



DEFENDING
RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM
FOR ALL PEOPLE,
EVERYWHERE

INTERNATIONAL
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
ASSOCIATION

SECRETARY GENERAL'S
REPORT

APRIL 2019



EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

IRLA 19th Meeting of Experts



The IRLA's 19th Meeting of Experts, held in Cordoba, Spain, brought together renowned scholars from a variety of academic disciplines to discuss religious freedom in the context of today's unprecedented global numbers of refugees and immigrants. Among the more than 20 scholars who presented papers at the meeting were: Silvio Ferrari, University of Milan; Cole Durham, Brigham Young University;

Raimundo Barreto, Princeton University; David Little, Harvard University; Rosa Maria Martínez de Codes, Complutense University; Blandine Chellini-Pont, Aix-Marseille Université; and, Nicholas P. Miller, Andrews University. Many of these papers will be published in the journal *Fides et Libertas*. At this year's meeting, the IRLA paid tribute to long-time IRLA supporter and contributor Professor Alberto de la Hera.

G20 Interfaith Forum



IRLA Secretary General Ganoune Diop was among global religious leaders who convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on September 26 for the fifth annual G20 Interfaith Forum. These yearly forums shadow the annual international “Group of Twenty” (G20) Economic Summit and

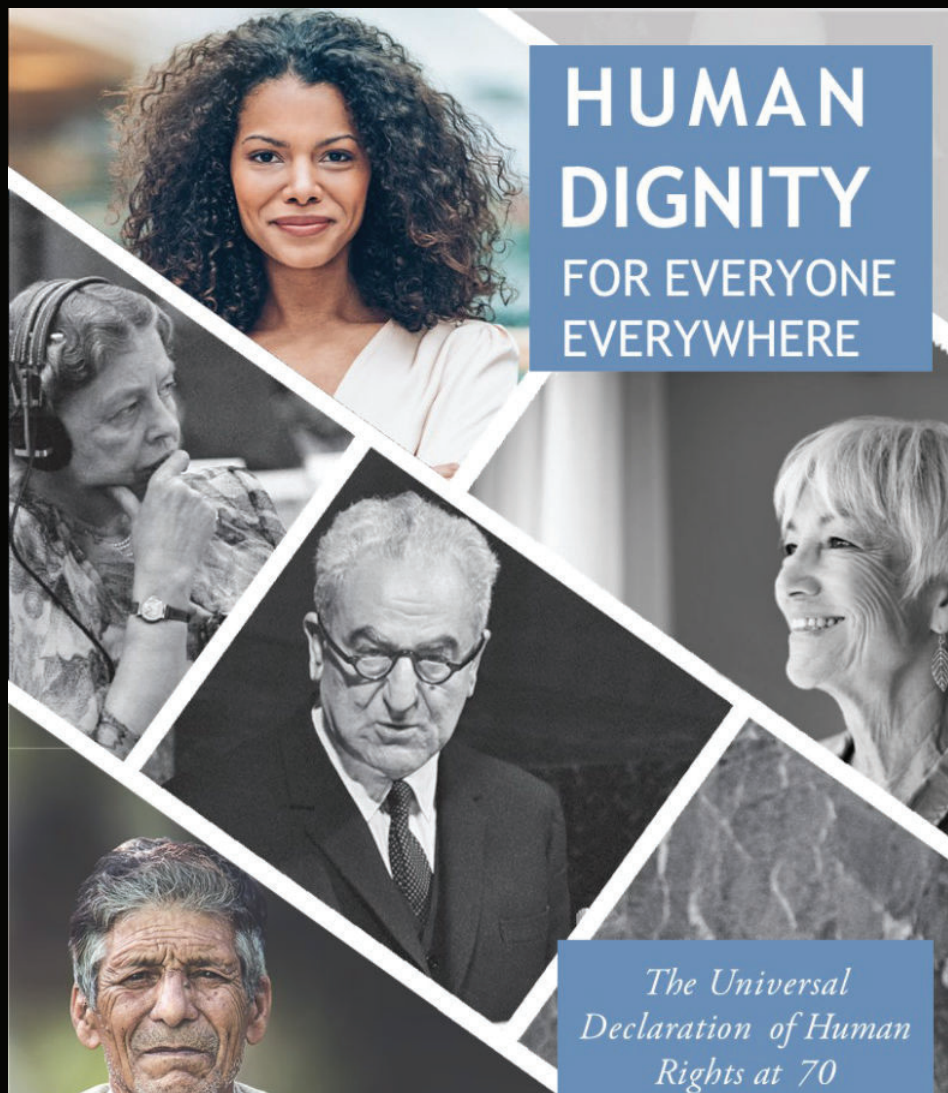
aim to strengthen the voice of the world’s faith communities in addressing global political, economic and social challenges. Dr. Diop was a plenary speaker on the first day of the event and spoke about the plight of refugee and migrant children, a group that is exceptionally vulnerable



Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity

In the face of growing challenges to traditional views about human rights, an international group of policy leaders and thinkers has issued an urgent call to refocus the conversation. Dr. Ganoune Diop, was among those who gathered in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in early December, to consider how a renewed emphasis on “human dignity” could help strengthen the international human rights narrative. On the final day of the conference, the

group issued the “Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere,” a document aimed at broadening support of human rights and emphasizing their universal and reciprocal character. The conference also commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948.



25th Anniversary Celebration IRLA Croatia

Religious liberty advocates in Croatia, representing many different faith communities and traditions, gathered recently to celebrate a special religious-freedom emphasis day. The event on January 12, 2019, was held at the University of Zagreb, and included an award ceremony. The gathering also marked the 25-

year anniversary of the launching of the Croatian Religious Liberty Association in February 1994.

Ganoune Diop was the keynote speakers and the event, which was organized by Dragutin Matak, general secretary of the Croatian Religious Liberty Association.



5th Annual United Nations Symposium



The Fifth Annual Symposium on the Role of Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs, held January 29, 2019, at the United Nations Secretariat in New York City, New York, United States, was co-organized IRLA Secretary General Ganoune Diop and focused this year on practical and ethical issues surrounding development funding. More than 300 people attended, representing both the UN community and a diverse range of organizations, including Protestant, Catholic, Islamic, and Jewish groups.

Speakers throughout the day emphasized the important role religion and faith-based organizations can play as the UN pursues its far-reaching development agenda, known as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 goals, set by the UN in 2015 as its guiding objectives for the next 15 years, encompass a range of humanitarian challenges, ranging from eradicating poverty and hunger to overcoming the scourge of illiteracy.

Inter-faith Focus on Human Rights in Finland

Kalervo Aromäki, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Finland, convened a seminar at Finland's Parliament in February this year to commemorate the United Nations' Week of Mutual Understanding. The event brought

together a wide range of denominations and faith groups. Ganoune Diop was a speaker at the event, along with Elina Vuola, an academic from the University of Helsinki, and eight members of Finland's parliament.



Global Christian Forum Leadership Committee



Ganoune Diop represented the IRLA in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the annual meeting of the Committee of the Global Christian Forum (GCF). Hosted by the Calvary Pentecostal Church and presided over by the new Secretary, Rev. Dr Casely Essamuah, Methodist Church, Ghana,

this leadership committee considered future plans and evaluated the most recent GCF event —the third global gathering held last year in Bogota, Colombia.



THE THIRD GLOBAL GATHERING

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA | 2018

United Nations Study Group for Preventing Polarization

At the invitation of Adema Dieng, United Nations Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide, Ganoune Diop presented a paper to a small group of experts gathered at the United Nations in New York. The event, held March 4 and 5, 2019, was focused on the theme: “Preventing polarization, building bridges and fostering inclusivity: the role of religious actors.” Dr. Diop’s presentation will be published as part of a compilation of the papers delivered at the

event. Other presenters included Azza Karam, Senior Advisor on Culture, United Nations Population Fund, Ruth Messinger, President, American Jewish World Service, Simona Cruciani, Political Affairs Officer, United Nations Office on Genocide prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and Elizabeta Kitanovic - Executive Secretary for Human Rights and Communication, Church and Society Commission, Council of European Churches.

