

Religions for Peace

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Partnership in "Ethics in Action" Initiative

Multireligious Collaboration for Moral Solutions to Global Challenges



(Front Row. R-L: Ayatollah Damad; H.E. Dr. Sammak; Sir Rabbi Rosen; H.E. Metropolitan Zizioulas; Rev. Niwano)

Vatican - **Religions for Peace (RfP)** partnered to co-launch a new initiative to develop a moral consensus around the great challenges related to sustainable and integral development, and to convert this consensus into concrete action.

Called **Ethics in Action for Sustainable and Integral Development**, the initiative entails a close and spirited partnership among the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the University of Notre Dame, and **RfP**.

Ethics in Action was inaugurated on 30 October 2016 at the Vatican. This first session focused on poverty and social exclusion. Over the next two years, **Ethics in Action** will tackle the major challenges related to integral sustainable development.

Monsignor Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor, Pontifical Academy of Sciences/Social Sciences, opened **Ethics in Action** with a penetrating analysis of the moral challenges facing the human family. He drew extensively from Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, underlining the way that document can serve as a model for moral reflections on public challenges. Each diverse religious community, he noted, can marshal its own moral resources as a basis for collaboration to build the common good.



(L-R: Monsignor Sorondo; H.E. Cardinal Maradiaga; H.E. Cardinal Onaiyekan; Prof. Sachs; Dr. Ramanathan)

Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network [**International Trustee of RfP**], followed with a sweeping overview of the last two centuries of development and of the shape of poverty today.

Highlighting the moral consensus to act for justice, **H.E. John Cardinal Onaiyekan**, Archbishop of

Abuja, Nigeria [**Co-Moderator of RfP**], noted that decades of careless oil production in the Niger Delta has resulted in massive environmental and social damage. It was agreed to undertake ethically-driven multistakeholder partnership there.

The commitment to **Ethics in Action** spanned many diverse religious traditions. "Buddhism teaches that all beings are related and interdependent," said **Rev. Kosho Niwano**, President-Designate of Risho Kosei-kai [**Co-Moderator of RfP**]. "Therefore the self and the other are mutually inseparable, and in Buddhism the true self is found in going beyond oneself in the service of others."

Sir Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee [**Co-President of RfP**] stated: "Judaism was born out of the experience of marginalization and vulnerability. This gives rise to a moral imperative to love the stranger as yourself."

H.E. Ayatollah Dr. Seyyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad, Dean of the Department of Islamic Studies at the Academy of Sciences of Iran, [**Co-President of RfP**] said: "Humanity is God's representative on earth. Each person in the human family is called to build up the human family and protect the earth, our common home."



(Center: Rev. Niwano)

Diverse religious perspectives were also offered by H.E. Peter Cardinal Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; H.E. Oscar Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; H.E. Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamon; and **H.E. Dr. Mohammad al-Sammak**, Secretary General of the Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue [**Co-President of RfP**].

Mrs. Christina Lee Brown, Founder of the Institute for Healthy Air, Water and Soil [**International Trustee of RfP**] noted that the great ethical challenges associated with Sustainable Development and climate change need to be translated into the threats to health that they pose to peoples' lives. She offered the Festival of Faiths in Louisville, Kentucky, as a kind of living laboratory for **Ethics in Action**.

Dr. Robert Boisture, President and CEO, The Fetzer Institute, underlined the importance of **Ethics in Action** by noting the great cleavages in contemporary society and the foundational need to build shared social capital as the essential foundation for moral societies.

Dr. William Vendley [**Secretary General of RfP**] noted that the religious communities are united in their conviction that an adequate foundation for **Ethics in Action** includes both a concern for unfolding each person's human dignity and advancing the common good. "The other's well-being is our well-being. We stunt ourselves when we don't take action to care for the other."



(Center: Dr. Boisture)



(Mrs. Brown)

Over the next two years, **Ethics in Action** will examine forms of violence and coercion (war, violent religious and ethnic extremism, gender violence, modern slavery, drug trafficking), environmental threats (climate change, species and habitat destruction), and social exclusion (poverty, inequality, deprivation, gender discrimination, and the marginalization of indigenous peoples and minorities).

"*Religions for Peace* is deeply encouraged by the launch of **Ethics in Action**, which has the potential to unite a troubled world in common action. **Ethics in Action** has been underwritten by a range of remarkable philanthropists. *RfP* is especially grateful for the generous support of the Fetzer Institute and **Mrs. Brown**," stated **Dr. Vendley**.

RELIGIONS FOR PEACE--the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition--advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than ninety national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Interfaith Youth Network.

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