Quite expressly, it had little fanfare and minimal media engagement. The objective was to embark seriously on the issues involved and look to future action at the global level. While all participants were bound by a common passion to make a difference in the world, important differences were aired in a forthright manner. These exchanges had no trace of rhetoric or blandness.

The shadow of September 11 loomed large, as many speakers noted that the world was at a crossroads, “a turning point for humanity” in the words of one speaker. The strongest message throughout the meeting was, first and foremost, the cry for action to reduce poverty in all of its dimensions and to increase social justice – time is running out for the poor. Many speakers turned to the Millennium Development Goals as both the morally “right” thing to do and a prudent framework, in the sense of enlightened self-interest. Other themes, frequently echoed in many sessions, centered around the broad notion of partnership, the inter-connectedness and shared responsibility throughout today’s global community. The gender dimensions of poverty and of HIV/AIDS emerged as a prominent theme throughout the meeting.

Many participants spoke to the dual faces of globalization and its differential impact on rich and poor countries. Poverty, HIV/AIDS, conflict, gender concerns, communications, international trade and global politics, taken together, bind all the countries and peoples of the world into a global community. The consequent issues and problems, as Mr. Wolfensohn noted, are “too much” for any one group to tackle alone. On the other hand, the unequal impact of globalization was cited in many contexts as a phenomenon, which is bringing the world closer together, while at the same time driving it farther apart. The need for greater attention to ethics, values, and spirituality in seeking sustainable solutions, within a context of social and economic justice, to today’s greatest challenges, at all levels—local, national and international—was suggested by many participants. In a similar vein, the commonality of the core values of the world’s major religions – compassion, love, obligation to take care and provide for the poor and the marginalized, tolerance and justice – was also noted often. The urgency to more fully exploit the great potential which lies in closer collaboration between the worlds of faith
and development in confronting major development issues can truly be cited as a unanimous conclusion drawn from these themes.

In the following sections, each session’s discussion is highlighted, followed by a section summarizing conclusions and recommended follow up actions.

1. Opening and Introduction

*Themes: Background to meeting; brief introduction of the WFDD experience; Changes since September 11, Monterrey Summit, Johannesburg Sustainable Development Summit*

In introducing the meeting, Archbishop Carey framed the rationale for a faith/development partnership. Faith communities have deep historical roots in assistance to the poor, with extensive grass roots programs in key social sectors – across Africa, faith based organizations account for up to 50% of health and education services, especially in poor, remote areas. While noting candidly that religions have sometimes been part of the problem in encouraging poverty and excessive spirituality, he indicated that “absolute poverty shames us all.” From a personal perspective, he described the roots of his own keen interest in development issues, which was the sense of disgrace and rebellion he felt as he saw his own parents caught in a trap of poverty from which they were never able to escape.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Wolfensohn noted that traditional delineations between religion and development are fading, not only within the World Bank, but in other key development organizations as well. He spoke to the tremendous inequity which characterizes today’s world. Five of the six billion people who populate today’s world live in developing countries, 3 billion of these live on less than $2 per day, a situation which is “ethically, morally and emotionally, disturbing.” Projecting into the future he noted that by 2025, the world’s population will have swelled to 8 billion, and virtually all of this increase will be in the developing world.

Despite these inequities, he further noted, the world today has “no walls.” The rich and powerful are as vulnerable as the poor and dispossessed. The links between poverty and peace are clear and stark: failed states with deep poverty are fertile ground for inciting hatred and sparking conflicts, both nationally and internationally. Such interdependence means that there are responsibilities on all sides – to ensure good governance; to promote capacity of legal frameworks to address financial and institutional corruption; and to confront social phenomena such as violence, gender discrimination and other issues. The need to control one’s own destiny requires equity, justice and development. This is the foundation of the Millennium Development Goals, which aim, inter alia, by 2015 to halve world poverty, to achieve universal primary education, to combat HIV/AIDS, and to address gender equality. Mr. Wolfensohn noted the growing consensus, reaffirmed in Monterrey, in Johannesburg and in Washington, D.C. during recent World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings, among all actors engaged in development to move to action, identifying what works, scaling up successful interventions and implementing them effectively. The challenge is daunting; success will depend on combining forces across all concerned constituencies, including governments,
civil society, faith groups, the private sector and the donor community, to meet the MDGs.

In the ensuing discussion, many speakers reiterated issues and themes introduced by Archbishop Carey and Mr. Wolfensohn. Many speakers agreed that the greatest moral issue in the world today is poverty eradication and the need for the world to come together seeking economic and social justice for all. Clare Short, noting the “spiritual bereftness” of OECD countries, highlighted the sometimes perverse effects of inequality, pointing to the diseases of plenty – cancer, obesity – which plague the developed countries, while the majority of the world lives in stark poverty. Urbanization trends – in 20 years, 65% of the world’s population will be urbanized – are raising the specter of poverty in starker terms since rural poverty, too often romanticized in a context of dignity and courage, can shield its true impact. Larger concentrations of urban poor will likely breed anger and resentment, with social, political and economic repercussions.

On the MDGs themselves, it was noted that while overall they are do-able, this would require the concerted and collaborative efforts of many different constituencies and their willingness to be honest and forthright in their roles and responsibilities. However, in some regions of the world, Africa for example, it is unlikely that all of the goals will be met.

There was considerable discussion of global politics. In the words of Clare Short, “the world is in extremely serious trouble. What is possible and what is needed is justice – real charity is justice. It is about bringing morality to politics. Fanaticism, that turns religion into one tribe that hates another, is ugly and wrong.” Pointing to the security threat posed by global conflicts, for example those in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, between India and Pakistan, and within India, many speakers noted that these both reflect and add to global inequality and injustice. Many felt that resources spent on arms and conflicts would add more to the goal of world peace were they spent more directly on poverty eradication. The goal here should be to bring core morality of all religions to the global stage in a unified effort to reduce poverty and deal with conflicts wisely. “What is needed most today is to speak truth to power. We need to translate faith into reality, fear into love (Sulak Sivaraksa)."

Prince Turki bin Talal presented a picture of the post-September 11 world economy, which he suggested entails new risks and burdens to the economies of the developing world “which hardly even attempt to be situated on the map of the world economy.” He pointed to the “lethargy” in the US economy, well before September 11, the impact of which was felt most acutely in the developing world. Presently, the whole world has been “negatively taken in by the September 11 hurricane and the US war on terrorism.” He noted that Arab economies, reliant on oil and gas, tourism, and labor services, and hence closely linked to world economic trends, have been among the hardest hit. For the immediate future, he suggested that the costs of waging the war on terrorism are likely to divert investment resources, noting a paradox in the counsel of the US and other developed countries to developing countries to accelerate development plans as the best protection against conflict, while at the same time, underwriting this
with sufficient resources and actions. The need to avoid double standards and see conflicts as they affect people was noted frequently – “the people of Iraq should be valued as highly as those who died in the twin towers.”

On the theme of globalization, several speakers pointed to the profound technical and communications revolutions which are producing huge surpluses and equally profound poverty, affecting the majority of the world’s population. For some, this raised the analogy with post-Industrial revolution Europe, and suggested the potential for today’s levels of technology and communication to uplift masses of people and spread democratic, participatory government structures. Here, many speakers noted the role of the faith communities in empowering people to demand higher standards of government and greater progress in development. One speaker noted that genuine democratic practices are the only real guarantees against corruption and inequality.

The critical need to accord higher priority to gender issues, and their impact on poverty alleviation, improvement of social indicators and their potential for ameliorating and mediating conflict, was recognized, by many speakers. Clare Short underlined that the realization of the MDGs will determine the survival of mothers and children, while continuing to note the nexus of issues around gender, education, health standards and development.

Finally, the inadequacy of aid resources was raised by a number of speakers. One speaker stated frankly that the present level of aid is “peanuts” – only about half of what it should be, and any pretense that this is “big money is a lie.” Many speakers queried whether efforts to combat terrorism divert funding for development and poverty alleviation. Several speakers noted while recent conferences in Monterrey and Johannesburg raised considerable hope for increased aid funding, the aftermath of these meetings has been disappointing. Equally, however, on the theme of shared responsibility, most agreed that developing countries need to provide greater assurances to the donor community that aid resources would be used wisely and effectively.

2. Twenty First Century Challenges – How to Accelerate Progress Toward Social Justice for All Peoples and Promote International Dialogue and Cooperation

Themes: The Millennium Development Goals; priority on education and health and what this entails for faith and development communities. Highlighting work of faith and development communities.

This session addressed directly the MDGs and the challenges and opportunities that they present. The subject was introduced with remarks from Mark Malloch Brown, Enrique Iglesias, and Bono.

Mark Malloch Brown asserted that the MDGs have gathered life and force along with a constituency; these are eight straightforward, yet interlinked, goals that everyone, from government to civil society, can agree should be done. To halve extreme poverty by 2015, the first goal, will require that the next six be met. The final goal is a challenge to the donor community to ensure a sufficiency of resources. It is a simple framework
that is gathering momentum. He pointed to the enormous political voice of the faith communities and their equally significant delivery systems, which suggests them as main partners and agents of change. He suggested that one reason the development world has become so secular is the result of concerns that hard-won gains in reproductive rights for women could otherwise be jeopardized; noting this is an area where the churches have “cast a long shadow” he called for efforts to sort out this conundrum.

Enrique Iglesias spoke from a Latin American perspective – a continent with 500 million people, a mix of culture, ethnicity and religion, where the contributions of religion have a long history, sometimes distinguished, sometimes questionable. The region is difficult to categorize – on the one hand, it has modern economic structures, a per capita income of $3000, and a long tradition of arts and culture; on the other hand, 40% of its people live in poverty; the gaps between the rich and the poor are greater than in any other region of the world. More recently, with the crises facing some Latin economies, e.g., Argentina, there are growing problems of exclusion, social disintegration, street children, violence and crime, including domestic violence against women, phenomena best exemplified by Argentina’s new poor. In this context, some MDGs have already been achieved; others will be difficult to meet, especially as development is increasingly recognized as a longer-term, far more complex process than previously appreciated. He outlined three factors critical to development progress. First was participation by the poor themselves and the role that faith groups have played in tapping into the strength and creativity of the poor. Second was solidarity, among and within countries, and with peoples to solve the problem of poverty, stating that “there is a moral imperative to remedy this.” Finally, the question of leadership was raised, defined to include commitment, conviction, faith and drive, which would give people hope for the future.

Bono addressed his remarks to how to engage the public in the fight against poverty and HIV/AIDS, suggesting the need to have a clear “melody line” to get people involved. Somewhat “tongue and cheek,” he intimated that the faiths had greater potential to dramatize these issues, given their “superior stage gear.” On a more serious note, Bono asserted the moral imperative of dealing with poverty and injustice – “People can fall asleep in the comfort of their freedom. . . . I want my generation to be the one which refuses to accept that people live in misery . . . God is on his knees, begging us to act. . . . history will be hard on us, and God even harder, if we fail to deal with this moment.” Referring to the precedent of the Jubilee campaign he underscored the importance of involving citizen constituencies, mothers for example, who appreciate the value of a child’s life. Righteous anger is a powerful force. Paraphrasing U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos, a survivor of Auschwitz, Bono intimated that history will ultimately hold everyone responsible for watching while so many people die of AIDS.

The themes of morality, urgency, shared responsibility, alliances between faith and development communities and their role in whether or not the MDGs were realized permeated the discussion which followed. “Poverty is the greatest existential threat to world peace the world has ever seen. . . . From Guatemala, I learned that peace means water, peace means schools, peace means heath. . . There is a need to act,” declared
Bishop Gunnar Stalsett. The need to get resources and decision-making down to community levels was noted as a key factor in raising living standards, thereby contributing to the MDGs. One speaker pointedly questioned whether in fact, despite recognizing the scourge of poverty, people nevertheless expect and tolerate it, as an inevitable evil. A number of speakers suggested the power of consolidating the core moralities of all faiths and religions and building bridges between the economic world and the world of spiritual values on a global level to reduce poverty, deal with conflicts wisely, and offer all of the world’s citizens the right to human dignity and social justice. Several participants noted the need to forge stronger ties and dialogue among religions as important for peace and development. In this context, the need for change, at the level of individuals as well as countries, religions and institutions, and the importance of strengthening personal values and relationships was mentioned frequently. Charity, brotherhood and the Golden Rule are concepts common to all faiths. The potential of faith groups to access and influence government policy makers was mentioned as an underused resource for effecting change.

The links between conflict and poverty was a recurrent topic. “More children know how to shoot than read,” in some parts of the world one speaker said. It was noted that the contributions of faith groups in providing services, especially health and education, in war zones would contribute to the realization of the MDGs in regions which would otherwise have no access to services.


Themes: Towards a Global Community: confronting the multiple aspects of globalization, its promises and its pitfalls; how to ensure social priorities are not neglected in emerging world financial and trade policies; how to ensure the voice and participation of civil society in shaping national and international priorities and policies.

This session was built around an exploration of the opportunities, the challenges and the widely differentiated impact of globalization in today’s world. The topic was introduced from three very different perspectives by Michel Camdessus, Sulak Sivaraksa and Faouzi Skali. Recurring throughout these discussions was the question of whether high speed communications in today’s globalized world are undermining the concept of a global community by highlighting developed countries’ standards of consumerism and economic inequality, or binding it closer together.

Michel Camdessus’s remarks were structured around three areas which he noted did not lend themselves to statistical analysis or solutions and where he felt the faith communities have a significant role to play: partnerships, pledges and governance. Taken together, these should imply a universal sense of world citizenship, a concept in which people needed to be educated. The concept of partnership is too often misunderstood; real partnerships involve mutual and equal acceptance, trust and responsibility. Increasingly this is becoming a central tenet in international development, as evidenced in the Monterrey Conference and in the New Economic Plan for African Development (NEPAD).
True partnership means moving beyond one’s own familiar territory, “one’s concept of time.” Perhaps the faith communities, more than most other institutions, can claim real partnership with the poor, since, unlike government and financial institutions, they live and work with the poor on a routine basis. Mr. Camdessus pointed to the need for the international community to adhere to its pledges to combat poverty, offering the developing world a measure of predictability in planning development programs. Implicit here, he suggested, is a behavior change in the industrialized world. Accepting the notion of real commitment to attacking world poverty will inevitably lead to a change in consumerism – again raising the ideas of partnership and shared responsibility. Finally, with respect to governance, he underlined the importance of ensuring that structures and mechanisms are transparent and participatory, especially including the poor and their legitimate representatives in global forums, including the G7. Archbishop Carey suggested that Mr. Camdessus was describing was close to the spiritual concept of a covenant, a commitment which cannot be broken.

Mr. Sivaraksa outlined a Buddhist perspective on the notion of global community and development philosophies. Centered around the idea of interconnectedness between an individual and the collective community, one is moved to act with wisdom and compassion against suffering and violence. According to Buddhist ideals, progress is possible only when spiritual transformation accompanies material transformation; material accumulation cannot be the goal of existence. Excessive consumerism, as seen in the developed world, is wrongly characterized as freedom of choice, when in fact concentration on materialism is severing one’s identity ties with family and community, as identity becomes enmeshed in money and material goods. The Buddhist goal of development is based on an alternative understanding of freedom, rooted in three concepts: freedom from insecurity, including basic needs; freedom from oppression and exploitation, presupposing tolerance and solidarity within a community; and, freedom of the inner life, to possess inner contentment, a state of “interbeing.” Atomistic societies where individuals are only seeking benefits for themselves will never achieve this holistic definition of freedom and lifestyles grounded in wisdom and compassion. This development model suggests small scale local production catering for local communities, taking no more from the environment than is needed. In this construct, education would be geared both to knowledge acquisition, and to spiritual enlightenment and compassion. This Buddhist model of development is more than material development with a human face, it is a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of individual happiness and social emancipation from greed, hatred and delusion.

Faouzi Skali continued many of the themes of the two previous speakers in pointing to the need to incorporate values, not just material goods, in concepts of dignity, spirituality and progress. He highlighted the need to examine culture and tradition of different civilizations, especially in the post-September 11 world, and to work toward development models which would help people to internalize and own their individual goals, through the inclusion of norms of spirituality which will assist in closing the gaps between rhetoric and reality. Religion can be a help or hindrance to development depending on local circumstances. “We must self-examine and move beyond what has
been a tremendous shock to civilization, to see how we can all participate in a global community.”

Comments which followed evidenced the deep and shared concerns with themes of global citizenship, and above all the urgency of reducing inequalities, moving toward a more compassionate world. All religions have some form of the golden rule which could serve as a basis for increased humanism and solidarity. Noting the potential for dialogue to break down fanaticism, many speakers noted that the traditional walls between religion and development must come down – “the world is on the brink and mankind is in crisis.”

4. Giving Voice to the Excluded: The Power and Dignity of Poor Communities in the Face of the Challenges of Poverty

Themes: Hearing the voices of poor and excluded peoples and the roles of faith and development leaders and institutions; the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper instrument as a vehicle for encouraging new voices and engagement; community development programs and inspiration and lessons of experience.

In a moving tribute to the poorest of the poor, Swami Agnivesh opened this session with a moment of silence for the dalits (the untouchables) in India, tribals and indigenous peoples, and women everywhere. The remainder of the Swami’s remarks centered squarely on the exclusion of women – especially from the hierarchy of religious institutions and on the need for all “establishment” institutions, including governments, religions, financial institutions and donors to critique themselves to see how they are contributing to changing the status quo, thereby increasing social and economic justice. “If you do not give women their rightful place (including in religious bodies) there will be no peace in the world.” Pointing to the links between poverty, gender and conflict, he recounted the havoc being played out in Gujarat, India, for some months now by religious fanaticism.

Cardinal McCarrick, clearly moved by Swami Agnivesh, commented that he saw the image of Mother Theresa in the Swami. He went on to highlight the common thread in all major religions in preaching care and protection of the poor. The Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament, the prophets of Israel, the Koran and the sacred writings of the oriental religions all speak powerfully and eloquently to the rights and plight of the poor being a common concern for all – “...where it often touches the poor in so special and personal a way, do we find evidence of the unity of this mystery which is the human race.” Quoting Mr. Wolfensohn, “neither of us owns the poor,” the Cardinal also cautioned that while faith and development leaders and institutions can and should speak forcefully in the corridors of power on behalf of the poor, one cannot presume to speak for them. Listening to the poor, supporting the poor requires recognizing the basic human dignity of every person, patience in tackling a complex long term problem and lobbying the wealthy countries to make aid available on a larger scale than before.

Picking up on Swami Agnivesh’s point on the exclusion of women, Thoraya Obaid’s remarks centered around women, the most voiceless of the poor, often lacking the ability to make choices that determine some of the most basic aspects of their own
lives. Every minute, 156 teenage girls marry before they are physically mature; 380 pregnancies occur, many are teenage girls, half are unplanned, 100 are aborted, many in unsafe and unsanitary conditions; 10 people are infected with the AIDS virus, most 15-24 years of age, and many are girls; and one woman dies in childbirth. “Clearly the world can do better.” She pointed to the need to educate young people both in academics and in life skills.

The experience of the Community of Sant Egidio in the two inter-related domains of poverty and conflict resolution was described by Andrea Ricardi. Community members live with the poor in a spirit of friendship, solidarity and compassion – “no one is too poor to be able to help someone else who is poor.” In a theme which would be repeated in later sessions, he pointed out the need for optimism and dignity, suggesting that excessive pessimism leads to excessive concentration on one’s self and one’s own perspective, further excluding the poor. “Hope makes us ready to listen.” Briefly he outlined the experience of the Community in peace negotiations in Mozambique, where they played a major role, noting sadly, that while Mozambique is celebrating the 10 year anniversary of peace, it is now confronting the scourge of HIV/AIDS which has both killed more people than the war and has seriously reduced life expectancy, which has fallen to only 32 years.

5. The Epic Millennial Challenge: Combating HIV/AIDS

Themes: Highlighting HIV/AIDS as the critical development challenge in today’s world, demanding unprecedented collaboration between government, civil society and the private sector, in which faith leaders have a unique role and contribution.

This session, focusing on the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the urgent need for stronger partnerships between the faith and development communities, provoked perhaps the most stimulating discussion of the meeting. The topic was introduced by Mats Karlsson who framed the issue in a multi-sectoral context as a crucible of development with many dimensions and complexities – a health issue, but, equally important, an economic and social issue, with links to poverty, gender and conflict. It is jeopardizing many countries’ recent progress, often achieved at great cost, and ultimately may reduce GDP growth significantly. However, suggesting a theme which would recur throughout this discussion, he also forecast a more hopeful scenario for combating AIDS through tolerance, partnerships, commitment and resources.

Among the most moving commentators on this topic was Canon Gideon Byamugisha, an Anglican priest from Uganda who is living with the virus. Four years ago he was diagnosed as HIV positive. His weight fell dramatically, as he went in and out of hospitals and nearly died. His life was saved through the intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury who acted to secure a course of antiretroviral drug therapy, which has since restored his health, allowing him to become one of Africa’s most vigorous AIDS campaigners. Canon Gideon spoke with passion about the impact on families and communities, about the devastation of stigma, especially on children. But his clearest message is that “we are not without hope in fighting AIDS.” The fulfillment of that hope depends on breaking down traditional taboos, removing stigma and
discrimination, in which the faith communities have been as culpable as the secular world. It also depends heavily on partnerships, combining the comparative strengths of both faith and development communities, the former with moral authority, on-the-ground-networks, and the ability to “speak the people’s language;” the latter with resources and technical expertise.

Overall, Canon Gideon and others called for combined and concerted efforts to “break the silence,” citing the example of the leadership by the Anglican church in Southern Africa, where Archbishop Ndugane, despite great personal risk, spoke out forcefully and publicly and led the Anglican bishops in a public march to testing facilities where they were all tested publicly. Efforts such as these were applauded as courageous and pioneering measures to combat discrimination and stigma, thereby paving the way for improved interventions along the whole gamut of prevention to counseling and care.

A number of speakers addressed the need to mount public information campaigns to engage the public – “one must go beyond the perpetuation of soulless statistics. In the words of Colin Moynihan, “Like many other difficult issues, if it is too difficult to understand, it becomes too easy to ignore. We need to engage the average pedestrian on the pavement. Without this we will fail.”

The plight of children and women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS was addressed by several speakers. There is the need to invest in children 10-15 years old, especially in Africa, ensuring they can remain in school despite the responsibilities of being heads of households. Discrimination and exclusion clearly present enormous burden for children. In Russia, it was noted that in some areas, children who are HIV+ are not allowed in school with other children. One speaker pointed to infection rates in Africa among women that are six times that of men, largely reflecting women’s inability to control their physical lives. Faith groups could play a role in empowering women and eliminating some of the more harmful traditional practices – marriage of very young girls, for example, in order to check the spread of the disease.

To the extent there are any success stories in combating AIDS they demonstrate the importance of leadership and partnership and broad based approaches. The most effective programs have seen a marriage of government/secular responsibilities (messages of condom use, registering of sex workers, testing blood supplies) with faith messages on core values, abstinence, and fidelity. The examples of Uganda, Senegal, and Thailand were cited as examples of government, civil society and the faith communities coming together to achieve significant and lasting reductions in infections rates. Another example cited was the Norwegian AIDS Advisory Council involving media, sports, churches, NGOs and government. Equally impassioned was Bono who also spoke of the need for partnerships, commitment and action. He underscored the need to mount public information campaigns, akin to Jubilee 2000, to educate the public on the devastation being wrought by AIDS. He offered his personal commitment and support. There was broad consensus around the idea that addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS will require networks across and within each of the communities of governments, external donors, private sector players, secular civil society and, the
stakeholders with perhaps the greatest influence on people’s daily lives, the faith communities.

Archbishop Anastasios, raising a note of caution, pointed out that one should be realistic about what is implied for faith communities in many of the areas under discussion. “All faiths have principles concerning relations between men and women, sex. . . . most religions have different approaches, and [it will be difficult for them] to seem to condone what up to now has been a sin.” The issue, he noted is how to find common ground, recognizing the deep responsibility faiths have to help persons who are suffering, especially children, but realistically, one must nevertheless be cognizant of religious differences.

What emerged starkly was the need to bridge the deep gulf of communication between faith and development institutions on this issue and the urgency to devise mechanisms for mutual learning and exchange of information. Mr. Wolfensohn noted the critical importance of better mechanisms to get resources down to community level initiatives, including those by faith groups, where the battle for sustainability will be won or lost. There was virtual unanimity of the need to devise better structures for collaboration, information sharing and disbursement of resources. There was a resounding consensus around this point.

6. The Peace of God: The Special Demands of Communities, Nations and Regions in Conflict

Themes: There are special challenges relating to conflict situations where religious leaders have historically played a critical role, for example, in the provision of social support to distraught and divided communities and in the supply of basic social services. These are special challenges where life and progress are undermined by conflict. What have we learned and what can we do?

The prophetic vocation of faith leaders in conflict areas, both at a community level, in providing physical relief and spiritual comfort and at a policy makers’ level, in having easier access to decision makers, was the most prominent recurrent theme in this discussion. For groups hovering on the edge of despair and hopelessness, faith leaders can provide succor and relief and solidarity at the front lines. Dr. Hashim Khatib, in particular, focused on the special need of people in conflict zones for psychological relief to deal with the trauma, mental anguish and oftentimes, humiliation, that accompanies conflict.

With notions of justice deeply embedded in Christianity, Islam and Judaism, several participants suggested religious leaders are uniquely placed to speak out against injustice and inequality between peoples – what Archbishop Anastasios characterized as the “radioactivity of hatred” -- within countries as an important means of preventing conflict and or paving the way for reconciliation following conflict. Faith leaders can contribute to reconciliation by working to break down walls between different ethnic or religious groups – doing away with the “us and them” which makes one group the enemy. The Archbishop cited two examples of work by faith groups in this. One was in Albania where the Orthodox Church, emerging from some 23 years of lying “in ruin” as a result
of government exclusion, established programs in health, education, rural development, social welfare, culture and the environment, which it saw to be vital elements in any lasting peace. Such services were made available to all citizens, irrespective of religion. Soon thereafter in 1999, when 30,000 Kosovar refugees fled to Albania, the Church mobilized all of its members to offer assistance to the refugees, including providing them with access to ongoing social programs. Resisting any efforts to add religious overtones to the Balkan conflict, the Orthodox Church said, “No one has the right to use the holy oil of religion to intensify the flame of armed conflict.”

In another conflict area, Sierra Leone, Olara Otunnu recounted how relations between the Catholic and Muslim populations served to facilitate community level reconciliation. In some areas, both faiths were encouraged by their leaders to go to each other’s place of worship where both the Lord’s Prayer and the Koran were read in both churches and mosques. In one area, local imams even included the need for more churches among their request for post-conflict community level investments.

One speaker, injecting a note of realism, reminded the participants that the ideal which has been painted is not always the reality. Religions are not always the forces behind reconciliation. Citing the Middle East and Lebanon, she suggested that religious groups are sometimes the forces behind conflict, and, unfortunately, neither area “possesses a Mandela.” In Lebanon, faith leaders fueled the conflict, such that prior to conflict, Muslims and Christians lived together harmoniously. Now they live apart.

The links between peace and development were cited by several speakers. “Today we realize there is another name for peace – development,” in the words of one participant, but this development must be based on notions of social justice and equality, without which security is not possible.


Themes: The specific work challenges, networks and gaps. Work to date and planned for the WFDD and multilateral organizations.

This penultimate session was designed to generate concrete proposals for moving forward jointly by the faith and development leaders and institutions represented at Canterbury, which would translate the ideals which had already been expressed into specific activities. The dimensions of the model were clear, one where development approaches to improve living standards would incorporate values, ethics, faith and spirituality. One speaker noted, “Religion is the last dimension of statecraft. . . we are building a new world where religion is part of the equation.” Another commented, “Morals should drive politics, not the other way around. . . . This is the common heartbeat of this gathering.” Solutions to economic and financial crises must cease to depend exclusively on market forces and take more direct account of unemployment and the plight of the poor. “This make-believe world [regulated by markets alone] was shattered by economic crises in Southeast Asia and in Latin America.”
Similarities among religions, as noted by several speakers, could provide a solid basis for stronger links within the faith communities. As Akbar Ahmed noted, on-going discussions in the US and other countries of the Abrahamic tradition, which depicts Islam, Christianity and Judaism as manifestations of the same religious tradition of monotheism whose founder was Abraham, is an existing example of promoting interfaith dialogue. The call for expanded interfaith dialogue was seen as an important vehicle for increasing tolerance and inclusion, minimizing fanaticism and reducing tensions across religions – calming the hatred and making clear to the world that there is no war against cultures or civilizations. In particular, several speakers noted the special relevance in today’s world of insulating the Muslim communities around the world from attack. Other speakers pointed to the fact that, however valuable a tool, the Abrahamic tradition excludes large populations of Eastern religions and measures are needed to ensure their inclusion in broad based inter-faith dialogue.

The potential force, as yet not fully exploited, of stronger links between religion and development, the core objective for the Canterbury meeting, could make a difference. There was a loud and clear cry for greater honesty from all camps, faith and development, about how they have contributed or constrained progress toward poverty alleviation and social justice. Today, the fight against poverty is facing dramatic setbacks, as the war on terror, the arms race, the challenge of HIV/AIDS, are all competing for international resources and attention. Post-Monterrey, many detected increasing inertia among the donor community, pointing to the need to devise a globalization process with “a human will and a human heart.” Reviving the concept of a covenant, raised earlier, there was a proposal for a new social contract and broadening of democracy on a world wide scale. “Time is running out on the poor.” One of the greatest challenges is the quest for a credible pro-poor strategy which relates globalization and ethics. While religion is still the most powerful force for promoting cultural change and ethical reform, faith and development need to be interconnected for the future of humanity.

At this point, the meeting turned specifically to the World Faiths Development Dialogue, its recent accomplishments and its future directions. Michael Taylor, Director of WFDD, noting the commitment of all participants to the common goals of poverty alleviation, social justice, HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, suggested that, while dialogue remains important, the time has come to move to action, in itself a spiritual and transforming process. He commented on WFDD’s vision of poverty as a condition which drains human fulfillment and constrains development. WFDD, while a small institution, has a large vision. He outlined a proposed work program, including efforts to promote the MDGs, collection of a fuller body of information on successful programs being undertaken by faith groups, continued work on engaging faith groups in Poverty Reduction Strategy consultations, organizing a series of consultations on the forthcoming WDR on social service delivery. From a sectoral perspective, the focus would be on three sectors: gender; education; HIV/AIDS, and from a geographic perspective on the following areas: Southern Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Latin America and Eastern Europe. He stressed the need to be selective and hoped that WFDD will not only take
from situations, but add to them, adding value and building on WFDD’s comparative strengths.

8. Concluding Remarks

In his closing remarks, Mr. Wolfensohn noted the progress in the three meetings thus far, joining faith and development leaders, in coming closer to a common shared purpose. “We have gone from theology and friendships to specific steps, small, but significant.” He commented that the meeting, with few prepared statements, had been more of a thought process than a conference. He proposed two main specific follow up actions. First, he called for mechanisms for better exchange of information, especially concerning activities related to the MDGs -- education, HIV/AIDS, gender equality. One option here might be to tap into the Development Gateway (which the World Bank helped to set up, but now operates independently), perhaps setting up a special page for WFDD. “We need to bridge the information gaps and start getting a feel for what is going on. We will find a number of specific projects in which we can share information (i.e. Mozambique and AIDS). There will be some commonalities and some differences.” He also proposed identifying a series of projects, which would move from general principles to specific action. Funding would need to be identified, but this would likely not be insurmountable. He proposed meeting in one year to gauge progress.

Mr. Wolfensohn also called for much greater openness, honesty and understanding from the many civil society groups who are so critical of the World Bank and other international organizations. Pointing to the depth of commitment by all Bank staff to the elimination of world poverty, he said, “We’re not ceding the moral high ground. . . . all of us spend our lives dealing the with question poverty, humanity and concern for justice and social equity. . . . I do not believe we can get peace for our children unless we deal with the question of poverty and social justice. . . . this needs spirituality; it needs faith.”

Mr. Wolfensohn’s remarks were complemented by Archbishop Carey who called for a vision of a changed world in which all faiths can participate freely. Quoting Gandalf from Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings*, he noted "It's not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succor of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have a clean Earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule." What kind of world do we want to leave behind us? That’s why we have no time to lose. We have so much to do.

Despite the many dire references to world poverty, injustice, insecurity and inequality, references to hope and cooperation were cited frequently, and, at the end of the two days, this emerged as one of the more prominent themes. The meeting closed with clear evidence of transformation among many participants. There were significant changes in positions and new ideas emerged over the two days, so that all participants left rededicated to action and exploration of a number of potential important new openings in the global partnership against poverty and social injustice.
Nowhere was this better exemplified than in the closing words of Brizio Biondi-Morra, President of the AVINA Foundation, when he noted that the complexity of the issues and the depth of understanding required to face them are intimidating and humbling. He went on to say, however, that there is great power in tapping into the strengths of religions, giving time to faith and spirituality, and room to the heart. “A vision without a task is boring. A task without a vision is awfully frustrating. A vision with a task can change the world.”