

Statement at the Closing of the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum by the Organizing Partners

October 17, 2020

As this year's G20 Interfaith Forum came to a conclusion, the key organizers - HE Faisal bin Muaammar, Secretary General of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), Prof. W. Cole Durham Jr, President of the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, HE Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC), and Dr Abdullah Alhomaïd, Secretary General of Saudi Arabia's National Committee for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue - highlighted central conclusions emerging from the Forum.

The partners thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its unwavering support for, and participation in, the G20 Interfaith Forum and extend their high hopes for a successful G20 Leaders' Summit.

The G20 Interfaith Forum concludes an elaborate consultation process that has involved religious and multireligious leaders and institutions, policy makers, and a rich network of faith-based organisations and was conducted digitally across 70 countries, on five continents. Recommendations from this months-long series of consultations on pressing challenges facing the human development agenda were reviewed at the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum which concluded on October 17.

The five-day Forum brought together prominent religious leaders from across the faith spectrum, interreligious leaders, and distinguished members of faith-based organisations as well as government officials, senior officials of United Nations entities, opinion formers, and more than two thousand participants from all over the world to debate a wide array of issues ranging from hate speech to Covid-19 to gender parity and economic displacement.

In these trying times, when the scourge of COVID-19 is causing unprecedented global economic and social dislocation, policy makers should recognise that for over 80 per cent of the world's population, the prism of a faith tradition affects day-to-day life, norms, and relationships.

Religious leaders in many parts of the world go far beyond conducting worship and pastoral oversight. Their leadership exemplifies the spiritual and practical ideals of charity, security, common purpose, human rights, and cohesiveness for everyone, including the most vulnerable in all societies.

Recommendations considered during the Forum are grounded in the experience and wisdom of the world of faith and the experience and insights of religious actors and institutions. Proposals address all aspects of the global human development endeavour as framed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Priority recommendations will be submitted to the November G20 Leaders' Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The breadth of topics considered highlights for us the need for more systematic, continuing relationships among faith leaders, governments, the United Nations itself, and global opinion formers. Recommendations include the following:

- Given the relevance of the world of religion to policy making, as demonstrated by the success of this year's G20 Interfaith Forum and the process leading up to it, a central recommendation is that the time has come for formal recognition of the interfaith platform of the G20 Interfaith Forum as an official engagement group in future G20 Summits.
- Systematic engagement of religious actors in policy making processes at national and international levels offers significant potential to enrich and enhance responses and implementation on many topics including disaster preparedness and response.

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- The G20 process should have as its constant beacon a focus on vulnerable communities and can benefit from the continuing engagement with the G20 Interfaith Forum to keep this ethical and practical priority always at the fore.
- In coming days, priority attention needs to be given to engaging religious communities in development, testing, and distribution of anti-COVID-19 vaccines.
- The urgent and compelling challenge of protecting the planet raises not only physical but moral and spiritual concerns that religious communities are uniquely prepared to address as partners in global governance instruments.

The partners express their thanks to the remarkable group of religious leaders and actors, religiously affiliated institutions, public officials, academics and other experts, all of whom have contributed their time, their insights, and hard work to make the 2020 G20 Interfaith Forum Saudi Arabia a great success.