



9TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

SECURING PEOPLE'S WELLBEING AND PLANETARY SUSTAINABILITY

JANUARY 24, 2023
8:30 AM - 1:30 PM ET



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**NINTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND
FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Theme: Securing People's Wellbeing and Planetary Sustainability

24 January 2023 | 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM EST

Virtual Event

PROGRAM

8:15 Zoom opens for participants to join

8:30 WELCOME

Video Introduction to the Ninth Symposium

8:45 HIGH-LEVEL OPENING SESSION

The moderator will introduce the theme of the symposium, and the 9th Symposium will open with representatives of the three major organizing components of the annual symposium—UN official, faith-based representative and member state providing their perspectives on the theme of human security.

CO-MODERATORS:

- Rev. Dr. Liberato C. Bautista (Assistant General Secretary for United Nations and International Affairs, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church and Chair, 2023 Symposium Planning Team)
- Ms. Nika Saeedi (PVE Team Leader, Crisis Bureau, UNDP; Global focal point on Religion, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and Hate Speech for UNDP)

SPEAKERS:

- H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense of Ecuador and former President of the UN General Assembly)
- H. E. Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia (Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer, Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations)
- Ms. Ulrika Modéer (UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP)
- Ambassador (ret.) Sergio Duarte (Former United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and President of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs)
- Bishop Dr. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm (Moderator, Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria)
- Priestess Beatriz Schulthess (Founder and President of Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council and Member of Qulla/Kolla Nation and Co-President, Religions for Peace)

9:25 FRAMING HUMAN SECURITY AS SHARED SECURITY FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

Conceptual and practical convergences on the topic of human security abound between faith communities and the UN System. These convergences also illustrate the complexity of what security, in its multiple dimensions, entails.

MODERATOR:

- Prof. Dr. Azza Karam (Secretary General, Religions for Peace)

SPEAKERS:

- Mr. Samuel Rizk (Head, Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Responsible Institutions (CPPRI) Team, Crisis Bureau, UNDP)
- Ms. Njoki Rahab Kinyanjui (Senior Advisor, Policy, UN Mission in South Sudan {UNMISS}, Former Chief of Gender Unit & Senior Gender Adviser, UN Dept. of Peace Operations) **TBC**
- Mr. Anwar Khan (President, Islamic Relief USA)
- Mr. Garry Jacobs (President and CEO of World Academy of Art and Science and Chairman and CEO the World University Consortium)

- Ms. Sophia Farion (Senior Program Officer for Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders {GNWP})
- Dr. Anne Mette Fisker-Nielsen (Associate Professor, Soka University)

10:45 BREAK

Cultural intermission: Cello piece by Michael Fitzpatrick
90-second video on human security

11:00 SEEING AND DOING HUMAN SECURITY

This session will highlight actual activities and initiatives that are focused on and promote human security. It will demonstrate how faith based actors, UN entities and Member States see and work for human security.

MODERATOR:

- Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria (General Secretary of ACT Alliance)

SPEAKERS:

- Ambassador Amanda Ellis (Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations in Geneva and Professor, Arizona State University)
- Ms. Mehrnaz Mostafavi (Chief of the Human Security Unit {HSU} and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security {UNTFHS})
- Dr. Jerry White (Executive Director, United Religions Initiative {URI})
- Mr. Pak Syamsul (Senior Technical Advisor, UNDP Indonesia) **TBC**
- Mr. Asif Ali Sherazi (Country Director Islamic Relief Pakistan)
- Atty. Salma Pir Rasul (Executive Director, Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy and Director, Islamic Law Studies, University of the Philippines Law Center {UPLC})
- Mr. Nelson Ngalle (Coordinator, National Peace Project, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon)

12:20 KEY LEARNINGS

This session will highlight key learnings that relate to work for human security and the roles different actors can play. It will address in concrete ways the development of “unity, solidarity, international cooperation and global coordinated action” necessary to make human security real.

MODERATOR:

- Ms. Audrey Kitagawa, JD (President/Founder, International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation and President, Light of Awareness International Spiritual Family)

SPEAKERS:

- Prof. Dr. PL de Silva (Adjunct Professor, UN Studies, Seton Hall University)
- Dr. Elizabeta Kitanovic (Executive Secretary, Human Rights, Council of European Churches)
- Ms Ruby Kholifah (Secretary General of The Asian Muslim Action Network {AMAN}, Country representative of AMAN Indonesia)

12:50 CONCLUDING SESSION

This concluding session will provide key ideas about what needs to be done next, and is envisioned to inspire action and impart a strong call for collaboration and partnership on the key learnings from the symposium.

CO-MODERATORS:

- Rev. Dr. Liberato C. Bautista (Assistant General for United Nations and International Affairs, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church and Chair, 2023 Symposium Planning Team)

- Ms. Nika Saeedi (PVE Team Leader, Crisis Bureau, UNDP; Global focal point on Religion, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and Hate Speech for UNDP)

SPEAKERS:

- Ms. Nika Saeedi (PVE Team Leader, Crisis Bureau, UNDP; Global focal point on Religion, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and Hate Speech for UNDP)
- Mr. Jonathan Granoff (Senior Advisor and Representative to the United Nations of the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates)
- Dr. Ganoune Diop (Director, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, Seventh-day Adventist Church)

1:30 CLOSE

CO-ORGANIZERS AND PARTNER OF THE 2023 SYMPOSIUM

Religious and Faith Based Organizations: ACT Alliance | General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church | Islamic Relief | Religions for Peace | Seventh-Day Adventist Church | Soka Gakkai International | United Religions Initiative | World Council of Churches

United Nations: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) acting on behalf of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (currently chaired by UNFPA, United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and the UN Alliance of Civilizations and includes 27 entities within the UN System. See [IATF-Religion and SDGs](#)).

Partner: The [Human Security for All \(HS4A\)](#) campaign led by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security and the World Academy of Art and Science.

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

The Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs was initiated by the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Council of Churches. Today, the symposium co-organizing entities and partners have grown to include denominational, ecumenical, multireligious and faith-based groups including long-time co-organizers ACT Alliance, Religions for Peace, Islamic Relief-USA, and the United Religions Initiative. From the third year (2017) of the symposium, the Interfaith Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development - currently representing 27 entities within the UN System – cooperated as a co-organizer. The Symposium was conceived as a space to focus on how religious and partner faith-based organizations could reinforce engagement around shared concerns of human dignity, human rights and sustainable development, in particular as regards UN the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)/Agenda 2030. The Symposium is organized as an annual event for conversation to identify and deepen the multifaceted, multi-layered, multidimensional, and multidisciplinary aspects of the permanent general theme on human rights and human dignity and follow that with an annual thematic focus that would enjoin the organizers to build upon previous conversations and continue to heighten intellectual engagement, create practical forms of action, and develop mechanisms for collaboration among symposium organizers, partners and participants. The Symposium is held annually on a date in January close to the birthday (January 15) of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

CONCEPT NOTE

NINTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

8:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Virtual Event

I. HISTORY OF THE SYMPOSIUM:

The 2023 Symposium will be the ninth in a series of symposiums held annually since 2015.

Nine years ago (2015), faith-based partners came together to launch an annual symposium around the intersections of religion and international affairs, intentionally including the participation of UN member states and UN System entities. From the second symposium (2016), partnership with the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development was instituted with the intention of organizing an annual policy dialogue between the UN System, member states, faith actors and wider civil society on critical issues of the day. Over the years, the sponsorship of the Symposium has included an increasing range of religious and faith traditions.

The Symposia series features a theme each year that both relates to current policy debates and intersects with the concerns and contributions of faith-based actors working in international affairs. The first Symposium in 2015 established the framework for all future symposia with a focus on human rights and human dignity. Such focus will undergird all symposiums in the series.

The second Symposium focused on the prevention of atrocity crimes and violent extremism (2016), the third focused on just, inclusive and sustainable peace (2017), the fourth focused on migration and displacement (2018) and the fifth (2019) covered the intersections of these four themes with key aspects of economic justice and financing for sustainable development, positing an economy of life. The sixth (2020) was intended to reflect on the planned processes to review progress 25 years after the Beijing Platform for Action and the state of multilateralism at the 75th anniversary of the UN, but was postponed due to unforeseen circumstances. Given the crucial importance of the theme, a smaller but well-resourced workshop for faith-based organizations was organized in its stead.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the seventh symposium was convened as a virtual symposium (2021) and focused on accelerating gender equality, equity and justice. The succeeding 2022 symposium was also held virtually on a theme focused on “mobilizing moral influence and governance to end the systemic injustices of racism, the legacy of colonialism and slavery.

The Symposiums have been timed to be held in January of every year in close proximity to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday to help commemorate the values and legacy he bequeathed to the world. The Symposium is also a contribution to the global observance of the World Interfaith Harmony Week that is celebrated annually in the first week of February of each year.

The symposium in 2023 is co-organized by the following groups and their representatives compose the planning team. They are, from the faith-based side, the [ACT Alliance](#), [General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church](#), [Islamic Relief USA](#), [Religions for Peace](#), [Seventh-day Adventist Church](#), [Soka Gakkai International](#), [United Religions Initiative](#), [World Council of Churches](#), and the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) on behalf of the [Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development](#).

The [Human Security for All \(HS4A\)](#) campaign led by the [United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security](#) and the [World Academy of Art and Science](#) is a partner.

II. 2023 THEME: SECURING PEOPLES' WELLBEING AND PLANETARY SUSTAINABILITY

A. HIGH-LEVEL WELCOME

The 9th symposium will be opening with a high-level panel that represents the three major organizing components of the annual symposium—UN official, faith-based representative and member state. The moderator will introduce the theme of the symposium, both in the context of the history of the symposium and the urgency and saliency of the current theme.

B. FRAMING HUMAN SECURITY AS SHARED SECURITY FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

Conceptual and practical convergences on the topic of human security abound between faith communities and the UN System. The convergences—in discourse and practice—also illustrate the complexity of what security entails—be it national security, human security, or people's security. Add to that complexity the urgency of conceiving security beyond human needs into planetary security that speaks to the intricate relation between people and the planet and their survival and sustainability in a common ecosystem. The UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), refers both to the wellbeing of peoples and the ecological integrity of the planet. In Agenda 2030, sustainable development is people-centered and planetary in scope. The attainment of sustainable development is co-constitutive with the attainment of peace and prosperity. This symposium intends to scale up support for the achievement of the SDGs by faith-based groups.

Faith based organizations have rich and diverse histories of discourse and practice demonstrating the nexus of human development, humanitarian work, and peace and human rights advocacy. Such discourses and practices affirm a people-centered, community-focused and human rights-based approach to peace and human security. The religious, ecumenical and interfaith character of the symposium will ensure presentation of the diversity of both discourse (theological, ethical, moral) and practice (advocacy, campaigns, projects) on human security. The unique contribution of this and previous symposiums in this series is the intentional exploration of faith-based understandings and their complementarity with UN normative frameworks and standards, like the Agenda 2030, the UNDP reports, and UN debates and reports of the UN Secretary-General on human security (see Part V. Readings).

The symposium is structured in such a way that faith-based organizations, UN System entities, including member states contribute to the development of “unity, solidarity, international cooperation and global coordinated action” on the thematic focus on human security, bearing in mind the overarching themes of all symposia in this series which is human dignity and human rights. The symposium will be a venue to illustrate how both conceptual and practical convergences around human security are exhibited in actual projects, programs, advocacies and campaigns by the participating entities, including the intersections of human security with sustainable development, durable peace, and gender justice.

Any discussion about human security necessarily implicates human development. Put in another way, human security and human development must be pursued simultaneously. The symposium will contribute to the bridging of the disconnect between human development and human security. It will demonstrate human security as shared security.

The inequalities unraveled by the Covid-19 pandemic and the varied forms of human induced activities, especially climate change, illustrate the urgency of revisiting the nexus between people's needs, wellbeing,

physical integrity and human dignity and the planet's sustainability and ecological integrity. Such discussion necessarily implicates a variety of existential threats to human and planetary security that must be laid bare and addressed by the symposium.

In fact, UNDP's 2021-2022 Human Development Report, "Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World", argues that layers of uncertainty are stacking up and interacting to unsettle life in unprecedented ways. The last two years have had a devastating impact for billions of people around the world, when crises like COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine hit back-to-back, and interacted with sweeping social and economic shifts, dangerous planetary changes, and massive increases in polarization. Human development has fallen back to its 2016 levels, reversing much of the progress towards the SDGs. There are many reasons for these devastating trends, including how insecurity and polarization are feeding off each other today to prevent the solidarity and collective action we need to tackle crises at all levels.

This symposium will explore how to better address these threats and more through the discourse and practice of faith-based organizations and partners in the UN System, including member-states, civil society actors, and other international and regional organizations committed to human and people's security. The symposium will present grassroots perspectives, experiences and voices from the ground that will give evidence to what makes them secure or insecure and therefore what needs to be done.

C. SESSION ON SEEING AND DOING HUMAN SECURITY

This session will highlight activities, events, programs, campaigns and the like that demonstrate how human security works and is operationalized in a variety of settings by a variety of actors. Panelists will come from the three categories representing the tripartite character of the symposium's collaborators.

1. How do faith-based organizations see and do human security?

Much is needed in understanding human security. But much more is required to realize it in the day to day lives of peoples and their communities. The UN General Assembly Resolution 66/290 speaks of human security as "an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people" and thus calls for "people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented response that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people." (UN Trust Fund for Human Security).

The role of religion in realizing human security is not alien to the work of faith-based organizations. The symposium will take a look at how religious, theological, ecumenical and interfaith groups have translated the theme into actual advocacy on the ground. Themes predicated by concern for human security abound in religious discussion and work, including food security, water security, economic security, climate security, health security, common security, digital and information security, and more. These themes, not exhaustive in this list, demonstrate the complexity of both theory and practice of human security. The symposium planners are all too aware of such complexity even as they are focused on specific themes for this symposium. This segment will spotlight how lives of peoples and communities are affected and changed by what faith groups do.

2. How do U.N. partners and member states see and do human security?

The themes identified with work by faith-based organizations are not alien to UN partners. The active collaboration by faith-based organizations, UN partners and Member-States underscores the concern for joint and concerted action and transformative solidarity among all actors. This and eight previous symposiums prove both the importance of FBO and UN partnership and collaboration.

The 2022 Special Report of the UNDP, called “New Threats to Human Security on the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity” is timely for the purposes of the symposium. The Special Report reminds us that when introduced in 1994, the “human security approach refocused the security debate from territorial security to people’s security”, emphasizing “the importance of everyone’s right to freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom from indignity”, and highlighting “the close connection among security, development and the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities.” New data and analysis in the Special Report shows that people’s sense of safety and security is at a low in almost every country, including the richest countries, despite years of upwards development success.

Today, accelerating planetary and social changes have given birth to a new generation of threats, which span borders and foster insecurity in fragile settings and beyond. In this context, the Special Report offers a new framework for action, adding “solidarity” to the existing pillars “protection” and “empowerment”. Threats to human and planetary security abound, and the symposium will look into them, including but not limited to what the Special Report calls the “four threats to human security superimposed on the Anthropocene context: “the downsides of digital technology, violent conflict, horizontal inequalities, and evolving challenges to healthcare systems.” (Overview, 2022 UNDP Special Report on Human Security)

D. KEY LEARNINGS

Identifying the normative corpus of international law dealing with security and doing the same in the body of available religious, ecumenical and interfaith teachings on human security will be critical in the symposium’s aim to contribute to the reorientation of both discourse and practice from territorial security (state constructs of national security, for example) into viable human security (securing the needs and wellbeing of peoples and the integrity of the planet and the whole ecosystem).

The symposium will give time to the demonstration by FBOs and UN partners of ongoing discourses and practices of human security that prove the viability and necessity of human security as a pivotal and overarching principle for “peace and prosperity for people and the planet”.

III. STRUCTURE, FORMAT AND LEADERSHIP OF THE SYMPOSIUM

A. High Level Welcome:

The formal welcome session will feature a high level representative from three entities—faith-based and IATF-nominated speakers from the UN System and UN member state. It will focus on reaffirming the importance of the symposium in general and the urgency and relevance of the current theme.

B. Framing Session:

The framing session will be held in a conversational format involving a moderator and speakers representing faith-based leaders, officials from the UN System, Member-States, and other experts in the human security field. (Part II.A)

C. Session on Seeing and Doing Human Security:

This session will highlight activities, events, programs, campaigns and the like that demonstrate and are focused on human security. Panelists will come from the three categories representing the tripartite character of the symposium’s collaborators. The session will address the following questions:

- 1. How do faith-based organizations see and do human security?** Panelists will come from religious, ecumenical and interfaith organizations. (Part II.B)
- 2. How do UN partners see and do human security?** Panelists will come from UN entities and member-states. (Part II.C)

3. How do Member States see and do human security?

Panelists will come from UN partners and member-states. (Part II.C)

D. Session on Key Learnings: (practical experiences from different levels—grassroots, national, regional, multiregional/international)

This session serves as the learning and hearing section of the symposium. The chair and panelists will attempt to retell what they heard are key learnings from the symposium and relate that to the roles played by religious and multilateral processes and entities—both intergovernmental and religious/ecumenical/interfaith. The session will address in concrete ways the development of “unity, solidarity, international cooperation and global coordinated action” necessary to make human security real. (Part II.D)

This panel session will be interactive. Panelists will be asked to speak about actual, practical, and good and beneficial practices of UN and FBOs working together collaboratively. Emphasis will be given to distinguishing as well as moving from national security to human security into shared security for people and the planet. Session chair will draw wisdom from the participants by eliciting examples of ways of seeing and doing human security different from already identified ones in the previous sessions above.

E. Concluding Session: This concluding session will feature speakers from all of the symposium entities—faith-based groups, UN system, governments— who will provide key ideas about what needs to be done next. This session is envisioned to inspire action and impart a strong call for collaboration and partnership on the key learnings from the symposium.

IV. PARTICIPATION

A. Invitations will be sent to various constituencies and networks of the collaborating symposium partners. This includes FBOs, civil society organizations, member states and their permanent missions, and UN agencies through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development.

B. The event will be hybrid but all participants will be required to register electronically. Sessions will be broadcast live via YouTube channel to allow the general public to join virtually while those registered through intentional invitation will join interactively.

C. Interactive modes of communication will be employed so that panelists and participants all contribute to the (exhaustion) elaboration of a complex theme and the identification of good practices on achieving human security, and all within the timeframe of the symposium. Moderators of panels must ensure a question and answer segment in their sessions.

V. DOCUMENTATION

Following in the tradition of previous symposiums, a symposium packet will be produced electronically and distributed in advance. It will include this concept note, a short bibliography of reference materials to prepare participants for discussion, and a list of biographies of panel moderators and speakers. A weblink to the event will contain the symposium packet as well as post-event documentation of presentations and statements. As a hybrid event, various social media platforms will be used to simulcast and broadcast the symposium.

VI. READINGS

U.N. RESOURCES

1. UNDP Special Report: New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity (2022) (<https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210014007/read>;

<https://www.undp.org/somalia/publications/new-threats-human-security-anthropocene-demanding-greater-solidarity>)

2. UNDP Human Development Report 2021-2022: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World

<https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22>

3. UNDP Human Development Report: New Dimensions of Human Security

(1994)<https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents//hdr1994encompletenostatspdf.pdf>

4. What is Human Security (UN Trust Fund for Human Security) <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/What-is-Human-Security.pdf>

5. UN General Assembly Resolutions and Debates, and Reports of the Secretary-General on Human Security

<https://www.un.org/humansecurity/reports-resolutions/>

6. GA Resolution 66/290 on Human Security <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/N1147622.pdf>

7. Human Security Approach from Principles to Practice, especially the first two modules

<https://www.un.org/humansecurity/human-security-e-course/>

RELIGIOUS, ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH RESOURCES

1. Peace and Human Security, Excerpts from a lecture given by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda at the East-West Center, Hawai'i (1995)

2. Vulnerability and Security: Current challenges in security policy from an ethical and theological perspective. Prepared by the Commission on International Affairs in Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations (2015)

3. Vulnerability and Security: A Paradox Based on a Theology of Incarnation (Wanda Deifelt, 2005)

4. Religion and Human Security: A Global Perspective. Edited by James K. Wellman Jr. and Clark B. Lombardi (Oxford University Press, 2012)

5. Human Security as Shared Security: Towards Sustaining Peace and Human Wellness with Justice and Human Rights (Liberato Bautista, 2013)