

Communiqué

The main objective of the founding of the Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table (VICIRoTa) in 2000 was to bring together concerned individuals from the Christian and Islamic faith traditions, to address issues that confront humanity as major challenges on the way to its future. In pursuit of this objective, the Second Plenary Meeting of the Round Table was held in Vienna, from 21 to 24 February 2002, on “Intolerance and Violence. Manifestations - Reasons - Approaches” – a theme which was selected out of various other topics as identified in June 2001 by the VICIRoTa Steering Committee.

After three days of deliberations on the subject of intolerance and violence, the Round Table agreed on the following:

1. Manifestations

We are deeply concerned about increasing intolerance and use of mental, verbal, and physical violence world-wide to serve religious causes, political agenda, and economic objectives.

2. Reasons

We have identified, *inter alia*, the following as the main reasons behind the phenomena of intolerance and violence:

- abuse of historical factors and collective memories of religion-based conflicts;
- selective and manipulative interpretation of religious texts and tenets to serve particular interests;
- the breakdown of social structures and cultural patterns threatening identity;
- inequity and disparity in the distribution of resources leading to hunger and poverty;
- application of double standards in the assessment of situations of violence, creating anger and frustration;
- the feeling of despair and hopelessness, resulting from oppression and other causes, that afflicts a vast portion of humanity.

3. Approaches and measures

- We appeal to all governments to implement principles of equality and equal protection of laws, to combat inequalities and injustice at national and international levels, to do everything in their power in order to achieve peaceful resolutions of conflicts, and to actively promote a culture of conflict prevention;
- we urge all those concerned with education, especially in religious learning, to enhance understanding and inculcate norms and values of mutual respect and religious tolerance;
- we appeal to all those who work in the field of history to present a balanced and peace-furthering view of our histories, free of lopsided guilt attributions;
- we call upon the scholars and followers of all religions to share and disseminate the texts and teachings containing messages of peace, tolerance, and mutual respect;
- we call upon the media to realise and fulfil their increased responsibility in the present global context and promote understanding and mutual respect through effective means.