



Photo: Islamic Relief/Haseeb

**DATE**

23 May 2016

**TIME**

16.00 – 17.00

**LOCATION**

Beylerbeyi

**MODERATOR**

**Azza Karam, Senior Advisor, Culture (UNFPA)**

**SPEAKERS**

**Mr. Vinya Ariyaratne**  
Sarvodaya

**His All-Holiness Bartholomew I:** Patriarch of Istanbul

**His Excellency Mr. Faisal bin Abdulrahman bin Muaammar**

**His Excellency Mr. Albrecht Boeselager**  
Chancellor, Sovereign Order of Malta

**Ms. Deborah Boudreaux**  
Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation

**Dr. Hany El-Banna**  
The Humanitarian Forum

**Mr. Benjamin Laniado**  
Cadena

**His Excellency Mr Gerd Müller**  
Minister, Federal Republic of Germany

**Ms. Alaa Murabit**  
Islamic Action Group

**Mr. John Nduna**  
Act Alliance

**Mr. Allen Ottaro**  
Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability

**Mr. Antti Pentikäinen**  
Network of Religious and Traditional Leaders and Peacemakers

**Her Excellency Ms. Anne Richards**  
US Department of State

**Sheikh Ibrahim Sesay**  
Islamic Action Group

**Cardinal Antonio Tagle**  
Caritas Internationalis

**SUMMARY**

Many religious institutions and faith-based NGOs have a unique comparative advantage in humanitarian contexts: they have an established relationship of trust and familiarity with most local communities in which they are embedded. Due to their presence before a crisis they are first responders and key providers of assistance and protection during crises, and they will stay after international organizations leave. This Special Session will seek concrete commitments from religious leaders and other humanitarian actors to increase the impact of faith-based actors in reducing humanitarian need and suffering, and their inclusion within policy- and decision-making at all levels of humanitarian response.

**OUTCOMES**

- 1** Commitment to the principles of compassion, humanity and impartiality in the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection
- 2** Commitment to prevent and resolve conflicts, whether or not these have a religious component, and to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation
- 3** Building on faith assets and faith infrastructure in communities, contribute to sustainable solutions to humanitarian crises

**RELATES TO CORE RESPONSIBILITIES**

#1 PREVENT AND END CONFLICT



#2 RESPECT RULES OF WAR



#3 LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND



#4 WORKING DIFFERENTLY TO END NEED



#5 INVEST IN HUMANITY



whsummit.org

#faithWHS

Whsummit

@whsummit #ShareHumanity



## IN A NUTSHELL

Religious institutions and faith-based NGOs are often first responders in crises. Utilizing their localized networks, resource mobilization, trust and influence with local communities and commitment to peace and dignity, they provide critical and sustainable contributions to all aspects of humanitarian response as well as subsequent development needs.

More than 250 faith-based leaders and representatives of the world's largest humanitarian organizations, representing all major world faith traditions, gathered at the World Humanitarian Summit's Special Session on Religious Engagement on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. These included representatives from all regions of the world, both religious leaders as well as NGOs, actively engaged in humanitarian relief work in all corners of the globe.

The speakers called upon the international community to recognize and affirm their significant and often unique holistic contributions to humanitarian work, to consider them as equal partners in humanitarian and development work, and to scale up efforts to support their important work in communities around the globe.

In turn, these major faith-based humanitarian actors committed, *together*, in an unprecedented and historic fashion, to: serving the most vulnerable in humanitarian settings; upholding and expanding the significant humanitarian response of faith-based organizations; overcoming the manipulative and abusive attempts to link religion with violence, terrorism, or exclusion of others; keeping affected persons at the center of all assistance planned and provided; maintaining robust beneficiary feedback mechanisms; ensuring that women and girls' rights are protected, their needs are met, and their ability to engage in decision making is enhanced; and continuing to play an active role in response coordination.

Many of the faith based actors were actively engaged in producing content in line with the indications and guidelines received for the WHS social media campaign some of which can be accessed through these links:

<http://www.orderofmalta.int/>

[www.walls.io/faithWHS](http://www.walls.io/faithWHS)



## BACKGROUND

Each of the distinguished speakers responded in their presentations, to two questions:

1. *What does your own organization do in the humanitarian field that is unique to its faith-based identity - please answer through a concrete instance; OR, for our governmental speakers - what does your own office see as the unique or added value of faith-based engagement in humanitarian work?*
2. *Based on this, what is the call you would make of your fellow faith-based colleagues, but also of all non-faith-based humanitarian actors?*

## COMITMENTS MADE at the WHS

[extracted from the Outcome Document]

We, faith-based organizations and religious leaders, commit to:

...Upholding the principles of compassion, humanity and impartiality in our provision of humanitarian assistance and protection in alignment with fundamental humanitarian principles.

...Upholding and expanding the significant humanitarian response of faith-based organizations and to overcome the manipulative and abusive attempts to link religion with violence, terrorism, or exclusion of others. By so doing, we aim to resolve conflicts and work to promote reconciliation.

...Working together to better contextualize humanitarian response, leveraging our added value to reach people in need of assistance and protection, and using our influence to mobilize our local communities in support of these efforts.

...Ending hunger and serving the most vulnerable in humanitarian [by] bringing our intimate knowledge of community needs, practices, fears, and hopes to humanitarian work.

...Keeping affected persons at the center of all assistance planned and provided, maintaining robust beneficiary feedback mechanisms.

...Ensuring that women and girls rights are protected, their needs are met, and that their ability to engage in decision making is enhanced; as this is a proven strategy



## SPECIAL SESSION RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

WORLD  
HUMANITARIAN  
SUMMIT

for increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian action as a means of building resilience for all members of families and communities.  
...Continuing to play an active role in response coordination, while we reinforce organizational systems and structures to allow us to meet growing humanitarian needs.  
...In addition to material assistance and other services, we [therefore] commit to facilitating spiritual assistance which can significantly contribute to the population's sense of hope during and after a disaster, while prohibiting pressuring people into any religious practice.  
... Continuing to work with national governments to recognize and affirm the role of faith and faith based organisations to provide faith-based assistance to communities in need.  
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See Annex of the full OUTCOME DOCUMENT **which was referenced and duly endorsed at the Special Session.**