

Report – July 2008

July was particularly intense, beginning on the first of the month with a preparatory meeting in Seville, Spain, for a first trilateral dialogue initiated by the Vatican (specifically Cardinals Kasper and Tauran who cover the interreligious scene for the Holy See) and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) which I chair and which is the Vatican's official Jewish partner. In addition we included the Orthodox churches via the Ecumenical Patriarchate with which the Vatican and IJCIC both have separate bilateral relations. Our mutual desire to parallel the Jewish-Christian dialogue with one that involves Islam, was immediately supported by the Seville based center for the Three Cultures (www.tresculturas.org) established by the regional government of Andalucia and the Kingdom of Morocco. This institution has agreed to serve as a permanent host for this trilateral dialogue and increased the logic of our turning to Morocco to take the lead as a Muslim partner – specifically, the Mohammadiyah Council of Moroccan Muslim Scholars, directed by Dr. Ahmad Abaddi.

This preparatory meeting that included representatives of all the abovementioned parties, held a productive day's meeting at the Three Cultures center in preparation for the trilateral meeting which is scheduled to take place next March.

While Dr. Abaddi was represented at the meeting, he was unable to attend in person and requested that I meet with him and colleagues in Morocco to build up relationship with his colleagues towards advancing this and other interreligious initiatives that we are involved in; and I spent a few very stimulating and rewarding days meeting major Moroccan Muslim figures.

On July 14/15 the founding meeting of the Middle East Interreligious Council of Religions for Peace (www.wcrp.org) of which I am a co-President, was held in Alexandria at the world famous Library (Bibliotheca Alexandriana www.bibalex.org) hosted by the Director Professor Ismail Seragaldin. The purpose of this Council is to promote communication between the religious communities from the Maghreb to Iran and where possible, contribute to overcoming prejudice and bigotry and to promoting reconciliation and peace. I am presently the only Israeli in this body. However it was resolved that the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which AJC helped found, will be one of the institutional bodies formally represented on the Council.

From Egypt to Madrid for the historic interfaith conference convened by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and organized by the World Muslim League, March 16-18. please see my briefing at:

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=ijITI2PHKoG&b=1530705&ct=5722299>

From Spain, I went on to Canterbury for the dialogue of the Jewish-Anglican Commission established by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and Lambeth Palace.

This was the latter's second meeting that took place in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral parallel to the Lambeth Conference. The dialogue on the subject of Holiness of Person, Place and Time, not only reflected a high quality of scholarship, but also a remarkable level of frankness and good will, profoundly encouraged by the Archbishop of Canterbury himself and the leading Anglican clergy.