

RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE A VOICE AT THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Millennium World Peace Summit brings Religious and Spiritual Leaders to address World Economic Forum's Closing Plenary in Davos, Switzerland

"World's Religions: Where are the peacemakers?"

Davos, Switzerland (January 28-31) – For the first time in the World Economic Forum's 31-year history, a large delegation of religious leaders were invited to participate in the Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. They have been engaged in intense discussion on how ethics and morality can guide the globalization process, calling for a humane, just and compassionate economic order. They have also been discussing how religion can better promote the values of mutual respect and understanding in order to prevent violent conflict. At the conclusion of two days of discussion, the religious leaders issued a statement committing themselves to working with the Forum on an ongoing basis to foster dialogue with the business and political leaders. They agreed to initiate a series of committed global dialogues to see how they can be a bridge for some of the divisions created over issues of globalization.

The invitation to religious leaders to participate in this year's World Economic Forum reflects the growing recognition that religion plays a critical role in the global agenda. Forum leaders are calling for an integrated framework that includes business and political leaders, civil society and religion to address the major challenges facing the human community. Religious leaders stressed their aim to be the voice for all sectors of society and to foster an inclusive rather than exclusive economic order.

The closing session entitled, "**The World's Religions: Where Are The Peacemakers?**", will be chaired by the President of the World Economic Forum, **Professor Klaus Schwab** and will be introduced by **Bawa Jain**, Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit. Panelists for the closing plenary included:

- **Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau** – Chief Rabbi of Israel – Judaism (Israel)
- **His Eminence Archbishop Diarmuid Martin** – Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
- **His Eminence Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane** – Archbishop of Capetown – Anglican (South Africa)
- **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar** – The Art of Living Foundation – Hindu (India)
- **Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh** – Vietnamese Buddhist Leader – Buddhist (France)
- **Sheikh Zafzaf** – President of the Permanent Committee of Al-Ahar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions – Islam (Egypt)

Presenting at other sessions were Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks – Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth (United Kingdom) and His Excellency Dr. Mustafa Ceric – The Grand Mufti of Bosnia (Sarajevo).

"The work of these leaders in rebuilding faith and unity within their own societies has prepared them for this historic gathering at Davos," says Bawa Jain, Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit. "We are grateful to Professor Schwab and the World Economic Forum for acknowledging the role religious leaders play in the world arena. We hope to use this forum and the relationships fostered here to launch a series of initiatives worldwide."

The Millennium World Peace Summit took place August 28-31, 2000 in New York City. The Summit opened at the UN with Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressing the leaders and continued with the religious leaders engaging in working group sessions to devise ongoing initiatives to address regional conflict, poverty and environmental problems. In addition to the signing of *The Commitment to Global Peace*, another outcome of the World Peace Summit is the formation of an "Advisory Council" of religious leaders who would be available as a resource to the United Nations in its conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

The Summit represented the first time in history that religious and spiritual leaders of the world's diverse faith traditions came together to discuss forging a partnership of peace with the United Nations and to identify ways that the worldwide religious communities can work together on specific peace, poverty and environmental initiatives.

The Commitment to Global Peace condemns all violence in the name of religion and makes a strong appeal to all religious, ethnic and national groups to seek a cessation of all hostilities. The signing of the Commitment signifies an unprecedented collaboration among religious and spiritual leaders to commit to cooperate in building peaceful societies.

The Commitment to Global Peace was developed with the contribution of the Summit's International Advisory Council and with input from the Scholars Group at Harvard Divinity School and other Summit strategic partners in the months preceding the Religious Summit. It was then circulated among religious leaders for their input and changes. The Commitment includes input from all the major religious faiths.

Participants:

- Bawa Jain** – Secretary General, The Millennium World Peace Summit, USA
- Dena Merriam** – Vice-Chair, The Millennium World Peace Summit, USA
- His Grace Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane** – Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa
- Chief Rabbi David Rosen** – Director, Anti-Defamation League, Israel
- Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau** – Chief Rabbi of Israel
- Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks** – Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, United Kingdom
- Sir Sigmund Sternberg** – Chairman, Three Faiths Forum, United Kingdom
- Grand Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat** – Chief Rabbi of France
- His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar** – Founder, The Art of Living Foundation, India
- Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh** – Vietnamese Buddhist Leader, France

- Sheikh M.A. Zaki Badawi** – Director, The Islamic Academy,
United Kingdom
- His Excellency Aly El Samman** – Vice President, Permanent
Committee of Al-Azhar for
Dialogue with Monotheistic
Religions, Egypt
- His Excellency Sheikh Zafzaf** – President, Permanent
Committee of Al-Azhar for
Dialogue with the Monotheistic
Religions, Egypt
- His Excellency Archbishop Diarmuid Martin** – Bishop, Secretary of the
Pontifical Council for Justice and
Peace
- His Excellency Mustafa Ceric** – Grand Mufti of Bosnia
- David Little** – President, Harvard Divinity
School, USA