



**THE MILLENNIUM WORLD PEACE SUMMIT
OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS**

For Immediate Release

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**LAUNCHING OF WORLD COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO
SPEARHEAD EFFORTS IN REDUCING REGIONAL CONFLICTS**

Sense of urgency pervades leaders who will attend the World Council of Religious Leaders launching, which is being organized to mobilize religious leaders to work with the United Nations

Bangkok—[June 12, 2002]-Over 100 pre-eminent religious leaders representing the major faith traditions and all regions of the world will gather in Bangkok, June 12-14, to establish an unprecedented World Council of Religious Leaders, specifically created to become an active partner with the United Nations in reducing conflict, poverty and environmental degradation. The first priority of the Council will be to determine concrete ways that religious leaders can reduce tensions in current areas of conflict including Asia and the Middle East.

This initiative is a direct result of the successful Millennium World Peace Summit which brought over 2000 religious leaders to the United Nations in August 2000 to explore ways that leaders could support UN initiatives. The need to form a Council that would actively intervene in conflict areas of the world was recommended by the participants of the Millennium World Peace Summit. This first meeting of the Council in Bangkok will begin to formulate the plan. The Crown Prince of Thailand, His Royal Highness Maha Vajiralongkorn, will preside over the opening session of the meeting which will be held at Buddhamonthon on June 12. His Excellency, Mr. Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary of

UN ESCAP will address the opening plenary on June 13 at the United Nations in Bangkok, Thailand.

“There is a sense of somber urgency among the leaders who will participate in the conference,” notes Bawa Jain, Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit. “The use of religion to promote divisiveness and violence must be countered by religious leaders from all traditions willing to become actively engaged in peace building. It is our hope that the conference will lead to specific recommendations for religious leadership involvement in the crises confronting the world today.”

Among the participants planning to attend the conference are:

H.H. Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, Vice-Supreme Patriarch of the Kingdom of Thailand

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Israel

H.E. Ayatollah Mahmoud Mohammadi Araghi, President of the Islamic Culture and Relationship Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran

H.E. Kamel AL-Sharif, Secretary General, International Islamic Council For Daw’ a and Relief

Reverend Joan Brown Campbell, Director, Department of Religion Chautauqua Institution

H.H. Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Chairman, All India Movement for Seva

Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Founder and President, Appeal of Conscience Foundation

Most Venerable Master Sheng Yen, Founder, Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association

Venerable Phra Thepsophon, Rector, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

Right Reverend T.J. Tshawane, Moderator of Protestant Churches, South Africa

His Excellency Vincent Concessao, Archbishop of New Delhi

The meeting was organized by the Millennium World Peace Summit and is hosted by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University with the active support of UNESCAP of Bangkok.

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The Millennium World Peace Summit **took place August 28-31, 2000 at the United Nations. It was the first time in history, religious and spiritual leaders of the world’s diverse faith traditions came together on such a large scale—more than 1,000 leaders attended. The Summit opened at the UN General Assembly Hall with**

Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressing the leaders. The goal of the Summit was to identify ways that the worldwide religious and spiritual communities can work together as an interfaith ally with the United Nations on specific peace, poverty and environmental initiatives. In addition to the signing of *The Commitment to Global Peace*, another outcome of the World Peace Summit is the formation of a World Council of Religious Leaders, which will be available as a resource to the United Nations and governments in conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

- June 12 Buddhamonthon
**A media van will leave The Imperial Queen's Park Hotel at 7:30 a.m.
 199 Sukhumvit Soi 22**
- June 13 Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand
 7:30 p.m. Informal Briefing
**Penthouse, Maneeya Center Building, 518/5 Ploenchit Road, adjacent
 to BTS Skytrain, Chidlom Station Tel: 652-0580-1**
- June 14 United Nations ESCAP
 12:15 p.m. Press Conference
**United Nations Conference Center, Theater
 UN Building
 Rajdamnern Nok Avenue**
- June 14 Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand
 2:00 p.m. Press Conference

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