

Agenda and Programme of Work

Conference Religion in the Modern World, Tehran, 12 - 15 October 2008

The development of modern, pluralistic societies has increased the demands for religious and cultural tolerance. Increased immigration and the globalisation of communications technologies have fostered a wider variety of religious beliefs, practices and organisations within and across societies. More over, rapid societal, political and economical developments have increased the tensions between modern and more traditionalistic fractions both within and across societies. What is the role of religion in this new type of societies?

More concretely, the Conference will address the issue of how religious and political leaders can cooperate to promote peace by protecting human rights, moral and religious values, diversity and peaceful coexistence in pluralistic, modern societies.

Sunday 12 October

1900 - 2130 Opening dinner at Esteghlal Hotel Tehran

Welcome remarks:

H.E. Seyed Mohammad **Khatami**, President, Foundation for Dialogue among Civilizations (FDC)

H.E. Kjell Magne **Bondevik**, President, The Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights (OC), Member of the Club of Madrid (CoM).

Monday 13 October

0830 – 0900 Coffee

0900 – 1100 Opening session (at Raizan Conference Center) - Open for the press and invited guests

0900 – 0930 Opening greetings by the organisers:

H.E. Seyed Mohammad **Khatami**, former President of Iran, President FDC

H.E. Kjell Magne **Bondevik**, former Prime Minister of Norway, President OC

H.E. Mary **Robinson**, former President of Ireland, Vice President CoM

H.E. Kofi **Annan**, former Secretary General United nations, Club of Madrid Member

0930 – 1030 Keynote addresses:

H.E. Jorge Sampaio, former President of Portugal, High Representative United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC), Club of Madrid Member

H.E. Romano Prodi, former Prime Minister of Italy, former President of the EU Commission, Club of Madrid Member

1030 – 1100 Coffee break

1100 – 1200 Roundtable 1: Religion, modernity, globalization and dialogue (Closed sessions)

Occupation, discrimination, deprivation, exclusion, injustice and humiliation have been identified as main causes of extremism in the modern world. How is it possible to counter humiliating policy practices? How can religious and political leaders work constructively to neutralise the belligerent potential of religion and instead draw upon its tolerance and peace promoting potential?

The imperative of dialogue: there is a need for self criticism and denouncing double standards both within the West and the Islamic world. How is this exercise best promoted? How could people of different faiths get committed to unite against violence, extremism and intolerance? What role for political leaders? How can this group of religious and political leaders and academics form a strategic alliance for future endeavours? What kind of initiatives would be most fruitful in order to reduce tensions and stereotypical images? Will this require as much intra-cultural, intra-religious as inter-religious efforts?

Participants will be challenged to identify relevant issues at the international agenda for which there could be a strategic alliance between the Islamic world and the West.

Moderator: Dr. John **Esposito**, Professor Georgetown University

Keynote Speakers: H.E. Joseph **Deiss**, former President of Switzerland, Board member FDC
Dr. Mosoumeh **Ebtekar**, Director, Centre for Peace and the Environment

1200 – 1330 Lunch & time for prayer

1330 – 1500 Continuation of Roundtable 1

1500 – 1530 Coffee break

1530 – 1800 Roundtable 2: Religion, democracy, peace and justice

Complex and multicultural societies require elaboration of new mechanisms for co-existence. A principal condition for peaceful co-existence between diverse religious and cultural groups is that they are granted equal rights and responsibilities in the law and practices of the state. What are effective strategies from political and religious leaders in promoting these equal rights? What are effective strategies to ensure protection against coercion that would impair the freedom to exercise a religion of one's choice? To what extent can religious leaders help overcoming the lack of justice both at the national and at the international levels?

Moderator: H.E. Mary **Robinson**, former President of Ireland, Vice President CoM

Keynote Speaker: H.E. Sadiq **Al Mahdi**, former Prime Minister of Sudan, CoM Member
The Rights Reverend John Bryson **Chane**, Bishop of Washington

1800 Photo opportunity

1900 Buffet dinner (at Esteghlal Hotel)

Tuesday 14 October

0830 – 0900 Coffee

0900 - 1030 Roundtable 3: Religion and fundamental rights (at Raizan Conference Center)

What are constructive leadership strategies to promote human rights, gender equity and justice within the religious and political realm in the modern world? Do the different realms require different strategies? How to ensure women's participation and integration of gender perspective into inter-religious dialogues? How to ensure freedom of expression while maintaining religious integrity? Moral and religious values vs. fundamental rights: contradiction or interaction? Conflicting rights: Should freedom of speech be subject to limitations when it is misused to offend intimate beliefs of peoples?

Moderator: H.E. Zlatko **Lagumdzija**, former Prime Minister of Bosnia Herzegovina, CoM Member

Keynote Speaker: H.E. Lionel **Jospin**, former Prime Minister of France, CoM Member
H.E. Chandrika **Kumaratunga**, former President of Sri Lanka.
CoM Member

1030 – 1100 Coffee break

1100 – 1200 Continuation of Roundtable 3

1200 – 1430 Lunch and time for Prayer

1430 – 1630 Recommendations / Final Declaration

Moderator: Ambassador Mohammad Javad **Zarif**

1630 – 1700 Coffee Break

1700 – 1730 Closing Remarks:
Kjell Magne **Bondevik** (OC and CoM)
Seyed Mohammad **Khatami** (FDC)

1800 – 1900 Buffet dinner (at Esteghlal Hotel)

2030 – 2130 Flight to Yazd from Tehran Mehrabad Airport

Wednesday 15 October

Sightseeing, lunch,
Espesial event: Yazd, cradle of civilization and hallmark of dialogue

1800 – 1900 Return flight to Tehran