

Thomas G. Walsh
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Dear UPF E-News Subscribers,

The Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations, which promotes partnerships among FBOs and various governmental and intergovernmental institutions such as the United Nations and its UN Office on Drugs and Crime, held a successful webinar today on the theme:

"Faith-Based Organizations, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: Addressing the Urgent Challenges of Our Time"

Please click here for the recording of the May 11th "FBO Coalition Webinar Series" youtu.be/Zu2IzZJYTkA

May 11—The first program for the **Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations' Spirituality and Justice Initiative** webinar series, on the topic "*Faith-Based Organizations, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: Addressing the Urgent Challenges of Our Time*," had over 120 participants from 24 countries.

PANELISTS:



Opening remarks and introduction to the mission of the Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations, were given by **Dr. Thomas Walsh** and **Dr. Michael Platzer** (*Co-Chairs, Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations*).



Amb. Alvaro Albacete (*Deputy Secretary General, KAICIID*) introduced the mission of his organization, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue. Too often religious and cultural differences are reduced to simple conflict narratives. More than 80% of the world population self-identifies as religious, so, though underutilized, the potential for faith-based leaders to address these conflicts is great. KAICIID recognizes the need for justice has many dimensions, including ethics, anti-corruption, good governance, and gender, racial, and economic justice. Multi-stakeholder partnerships must respect differences between groups in order to have credibility. KAICIID has worked in many countries locally as well as contributing by connecting political, academic, and religious groups. FBOs and leaders have shown undisputed commitment and motivation to go the extra mile with regard to crime prevention. Their day-to-day presence in communities gives them high credibility, making them a key resource for crime prevention and restorative justice. Amb. Albacete concluded by calling for the voices of religious leaders and communities to be brought to the center of the global crime prevention conversation.



Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu (*Director, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, UNODC*) observed that due to the current crisis, the world is under strain, businesses are struggling, and ordinary lives are on hold. COVID-19 has exposed the fragility of the globalized world order. However, we want to defeat the virus, it requires global collaboration. The crisis has reduced the risk of crime in public spaces, but not everywhere. The risk of crime in domestic spaces has increased: for “intimate homicides” taking place in domestic settings. 82% of victims are women and girls. Furthermore, a sharp spike in unemployment may lead to a post-crisis crime rise in places where social safety nets are weak. The crisis has created opportunity for wildlife trafficking and the co-option of resources by corrupt actors. Excessive density in prisons puts those vulnerable people at risk. There is a risk that the emergency measures may lead to a loss of liberties in authoritarian systems. Governments and non-state actors are fighting one-another for legitimacy and scarce resources. Mr. Lemahieu congratulated the Coalition on its new initiative, and stated his organization’s willingness to further cooperate.



Dr. Azza Karam (*Secretary General, Religions for Peace*) described her organization, Religions for Peace, as the “United Nations of Religions,” with interreligious councils legally registered in 90 countries and 6 regions. The social contract and the very nature of religious worship are being challenged and renegotiated throughout this crisis. Normal worship is being disrupted by social distancing. Four of the top-ten humanitarian responders in the world are faith based, but they do not cooperate with one-another. Religions for Peace began The Multi-Religious Humanitarian Support Fund in order to

foster collaboration among these institutions. We need not only interreligious dialogue but diapraxis – sharing and working together. Religious extremism must be addressed. Some religious extremist groups are shoring up legitimacy by performing social services where governments are failing, while other extremist groups have taken advantage of the vulnerability of their communities to ramp up their violent activities. If faith-based organizations can serve well now, they can later serve as legitimate agents of peace.



Ms. Saskia Schellekens (*Senior Adviser Culture UNFPA / Coordinator Executive Secretariat UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development*) said both the UN Task Force and UNFPA welcome opportunities for cooperation among faith-based organizations. The Task Force gathers various global entities to discuss the relationship between faith-based actors and their strategic objectives. UNFPA seeks to create a world “where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person can achieve their full potential.” It works towards women’s equality, ending female genital mutilation and child marriage, and supporting governments in data collection. There is a growing awareness of the importance of engaging with FBOs in order to move towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. She encouraged the coalition to focus particularly on young people. Ms. Schellekens wrapped up with a few thoughts on the current crisis. She reiterated that facing the pandemic has reinforced the need for UN engagement with religious leaders and FBOs.



Bishop Munib Younan (*Palestinian Bishop Emeritus, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land*) spoke of intertwining justice with righteous acts. Justice is the central moral concept of the Bible -- it is religious, political, and concerns the individual human being. Theologians have spoken repeatedly of God’s care for the oppressed and humbling of the lofty. Truth, justice, charity and liberty are the basis of human rights. Feminist theologians have drawn attention to the alienation of women. Lutheran churches have gender justice policies. He told the story of the Prophet Nathan’s confrontation of King David, stating that religious leaders must not be complicit with their coreligionists in injustice. They must address domestic violence and structural discrimination, including and especially within their own church institutions. They must boldly speak on peace based on justice. He concluded: “I will never stop working for justice until I find that peace based on justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are realities in our world.”



Dr. Michael Platzer concluded the panel. He summarized the findings of the panel, noting that most panelists particularly addressed environmental stewardship, gender justice, and prisons, all of which could be future topics of Coalition of FBO webinars.

Q&A followed: On the issue of economic justice, Mr. Lemahieu pointed out the link between vulnerability and opportunity. It's not that people who are poor are inclined to go on a criminal track; there is a greater complexity. But if poverty and criminal opportunity both exist, those who are vulnerable will be enticed to engage in criminal activities. Rev. Younan called for all countries, secular and religious, to respect international law and be ready to hear prophetic leadership which challenges and takes us into a new ethical understanding. Amb. Albacete noted that public interaction is necessary in order to bring about positive changes in the social contract. Rev. Younan expressed a hope that the crisis will spur nations to greater goodwill into the future, and that it will inspire European countries to critique some neocolonial viewpoints.

FBO Coalition Webinar Series: The FBO Coalition is a broadly-based multi-faith coalition of leading representatives of the world's great religious traditions, along with interfaith leaders, academics, and practitioners actively engaged in various areas of criminal justice and crime prevention. The FBO Coalition encourages responsible collaboration with various UN agencies, most notably the UNODC, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development, and ECOSOC. The FBO Coalition is working in partnership with the Vienna-based NGO Alliance for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The FBO Coalition Webinar Series will feature programs every three weeks. Upcoming programs will focus on topics such as: Ethics and Governance; Social Justice; Rehabilitation; Restorative Justice; Gender Justice; Environmental Crime.

Contact Us:

Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations, c/o Civil Society Team D1475 Vienna International Centre, PO Box 500, A1400 Vienna, Austria.
Email: coalitionfbo@gmail.com

Upcoming Events


- MAY 12: [UPF-EUME - "Peace Talks" - "The Role of Faith in Times of Crisis"](#)
- MAY 15: [Peace Talks Webinar - The Covid 19 Crisis and its Impact on Families](#)
- MAY 15: [UN International Day of Families](#)
- JUN 1: [UN Global Day of Parents](#)
- JUN 30: [UN International Day of Parliamentarism](#)
- JUL 18: [Nelson Mandela International Day](#)

Contact Us

www.upf.org | e.news@upf.org | 220 White Plains Rd. FL5, Tarrytown, NY 10591, USA

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