

## Buenos Aires, Argentina UPF participated in the G20 Interfaith Forum

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Buenos Aires, Argentina -- UPF-Argentina participated in the G20 Interfaith Forum 2018 (1), which was held from September 26 to 28, 2018 in Buenos Aires in lead up to the G20 Summit, which will take place in Argentina's capital from November 30 to December 1.

The theme of the fifth annual event was "Building Consensus for Fair and Sustainable Development: Religious Contributions for a Dignified Future." All policy recommendations developed at the Forum will be presented to the Group of Twenty (G20), a forum of 19 countries and the European Union for advancing international economic cooperation.

The three-day event was organized by the G20 Interfaith Forum Association; the Argentine Council for Religious Freedom (CALIR); and Ética y Economía (Creas-Pidesone), a project in Latin America involving several religious organizations.

Plenary sessions, working group sessions and panels took place in the Auditorio Manuel Belgrano in the historic Palacio San Martín of Argentina's Cancillería, the Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs, the Sheraton Buenos Aires Hotel and Convention Center, and the Jorge Luis Borges Hall in the National Library.

At the opening of the forum, the vice president of Argentina, Gabriela Michetti, praised the event and hoped the recommendations developed during it become public policies so everyone "can develop and lead a decent life." A message from Pope Francis was read by Monsignor Carlos Malfa, secretary-general of the Argentine Episcopal Conference (CEA). In his message, the Pope said: "A first fundamental contribution to the world today is to be able to show the fruitfulness of constructive dialogue; to find together the best solutions to the problems that affect us all" (2).

Some of the themes of the main discussions were ethics and economics, religions and the new global challenges, climate change, and sustainable development. In the various sessions, religious representatives and experts, along with government officials, addressed issues related to: dignified labor; human trafficking and slavery; religious freedom and anti-discrimination norms; migration and the refugee issue; religious insight on climate change; education and religious action to end hunger; good governance; interfaith work; religion, global priorities and the G20 Agenda, among others.

Other sessions addressed "Children: A Common Imperative for G20 Engagement;" "Despise Not My Youth: International Youth Interfaith Leadership;" and "Women and Religion: Dignity, Equality and Empowerment."

In the last panel discussion of the event, Uruguayan Senator Carmen Asiaín Pereira, who is a professor of law and religion at the University of Montevideo, gave an exposition. She addressed the Jewish-Christian tradition in which men and women are created in God's image, with the same dignity and rights. Then, she mentioned some practices, from child marriage and sex change to eroticization and prostitution. Finally, she questioned whether current "gender" policies are suitable to achieve equality in a context where some usual rules found in social patterns perpetuate inequality.

In the panel on "Interfaith Work," moderated by Argentina's new undersecretary general for worship, Mr. Alfredo Abriani, Rabbi Marcelo Polakoff of the Israelite Union Center in Córdoba and a member of the Interfaith Committee for Peace (COMIPAZ) gave an interesting biblical explanation on responsibility. Rabbi Polakoff read excerpts from the Bible that illustrate how difficult it was for iconic, providential figures to assume their individual, moral and joint responsibilities. He mentioned Adam (who blames Eve), Cain (who neglects his brother: "Am I my brother's keeper?"), and Noah (who only saves his family). Rabbi Polakoff concluded that dialogue between religions is not enough; they also need to coexist and work hand in hand.

In one of the final panels, Mrs. Silvia Morimoto, director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Argentina, explained that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved with intersectoral collaboration, investment, and identification of issues and innovative solutions. At the end of her talk, she challenged the participants. She raised two pens: one made by exploited labor and pollution, the other made in dignified labor conditions and by an environmentally-friendly company. The first pen is sold for four dollars, the other for six dollars. "Which one would you buy?" she asked. Many people raised their hands for both. Many conclusions can be drawn from this social experiment; however, what is clear is that sustainable development is a complex subject related to ethics. In the same panel, Mr. Álvaro Albacete, deputy secretary-general of the KAICIID Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, spoke about how religions have contributed to the creation of public policies.

The conference produced a statement which underscored the importance of "joint work...in a globalized world where challenges multiply and reach extraordinary dimensions." The statement also condemned "any discourse or action that incites violence, religious hatred or confrontation," and called on "world leaders to uphold religious freedom."

In addition, the nine-point document established that "all areas are responsible for protecting our common house," and called on "states to step up their efforts to create policies from environmental, economic, social, and cultural perspectives." The statement also reaffirmed a commitment to "join efforts to address inequality," a task in which "the G20 governments have an opportunity to play an active role," and "promote good joint practices to decrease inequality gaps...for all humanity to access a plentiful life" (3).

Participants highlighted the importance of translating what was discussed into action and good practices for the dignity of every individual and the protection of our "common house." Some themes, such as the family, could not be addressed properly.

(1) To learn about the G20 Interfaith Forum, please visit [www.g20interfaith.org](http://www.g20interfaith.org).

(2) Pope Francis' address can be viewed at [press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/es/bollettino/pubblico/2018/09/26/for.html](http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/es/bollettino/pubblico/2018/09/26/for.html).

(3) The Spanish language version of the conference statement can be viewed at [www.aica.org/35733-foro-interreligioso-g20-llamado-reducir-brechas-escandalosas-de-la-desigualdad.html](http://www.aica.org/35733-foro-interreligioso-g20-llamado-reducir-brechas-escandalosas-de-la-desigualdad.html).