

IIA monthly highlights, July 2010

The major highlights of my international interreligious activity this month took place in London.

The first was a day's briefing, feedback, discussion and recommendations hosted by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair for the Advisory Council of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation on which I serve.

The second was a day's meeting of the members of the board in formation for Saudi King Abdullah's center for interreligious dialogue being established in Vienna. This initiative has taken longer to get off the ground than anticipated for various reasons, primarily internal struggles of different interest groups in Saudi Arabia itself. However King Abdullah has now resolved these and appointed Faisal Mouammer, the SA deputy Minister of Education, as the acting director of the center. This meeting was an opportunity for the members of the board in formation (in which the Vatican, Canterbury, the Orthodox Patriarchate and AJC are represented, together with the leading Lebanese Muslim theologian Dr. Mohammed Samaak. A representative each from Shia Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, will shortly be invited to join as well) to get to know Dr. Mouammer and to approve the proposals for the structure of the planned center.

In Rome, our liaison to the Vatican, Lisa Palmieri Billig had a number of key meetings with Vatican officials, in particular Archbishop Nikola Eterovic of the Synod of Bishops, in preparation for my address to the forthcoming Synod's Special Assembly on the Middle East in October.