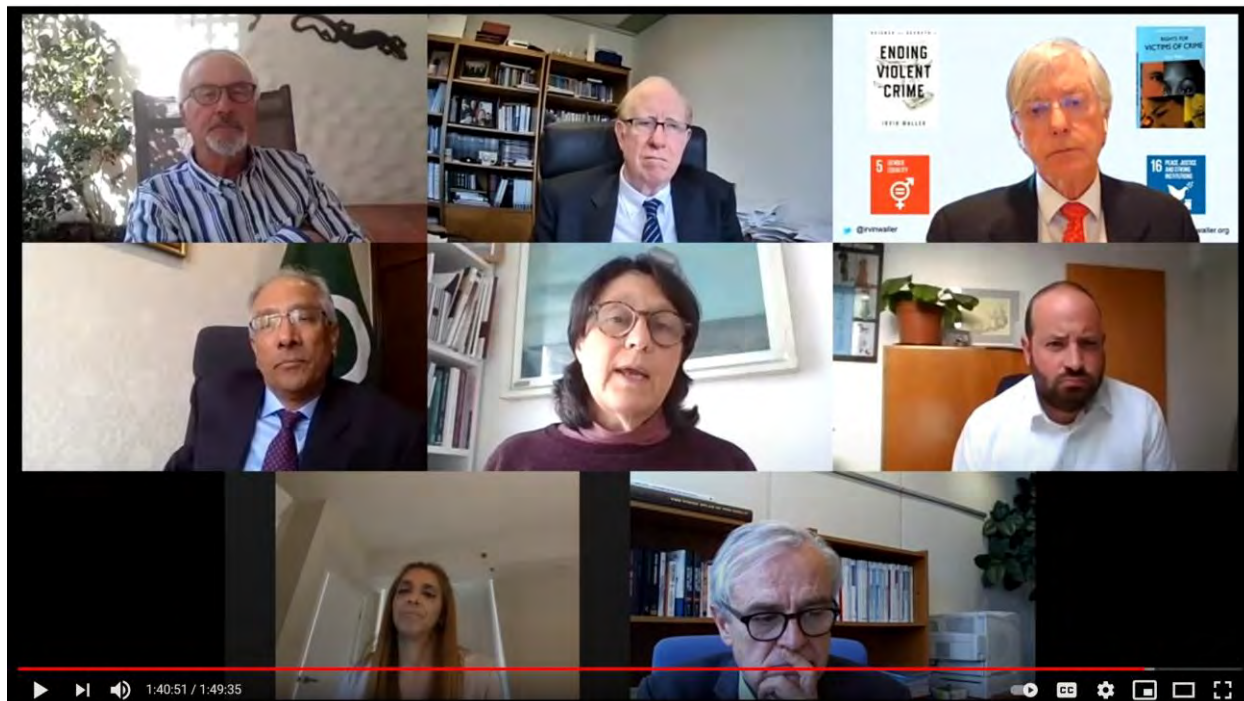


Kyoto Declaration: Next Steps for Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations

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New York, United States -- On April 21, 2021, the Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations (UPF International is a member) hosted a webinar on "The UNODC Crime Congress -- The Kyoto Declaration: Next Steps for Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations." About 100 people from 16 different countries registered for the webinar.

The co-chairs of the host organization, Michael Platzer and Thomas Walsh, served as co-moderators. The webinar began with a brief background by Dr. Walsh on the mission and the work of the coalition over the past two years.



Following up on the recent Kyoto Crime Congress of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC; March 7–12, 2021) discussions centered on the [Kyoto Declaration](#) and next steps that should be taken by FBOs, and civil society in general, to effectively move forward in reducing crime, preventing violence, contributing to SDG16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), promoting the rule of law, and reforming systems of criminal justice.

Dr. Platzer introduced a five-minute video about the Kyoto event that featured presentations by several experts associated with the Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations: Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu (Director, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, UNODC), Amb. Aftab Khokher (Ambassador of Pakistan to Austria in Vienna), Bishop Munib Younan (Palestinian Bishop Emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land), Amb. Alvaro Albacete (Deputy Secretary General at

KAICIID, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue), and Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati (Spiritual leader in India).

Panelists and Brief Summary:

Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu (Director, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs, UNODC) expressed his appreciation to the government of Japan for hosting the Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The Congress was originally scheduled to take place in April 2020 but was postponed due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Lemahieu cited impressive statistics about the virtual event: More than 5,000 attendees and 114 NGOs from all over the world participated. The Kyoto Declaration, which was drafted and adopted in advance, called on the governments to implement concrete actions, specifically to address crime prevention, strengthen criminal justice and promote the rule of law and international cooperation. Mr. Lemahieu pointed out, however, that there was no reference or involvement of faith-based organizations in the Declaration.



H.E. Takeshi Hikihara (Ambassador of Japan to the International Organizations, Vienna) gave more details about the Congress, of which, for the past two years, he played a key role in the arrangements and guiding the negotiations in the midst of the COVID-19 conditions. The ambassador expressed Japan's strong commitment to counter crime together with the international community. He emphasized the importance of strong multistate partnerships with civil society and faith-based organizations: "I understand that faith-based organizations have played a longtime role in the issue of criminal justice and have unique expertise." He welcomed the FBOs to take a more active role and urged member states to give them support.

H.E. Aftab Khokher (Ambassador of Pakistan to Austria, Slovakia and the UN in Vienna) directed his remarks to what he sees as a lack of interfaith harmony. "This is where the role of FBOs is relevant.... Given the current tendencies within our society, harmony has assumed much more greater relevance and urgency and importance." Greater interfaith cooperation would serve as a "powerful antidote to counter hate speech," and he gave several examples: A copy of the Holy Quran was burned in Sweden last year, and a cartoon about the Prophet Muhammad was published in the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo in 2015. The ambassador spoke about the good works by FBOs in Pakistan which have helped to bring these issues out in the open for discussion. Freedom of expression is needed he said but it should be done in a way that doesn't disrespect or dishonor. He highlighted some key points in the declaration, including need for a multi-partnership approach to crime, with extra emphasis on prevention and how to improve the conditions that are at the root of crime.

Dr. Anna Alvazzi del Frate, (Chair, Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and for Criminal Justice) praised the Kyoto Crime Congress but regretted having to attend virtually and not in person. The Declaration included a paragraph referring to an umbrella group to include civil society and multi-stakeholders but should have given greater emphasis to FBOs, she said. "We are in this together," and "we all need to feel a sense of ownership." Dr. del Frate, citing the positive side, observed that the Congress recognizes the connection and relationship between civil society and government: "We must see the glass as half full." She noted that the discussions begun in Japan will continue at the annual general assembly of the Alliance of NGOs for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, May 19–20, in conjunction with the 30th Session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna.

Ms. Lucie Leonard (Director, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics) gave a PowerPoint presentation based on her address for the Kyoto event. Results and progress on crime and violence at the global level must be standardized and measurable, she said, and in particular, she noted gender-based hate crimes. Three points were highlighted. First, the need for more timely data and information. Second, more granularity of the data (size, scale, detail, depth). Third, to explore new, alternative sources of information and data on crime and victimization. Ms. Leonard said that FBOs can play an important role to collect information and encourage conversation in the community about the justice and police systems.



Mr. Ian Tennant (Manager, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime Resilience Fund, Vienna; and Vice Chair of the NGO Alliance) addressed the context of how civil society has been challenged to engage with the UN member states. He described the tense and even hostile relationship that sometimes has existed. NGOs have uncovered particular crimes and corruption issues that were seen as "unwelcome truths," and even revealing alliances between states and criminal groups. Mr. Tennant said the Kyoto Declaration demonstrates less inclusive and less supportive participation from civil societies. He pointed out that there were arbitrary limits on how civil society could engage, few speaking slots, and restrictions on the number of delegates that could be registered by each organization. In order to move forward to respond and prevent crime, civil society and faith-based organizations must be allowed to give more input and find ways to build productive and efficient partnerships.

Prof. Dr. Irvin Waller (Professor Emeritus, University of Ontario; Author, *Science and Secrets of Ending Violent Crime*) said that the United Nations adopted the "Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power" in 1985, but every year there are half a million homicides, more than a half million women raped, and a billion child victims of violence.

Dr. Waller delivered a powerful call to action. He said the root causes need to be addressed and accelerated tailor-made strategies must be created. There are scientifically proven prevention programs and guidelines that must be more widely implemented. This will require investment and large sums of funding, and awareness must be raised. "We can't just be looking at the branches. We need to get to the root and address crime before it happens. Strong leadership is needed in the Civil Society, and faith-based organizations with the governments who really believe the Declaration. We need to transform our approach so we're not just issuing nice statements and doing little about it. There must be greater collaboration among the various stakeholders -- World Health Organization (WHO), UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UN General Assembly, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) -- together with civil society and faith-based organizations to turn those statements into reality."

QandA Session:

Question: What are the challenges that FBOs are facing?

Amb. Khokher: FBOs in Pakistan are very active in philanthropic activities including in times of national disasters, but there has been some suspicion that their work is too closely tied to special interest groups.

Question: Regarding freedom of expression, where is the line drawn when freedom of speech turns into hate crimes?

Amb. Khokher: There are certain personalities who are at a level that is beyond reproach. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is in this category.

Question: International crime organizations get their money from criminal activities. How to confiscate, block and deal with the resources of criminal organization worldwide?

Mr. Tennant: The G20 Anti-Corruption World Group and other organizations are currently dealing with this area and working to enhance international cooperation.

Mr. Lemahieu: Corruption is the core problem. He also raised the issue "How can we create a better world environment post-pandemic?"

Dr. Waller: "It's important not only to fight alligators but to drain swamps." He pointed out that in last 50 years not enough money has been put into reducing the demand. He outlined a titling rule to put 10% of what is currently spent on dealing with crime, and put 10% into prevention. He said the good thing about the Kyoto Declaration is that it has many paragraphs on prevention, which has the potential to significantly reduce organized crime and corruption.

The next FBO Coalition webinar is scheduled for May 28 and will be co-hosted with the Al-Liqa Center in Jerusalem.

