

## ACHIEVEMENTS 2009

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### TRANSFORMING CONFLICT

**ISRAEL AND PALESTINE.** Humiliation, vulnerability, occupation and rockets fired at Israeli citizens were all part of the context for war in Gaza, which erupted on 27 December 2008, killing more than 1,300 Palestinians and thirteen Israelis. A formal ceasefire was called on 18 January 2009. **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, on 5 January 2009 called for an end to the violence, and *Religions for Peace* youth from Israel and Palestine met in Paris to call for dialogue and peace.

**SRI LANKA.** Sri Lanka, a nation with diverse religious heritages, suffered nearly fifty years of civil strife. About 120 senior religious leaders and others representing Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and other traditions from Sri Lanka and Thailand gathered in Bangkok on 29 October 2009 to advance peace. The Sri Lankan delegation represented the Sri Lanka Council of *Religions for Peace*, and the local host was the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Council of Thailand; it was the first time the two councils had met together. [READ MORE](#)



**HOLY LAND.** The *Religions for Peace* Middle East/North Africa Council on 3 April 2009 called for a re-starting of the peace process in the Holy Land, including: encouraging the engagement of senior religious leaders in the search for peace, providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, ensuring respect for democratic elections in the region, and preserving Jerusalem as a holy city that should be accessible to all believers. [READ MORE](#)

**AFRICA.** *Religions for Peace*-International cooperated with *Religions for Peace*-Africa to advance multi-religious conflict transformation in the Horn of Africa and ongoing multi-religious peacebuilding efforts in West Africa and the Great Lakes Region, including a special initiative in Burundi. Inter-religious Councils in more than 20 African nations participated in these conflict and peace building processes.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN.** *Religions for Peace* and UNICEF jointly launched a multi-year project that aims to strengthen inter-religious mechanisms and engagement of religious communities to protect children affected by conflict. A joint stakeholders' meeting for the first of the pilot projects was convened on 17–22 April 2009 by UNICEF and *Religions for Peace* in the Philippines.

### DISARMAMENT

**LAND MINES.** *Religions for Peace* actively participated in the Second Review Conference of the Mine Ban Treaty held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 30 November to 4 December 2009. This is the second review conference for the Mine Ban Treaty, which entered into force ten years ago. It bans the use, production, transfer, and production of anti-personnel landmines, as well as obligates States Parties to destroy stockpiles, clear the land, and assist survivors.

**NUCLEAR WEAPONS.** To make the voices of faith communities heard at high-level disarmament dialogues, a delegation from *Religions for Peace* served as a multi-religious representative at the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. The consultations were held from 4–15 May 2009 at United Nations headquarters in New York. In addition, the delegation met with Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba of Hiroshima.

**SMALL ARMS.** One thousand people are killed daily by small arms, and US\$1 billion in small arms are traded illegally each year, according to the International Action Network on Small Arms. The “Conference of Religious Leaders on Conventional Weapons: Small Arms and Landmines” helped strengthen disarmament activities conducted by faith communities in Africa. In addition, *Religions for Peace* worked to help end the use and trade of small arms in Bogotá, Colombia, in two initiatives. First, *Religions for Peace* participated in the Latin American meeting of the Gothenburg Process on 26–28 May 2009—an ecumenical initiative that aims to raise the understanding and knowledge of the ethical challenges posed by the small arms trade by encouraging constructive dialogue with the defense industry. Following the Gothenburg Process, *Religions for Peace* led an interactive training session with local religious leaders on the issue of small arms and landmines, the international treaties seeking to eliminate their use, and the stories that survivors have to tell.

## ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

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**ARMS DOWN!** United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has warned that global military spending now tops \$1.4 trillion per year while basic development needs remain unfunded. To help address this disparity, the global multi-religious campaign on disarmament was launched by the *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network in San José, Costa Rica, on 7–8 November 2009. More than a 120 young religious leaders of different faiths from forty-nine countries outlined their strategies for meeting the campaign’s three goals: abolishing nuclear weapons, stopping the proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons, and redirecting at least 10 percent of military expenditure to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) by 2015. The campaign launch was organized by *Religions for Peace* in partnership with the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress and the University for Peace. [READ MORE](#)



**RESTORING DIGNITY.** The *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network has launched the “RESTORING DIGNITY: End Violence Against Women” initiative, which invites faith-based organizations, religious leaders and communities to mobilize their moral authority and spiritual resources to raise awareness about eliminating violence against women. Actions include: signing and collecting signatures for an interfaith pledge; mobilizing youth to participate in an interfaith youth poster competition; organizing a spiritual service, prayer or retreat; advocating to the UN and local and national government leaders; sharing a survivor’s story; and organizing an educational or awareness raising event. [READ MORE](#)

## POVERTY

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**G8.** In response to the ongoing global financial crisis, more than eighty senior religious leaders appealed to the Group of 8 (G8) governments to address the root causes of the crisis and help the world’s poorest citizens who are most devastatingly affected. The religious leaders met in L’Aquila, Italy, on 8–10 June 2009 in advance of the G8 meeting; the meeting site was chosen as a gesture of solidarity for the medieval town, which suffered a massive earthquake in April 2009. The religious leaders addressed the G8’s main issues for 2009, including the availability of water, the right to food, health, education, peace and security. [READ MORE](#)

**WOMEN, FAITH, AND DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE.** *Religions for Peace* played a leadership role at the International Colloquium on Development and Women’s Empowerment, a special initiative hosted by H.E. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, in Monrovia, Liberia, on 7–9 March 2009. *Religions for Peace* is a co-founder of the Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA), which made a central presentation at the colloquium. The Liberian Women of Faith Network joined with local development partners to form the WFDA-Liberia chapter.

## HEALTH

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**HIV AND AIDS.** *Religions for Peace* and its affiliates in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development, Dialogue and Action) and Tanzania (*Religions for Peace* Tanzania) completed the first of a three-year, \$4 million grant from the US Government. The grant is from the New Partners Initiative of the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. [READ MORE](#)



## CLIMATE CHANGE

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**HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE.** *Religions for Peace* played a leadership role in placing the voices of senior religious leaders and communities at the center of high-level dialogue on climate change during the opening of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2009. On 23 September, *Religions for Peace* co-hosted the High-Level Consultation of Senior Religious Leaders, Government Representatives, and Representatives of the United Nations. This consultation of senior religious leaders advocated that governments commit to an ambitious, fair, and binding outcome document at the Copenhagen, Denmark, climate conference in December. Senior religious leaders advanced the dialogue with policy makers and the media. [READ MORE](#)



**UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT.** Three *Religions for Peace* Co-Presidents—**H.E. Dr. Mustafa Cerić** of Bosnia- Herzegovina, **Ven. Dr. Grace Chung Lee** of Won Buddhism in Korea, and Church of Sweden **Archbishop Anders Wejryd** attended a multi-religious ceremony on 10 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The ceremony gathered international religious leaders in support of world political leaders’ efforts to reach agreement on climate change measures. The Office of the Archbishop and *Religions for Peace* Europe organized the event, which was coordinated by *Religions for Peace* Europe President **Rev. Dr. Hans Ucko**. The event furthered dialogue at an international conference of religious leaders on climate change in 2008 initiated by **Archbishop**

Wejryd, a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council. [READ MORE](#)

## HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENTS

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**UN DECADE.** *Religions for Peace* was among the forty-five religious, interfaith, and value-based organizations from five continents that agreed to form a coalition to advance a “United Nations Decade for Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding, and Cooperation for Peace.” Coalition members expressed the hope that the UN Sixty-Fourth General Assembly, which began its deliberations in September 2009, will approve a resolution establishing such a decade from 2011–2020. **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, chairs the Coalition Steering Committee.

**WORLD CONGRESS OF MUSLIM PHILANTHROPISTS.** *Religions for Peace* was an official program partner at the Second World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists (WCMP), held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 22–23 March 2009, at which Muslim leaders explored strategic ways to address global development challenges. The Congress is a high-level network of donors and foundations established to promote informed and effective giving. **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, gave a keynote address at the Congress, “Confronting Global Challenges: The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation for Peace.” In addition, *Religions for Peace* President Emeritus, **HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal**, sent a video greeting to attendees.



**ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS.** *Religions for Peace* led a session in the Second Annual Meeting of the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul, Turkey, on 6–7 April 2009, “Engaging non-state actors in resolving conflict and promoting peace and development.” The session was attended by a number of religious leaders from the Middle East and other parts of the world as well as representatives of governments, media, and other non-governmental organizations. Participants appealed to the Alliance of Civilizations to place the role of religion and religious communities higher on the agenda for the next annual meeting in Brazil in 2010.

**THIRD CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD RELIGIONS.** The Third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions was held on 1–2 July 2009 in Astana, Kazakhstan, to promote tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation. Secretary General **Dr. William F. Vendley** gave a keynote address, “The Role of Religious Leaders in Building Peace Based on Tolerance, Mutual Respect and Cooperation.” He also facilitated one of three panels, “Solidarity, Especially in Period of Crises.” Also representing *Religions for Peace* were the **Very Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky**, Moderator, and **Mr. Stein Villumstad**, Deputy Secretary General.

**CODE ON HOLY SITES.** Leaders around the world are working toward a universal code that may help protect sacred sites with the intention that the code would be adopted by a relevant United Nations body as a convention. A consultation on “Holy Places – Places for Conflict or Dialogue?” was held in Trondheim, Norway on 27–28 July 2009. The consultation, convened by the Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights and One World in Dialogue, concluded by proposing a draft “Code on Holy Sites.” Participants represented Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders from European countries and the Middle East. Representing *Religions for Peace* was Deputy Secretary General **Mr. Stein Villumstad**. *Religions for Peace* will partner in the code development process, with special emphasis on bringing perspectives from a broader range of religious traditions as the code is further advanced. [READ MORE](#)



**PARLIAMENT OF WORLD'S RELIGIONS.** *Religions for Peace* made presentations at the Fifth Parliament of the World's Religions, held 3–9 December 2009 in Melbourne, Australia. **Dr. William F. Vendley**, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace*, led several sessions including one on the role of religion in periods of mediation and in times of peacebuilding and reconciliation. More than seventy leaders from the *Religions for Peace* global coalition participated in the event. Ms. Jacqueline Ogega, Women's Program Director, participated on a panel discussing the impact of women in conflict resolution.

**FAITH-BASED FORUM.** *Religions for Peace* convened the Third Annual Forum for Faith-Based Organizations in Toronto 26–27 October 2009. Thirty participants representing twenty-five organizations from Africa, Europe, and North America shared experiences and insights in multi-religious cooperation for humanitarian relief and development. The group discussed effective methods for advocacy research and opportunities and challenges to multi-religious advocacy. Participants agreed to form a working group for humanitarian advocacy at the United Nations, to be facilitated by *Religions for Peace*.

## GOVERNANCE

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**HIS EMINENCE KIRILL, METROPOLITAN OF SMOLENSK AND KALININGRAD**, was elected head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, on 27 January 2009. He was enthroned in a ceremony in Moscow on 1 February. Patriarch Kirill is among the founding members of the *Religions for Peace* European Council of Religious Leaders (*Religions for Peace* Europe) and is a Co-President of the *Religions for Peace* World Council.

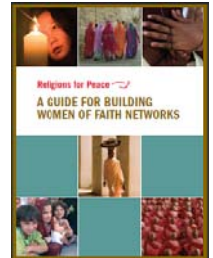
**MRS. ELENI TSAKOPOULOS-KOUNALAKIS**, a *Religions for Peace* International Trustee, was nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as the US Ambassador to the Republic of Hungary. Ms. Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis is a civic leader and philanthropist and served as president of AKT Development Corporation, one of California's largest land development firms.

**METROPOLITAN EMMANUEL** of France, Patriarchate Liaison Office of the European Union and a Co-President of *Religions for Peace*, was elected the new President of the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

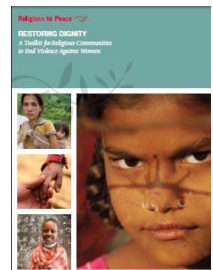
**H.E. PETER CARDINAL KODWO APPIAH TURKSON**, Catholic Archbishop of Cape Coast in Ghana and a *Religions for Peace* Honorary President, has been elevated to the high position of President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

## NEW TOOLS & PUBLICATIONS

**GUIDE | BUILDING WOMEN OF FAITH NETWORKS.** *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network has developed a Guide to Building Women of Faith Networks which affirms that women of faith draw deeply upon their reserves of agency, wisdom, and compassion to lead the world toward peace. The guide recognizes networks of women of faith as an essential infrastructure in which women can demonstrate their leadership to transform violence, promote just and harmonious societies, advance human development, and protect the earth. It offers strategies for women of faith to establish inter-faith networks in their communities, countries, and regions. The guide also offers information on how to engage women of faith networks in advocacy and action that mobilizes the social, moral, and spiritual assets of religious communities. [READ MORE](#)



**RESTORING DIGNITY: A TOOLKIT FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.** This toolkit was designed in collaboration with religious leaders from countries around the world for women and men of faith working at the community, national, or international level. It offers strategies for interfaith advocacy and action to help address violence against women. [READ MORE](#)



**2010 WOMEN'S INTERFAITH CALENDAR.** The Women's Interfaith Calendar 2010 includes quotes from women of faith around the world and a broad range of holidays from the world's major faith traditions. [READ MORE](#)

**A CALL TO ACT: ENGAGING RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES ON ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HIV.** This is a new guide co-produced by *Religions for Peace* and USAID. "Religious leaders possess an ordained role of leadership in their institutions and communities, serving as role models of care and compassion. As religions around the world speak to the inherent sacredness of human life, religious leaders and their communities have the moral authority to raise awareness about gender-based violence and a moral responsibility to prevent violence, provide support and care, and strive to transform societal or religious norms or practices that perpetuate such violence and vulnerability to HIV." [READ MORE](#)

## AWARDS

**GURU NANAK INTERFAITH PRIZE.** *Religions for Peace* was named the winner of the 2010 Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize on 19 November 2009 at New York's Hofstra University for its exceptional work in bringing together people from all faiths to address shared humanitarian goals. Co-recipient is Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Senior Rabbi at Park East Synagogue in Manhattan and president of the Appeal for Conscience Foundation, which he founded in 1965. The Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize is awarded biannually to enhance awareness of the critical role of religious dialogue in the pursuit of peace. [READ MORE](#)



**RELIGIONS FOR PEACE**—the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition—advances common action among the world's religious communities for peace. *Religions for Peace* works to transform violent conflict, advance human development, promote just and harmonious societies, and protect the earth. The global *Religions for Peace* network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than seventy national ones; and the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Youth Network.