

International Interreligious Affairs – December highlights
David Rosen

Melbourne Nov.29- December 7

The main interfaith event of December 2009 was the world assembly of the Parliament of the World Religions – an enormous interfaith gathering that takes place every five years in another part of the world.

On this occasion it was held in Melbourne Australia . In order to enable me to participate and speak at this event, both at the request of the organizers and the local Jewish community, AJC's Australian partner AIJAC brought me out to Australia - and previously to New Zealand as well - where I both spoke in academic settings and held discussions with national and civic leadership as well as that of the Jewish community.

I addressed three public meetings in Melbourne – in sequence these were the dinner of the Council of Christians of Jews attended inter alia by the Governor of Victoria; the annual lecture of the Center for Dialogue of LaTrobe University; and a public event for the Jewish community co-hosted by AIJAC and the Zionist Council of Victoria. In addition I addressed two luncheon events for AIJAC leadership.

At the Parliament I spoke on Jewish-Christian relations; Jewish-Hindu relations; Peacemaking in the Middle East; Global Warming, Religion and Vegetarianism; and on the subject of Religious Leadership in the 21st century.

In the course of my visits I was interviewed for both the written and electronic media; see:-

<http://jewishnews.net.au/2009/12/07/peacemaker-role-for-rabbi-rosen/10098#more-10098>

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/religion-must-be-part-of-mideast-answer-20091130-k18x.html>

<http://ccj.org.nz/2009/11/rabbi-david-rosen-audio-is-religion-part-of-the-problem-or-the-solution/>

Seville, December 8-10

From Australia I went on via Israel to Seville, Spain, to participate in the first ever trilateral colloquium organized by the ILC (The International Jewish-Catholic Liaison Committee.) The ILC is made up of the IJCIC (the International Jewish umbrella organization for relations with other religions – the official Jewish dialogue partner of the Vatican – which I chaired for four years until last July) and the Holy See's Commission for Religious relations with Jewry. A decision was taken during my tenure as chair to hold a trilateral meeting with a Muslim world body and the Seville Center for the Three Cultures of the Mediterranean agreed to host the meeting (at its beautiful location in the Moroccan pavilion built for Expo 1992.)

It was agreed that this first trilateral meeting should be both small (approximately thirty participants) and closed to the public and media.

At the recommendation of the Vatican, the World Muslim League was invited to be the Muslim partner and the Islamic Center in Madrid was given the responsibility to gather the Muslim delegation which in fact came from four continents. The Christian delegation came from both the Catholic and Orthodox worlds (the latter under the authority of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew) and included both Cardinal Kasper and Cardinal Tauran from the Vatican and Patriarch Twal from Jerusalem. The Jewish delegation was principally American and Israeli (including Rabbi Professor Daniel Sperber of Bar Ilan University who was the Jewish keynote speaker.)

The subject of the colloquium was the implications of the teachings in the three religions concerning Human Dignity and was conducted in a very respectful and friendly atmosphere. In addition to the keynotes, there were three workshops which took up the bulk of the days' deliberations. These were on the following sub-themes:- Sanctity of Life, Absolute or Qualified ?; Reconciling Individual and Communal Responsibility; Human Rights and the Freedom of Religion.

The participants expressed the hope that this was the first of ongoing trilateral colloquia that would expand both in their character and in terms of informing public consciousness; and the leadership of the Center for the three Cultures in Seville expressed their willingness to facilitate this.