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## TOKYO, JAPAN PEOPLE, PEACE, PLANET: PATHWAYS FORWARD

7 - 9 JUNE 2019

[www.g20interfaith.org](http://www.g20interfaith.org)

### Event Summary

This note on the 2019 G20 Interfaith Forum highlights what happened, with some analysis of key points. This ambitious effort aimed to bring together a “network of networks”, linking religious actors working on global issues within the broad framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The core recommendations ([see link below](#)) have been transmitted to Japan Prime Minister Abe, and the goal is to reach other G20 leaders before they meet in Osaka at the end of June.

A fuller set of policy recommendations is being prepared, along with a full report on the event. Eight policy briefs, essential to robust and plausible recommendations, are available on the G20 Interfaith Forum website ([link below](#)).

*The event and its broad goal.* The 2019 G20 Interfaith Forum took place in Tokyo, June 7-9. It was the sixth in a series of annual events linked to successive G20 Summits. Japan is the 2019 host, with the G20 Osaka Summit to occur in late June. The originators and core organizers of the Forum have comprised an informal association for several years, and a legal entity has recently been incorporated to provide continuity and to facilitate ongoing activities. The Association’s organizing committee will continue as an advisory council in the formalized structure. The Centre for Interfaith and Cultural Dialogue at Griffith University in Australia and Brigham Young University and especially the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS) in the United States have played central roles in the Forum’s evolution, and are delighted to see the ongoing expansion of the organization and formalization of its structure, with many other collaborating institutions assuming significant roles.

The Forum’s aims and ambitious have expanded significantly over the years. They are currently sharply focused on drawing on the growing network of religiously linked networks working on global agendas, to present robust recommendations to the G20 as well as to the “network of networks”.

*Scope of Activities.* The 2019 Forum was far larger and more ambitious than its predecessors (Australia (2014), Turkey (2015), China (2016), Germany (2017), and Argentina (2018)). With substantial support from Worldwide Support for Development (WSD) (an organization supported by Dr. Haruhisa Handa, Japanese religious leader and philanthropist) as well as the ICLRS, and KAICIID (King Abdallah bin Abdulaziz Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue), over 200 international speakers and participants (including Japanese specialists) and an audience of over 2000 were involved. The World Faith Development Dialogue (WFDD) based at the Berkley Center at Georgetown, ICLRS, and KAICIID played particularly active roles in planning and execution of the Forum. (KAICIID is looking especially towards plans for the 2020 G20 host, Saudi Arabia). Among the other networks that participated actively were the UN Interagency Task Force and Faith Council, the Joint Learning Initiative, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Global Network of Religions for Children, the Transatlantic Partnership on Religion and Diplomacy, the WASH Alliance, the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, leaders of large faith-inspired organizations, and several networks and academics focused on religious freedom, religious peacebuilding, human rights, and sustainable development. Bill Vendley, Religions for Peace Secretary General, brought RfP insights to the meeting. Many other organizations continue to provide ongoing support for Forum initiatives.

*Supplementary Meeting.* Strong interest in the issues among religious organizations in Japan led to the organization of a separate supplementary event organized as the “G20 Interfaith Forum Kyoto.” One of our organizing committee members, Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake, initiated the Kyoto event, with support from a distinguished committee of Japanese religious and government leaders. The Kyoto event was held on June 11-12, and was attended by a number of our Organizing Committee members. The Kyoto event provided opportunities for expanded participation by Japanese religious communities. Because of the difference in focus, the Kyoto event did not have the same breadth and depth of policy expertise of those participating in the Tokyo conference for purposes of shaping global policy recommendations. But there was a fundamental alignment of recommendations and a shared sense of the importance and merits of religious engagement in G20 processes.

*Focus on linking political and religious approaches and leadership.* The Forum was marked by its attention to political processes with the active presence of three former Prime Ministers (David Cameron, UK, Sir John Key, New Zealand, and Enda Kenny, Ireland) and Graça Machel, a notable African stateswoman and civil society leader. Two senior Japanese political leaders represented Prime Minister Abe (who wrote a welcome message). Diverse religious voices included (via messages) Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, with active participation of Lord Carey of Clifton (103rd Archbishop of Canterbury), Sulak Sivaraksa, Bishop Gunnar Stålsett, and many other leaders, representing a broad spectrum of traditions. Other participants, speakers, and close involvement came from the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) and Sport at the Service of Humanity (SSH). A full list of speakers and panelists can be found at the [link below](#).

*Goals, focus, and central premises.* The Forum was organized around the theme: Peace, People, Planet: Pathways Forward. This reflects the deliberate focus on the SDGs as the leading global agenda, though it was reiterated on several occasions that the Forum’s goal is to bring a prophetic voice to global discussions. The SDGs were discussed often (few who were there could have come away without an awareness of their scope and significance). Working sessions focused on work for peace, human development (people), and care for the environment (planet), with additional urgent topics including trafficking and modern slavery, religious cultural heritage, and fighting corruption (see [full program link below](#)). The core premise is that religious voices, both as a “moral compass” and reflecting vast networks and experience, belong at global policy “tables” like the G20, and can enrich the contributions of other communities and sectors. A Pew Forum data point suggesting that some 84 percent of the world’s population has some religious affiliation was cited repeatedly to underscore the importance of religion in shaping and responding to global agendas.

*Special features of the 2019 Forum.* The diversity of voices at the Forum was a notable feature this year, as was the large Japanese audience (4000+). The Forum benefitted from facets of Japanese and Asian culture (including Japanese drums, music, Chinese gymnasts, and a Ninja theme). A compelling feature of the closing plenary was a powerful speech by a young leader, Kim Tran of Fridays for Future Tokyo.

*Outcomes and recommendations.* The Forum will have three tangible outcomes:

First, an urgent, short document has been presented as the Forum's priority recommendations to Prime Minister Abe and other G20 leaders. This focused on five key recommendations, reflecting areas where extensive analysis and dialogue among different participants and associates supports specific recommendations. The five topics are: (a) working for peace with a new framing of religious roles in conflict and polarization; (b) a sharp focus on children backed by resources; (c) meaningful action and partnerships to protect rainforests; (d) strengthened rule of law and protection of human rights, with particular emphasis on freedom of religion or belief and action to fight against corruption; and (e) strengthened commitments to combat trafficking and modern slavery as a long-term G20 priority.

Second, a fuller set of recommendations with robust policy recommendations (supported by analytic briefs) will be prepared before the Osaka Summit. These include, alongside the five topics listed above, action on refugees and displaced populations, disaster risk reduction and resilience, and challenges and opportunities presented by aging societies. Significant discussions on education, health, cultural heritage, water and sanitation, and inclusion of women will be highlighted together with recommendations for further work to sharpen recommendations in the months ahead. The Kyoto Forum added a recommendation on nuclear disarmament, reflecting extensive religious involvement on this issue, but the G20 Interfaith Forum Association has not yet prepared an in-depth policy analysis on that topic.

And third, as has been the practice over the years, a full report will be available. This will draw on the 22 separate working sessions where specific topics were discussed, and link them to the larger plenary sessions and ongoing work and materials.

Efforts to place op-eds on central topics in the weeks ahead are underway.

In sum, the Forum reflects a remarkable and continuing partnership, crossing continents, cultures, disciplines, ideologies, and religious traditions. For the future, the intention is to continue annual Forums, adapted to the agendas and focus of the host countries, which will be Saudi Arabia in 2020, Italy in 2021, and India in 2022.

Links:

Core Recommendations: <https://bit.ly/2Y5osTu>

Policy Briefs: <https://www.g20interfaith.org/2019-policy-recommendations/>

Panelists and Speakers: <https://www.g20interfaith.org/speakers/>

Full Program: <https://www.g20interfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final-2019.pdf>

G20 Interfaith Forum Advisory Council: <https://www.g20interfaith.org/our-council/>