

Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table

Manifesto

**Adopted on the
occasion of the 5th VICIRoTa Plenary Meeting
at St Gabriel's on 24 October 2008**

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Preamble

At the dawn of a new era in human history, a group of Muslim and Christian scholars from around the world met in Vienna and St Gabriel from 2000 to 2008, in order to discuss the possibilities for closer cooperation in view of the urgent questions humanity is facing. The Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table (VICIRoTa) emerged from the Vienna dialogue process inaugurated in 1993, in the tradition of the interfaith initiatives of the St Gabriel Theological Faculty that began in the mid-1970s.

1/- As a summary of our reflections and discussions on what may hinder or promote peace in the future, we have adopted the VICIRoTa Manifesto. Not having an official mandate, it is in our own name that each of us subscribes to this Manifesto. This document makes reference to all our Christian-Muslim dialogue meetings, which started with an international dialogue conference on “God in Christianity and Islam” held at St Gabriel’s in 1977. Today, we are pleased to present this Manifesto to the public.

However much our individual arguments may agree with or differ from each other in the details, we unanimously agree that the issues presented in this Manifesto are of particular importance for creating a peaceful world order in the spirit of justice and reconciliation, and that they call for joint responsibility worldwide. In the following commentary we would like to illustrate in detail the path we walked in order to arrive at the ten points of concern proposed in the Manifesto.

2/- The obviously irreversible process of globalization is seen both as the promise of all promises and as the problem of all problems in the present period of history. Looking at the acute problem areas worldwide, are we not in danger of trying to stop an erupting global volcano by simply putting a lid on it? We can feel the bubbling underground and the burning lava, as well as the tectonic shifts that are taking place.

Aware of these stirrings, our VICIRoTa is convinced that the pressing problems of our world should be solved by investigating their causes, applying appropriate and effective countermeasures, and, not least, by establishing intercultural and interreligious dialogue initiatives for a better world.

3/- Emerging from more than thirty years of living dialogue, the document has a concrete, historically defined context in which it originated and in light of which it should be interpreted. This context, which is documented in numerous publications edited throughout the period mentioned earlier, can help the reader understand the selection of topics.

We are aware of the many other initiatives aimed at promoting the spirit of dialogue in our times. In harmony with these, we wish to contribute our own viewpoint, which may be similar to those of these initiatives in many respects but different in others.

4/- All our dialogue initiatives were based on our belief in God. We are convinced that true faith in God implies a deep and far-reaching responsibility for the world and for all our fellow human beings. Our faith in God attributes a universal meaning to our existence since He is the one and only Creator, who cares for all creatures and all mankind in their God-given diversity.

It also gives our existence a challenging meaning that is of current importance. We have to live *our* life: we must not simply repeat what others have said but speak our own personal language, and answer the questions we are confronted with in the context of our time and space. After all, God will call us to account for what we did, and not what others did in the past.

5/- The texts have been elaborated, faithful to selected statements made by Muslim or Christian participants in our dialogue meetings over the years. The references in the texts indicate the page number according to their place in the original English or German publications (cf. enclosed list, pp. 7–8).

Quoted in the context of our Manifesto, the statements are supposed to express the viewpoint of the VICIRoTa – in agreement with what we or our friends have said at earlier dialogue meetings. We consciously refer to these statements because we wish to underscore the fact that this Manifesto originated in our long-term joint efforts in the service of dialogue. We did not use quotation marks because, firstly, we believe that the texts should be easily readable and not burdened with academic technicality; and secondly, because we wish to remain somewhat free from the constraints of syntax and grammar. Thus, we do not always quote verbatim.

We humbly address this Manifesto to all our sisters and brothers, and to the authorities in our respective religious communities. We also make it our urgent appeal to politicians, academics, members of international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and all those who hold responsible positions in societies and states throughout the world.

The Participants of the
“Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table”

St Gabriel / Vienna, 24 October 2008

Points of Concern

There can be:

1. **No peace without justice – and no justice without peace;**
2. **No peace in a world where social injustice, extreme poverty, and hunger persist;**
3. **No peace without the determined rejection of violence, especially violence in the name of religion, and no peace without a careful investigation into the reasons for it and resolute steps to eradicate the roots of this evil;**
4. **No peace without the recognition of the inherent equal dignity of all members of the human family, and no peace without legal systems that safeguard and monitor compliance with human rights;**
5. **No peace without pluralistic social structures that guarantee freedom of thought, conscience, and religion;**
6. **No peace without the cultivation of joint responsibility, based on dialogue, in view of the crucial problems of humanity on its way into the future;**
7. **No peace without the readiness for peaceful conflict resolution, reconciliation, and conflict prevention;**
8. **No peace without equal access to education founded on true human and religious values;**
9. **No peace if women do not share responsibility in all spheres of life, on the basis of equality and partnership; and**
10. **No peace without the due recognition of minority rights and a careful consideration of the interests of future generations.**

We do not wish to present this Manifesto without expressly referring to the final declarations of our dialogue conferences on “Peace for Humanity” (1993) and “One World for All” (1997), as well as to the communiqués issued following our VICIRoTa meetings in 2000 and 2002, which we have added to the Manifesto in their entirety.

Commentary

Documentary publications of the St Gabriel / Vienna Christian-Islamic Dialogue Process 1977–2008

- Dial 1978 *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams* [transl.: God in Christianity and in Islam] (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 2). Moedling, 1978, 2nd ed. 1992;
Arabic edition: *Allāh fī l-masīḥīya wa-l-islām* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-taʿāwun; 20). Jounieh, 2003.
- Dial 1992 *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* [transl.: Listening to His Word: Man as a Hearer of the Word of God in Christian and Islamic Traditions] (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Moedling, 1992;
Arabic edition: *al-Isḡāʾ ilā kalām Allāh: fī l-masīḥīya wa-l-islām* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-taʿāwun; 5). Jounieh, 1997, 2nd ed. 1999.
- Dial 1994 *Peace for Humanity: Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*. New Delhi, 1996, 2nd reprint 1998;
German edition: *Friede für die Menschheit. Grundlagen, Probleme und Zukunftsperspektiven aus islamischer und christlicher Sicht* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 8). Moedling, 1994;
Arabic edition: *Salām li l-bašar: al-masīḥīya wa-l-islām yanzurān ilā s-salām fī usūḥī wa-mašākilihī wa-abʿādiḥī al-muqbila* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-taʿāwun; 3). Jounieh, 1997, 2nd ed. 1998;
Urdu edition: *Aman barāe insāniyāt. (Vienna men munaqida conference men peshkarda maqalāt wa mabāhiss); 30 March ta 2 April 1993*. Lahore, 1997.
- Dial 1997 *Gerechtigkeit in den internationalen und interreligiösen Beziehungen in islamischer und christlicher Perspektive* [transl.: Justice in International and Interreligious Relations from Muslim and Christian Perspectives]. Moedling, 1997;
Farsi edition: *ʿEdālat dar rawābet-e bain al-milal wa-bain-e adyān az dīdgāh-e andišmandān musalmān wa-masīḥī*. Tehran, 1998;
Arabic edition: *al-ʿAdl fī l-ʿilāqāt bayn ad-duwal wa-l-adyān fī n-naẓra al-islāmīya wa-l-masīḥīya: an-nadwa al-īrānīya an-namsāwīya al-ūlā; al-muḥāḍarāt – al-asʿila – al-mudāḥalāt* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-taʿāwun; 17). Jounieh, 2002.
- Dial 1999 *One World for All: Foundations of a Socio-Political and Cultural Pluralism from Christian and Muslim Perspectives*. New Delhi, 1999;
German edition: *Eine Welt für alle. Grundlagen eines gesellschaftspolitischen und kulturellen Pluralismus in christlicher und islamischer Perspektive* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 9). Moedling, 1999;
Arabic edition: *ʿĀlam wāḥid li l-ḡamīʿ: usū at-taʿaddudīya al-iḡtimāʿīya wa-s-siyāsīya wa-t-taqāʿīya fī nazar al-masīḥīya wa-l-islām* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-taʿāwun; 12). Jounieh, 2000;
Urdu edition: *Aek dunjy, sub kay liay*. Lahore, 2003.
- Dial 2001 *Werte – Rechte – Pflichten. Grundfragen einer gerechten Ordnung des Zusammenlebens in christlicher und islamischer Sicht* [transl.: Values – Rights – Duties: Basic Questions of a Just Order of Human Coexistence from Christian and Islamic Perspectives]. Moedling, 2001;
Farsi edition: *Arzešha-ḥoqūq-wazāʿef: masaʿel-e asāsī-ye neẓām-e hamzistī-ye ʿādelāne az dīdgāh-e andišmandān-e mosalmān wa masīḥī [dowwomīn hamāyeš-e andišmandān-e īrān wa otrīš, weyan 19 ta 23 septambr-e 1999]*. Tehran, 2001;

- Arabic edition: *al-Qiyam – al-ḥuqūq – al-wāğībāt: masā'il asāsīya li-nizām 'ādil li l-'ayš al-muštarak fī n-nazra al-masīḥīya wa-l-islāmīya; an-nadwa al-irānīya an-namsāwīya at-tāniya* (Vienna 19-22 aylül 1999). *al-muḥāğdarāt – al-as'ila – al-mudāḥalāt* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 19). Jounieh, 2003.
- Dial 2003 *Reading the Signs of the Time: Contemporary Challenges for Christians and Muslims* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 1). Moedling, 2003;
German edition: *Um unsere Zeit zu bedenken. Christen und Muslime vor den Herausforderungen unserer Zeit* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 1). Moedling, 2003;
Arabic edition: *Likay nataḍabbar 'alāmāt al-azmina: al-masīḥīyūn wa-l-muslimūn amām taḥaddiyāt al-'ašr; an-nadwa al-masīḥīya al-islāmīya ad-duwalīya al-ülā ḥawl ṭāwila mustadīra* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 21). Jounieh, 2003;
Urdu edition: *Isharaat-e-Waqt ka Shu'ur. Isā'iyoun aur Musalmanoun ke liey 'Asri Challenge: Proceedings of 1st Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table [October 2000]*. New Delhi, 2004.
- Dial 2004 *Intolerance and Violence: Manifestations – Reasons – Approaches* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 2). Moedling, 2004;
German edition: *Intoleranz und Gewalt. Erscheinungsformen – Gründe – Zugänge* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 2). Moedling, 2004;
Arabic edition: *at-Tazammūt wa-l-'unf. mażāhiruhumā – asbābuhumā – madāḥil ilā l-ḥulūl al-mumkina; an-nadwa al-masīḥīya al-islāmīya ad-duwalīya at-tāniya ḥawl ṭāwila mustadīra* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 23). Jounieh, 2004;
Urdu edition: *Ghair Rawadaari aur Tashaddud. Izharat – Wujuhaat – Nazriaat. Proceedings of 2nd Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table [February 2002]*. New Delhi, 2004.
- Dial 2005 *Friede, Gerechtigkeit und ihre Bedrohungen in der heutigen Welt*. [transl.: Peace, Justice, and Their Threats in the Modern World]. Moedling, 2005;
Farsi edition: *Solh, 'edālat va avāmel-e bāz dārand-e ān dar donyā-ye mo'āser*. Tehran, 2005;
Arabic edition: *as-Salām wa-l-'adl wa-l-'awāmil allatī tuḥaddiduhumā fī 'ālam al-yawm* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 32). Jounieh, 2006.
- Dial 2006 *Poverty and Injustice: Alarming Signs of the Present Crisis in Human Society Worldwide* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 3). Moedling, 2006;
German edition: *Armut und Ungerechtigkeit. Krisenzeichen der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaftsordnung weltweit* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 3). Moedling, 2006;
Arabic edition: *al-Faqr wa-ḡ-ḡulm. 'Alāmāt al-azama fī nizām al-muğtama' al-ḥālī; an-nadwa al-masīḥīya al-islāmīya ad-duwalīya at-tālīta ḥawl ṭāwila mustadīra* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 39). Jounieh, 2008.
Urdu edition: *Ghurbat aur Naainsafi. Alami Mu'ashrey mein Shadid Bohran key Isharaat*. New Delhi, 2006;
- Dial 2007 *Education for Equality: An Answer to Injustice and Intolerance* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 4). Moedling, 2007;
German edition: *Erziehung zu Gleichberechtigung. Eine Antwort auf Ungerechtigkeit und Intoleranz* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 4). Moedling, 2007;
Arabic edition: *at-Tarbiya 'alā l-musāwāt fī l-ḥuqūq. Radd 'alā ḡ-ḡulm wa-t-tazammūt; an-nadwa al-masīḥīya al-islāmīya ad-duwalīya ar-rābī' ḥawl ṭāwila mustadīra* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun). Jounieh, 2009 (in preparation);
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1.

**No peace without justice –
and no justice without peace**

Literature

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1/- Obviously, peace for humanity is the primary and overall goal for all people of good will. It must always be created anew. It is, as we see it as Muslim and Christian believers, at the same time an achievement of man and a gift of God. Peace is, for every human being who seeks it, both the goal and the path towards the goal.¹

Moreover, we would like to stress that the contribution of religions to the building of peace is not limited to opposing conflicts or guaranteeing religious freedom. The religious communities also have the duty to contribute to the establishment of justice and the promotion of integral human development.²

Although there is a lot to be said for the assumption that religion has served mankind much more at the individual level than at the institutional level, and that it repeatedly has been used by particular interest groups to serve certain purposes and interests³, it remains true that the basic moral orientation of one's life towards God and the task to serve the propitious coexistence of all creatures is common to Christians and Muslims. They know that whoever wants to serve God must serve the cause of peace.⁴

In this context, we feel obliged to admit that both our religions frequently have shown a practice in history which is widely at variance with their ideals; they have repeatedly even justified and given reasons for wars and discord. While the primary aim of religions is to bring mankind together in peace, it is sad that disagreements between the followers of different religions present one of the greatest obstacles to peace.⁵ We are all the more convinced that it is worth sowing the seeds of peace for the future. The message of Islam and Christianity is to seek and make peace, and this no longer in opposition to each other, as was quite often the case in history, but from now on by working together.⁶

2/- We want to place special emphasis on the fact that peace and justice are inseparably inter-related. We can speak of peace only in conjunction with justice. Without justice there can be no peace.⁷ Justice is something like a twin sister of peace, whose opposite pole is not so much 'war' as wickedness and evil.⁸

But here again we have to ask, especially with regard to the monotheistic religions: do they really believe that every human being has the same rights, and that there is a justice which is rooted in God himself and is true for every human being?⁹

Confronted with these pressing questions, we would like to stress all the more our obligation to seek and find all possible ways and means to guarantee the protection of the basic human rights, including that of religion. Only then can justice and peace be guaranteed.¹⁰ And facing the actual conditions in the present world, especially in Jerusalem and the Near and Middle East, we would be well advised to appeal to the traditions of our own scriptures and mend our ways. The representatives of

Christianity, Islam, and Judaism should raise their voices, calling out loudly and insistently that there will never be any peace without *practising justice* and without respecting people's rights to land, property, work, freedom of movement, etc. This prophetic voice of the religions will also have to be addressed to the great powers. One cannot help but be deeply worried about the impotency of the international organizations and the great powers who declare themselves protectors of international treaties, while violating them for the sake of other interests.¹¹

3/- If we transpose what we are saying into the political and historical context, we have to accept the fact that a great number of States are not democratic. Thus they do not have political pluralism. Because of this fundamental rights are not only denied to minorities, but also to majorities. Therefore, the challenge is to find ways to further develop and promote the process of democratization and pluralization, and foster diversity in societies at large. If we really wish to seek a just society, in which peaceful coexistence becomes possible, we have to link both elements, namely social and political pluralism.¹²

We deeply regret that generally seen the modern world's politico-legal theory, e. g. concerning religious minorities, is indeed unassailable. The big question remains whether and to what extent the situation around the world reflects a successful implementation of international and national legal texts.¹³

4/- Being confronted with the many forms of injustice in our world and focusing more closely on our own responsibility in this world (cf. Chapter 2), we come to the conclusion that the peaceful coexistence of different communities will be possible only if religions and politics make a preferential option for the suffering victims of this suffering earth (Knitter). In fact, being convinced that all who work for justice are God's co-workers, a new political culture should be produced on this basis through the cooperation of the Islamic and Christian faiths.¹⁴ Only through a solidarity of action can peace be maintained in the world.¹⁵

Our religious teaching, which states that we should serve the cause of peace, logically demands our sensitivity to the development of structures and instruments that can translate general views into practice and then develop a practice which can help us achieve those goals that are worth striving for.¹⁶

Furthermore, we would like to propose for serious consideration that countries and nations, before they are entitled and ready to serve the cause of world peace, must find an inner peace of their own.¹⁷ On an individual level, three interconnected circles of peace might be distinguished: the circle of peace with God, the circle of peace with ourselves in the hearts of men, and the circle of peace that is to be created around ourselves.¹⁸

At the end of this chapter, we would like to join our spiritual guide of many years – Cardinal Franz König, who said at the opening ceremony of our conference on *Peace for Humanity*:

“In view of the joint responsibility which the two religions bear for the future of a world growing together, and in view of the responsibility which we can expect to face on the Day of Judgment, we must all take account of how far we have worked together towards peace and the understanding between peoples.”¹⁹

¹ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1994*, pp. 65–86, here: p. 65.

² F. Arinze, *Dial 1994*, p. 40.

³ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2006*, pp. 134 f.

⁴ Vienna Declaration, *Dial 1994*, p. 278.

⁵ Gad al Haq A. Gad al Haq, *Dial 1994*, p. 48.

⁶ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 1994*, pp. 139 f.

⁷ A. A. Engineer, *Dial 1994*, p. 133.

⁸ G. Vanoni, *Dial 1994*, pp. 103–106.

⁹ G. Khodr, *Dial 2003*, p. 22.

¹⁰ Gad al Haq A. Gad al Haq, *Dial 1994*, p. 49;
cf. A. E. Abdel-Meguid, *ib.*, p. 27.

¹¹ C. Geffré, *Dial 1999*, pp. 270 f.

¹² A. E. H. Dessouki, *Dial 1999*, pp. 172 f.

¹³ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2006*, p. 167.

¹⁴ K. C. Abraham, *Dial 1994*, pp. 230. 243.

¹⁵ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1994*, p. 81.

¹⁶ A. Manzoor, *Dial 1994*, p. 140.

¹⁷ A. Mumcu, *Dial 1994*, p. 158.

¹⁸ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1999*, pp. 27 f.

¹⁹ F. König, *Dial 1994*, p. 61.

2.

**No peace in a world
where social injustice, extreme poverty,
and hunger persist**

Literature

A. Bsteh – T. Mahmood (eds.), *Poverty and Injustice: Alarming Signs of the Present Crisis in Human Society Worldwide* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 3). Moedling, 2006; K. C. Abraham, “Socio-Political Pluralism and Global Solidarity: A Liberational Perspective,” in: *Dial 1994*, pp. 229–245; G. A. Khidoyatov, “Injustice and Poverty on the Level of World Politics,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 11–18; M. M. Schabestari, “Die Muslimen und Christen gemeinsamen Glaubensprinzipien und praktischen Pflichten als tragfähige Stützen ihres gerechten Zusammenlebens” [transl.: Religious Principles and Practical Duties Shared by Muslims and Christians as Firm Pillars of Their Just Coexistence], in: *Dial 1997*, pp. 377–387; I. Gabriel, “The Different Faces of Poverty,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 25–34; S. A. Mirdamadi, “Poverty and Injustice: From Justice to Injustice,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 39–45; N. Iqbal, “Hopelessness and Despair as Consequences of Extreme Poverty and Injustice,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 59–67; S. S. Mahmood, “Education as a Key to Overcome Poverty,” in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 27–33; A. Belarbi, “Education and Global Learning as a Challenge to Poverty and Injustice,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 87–102; G. Khodr, “Poverty and Injustice: A Socio-Political Challenge in the Realm of Minority Affairs,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 113–116; S. S. Mahmood, “Poverty and Injustice – Alarming Signs of the Present Crisis in Human Society Worldwide,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 121–132; I. Marboe, “The Role of Non-Governmental Agents in the Struggle against Poverty and Injustice on the International Level,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 141–156; A. Th. Khoury, “We are Unjust when We Owe a Debt to Ourselves and to the Others,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 179–188; J. H. Pichler – I. Gabriel, “Das ethische Element in der ökonomischen Doktrinbildung und die Katholische Soziallehre” [transl.: The Ethical Component in Economic Doctrinal Development and Catholic Social Teaching], in: *Dial 2001*, pp. 321–342.

1/- We are firmly convinced that poverty is one of the crucial problems confronting humanity at present. More or less all the UN Millennium Development Goals revolve around the question of how a fairer distribution of the basic requirements for life may be accomplished.¹ The demand for an integral perception of man that takes account of the needs of each individual and of all human beings, requires a struggle against poverty, against the lack of rights, and against the decomposition of social structures. It should lead towards a new world view and towards a new lifestyle of the rich; and it needs a culture of solidarity, including an option for the poor.²

Poverty in our present time is one of the most serious forms of violence against humanity. If the sources of a further escalation of violence are to be eliminated, the divide between the rich and the poor must be overcome.³

Over a billion people around the world live in abject poverty, and close to a billion go hungry every day.⁴ The world's 225 richest people have a combined wealth equal to the annual income of the poorest 47 % of the world's population, i. e. of about 3 billion people.⁵ Every year 12 million children under five die as a direct result of avoidable diseases associated with poverty.⁶ And some 300,000 children are serving as soldiers in armed conflicts forced by systems of tyranny and destitution: escaping from poverty and social and family breakdown in conflict-ridden areas, children find armed groups as their best chance for survival.⁷

2/- God did not create poverty and injustice; he rather established justice as a principle of creation, and the prophets commanded people to establish social justice.⁸ We are aware of a situation worldwide that confronts all religions with the challenges of enslaving social and cultural systems and with the need of struggling for justice. Religions, then, should meet each other, exploring and sharing their liberative elements. In the true spirit of liberative ecumenism, there should be a form of interreligious dialogue which is concerned with the contribution that the different religions can make to human liberation. This is true especially of Christianity and Islam since, looking at their origin, one may conclude that an identification with the poor, a critique of the wielders of power, and a prophetic zeal for justice are the hallmarks of the early beginnings of these faiths. Inter-faith dialogue is necessary to sustain a pluralist form of polity. The preferential option for the poor can provide the necessary grounding and a direction that integrates the mystical with concrete prophetic concerns.⁹

Muslims and Christians should function as born and factual allies and partners of the suppressed. Today, as in the past, the message of faith in the one God can only be proclaimed to the extent that the heralds of the message partake in the pains and sufferings of their addressees.¹⁰ This compels us to search for a new political culture that is rooted in the experience of the poor. Liberative sources of religion have a significant contribution to make, as they emerge from the depths of the experience of the poor.¹¹

3/- If religious discourse is to be accepted and internalized by peoples, we have to talk about hunger, illiteracy, and unemployment, and we have to relate the great noble ideas of our religions to the real living conditions of the man in the street.¹² Should not that which happens in today's world

make us more empathetic, focusing on matters that are truly important to human life rather than on trivialities? Are common human miseries like hunger, poverty, deprivation of the basic necessities of life, socioeconomic exploitation, communal hatred, false claims to hegemony, etc., not worthy of receiving our full attention?¹³

Injustice and oppression generate anger that transcends reason. Once again we would like to stress the fact that widespread and endemic poverty is also a manifestation of injustice, which provides the breeding ground for violence and intolerance.¹⁴ Half of the world's population lives in poverty that deprives them of even the most rudimentary necessities of life. This, in turn, leads to more poverty and hunger, and the spiral continues to dive downward.¹⁵

4/- In this context, the different faces of poverty cannot be overlooked: the deficient satisfaction of basic needs in order to survive, the lack of rights and social recognition of people in their political community, and the lack of identity and orientation as a consequence of cultural and religious deficiencies.¹⁶ The elimination of all these forms of misery and poverty, in other words the implementation of social human rights, is a mandatory condition for a peaceful coexistence. This is to say that the achievement of civil liberties and rights of participation have to be complemented by the creation of a worldeconomic order which deserves this designation. Civil liberties are a value in themselves. But it also holds true that liberty rights and social human rights are indivisible.¹⁷

5/- Therefore, we must not leave the alleviation of worldwide poverty only to those who are goodhearted and ready to give alms. Almsgiving, laudable as it is, must not be taken as a substitute for justice. We must tackle the burden of poverty, which must be interpreted as the most serious and basest of violence, often perpetrated by man against mankind and among the countless millions around the globe in the most dertermined manner possible. This massive task has to be handled on a global scale, for poverty is a challenge to the world community at large.¹⁸

We are compelled to observe that, along with all its positive sides, globalization also has destructive consequences. It deepens the polarization of the human community and leads to abuses that represent the most dangerous challenges to modern civilization. These generate social animosity and envy on a worldwide scale, which find their expression in separatism, the spread of world terrorism, religious extremism, aggressive nationalism and chauvinism, organized crime, etc. Moral values, human virtues, ethical principles – are they not in danger of becoming no more than empty dreams in these conditions?¹⁹

6/- Above all, we wish to give through this manifesto a voice to our uncounted sisters and brothers who are the voiceless today. For, religions have a special duty to be 'a voice for the voiceless,' to speak in the name of the poor and defenceless, the marginalized, and all those whose position is the most fragile in the social fabric.²⁰ A human being who dies of starvation, a widow or an orphan to whom their rights are refused because they are the weaker party and cannot stand up for themselves – these injustices cry to high heaven. The God to whom all these injustices cry out is the God of our faith, whether we are Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, or whosoever.²¹

We have witnessed the parting of the seas and the conquest of the moon. We have yet to witness the warming of the earth to embrace all living creation with adequate sustenance, food and fulfillment for all, and with hunger and deprivation for none.²² Poverty has been a subject of discussion for many centuries and described as the enemy of mankind. It strips people of their livelihood, making them endure deprivation and humiliation, breaching their fundamental rights and creating a social injustice which deeply affects the implementation of democracy and the reinforcement of the rule of law.²³ Wherever there is hunger, illiteracy, disease and injustice among people, there will be no peace.²⁴ Eradicating poverty and ensuring economic development should therefore be the first objective of all national and international plans.²⁵

¹ I. Marboe, *Dial 2007*, p. 145.

² I. Gabriel, *Dial 2006*, pp. 33 f.

³ A. Falaturi, *Dial 1994*, p. 248.

⁴ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2007*, p. 15.

⁵ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2006*, p. 90.

⁶ *Ib.*

⁷ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2006*, p. 129.

⁸ S. A. Mirdamadi, *Dial 2006*, pp. 39 f.

⁹ K. C. Abraham, *Dial 1994*, pp. 239 f.; cf. U. Mihçiyazgan, *Dial 1994*, pp. 250 f.; J. Slomp, *Dial 1999*, pp. 341 f.; C. Geffré, *Dial 1999*, pp. 271 f.

¹⁰ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 1997*, pp. 386 f.; cf. A. Bsteh, *Dial 2003*, p. 65.

¹¹ K. C. Abraham, *Dial 1994*, p. 244.

¹² A. E. H. Dessouki, *Dial 1999*, p. 347.

¹³ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 74.

¹⁴ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 26.

¹⁵ *Id.*, *Dial 2004*, p. 24.

¹⁶ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2006*, pp. 26 ff.

¹⁷ *Id.*, *Dial 2003*, p. 19.

¹⁸ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, pp. 29. 31.

¹⁹ G. A. Khidoyatov, *Dial 2003*, pp. 136 f.; *Dial 2006*, pp. 17 f.

²⁰ F. Arinze, *Dial 1994*, p. 40.

²¹ A. Bsteh, *Dial 2006*, p. 58.

²² S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, p. 32.

²³ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2006*, p. 88.

²⁴ Hassan II, *Dial 1999*, p. 39.

²⁵ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 29.

3.

**No peace without the determined rejection of violence,
especially violence in the name of religion,
and no peace without a careful investigation into
the reasons for it and
resolute steps to eradicate the roots of this evil**

Literature

A. Bsteh – T. Mahmood (eds.), *Intolerance and Violence: Manifestations – Reasons – Approaches* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 2). Moedling, 2004; **H. Ott, “Love of Man – Love of God, Contempt of Man – Contempt of God,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 11–16; **S. S. Mahmood, “Intolerance and Violence: Manifestations and Reasons,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 23–33; **A. Th. Khoury, “Violence in the Name of Religion,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 39–49; **I. Marboe, “Intolerance and Violence – Conditions and Ways of Combating it on an International Level,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 57–62; **T. Mahmood, “Cousins in Crisis: Christian-Muslim Harmony in Terrorist Trap,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 69–75; **G. Khodr, “Violence, Tolerance and the Liberating Force of Love,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 81–85; **M. M. Schabestari, “Religion as the Cause of Violence,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 91–93; **U. Mihçiyazgan, “Can Active Tolerance Prevent Intolerance and Violence?,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 101–108; **R. Potz, “Intolerance and Violence: Manifestations – Reasons – Approaches,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 115–117; **N. Iqbal, “The Problem of Terrorism: Causes and Cures,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 125–130; **G. A. Khidoyatov, “Intolerance and Violence,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 135–140; **I. Gabriel, “Violence as a Disaster for Humanity: Ethical and Theological Deliberations from a Christian Perspective,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 145–151; **G. Khodr, “The Problem of Violence – and No Solution?,”** in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 39–42; **G. Vanoni, “Mit Ölzweig oder Schwert? Zum Konfliktpotential der Monotheisten”** [transl.: **An Olive Branch or Sword? On the Potential for Conflict of Monotheistic Religions**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 211–228; **St. Hammer, “Globale Konflikte, Unrecht und universelle Herrschaft des Rechts”** [transl.: **Global Conflicts, Injustice, and the Universal Rule of Law**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 285–297.

1/- The problem of violence presents itself at all times, even though it appears in different forms. This terrifying omnipresence in the history of mankind must by no means tempt us to regard it as an inevitable fate which, imposed on us, prevents us from further investigations and measures. On the contrary, in view of what is happening today, which terrifies us when we look towards the future, we feel obliged to confront the question of the origin and mechanisms of violence. Why do human beings suppress, torment, and kill their kind? Where do those destructive impulses come from, which turn man into a wolf for man? What is the origin of those forces that time and again endanger peaceful coexistence, be it between individuals, in the family, in society, within the state, and above all between states and nations?¹

Especially in view of today's situation worldwide we have to jointly search for, and seriously analyse, the inner causes of what is happening around us. We have to locate the fire underneath the surface from which the volcanoes erupt, and define the real breeding grounds for violence, terror and devastation. Subsequent to this, proper solutions have to be carefully worked out and effectively implemented. Policies adopted by the world centres of political and economic power for waging the global war against terrorism will not, and cannot, solve the problem; they can create, and indeed repeatedly have created, more problems.²

2/- History teaches us that religions have not only led to peace but also to violence and war. It is therefore extremely important that we critically evaluate the very real power that religions exert. Religion, too, can drive people to violence, since it not only regulates the relationship believers have with a transcendental power; it also regulates the relations they have to other people. Religious groups, each advocating a communal life according to its own religious teachings, can thus easily become intolerant towards those who do not live according to their way of life.³ In this way, political and religious orders may be created which are based on the practice of violence and which divide people in the name of God and his will into separated, adverse groups.

A human image of God is created, and in keeping with it the word of God and its content is understood in a way in which nothing is left to question and interpretation.⁴ Obviously, there is a way we link power and violence in the relations between people and the way we understand the omnipotence of God as a coercive one, which does not set us free.⁵

One of the worst forms of violence consists in waging armed conflict and even wars, in order to strike down or even eradicate other people and other nations. And the worst form of this worst violence is that which tries to legitimate itself by religious motives or even by divine ordinance.⁶

3/- The powers of this world strive not only to maintain their power on the political scene, but also in the minds and convictions of their citizens by elaborating ideologies.⁷ This is enclosed in the international events of today that bear the decisive imprint of certain ideologies. If we wish to react to these international events, we also have to react to the ideologies behind them.⁸

4/- Finally, in conjunction with what has been said in our second proposition, we feel obliged, once again and with all emphasis, to point to the fact that all recent religious fundamentalism cannot be separated from the other type of fundamentalism – political fundamentalism. The revival of religious fundamentalism is mainly caused by the miserable political and economic situation in various countries, where all modern reform movements in the areas of economy and politics have been to no avail.

This is why many people in these countries want to return to their past; in doing so, they voice their protest. The bad, inhuman economical and political conditions in their countries do not allow them to find a way out. Any sustainable solution of the problem would have to change the economic and political situation in these countries as a whole.⁹

The only effective way to fight terrorism is to address its root causes, which make people frustrated enough to risk their lives and destroy their livelihood. Frustration aggravated by humiliation are the most powerful driving forces that provide the fuel for terrorism. This is a base response to a base threat. Violent retaliatory measures unaccompanied by acts to remove the root causes will not be sufficient. The main causes for violence and intolerance, embedded in socioeconomic and political inequities, must be addressed. The swamps of poverty and ignorance must be drained and the social soil must be fertilized again.¹⁰ What appears to be a religious battle is in fact mainly a complex of socioeconomic conflicts. As with other things, fundamentalism is being exploited by different powers for their own political motives.¹¹

5/- According to the Western mindset of today, terrorist acts are committed by the weak and the poor. The powerful people do not opt for terrorism; instead, they exercise justice over the poor. They understand themselves as representing democracy, and until the end of history they will claim the democratic ideals as their own. Themselves incapable of ever becoming corrupt – so their assurance – they do, far from any terrorism, nothing but justice to the poor.¹²

One can speak of the ‘tragedy of terrorism,’ since terrorists always begin their activity at a point where one could still comply with their claims and do justice to their concerns. If their concerns are neglected, their activities intensify and may become self-generating. Finally, an explosion takes place which one can no longer understand.¹³

Incidentally, whenever we talk of terrorism, we usually have in mind certain individuals or groups. We overlook the fact that there is also state terrorism and institutional terrorism.¹⁴

¹ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2004*, pp. 151. 145.

² T. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, pp. 73 f.

³ U. Mihçiyazgan, *Dial 2004*, pp. 103 f.

⁴ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 2004*, pp. 91. 93.

- ⁵ H. Ott, *Dial 2004*, p. 94.
- ⁶ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2004*, p. 39.
- ⁷ G. Khodr, *Dial 2004*, p. 83.
- ⁸ G. A. Khidoyatov, *Dial 2004*, p. 142.
- ⁹ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 2007*, pp. 183 f.;
cf. G. A. Khidoyatov, *Dial 2007*, p. 182.
- ¹⁰ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 30.
- ¹¹ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2007*, pp. 182. 184.
- ¹² G. Khodr, *Dial 2004*, p. 63.
- ¹³ R. Potz, *Dial 2004*, p. 34.
- ¹⁴ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 66;
cf. G. Khodr, *Dial 2004*, pp. 63 f.

4.

**No peace without the recognition of the
inherent equal dignity of all members of the human family,
and no peace without legal systems that
safeguard and monitor compliance with human rights**

Literature

A. Bsteh (ed.), *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams* [transl.: **The God of Christianity and Islam**] (*Beiträge zur Religionstheologie*; 2). Moedling, (1978) ²1992; id. (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* [transl.: **Listening to His Word. Man as a Hearer of the Word of God in the Christian and Islamic Tradition**] (*Beiträge zur Religionstheologie*; 7). Moedling, 1992; M. K. I. Gaafar, “**Gott ist das Endziel**” [transl.: **God is the Ultimate Goal**], in: *Dial 1978*, pp. 147–165; G. Greshake, “**Menschsein als Berufung zur Gemeinschaft mit Gott**” [transl.: **Human Existence as a Call to Communion with God**], in: *Dial 1978*, pp. 166–187; M. Zakzouk, “**Der Mensch im Koran als Hörer des göttlichen Wortes. Gnade, Freiheit und Verpflichtung**” [transl.: **Man in the Qurʾān as a Hearer of the Divine Word. Grace, Freedom, and Obligation**], in: *Dial 1992*, pp. 35–70; H. Schneider, “**Das Menschenbild als Leitmaß für die Ordnung des Zusammenlebens**” [transl.: **The Image of Man as a Guiding Principle for Structuring Coexistence**], in: *Dial 2001*, pp. 41–77; A. A. Rashadi, “**Das Bild vom Menschen im Islam und seine Bedeutung für das Leben der Gesellschaft**” [transl.: **The Image of Man in Islam and its Impact on Social Life**], in: *Dial 2001*, pp. 85–101; G. Luf, “**Peace and Human Rights as Seen by the Churches,**” in: *Dial 1994*, pp. 143–157; M. M. Schabestari, “**The Theological and Legal Foundations of the Freedom, Autonomy and Sovereignty of Man in Islam as the Basis for an Earnestly Desired World Peace,**” in: *Dial 1994*, pp. 179–184; I. Marboe, “**Human Rights Education,**” in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 135–149; St. Hammer – G. Luf, “**Menschenrechte in den internationalen Beziehungen**” [transl.: **Human Rights in International Relations**], in: *Dial 1997*, pp. 133–156; S. M. Mohaqqueq-Damad, “**Menschenrechte im Westen und im Islam**” [transl.: **Human Rights in the West and in Islam**], in: *Dial 1997*, pp. 171–181; id., “**Die Menschenrechte. Minderheiten und Mehrheiten**” [transl.: **Human Rights: Minorities and Majorities**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 155–162.

1/- According to our Muslim and Christian traditions, *human dignity* is rooted in humanity's relation to God. This mutual relationship is based on our common belief that God is the Creator of humans, and that humans are called to render account to their Creator on the Day of Judgment for all that they did in their lives.¹ This relationship implies for humankind a radical dependency *and* self-responsibility since God, in a permanent act of creation, calls into being persons whom He expects to respond to His call.

Through this relation to God, humans receive a dignity which cannot be questioned by any other creatures, not even by humans themselves, and which does not depend on their worthiness or unworthiness. It is absolute because it is willed by, and related to, God.²

2/- It is in this absolute nature of human dignity, which is grounded in each individual's relation to God³ that we recognize the ultimate foundation of *basic human rights*, as they have been formulated by the international community. Without this legal aspect, which attempts to concretize and protect human dignity within earthly and temporal conditions, all statements avowing human dignity remain abstract and subject to arbitrariness.⁴

In summoning mankind to peace and the protection of basic human rights, our religious traditions call their believers to the service of mankind and to solidarity with all human beings. Together, in concerted global efforts, we should seek all possible ways to guarantee the protection of basic human rights.⁵

In order to make these protective measures more concrete and binding, all the international human rights instruments at least recommend to the States Parties to incorporate as many rights as possible into their national legislations.⁶ However, in this context of harmonizing internal law with international instruments, it is important to change the mentality of people so that they start taking a personal interest in these tasks.⁷

3/- In our dialogue of faiths, we have realized that in our religious interpretation of human dignity and human rights we, Muslims and Christians, are at the same time confronted with a secular system of values. This was, so to speak, the third partner in our dialogue.⁸ It is above all humaneness that God requires from man, a kind of behaviour which corresponds to human dignity.⁹ We confess unanimously that our coexistence must be based on a transparent, honest and constant respect for human rights, even if they are formulated in a secular, humanistic language.¹⁰

The violation of human rights should therefore be forbidden all over the world as a matter of principle. Rich and poor countries should be subject to international law in the same way, for the guarantee of international human rights is the basis for peace.¹¹ This raises the question of which system and which concrete guarantees are appropriate for safeguarding human rights effectively, in view of the countless experiences of injustice. Dissatisfied as we may be with various conditions in the United Nations, it is a fact that they do have institutions, like the Commissions for Human Rights and against Discrimination, that deserve support. There are also private organizations which defend human rights and support these institutions of the UN, such as Amnesty International.¹²

4/- We advocate a dynamic conception of human rights. Generally speaking, legal regulations must be reconsidered when social situations change,¹³ and new solutions must be found for newly arisen problems.¹⁴ This also holds true for the complex of human rights: they emerged as responses to the specific crises and threats in the modern world¹⁵, more specifically in the aftermath of World Wars I and II and all the atrocities perpetrated against humanity in the 20th century. This ongoing process can be observed today especially in view of the various generations of human rights: the first one dealing with civil and political rights; the second generation dealing with economic, social, and cultural rights; and the third generation concerned with international solidarity and cooperation.¹⁶

In this context, we wish to assert that it is an urgent requirement for religions to advocate human rights and help safeguard them in an active and productive manner. The ever growing number of, and highly varied, tasks this implies might include: a stimulating function, which strengthens the awareness of human rights from a religious point of view; a corrective function that rectifies, for instance, the erosion of individual rights in favor of group rights; and finally a deepening function that awakens and sharpens the widely endangered awareness of the unconditional and inalienable value of every human being.¹⁷

This critical function, however, should not result in reservations which tend to be attached to declarations on human rights and may finally lead to their rejection or abolishment;¹⁸ it should rather sustain vigilance vis-à-vis newly developing privileges and disadvantages, which may even take place under the pretext of human rights.¹⁹

5/- We feel strongly bound to admit that in this vast field of issues dealing with human dignity and human rights, there remain large areas for further elaboration and discussion. This is true, for example, concerning the tension between universal human rights and the various cultural and religious traditions of peoples. If it is true that human rights can be accepted to the extent that they harmonize with these traditions, how will it be possible to formulate human rights issues from a properly religious angle without drawing new dividing lines?²⁰

That human rights can be definitely accepted only when they are compatible with the traditions of nations and religious communities implies the necessity of common efforts in order to find a common language.²¹ In other words, one of the most important tasks today is to see how juridical and political guarantees can be established that protect pluralism in fidelity to our traditions.²²

Finally, two other major fields of tension must be mentioned. One of them concerns the relationship between divine rights and human rights: how can the latter be conceived of in a way that they do not lead away from the rights of God, but are rather grounded in the divine rights or guide towards them?²³ Are we in danger of forgetting the rights of man if we speak about the rights of God, and vice versa?²⁴

The other important field of tension, which shall be indicated here, refers to the relationship between human rights and human duties. We felt this to be so important that it was included in

the Conference Votes of our 2nd International Dialogue Conference entitled “One World for All” (Vienna 1997), which state, “In analogy to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, our responsibility for the entire creation shall result in the elaboration and passage of a *Universal Declaration of Human Duties*, whereby emphasis is placed on the fact that the recognition of human rights must not be made dependent on the fulfilment of the duties.”²⁵

¹ J. Roloff, *Dial 1992*, pp. 71. 161; M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1992*, pp. 35. 69 f.; G. Greshake, *Dial 1978*, pp. 167–175.

² M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 1994*, pp. 179–182; G. Luf, *Dial 1994*, pp. 143–148.

³ A. Merad, *Dial 1994*, p. 174.

⁴ J. Slomp, *Dial 1994*, p. 169.

⁵ Gad al Haq A. Gad al Haq, *Dial 1994*, pp. 48 f.

⁶ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2007*, p. 151.

⁷ A. Bou Imajdil, *Dial 1999*, pp. 188 f.

⁸ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2007*, p. 153; I. Marboe, *ib.*, p. 154.

⁹ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1994*, p. 83.

¹⁰ G. Khodr, *Dial 1999*, p. 43.

¹¹ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1994*, pp. 85. 95.

¹² M. Fitzgerald, *Dial 1999*, pp. 179 f.

¹³ M. Schabestari, *Dial 1994*, p. 201.

¹⁴ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1994*, p. 176.

¹⁵ G. Luf, *Dial 1994*, pp. 148 f.

¹⁶ I. Marboe, *Dial 2007*, pp. 154 f.

¹⁷ G. Luf, *Dial 1994*, pp. 150 f.

¹⁸ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 1999*, p. 318; cf. A. Bou Imajdil, *Dial 1999*, p. 188.

¹⁹ G. Luf, *Dial 1999*, p. 338.

²⁰ G. Khodr, *Dial 1994*, pp. 162 f.

²¹ S. Balić, *Dial 1999*, p. 139.

²² A. Bou Imajdil, *Dial 1999*, p. 188.

²³ Chr. W. Troll, *Dial 1999*, p. 143; C. Geffré, *Dial 1999*, pp. 97 f.; S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 1999*, p. 134.

²⁴ A. A. Engineer, *Dial 1999*, p. 130.

²⁵ In *Dial 1999*, p. 365.

5.

**No peace without pluralistic social structures
that guarantee
freedom of thought, conscience, and religion**

Literature

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1/- If we accept that human beings have free will and bear within themselves the concept of the absolute and the disposition to recognize the truth, pluralism is absolutely necessary. This is particularly the case if one is convinced that God willed them as free creatures.¹

We must not forget that in the 21st century, people cannot behave in respect of religion as they did in ancient and medieval times. As Muslims and Christians, we owe a very special obligation to humanity. Let us unite to effectively discharge this sacred obligation.² Religion cannot survive unless it meets the needs of people. But at the same time it should remain faithful to its principles, and may even have certain cultural and structural requirements.³ At the legal level, there must be the right of free religious practice for all; at the moral level, however, we remain bound to follow whatever we, individually or collectively, feel is the truth or the demands of the truth upon us.⁴

Thus, for the progress and development of a just and humane society, all of us need to change our approach and be more honest with ourselves, so that we can contribute our part to building a global society free from religious bigotry and hatred.⁵ In this context, a complete separation of legal and moral values does not seem recommendable. We should foster our inner conversion from a purely politico-legal understanding of religion to a more ethical and mystical religion, in the sense of an inner readiness to return to the ways of God and free ourselves from a merely human way of seeing things.⁶

In both our religious communities we must be ready here and there even to change doctrines that seem to be essential for us, if we really are in search for the profound change which we feel to be necessary.⁷ Every community of believers has to take care in one way or another of maintaining its own identity. But within this unity, an ample diversity should be possible.⁸ And seen from an Islamic perspective, it was emphasized that there is no end for developing the *shari'a* because the goal is God, and God is undefinable and unattainable. The same can perhaps be said of the concept of *idjtihad*.⁹

2/- Two observations that seem to be important in this context:

First, we are persuaded that inner-religious pluralism is just as important as inter-religious pluralism, and that acts of intolerance within a certain religious community shock the world even more than if these offences are committed between people of different religious communities.¹⁰ This inner-religious intolerance is indeed a very sensitive problem which has to be resolved to attain an effective pluralism.¹¹

The second observation concerns the phenomenon that intolerant conduct and mutual animosity is sometimes roused among believers of different religions by politicians who mix their political interests with religion, in order to use the latter as an instrument for their own purposes.¹² But in modern times even the role of the State in general has to be questioned critically, since religion has been removed from the public space and replaced by the State. Subsequently the State had the capability to become the greatest oppressor in the modern world, a reality that suppresses human life and the dignity and freedom of man. What was formerly done in the name of God and religion could now be done in the name of the State.¹³ All the more we would like to underline that it is

for the sake of the integrity of religion that the State cannot be allowed to coerce or dictate belief. According to both our religious traditions, plurality is necessary for human communities, and it is God's prerogative to know and explain, later in the Next Life, why people are different from each other in many ways.¹⁴

3/- Active tolerance may be understood as the readiness to become active against every form of intolerance and to oppose it.¹⁵ Blanket repudiations of other peoples and cultures are some of the main problems of our world and lead to fundamentalism. They lead to the killing of other people simply because they are slighted as "all these white people," "all these black people," and by other stereotypes. This has led to the worst atrocities in history.¹⁶

Our mentalities tend to consider perfect what is our own and to find what is imperfect and erroneous with others. We are all tolerant and intolerant; both can be found in our traditions. Always shifting responsibility for the crimes to others and washing one's own hands neither serves the cause of Islam nor that of Christianity, and neither serves dialogue nor peace in this world.¹⁷

Our religious communities are expected to accept the fact of their socio-cultural diversity and tolerate each other, so as to give everyone the freedom and opportunity to pursue life in accordance with their own respective belief systems. The world today is a pluralist world. The effect of globalization has been the creation of the 'global village,' in which people are transparent to each other. People of faith or religion living in the global village must have a religious vision that will do justice to their own religion as well as to that of other communities, with a positive consciousness about the existing differences between the various groups.¹⁸

The State has the task to protect and secure tolerance as an attitude of the individual, but it cannot order it as an attitude to be adopted. The State cannot do without tolerance, on the part of citizens, yet it legally cannot bring about tolerance since it can only promote it. Hence the State cannot formally enforce the persuasions by which it lives itself (Böckenförde).¹⁹

4/- Tolerance was in fact an important step on the path towards religious freedom, which is, however, of another nature entirely. And tolerance must be promoted further, since the individual's attitude of tolerance is absolutely necessary if religious freedom is to become effective in society.²⁰ The peaceful coexistence of human beings is guaranteed through the principle of religious liberty.²¹

All our great religious faiths emphatically tell us that piety and godliness lie in promoting mutual love and sympathy for one's fellow human beings – in accepting their human right to their own ways of worshipping the Creator, in giving them full freedom to choose for themselves any of the various such ways available. In our present age, religious freedom as a fundamental human right can be recognized, respected and practised only for the protection of humanity, and not for its destruction.²² The diversity of ways becomes apparent as something inherent in the nature of freedom and therefore necessary. In other words, pluralism is necessary for making freedom possible.²³

In this context a distinction has to be made between the freedom of religion and the freedom of conscience: freedom of religion comprises collective rights and their guarantees *as well as* indi-

vidual rights, such as the freedom of conscience and faith. Behind these two rights there stands the one concept of freedom, which makes it possible to subsume them in one concept.²⁴

To sum up, one may say that no human being must be forced by any other to believe in God or in a certain religion. Faith and religion must always be based on a completely free decision and initiative on the part of man. No compulsion in religion, no inquisition, and no wars of religion must take place.²⁵

¹ M. Talbi, *Dial 1999*, p. 102.

² T. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, p. 52.

³ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2006*, p. 136.

⁴ Chr. W. Troll, *Dial 1999*, p. 92.

⁵ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2003*, p. 76.

⁶ V. Tania, *Dial 1999*, p. 105.

⁷ Chr. W. Troll, *Dial 1999*, pp. 89 f.

⁸ Id., *Dial 1999*, p. 95.

⁹ N. Madjid, *Dial 1994*, p. 256; id., *Dial 1999*, p. 124; N. Iqbal, *Dial 1994*, p. 257; id., *Dial 1999*, p. 171.

¹⁰ T. Mahmood, *Dial 1999*, p. 182.

¹¹ N. Iqbal, *Dial 1999*, p. 189.

¹² G. A. Khidoyatov, *Dial 2003*, p. 118.

¹³ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, pp. 114 f.

¹⁴ N. Madjid, *Dial 1994*, p. 211.

¹⁵ N. Iqbal, *Dial 1994*, pp. 134 f.

¹⁶ F. Esack, *Dial 1999*, pp. 175 f.

¹⁷ M. Talbi, *Dial 1999*, p. 168.

¹⁸ N. Madjid, *Dial 1994*, p. 203.

¹⁹ R. Potz, *Dial 2004*, p. 118.

²⁰ Id., *Dial 2003*, p. 84; G. Luf, *Dial 1994*, pp. 192 f.

²¹ Gad al Haq A. Gad al Haq, *Dial 1994*, p. 48.

²² T. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, p. 52.

²³ M. Talbi, *Dial 1999*, p. 102.

²⁴ G. Luf, *Dial 1994*, p. 171.

²⁵ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 1994*, p. 183.

6.

**No peace without the cultivation of joint responsibility,
based on dialogue,
in view of the crucial problems of humanity
on its way into the future**

Literature

G. C. Anawati, “Zur Geschichte der Begegnung von Christentum und Islam” [transl.: **On the History of the Encounter between Christianity and Islam**], in: *Dial 1978*, pp. 11–35; **A. Th. Khoury, “Christen und Muslime. Gemeinsam unter dem Worte Gottes stehen”** [transl.: **Christians and Muslims: Together under the Word of God**], in: *Dial 1992*, pp. 19–33; **M. M. Schabestari, “Die Christen und Muslimen gemeinsamen Glaubensprinzipien und praktischen Pflichten als tragfähige Stützen ihres gerechten Zusammenlebens”** [transl.: **Principles of Faith and Practical Duties Shared by Christians and Muslims as Firm Pillars of Their Coexistence**], in: *Dial 1997*, pp. 377–387; **A. Th. Khoury, “Für eine größere Gerechtigkeit in den Beziehungen zwischen Christen und Muslimen”** [transl.: **For Greater Justice in the Relationship between Christians and Muslims**], in: *Dial 1997*, pp. 351–368; **H. Ott, “Humaneness Has to Grow by Direct Human Encounters,”** in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 57–60; **G. A. Khidoyatov, “Year of Dialogue among Civilizations,”** in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 133–137; **T. Mahmood, “Cousins in Crisis: Christian-Muslim Harmony in Terrorist Trap,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 69–75; **H. Ott, “Love of Man – Love of God, Contempt of Man – Contempt of God,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 11–16; **id., “Spiritual Aspects of a Global Political Dispute,”** in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 49–55.

1/- To begin with, we made the relationship between our Christian and Muslim religious communities one of the focal points of our dialogue in our quest for mutual understanding. With a global perspective, we strove to further our common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.¹ Doubtless, in the face of globalization, we need new forms of encounters between human beings, nations, States and cultures.²

Over many years of joint reflection, dialogue in its most comprehensive understanding became not only one of the major points of our common interest: we also wanted it to be the overall characteristic of *all* our joint endeavours. In our mind's eye there was a world where all the God-given goods are shared by all in fairness, while all kinds of differences and conflicts, be they political, economic or social, are resolved in the spirit of dialogue and in a peaceful manner.³ When humans really listen to God – so is our conviction – they will not get tired in discovering what God wants of them.⁴ If we wish to create one world for all, religions also have to contribute their share creatively, and for this reason the dialogue of religions is necessary as never before.⁵

Much will depend on how successful we are in forging the foundations for bonds between people of different religions. And since Christianity and Islam are religions with a worldwide presence, much will depend on them. Moreover, they should feel called to continue faithfully what was initiated in the past decades worldwide and remain open to further progress on the path of dialogue with other religions.⁶

We are aware of the challenges facing Islam and Christianity in the contemporary world. To the extent that they listen to their scriptures they are, as it were, the consciences of modernity. It is their relationship to God that compels us to constantly search for what is authentically humane.⁷

2/- The will to hold dialogue means that the partners in the dialogue adopt an attitude rooted in the recognition of the other. Dialogue requires solid philosophical foundations, accompanying ethical rules, and illuminating spiritual orientation. It needs horizons it can accept as well as agreements and arrangements it feels obliged to enter into.⁸ Thus we must come through dialogue, study, and patient listening to appreciate the genuine concerns and preoccupations of our neighbours of other religions.⁹ Each partner must enter into the religious experience of the other party in order to understand it from within. The honesty and sincerity of the dialogue require the partners to commit themselves to this task in the integrity of their faith.¹⁰

The sincerity of dialogue also requires that it cannot limit itself to telling other people about the beauty and grandeur of one's own religious truths. The meaning of dialogue lies rather in explaining to other people the huge gap there is between our professed beliefs, on the one hand, and what we do in our life on the other. And we should explain to them what we are doing to bridge this gap.¹¹ We also know in our traditions of an inner prophet, a messenger coming from inside of ourselves. And one opportunity to counteract the danger of missing this call from inside lies in an honest dialogue, in which we allow each other to appeal mutually to our consciences.¹²

In our world that is becoming smaller and smaller, we have no other choice but to accept living together with each other and intercultural penetration. From now on, we have to combine what is specific to us and what is borrowed – in short, we must receive and give in a free exchange of sharing and mutual fecundation.¹³

3/- Despite all the positive developments today towards a new global culture of dialogue, we, the Christians and the Muslims of the world, must admit that we are going through a deep crisis of mutual confidence. Brothers and sisters are being divided by the satanic forces of mutual hatred. If we really do not want a catastrophe for mankind, we must realize that the present situation calls for drastic changes in our mindsets. We have to develop, adopt, and practise new paradigms of closer cooperation. The world looks forward to this direction and is in urgent need of new thinking about interreligious relations.¹⁴

Many Muslim communities feel confronted with a cultural invasion. They want change, yet they do not want transformation. At the same time, whilst Islam is afraid of a cultural invasion from the West, the West is afraid of a violent invasion from Islam.¹⁵ To combat the process of ‘mutual satanisation’ and in order to return to real dialogue, each of us must recognize the full humanity of the other. In a world divided into ‘us’ and ‘them,’ people are not treated or valued equally.¹⁶

Furthermore, if all of us should be concerned about sharing through cooperation and dialogue, then dialogue should be extended to all people and not only to those who believe. In other words, if dialogue is needed in our world, education should be generally oriented towards dialogue – between religious communities, cultures and civilizations.¹⁷

4/- In the current world situation facing the religions, there is only one way for all of us towards the future: the way of communication, fraternal dialogue and cooperation, in order to overcome the hostilities of the past and prepare and realize an ecumenism of the religions.¹⁸ Thus, friendship would have to become a category in the field of the theology of religions. Friends respect each other’s special features. While remaining different, they can achieve agreement in many individual points, they can learn together, etc.¹⁹

And in fact, Muslim-Christian friendships do exist. They may fill a whole lifetime and be a source of joy day in and day out. They can awaken and strengthen contemporary forms of cooperation in the interests of justice and solidarity, and contribute to building a peaceful future.²⁰ Therefore, concerning the question of an exclusive or inclusive character of religions, we should add a further alternative in the form of the ‘dialogue of the religions.’²¹

This touches upon immanent dialectics, i. e. how our own self can be harmonized by the reaction of the self to all that surrounds us. Indeed, identity is built upon this very relationship between ‘I’ and ‘You,’ between what concerns me and what concerns the other.²²

'Unity in dialogue' could in fact become a keyword for our path into the future. It would neither absolutize one's own position and exclude the other. Nor would it subsume the other under my own identity in an inclusive manner, or relativize our mutual positions by reducing the existing differences to a lowest common denominator. 'Dialogue unity,' meaning a unity that is achieved in dialogue, calls for a 'dialogue ethos,' which obliges us to act in unison within the differences of our respective moral groundings. A common ground of this kind not only must be attained within the differences but is, as it were, constituted by it.²³

¹ Cf. "Nostra aetate" of Vaticanum II, Art. 3.

² V. Köhler, *Dial 1999*, p. 334.

³ H. M. Sjadzali, *Dial 1994*, pp. 33 f.

⁴ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 1994*, p. 195; id., *Dial 2004*, p. 98; cf. A. Bsteh, *Dial 2007*, p. 167.

⁵ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1999*, p. 25.

⁶ C. Patelos, *Dial 1999*, pp. 260 f.

⁷ C. Geffré, *Dial 1999*, p. 271.

⁸ Hassan II, *Dial 1999*, p. 35.

⁹ F. Arinze, *Dial 1994*, p. 40.

¹⁰ Chr. W. Troll, *Dial 1999*, p. 77; cf. N. Iqbal, *Dial 1999*, p. 167.

¹¹ F. Esack, *Dial 1999*, p. 176.

¹² H. Schneider, *Dial 1999*, p. 262.

¹³ M. Talbi, *Dial 1999*, p. 305.

¹⁴ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 75.

¹⁵ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, p. 132.

¹⁶ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2004*, p. 127.

¹⁷ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2007*, p. 169; A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2007*, p. 170.

¹⁸ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 1992*, p. 21.

¹⁹ H. Ott, *Dial 1999*, p. 127.

²⁰ H. Teissier, *Dial 1994*, p. 45.

²¹ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2003*, p. 119.

²² M. Talbi, *Dial 1999*, p. 314.

²³ A. Bsteh, *Dial 2003*, p. 72.

7.

**No peace without the readiness for
peaceful conflict resolution,
reconciliation, and conflict prevention**

Literature

A. Th. Khoury, “Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation: As a Preliminary Stage towards a Positive Peace and a Healthful Togetherness,” in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 101–106; **N. Mosaffa, “Die Stärkung einer Kultur des Friedens als Vorbedingung zur Vermeidung und Lösung von Konflikten”** [transl.: **The Strengthening of a Peace Culture as a Precondition for the Prevention and Solution of Conflicts**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 263–275; **I. Gabriel, “Der lange Schatten der Geschichte. Konflikt und Versöhnung in den christlich-muslimischen Beziehungen”** [transl.: **The Long Shadows of the Past: Conflict and Reconciliation in the Context of Christian-Muslim Relations**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 31–47; **G. Khodr, “Violence, Tolerance and the Liberating Force of Love,”** in: *Dial 2004*, pp. 81–85; **S. M. Khamene’i, “Friede und Gerechtigkeit”** [transl.: **Peace and Justice**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 57–81; **A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity: Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians***. New Delhi, 1996 (2nd reprint 1998).

1/- The problems which we face today can only be resolved by developing a global consensus. If the ideal of humanitarianism is to be realized, the vicious circle of conflict and clash has to be broken and reformed into multilateralism and reconciliation. We must recognize the worth and dignity of each and every human being and respect the ethical values shared by all the members of the international community. In order to realize the common good, common action is necessary.¹

A positive strategy is needed, particularly in the field of dialogue between civilizations and cultures. Cultural dialogue is about preventing violent conflicts – it is forward-looking security policy.²

A comprehensive “Culture of Prevention” is, however, hampered above all by two serious problems. First, although the costs of a preventive policy are far lower than those of reconstruction aid that only reacts to catastrophes, they have to be financed immediately, and become successful in the longer or long run only. The fact that prevention is more important than mere reaction is still hard to convey or put into political practice. This is also linked to the second great problem, namely that the results of a preventive policy are hard to measure, since its success is reflected in the non-occurrence of catastrophes and conflicts. This kind of political success is hard to sell in public.³

2/- We often experience antagonism between groups, communities, and peoples: in political confrontation, in social relations, in theological controversy, in the economic field, etc. Against this background, it is understandable how the legitimate wish to define one’s own identity sometimes develops into an identity against others. The readiness to overcome these various forms of antagonism and the development of an open identity could bring about a new, liberating attitude of tolerance.⁴

Thus, the important point is how the values and attitudes that promote peace and reconciliation can be cultivated. What exactly is needed to defuse historical experience, which poisons the ‘collective memory’ of peoples and religions? How can we attain a consensus about rules that create confidence, moderate conflicts, or prevent them from the very beginning? Which kind of moral positions are compatible with the belief in a peaceful and merciful God?⁵

3/- Faced with the conditions of today’s world and in the absence of effective and trustworthy instruments at the international level – even if we take into account the unique experience of interpersonal relations in the framework of the United Nations, the strengthening of a peace culture, conceived of as a comprehensive process, should be considered the most important means of preventing conflicts or finding ways to resolve them.⁶

The new international strategy is based on prevention. The assumption that prevention is better than curing, is well accepted worldwide. The same is true for the idea that preventive measures have to be directed against the root causes of hostilities, and not be limited to taking action against the consequences of violence. Still more important is the development of a comprehensive and sustainable mindset capable of guaranteeing the peace, well-being and development of nations and peoples.⁷ In this context, one of the most pressing problems at the political level is how the necessity of a preventive culture can be conveyed to the public.⁸

4/- If peace is a gift of God, then it is above all a *reconciling* dynamic of God. It is this very dynamic which seeks to bring mankind – and not only mankind but also the whole of creation – together.⁹

Violence tends to provoke violence, and conflict-ridden disputes may lead to war and separate people's hearts from each other. In order to abstain from dispute and conflict, we must dissociate ourselves from the animal nature in us, control our actions, and decide on specifically humane behaviour, for example forgiveness, kindness, and self-sacrificing generosity. For what is good will continue to create good things, as mentioned in a poem of Ḥāfīz, a great scholar and mystic: "Plant the tree of friendship which will produce what your heart is longing for."¹⁰

We all agree that the many centuries of conflict speak for the urgent need to introduce an era of reconciliation and peace. In this respect we can also learn a lot from history, since there is also a positive side of history in the relations between Christians and Muslims which is much too little known. This is a history of friendship, diverse exchanges, and peaceful coexistence.¹¹

In any case, what is past should not be decisive for the shaping of international relations and of relations between the religious communities today. We want to commit ourselves to establishing peace in the world, above all religious peace. This message of people who commit themselves to establishing a new order for human coexistence should be carried to all parts of the world.¹²

5/- Possibly, in this context, we should think even more of a collective process. Perhaps we should ask whether hostile groups can, after all, instil so much trust through their actions that a mutual relationship of trust could perhaps come about. Trust can never be unilateral. It is possible only reciprocally.¹³

How can we then pave ways that lead from violence towards love and walk them together? Do we not have to develop a differentiated concept of dialogue, by not only exchanging arguments but also treading a common path, a path of peace and of reconciliation?¹⁴

We have pleaded therefore at an earlier occasion for a "Pact of Friendship" between Christians and Muslims, whose concerns, among others, were the following: "With reference to the burden of our common history, we declare that we wish and strive for putting a definite end to our mutual accusations and to overcome our failures and injustices through mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. Face to face with our history, we endeavour to correct the errors of this past and to overcome these deficiencies. Together we want to search for ways to settle conflicts peacefully, remove their causes, and limit tensions."¹⁵

¹ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2006*, pp. 66 f.

² L. Hjelm-Wallén, *Dial 1999*, p. 33.

³ I. Marboe, *Dial 2004*, p. 62.

⁴ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2003*, pp. 101–103.

- ⁵ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2005*, p. 31.
- ⁶ N. Mosaffa, *Dial 2005*, p. 264.
- ⁷ Id., *Dial 2005*, p. 269.
- ⁸ H. Ott, *Dial 2004*, p. 63.
- ⁹ G. Vanoni, *Dial 1994*, p. 129.
- ¹⁰ S. M. Khamene'i, *Dial 2005*, pp. 72 f.
- ¹¹ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2003*, p. 107.
- ¹² T. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, p. 110.
- ¹³ H. Ott, *Dial 2004*, p. 19.
- ¹⁴ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2004*, p. 18.
- ¹⁵ In: Conference Votes, *Dial 1999*, p. 365.

8.

**No peace without equal access to
education founded on
true human and religious values**

Literature

A. Bsteh – T. Mahmood (eds.), *Education for Equality: An Answer to Injustice and Intolerance* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 4). Moedling, 2007; **S. S. Mahmood, “Education as a Key to Overcome Poverty,”** in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 27–33; **M. M. Schabestari, “The Contemporary Value Crisis as a Threat to Human Life,”** in: *Dial 2003*, pp. 11–12; **A. Belarbi, “Education and Global Learning as a Challenge to Poverty and Injustice,”** in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 87–102; **S. S. Mahmood, “Illiteracy and Access to Basic Education,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 11–21; **R. Potz, “Mediation of Religious Values at Schools in European Union,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 27–33; **T. Mahmood, “Right to Education in Religious Texts and Modern Laws,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 41–51; **G. Khodr, “Preaching and Education in Christianity and Islam: An Orthodox Perspective,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 59–66; **A. Belarbi, “Education and Gender,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 73–94; **G. A. Khidoyatov, “Religious Education in Central Asia,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 101–105; **M. M. Schabestari, “Religious Education and Identity,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 111–113; **I. Gabriel, “Learning Justice,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 119–128; **I. Marboe, “Human Rights Education,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 135–149; **A. Th. Houry, “Education in View of Religious Pluralism,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 157–164; **N. Iqbal, “Education to Overcome Fundamentalism,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 173–180.

1/- In our time proper education has become the most pressing need of human society – for therein lies the answer to the injustices and intolerance rampant in the world. It is indispensable at the same time to pay attention to what is being taught at schools and colleges, especially with regard to human rights, which should be, right from the primary levels onward, an essential part of the curriculum. Education in general must be designed in ways that contribute to the solution of the problems the world is grappling with, and not as a minefield of sources and motivation for creating the same.¹

Education faces the arduous task of resolving the issue of citizenship while keeping pace with a world that is changing at a very rapid pace. The need of the time is to produce informed and responsible citizens rather than knowledgeable vessels.²

Especially the learning of justice is not first and foremost a matter of information: it is rather a question of a special mode of education that refers to the whole person. Through this never-ending process the human being develops into a person. And since the learning of justice is of a personal nature, it takes place socially in groups and communities.³

Basic education is a fundamental right of every individual. It follows from this that every society has the obligation to provide universal, free, and compulsory primary education to all without discrimination. Indeed, if one is to analyze the matter more closely, the successful attainment of all of the Millennium Development Goals is most directly related to one of these goals, namely the goal to achieve universal primary education.⁴

2/- We have to be careful about the fact that education may be felt as being dangerous, because it may possibly destabilize the existing balance of power. For if one supports education for the poor, this will also enhance the chance for the rightless to claim their rights.⁵ But, if education is dangerous, then all the more so is illiteracy. Uneducated people are at the mercy of a small elite.⁶ And although education is a double-edged sword, we do need a sharp knife. Without education people can be misled, exploited, and so on.⁷

Only those nations can progress that give priority to education in their planning. The development of the spiritual, material, social and economic aspects of any society basically depends on the kind of education provided to its children in schools.⁸

3/- The eradication of poverty is not brought about by some miracle formula. Instead, it calls for global learning: learning in the sense of the individual and collective enhancement of the abilities of society; learning which helps to break out of a frame of mind that accepts passivity, resignation and silence. Furthermore, it requires that individuals learn that they have rights and that they have the potential to use new opportunities. And it calls for learning to empower the poor through both knowledge and organizations – factors that are of benefit for confidence and self-esteem. The articulation of material, social, and spiritual aspirations is an essential precondition of global learning.

However, the need to learn is not limited to the poor. It is the very essence of the development process and requires that all segments and levels of society meet the new needs of continued education.

This new vision of global learning emphasizes a holistic, interdisciplinary approach. Such a vision requires a reorientation of the education policies and practices, and the empowering of all citizens to express their own opinions, make reasoned choices, participate effectively in decisions, and be aware of the consequences of their actions.⁹

4/- There has to be a global collaboration for peace education and human rights literacy. We have an uphill task of convincing our co-religionists that violence provokes greater violence, hatred provokes greater hatred, and intolerance leads to wider intolerance – that there is now an urgent need for the Christians and Muslims of the world to actively defend, and not just magnanimously ‘tolerate,’ each other’s religion.¹⁰

The objective of a well-founded human rights education is to establish a culture in which human rights are properly understood, defended and respected. In doing so, the needs and interests of the people and the skills and desires of individual human beings in their social environment have to be taken into account. An education in human rights should explain why the principles and procedures of human rights are a proper means of achieving a people-centred human, social and economic development. On this basis, a worldwide ‘culture of human rights’ can enable people – as individuals and as groups – to strive for social changes and for the full realization of their human rights.¹¹

The way we teach religion is sometimes very traditional, leading to resignation and a passive acceptance of what happens. In contrast, however, our children should be enheartened to gladly open up to new developments, act on their own initiative, and shape their lives according to their own responsibility.¹²

5/- The safeguarding of our cultural, religious, and moral identity demands an education that teaches our own system of values and simultaneously respect for other cultures and religions. This can only be done by means of good reasoning and reflection.¹³

By removing religion from the public space, we have created a vacuum in the world with regard to spiritual needs, which remain unmet, giving rise to religious sects and cults and to distorted social practices. Through our efforts to re-introduce religious, moral, ethical and spiritual values, while examining and assessing these values for their significance in emerging situations, we may succeed in stemming the current erosion of the rich soil of our social fabric.¹⁴

The lack of values and binding standards is the most serious obstacle for humanity on its way into the future, and the greatest threat to human life. A merely pragmatic viewpoint cannot be sufficient for us as followers of religions. We are concerned with the truth and not least with the truth of values. The question of grounding values is actually the question of experiencing them.¹⁵ We should honour the truth and give priority to values rather than to interests.¹⁶

If human globalization means a dimension of new challenges, then the maintenance of moral foundations is all the more important. We know that a society without these ties is nothing but a well-organized gang of robbers. One single formula of how to safeguard identity in a time of fast

change, develop a world culture, and harvest the fruits from the tensions between modernization, globalization, and the preservation of tradition, does not and cannot exist.¹⁷ Especially in the age of globalization it will be necessary to continue preserving certain unchanging values.¹⁸

If it is not connected with ethical norms, globalization turns into an evil that strikes humanity as a whole. If moral foundations are denied or sacrificed on the market of egotism and rough competition, globalization can indeed change into a new, cruel war.¹⁹

When reconstructing the present-day status of religion, we must pay constant attention to the natural requirements of those to whom religion is addressed, i. e. to the requirements of man's need for freedom and justice. We have to approach and propagate religion in such a way that it can meet the demands of a future in which the whole of mankind (and not simply part of it) can recover what it has lost – namely, its basic grounding in ideal values. For without the ideal values of religion freedom and justice is but a lie, and without freedom and justice the ideal values of religion are simply deception.²⁰

The most important counsellor for a religious education for peace is God himself.²¹ If religions remember their primary task, which is to educate humans to be peaceful, they will be in the position of contributing something necessary to the formation of a global society of religious and cultural pluralism.²²

¹ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2007*, p. 51; A. Belarbi, *Dial 2006*, p. 106.

² N. Iqbal, *Dial 2007*, p. 179.

³ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2007*, pp. 119–122.

⁴ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2007*, pp. 11 f. 14.

⁵ A. Bsteh, *Dial 2003*, p. 35.

⁶ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2003*, pp. 35 f.

⁷ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, p. 36.

⁸ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2007*, p. 175; I. Gabriel, *Dial 2006*, p. 29.

⁹ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2006*, pp. 101 f.

¹⁰ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, pp. 74 f.

¹¹ I. Marboe, *Dial 2007*, p. 137.

¹² A. Belarbi, *Dial 2006*, p. 104; I. Gabriel, *Dial 2007*, p. 127 f.

¹³ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2006*, p. 32.

¹⁴ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2004*, pp. 35. 31.

¹⁵ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 2003*, pp. 11. 13.

¹⁶ A. A. Engineer, *Dial 1999*, p. 130.

¹⁷ V. Köhler, *Dial 1999*, pp. 332. 335.

¹⁸ Id., *Dial 1999*, p. 351.

¹⁹ Hassan II, *Dial 1999*, p. 38.

²⁰ S. M. Khatami, *Dial 1994*, p. 31.

²¹ G. Vanoni, *Dial 1994*, p. 120.

²² M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1999*, p. 27.

9.

**No peace if women do not share responsibility
in all spheres of life,
on the basis of equality and partnership**

Literature

A. Bsteh – T. Mahmood (eds.), *Education for Equality: An Answer to Injustice and Intolerance* (Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table; 4). Moedling, 2007; **S. S. Mahmood, “Illiteracy and Access to Basic Education,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 11–21; **A. Belarbi, “Education and Gender,”** in: *Dial 2007*, pp. 73–94; **M. M. Schabestari, “The Theological and Legal Foundations of the Freedom, Autonomy and Sovereignty of Man in Islam as the Basis for an Earnestly Desired World Peace,”** in: *Dial 1994*, pp. 179–184.

1/- Presently we are not in the position of defining the particular features which confer on women their very own dignity. One would be mistaken not to see that much intensive thinking and dialogue is still needed here.¹

In speaking about women's rights, we should take into account that human rights generally have to be respected as answers to exemplary manifestations of injustice, which may appear in different guises at different times. Thus, for example, issues relating to the discrimination of women and the denial of their rights are undoubtedly much more evident today than they were some time ago.²

It is high time to make decided efforts to eliminate discriminatory attitudes towards women, which affect the whole society. Of course, women can be found in almost every sector of modern society. And people are sometimes very happy to find women in their midst. But the problem is that the participation of women in public life is all too often limited in undue ways. Women do not want to be associated with flowers or similar things: they want to be recognized as human beings. Because our world is experiencing thorough and far-reaching changes, we should not remain in the world of our grandparents but get involved in favour of our present world and that of our children.³

Doubtless, all issues that refer to the founding of a family, which is the core of human society, are of special import. The founding of a family must result from a completely free decision of man and woman. No one must be forced to enter into a particular marriage. In the same way, no one must be forced to continue a ruined marriage; separation is permitted and is the right of man and woman. When necessary, either of them may make use of this right.⁴

When it is said that we have to protect women, we should sometimes ask ourselves whether women really are such a vulnerable species that they constantly need to be protected. When are we going to arrive at the point of seeing them as people quite capable of running their own lives? The stage has to be reached where we learn to perceive all of us, whoever we are, as human beings with equal rights.⁵

We are in a position to approach the sensitive issue of human rights in a calm and prudent way, and without affecting the basic values of individual countries. This is all the more important because certain problems, for example the rights of women and children, the equality of all humans, the recognition of human dignity, etc., are highly relevant in the life and coexistence of nations. Answering the question of how we can reach our goal in these issues, and how we can behave in this context in the best possible manner, requires high precision and sensitivity.⁶

A part of the problem is that women are marginalized and discriminated against by various forces, and that they are denied the possibility of taking adequate responsibility upon themselves for finding out what is appropriate for promoting and securing their equal rights in society.⁷

2/- At the same time, there is increasing evidence of the feminization of poverty in today's world. With less access to education and employment opportunities in most societies around the world, women are at the forefront of the poverty lines, as economic growth stagnates and population density intensifies. Women not only do not enjoy equal status with men; they also suffer from violence and discrimination, which is further exacerbated by social, political, and armed conflicts.⁸

We gladly acknowledge that the world has made a lot of progress in promoting education for girls and reducing female illiteracy. Yet, from a historical perspective, women have been left for much too long without access to school, literacy, and other educational opportunities. Through a complex set of social, cultural, economic and biological reasons, many women have been effectively deprived of the basic human right of education. This has produced a gender gap that still persists.⁹

In many cases school environments are not conducive to learning, especially for girls. Safety and security when attending school play an important role in their schooling. Gender bias in education is reinforced in many countries. Boys and girls are treated differently in schools. Gender bias includes the behaviour of teachers towards students, the subjects and topics students are encouraged to study, and the images conveyed by textbooks and other materials representing social gender roles.¹⁰

A new vision of education for a sustainable future requires a reorientation of the traditional approaches and the implementation of new ones. This is to be undertaken in order to promote widespread public awareness and understanding, critical analysis, and support for sustainable development based on gender equality, through the engagement of a wide spectrum of institutions and sectors.

Gender equality is seen as both an aim and a precondition of sustainable development. Gender equality in formal education is also a main objective of the UN system, the States policies, and the actions of NGOs. All these institutions emphasize the need for gender-sensitive approaches and materials, and for the integration of gender perspectives into all educational activities.¹¹

3/- The shaping of gender relations in a particular society is not exclusively, but nevertheless to a great extent a question of power. Thus the gender question coincides with the political question. The claim that the man is in principle in charge of the woman is found not only in all religions, but in secular society as well. It is a general anthropological problem.¹²

Even though gender inequality still exists, times are changing very rapidly. On the whole, the question is not so much that women are not being educated, but that they are not being empowered.¹³ The fact that women easily tend to accommodate and resign to given conditions underlines the role women NGOs and development NGOs have to play in our world, namely to make women more aware of their rights and obligations, and to encourage them to become more intensively involved in politics. Although women sometimes think too simply that there are special spaces reserved for women and others for men, we take the stance that in order to give all spaces the necessary strength, they have to be shared by men and women.¹⁴

What the declarations and conventions on issues of education and gender, and on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, are so concerned about, is the assessment that a woman must not be seen only from the perspective of her sex, but first of all as a human being, as a citizen. Women and men should live together in respect toward the differences of their genders, working together in order to achieve gender equality. Women were less educated at the beginning of the past century, but we are now living in the 21st century, and we must be ready to revise and rethink their situation.

Women must not only have visions and wishes: they need to get involved and become partners in this undertaking. Nonetheless, in this respect we are confronted with strong issues, above all each country's general state of development. Last but not least, all this remains a cultural problem as well.¹⁵

Human coexistence requires human beings who are ready and able to acknowledge the other as a person with equal rights.¹⁶

¹ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2003*, p. 25.

² G. Luf, *Dial 1994*, p. 162.

³ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2007*, pp. 97 f.

⁴ M. M. Schabestari, *Dial 1994*, p. 184.

⁵ F. Esack, *Dial 1999*, p. 176.

⁶ N. Mosaffa, *Dial 2005*, pp. 281 f.

⁷ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2007*, p. 99.

⁸ Id., *Dial 2006*, pp. 128 f.

⁹ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2007*, p. 78.

¹⁰ Id., *Dial 2007*, p. 81.

¹¹ Id., *Dial 2007*, p. 94.

¹² I. Gabriel, *Dial 2003*, p. 119.

¹³ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2007*, pp. 99 f.

¹⁴ A. Belarbi, *Dial 2007*, p. 100.

¹⁵ Id., *Dial 2007*, pp. 95 f.

¹⁶ I. Gabriel, *Dial 2003*, p. 20

10.

**No peace without the due recognition
of minority rights
and a careful consideration of the interests
of future generations**

Literature

G. Khodr, “Poverty and Injustice: A Socio-Political Challenge in the Realm of Minority Affairs,” in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 113–116; **T. Mahmood, “Prejudices Breeding Injustices: Minorities’ Predicament amid Global Modernism,”** in: *Dial 2006*, pp. 163–173; **S. M. Mohaqqeq-Damad, “Die Menschenrechte. Minderheiten und Mehrheiten“** [transl.: **Human Rights: Minorities and Majorities**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 155–162; **A. Th. Houry, “Friede – ohne Lösung der Minderheitenfrage? Eine Anmerkung aus christlicher Sicht“** [transl.: **Peace – Without a Solution of the Minority Problem? Comments from a Christian Perspective**], in: *Dial 2005*, pp. 173–183.

1/- Minorities in the world do not necessarily share the same characteristics, nor have they had similar developments in the course of their histories. Nonetheless, they share the same sociopolitical challenge of poverty and injustice.

Their experience in facing this challenge differs largely according to two main factors. The first of these, the external factor, relates to the nature of the ruling powers and the culture of the majority that surrounds them. The other major (and even more important) factor relates to the awareness which these minorities have of their own needs and potentials, and to the understanding they have of their own identity and role, which are manifested in the dynamics and strategies that move them.¹

Respect for minorities is to be considered the touchstone of social harmony and the index of the civic maturity attained by a country and its institutions.²

Notwithstanding differing medieval concepts, it is our conviction that all citizens of all States of the earth should have equal rights.³ Since the problems of cultural diversity and religious and other minority groups are inherent in the nature of social life, a clear understanding of the processes that make for diversity and the ability to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of diversity may save the world from destruction.⁴ No political ideology, religious or otherwise, that projects a holistic, totalitarian image of society, can lead to respect for pluralism, neither on the political nor the social level.⁵

In the constitutional State there is not only the principle of majority, but also of minority protection, which extends even to the smallest 'minority' – the individual – in the form of fundamental rights. The collective goods and interests of groups are also protected, insofar as this does not encroach upon the rights of others.⁶

2/- The major factors responsible for the predicaments of the minorities across the globe are thus, first, discriminatory attitudes towards various religions which arbitrarily treat one or another religion as the only true – or at least the most superior – spiritual system and, second, popular perceptions which see particular religions as the basic or natural religions of particular nation-states, to the total exclusion of all other faiths.

True spokesmen of all religions, and indeed of true humanity, must awaken to man's potential for perpetuating discrimination and injustice against minorities. They have to persuade people to realize and accept that all religions together are the common heritage of mankind as a whole. To achieve the true ideals and objectives of a purposeful globalization, the origin of each of our religions also has to be globalized.⁷

What is necessary today is to take the initiative towards this new understanding of the self-determination of cultures or minorities of a specific (religious) culture. The variety of cultures and religious traditions is part of the common heritage of mankind. Because of this, we must react against the danger of ruthless nationalism and cultural chauvinism. Representatives of religions and interreligious dialogue can make a creative contribution to solving one of the secular global political problems confronting mankind today.⁸

At the domestic level, every religion should be accepted and respected without any favouritism toward or advantages for a particular religion, as this causes religious hatred and conflict in society. This can be guaranteed only by ensuring the participation of religious minorities in all spheres of national life.⁹

The decisive point here is that not only individual rights are spoken of: religious communities are also entitled to play a part in public life.¹⁰ Thus, the adequate political representation of minorities is of great importance.¹¹

3/- The tragedy of the contemporary world is that despite all its professed modernism in its political and legal theories, in actual practice it does not take into account the needs and interests of minorities. Political professions apart, 'numerical inferiority' – which the legal definitions of the term 'minority' speak about – invariably becomes social and political inferiority, and the numerically 'dominant position' is obstinately translated into an arbitrary hegemony of the predominant group.¹²

We have to look for new ways which make integration possible and which enable us to find appropriate means for it. We have to opt for the partnership between majority and minority, to recognize and practise the universal solidarity of all with all, who certainly are creatures of the one God. Finally, transcending mere partnership, we must also make friendship possible and enter into it.¹³

When we think of the emerging global village and the different religious communities, the urgent question arises of how to guarantee for all people the right to live according to their religious persuasions, without discrimination of any kind. Because in the world of tomorrow, there will perhaps be only minorities, and we will all have to learn to live as minorities.¹⁴

4/- If we consider the limited reserves of our earth and the extent to which they have already been used up, we ask ourselves the question: does this not also overtax the earth's peace reservoir? If we want to promote human rights and development at one end of the earth, we ought not to neglect the other end of the earth, the Third World. The gift of creation is there for all human beings, so that they can enjoy, honour and care for it.¹⁵ Peace has cosmic dimensions: it is for the whole of creation, not only for humans. Whoever claims peace for him/herself alone is against peace. This has all too often been forgotten, and the price of this forgetfulness has been the destruction of many values of creation.¹⁶

Therefore, if we do emphasize the human rights issue so much, we should similarly take into consideration the rights of all creatures.¹⁷

5/- The reckless exploitation of natural and human resources threatens the future of humankind.¹⁸ The idea of 'sustainable' development has been hard to sustain in a world hurriedly moving towards globalization, which avoids the irritating checks of immediate limitations and concerns for long-term sustainability, permanent depletion, and environmental degradation. This is an age of immediate gratification, just as it is of instant information.¹⁹

Perhaps not today, but tomorrow at the latest or the day after tomorrow, we must think of the world we are going to live in, we and our children and grandchildren.²⁰ A concomitant problem which the model of unfettered growth creates is the ecological crisis. The rapid depletion of natural resources, the pollution of air, land and water, global warming, and other atmospheric changes all have catastrophic effects. While all are affected by the ecological crisis, the poor and marginalized are further impoverished by it.²¹

Movements among indigenous and other grass-root level people, environmentalists, and feminists are already generating a new political culture, based on the spiritual and social visions of their traditions. They challenge us to respect the plurality of cultures; they demand justice as a prerequisite for a meaningful form of human solidarity; and they show us the need for a viable ecosystem in order to survive.²²

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- ¹ G. Khodr, *Dial 2006*, p. 113.
 - ² John Paul II cited by F. Arinze, *Dial 1994*, p. 40.
 - ³ A. A. Engineer, *Dial 1994*, p. 247.
 - ⁴ N. Iqbal, *Dial 1999*, p. 145.
 - ⁵ A. E. H. Dessouki, *Dial 1999*, pp. 172 f.
 - ⁶ H. Schneider, *Dial 1999*, p. 277.
 - ⁷ T. Mahmood, *Dial 2006*, p. 173.
 - ⁸ H. Ott, *Dial 1994*, p. 172.
 - ⁹ N. Iqbal, *Dial 2003*, p. 80.
 - ¹⁰ H. Schneider, *Dial 1999*, p. 264.
 - ¹¹ M. Fitzgerald, *Dial 1999*, p. 139.
 - ¹² T. Mahmood, *Dial 2006*, p. 167.
 - ¹³ A. Th. Khoury, *Dial 2005*, p. 180.
 - ¹⁴ A. Bsteh, *Dial 2003*, p. 138.
 - ¹⁵ M. Zakzouk, *Dial 1994*, p. 78.
 - ¹⁶ G. Vanoni, *Dial 1994*, p. 127.
 - ¹⁷ C. Anzai, *Dial 1994*, p. 160.
 - ¹⁸ Vienna Declaration, *Dial 1994*, p. 279.
 - ¹⁹ S. S. Mahmood, *Dial 2003*, p. 28.
 - ²⁰ A. E. H. Dessouki, *Dial 1999*, pp. 136 f.
 - ²¹ K. C. Abraham, *Dial 1994*, p. 236.
 - ²² Id., *Dial 1994*, p. 244.

Appendix

VIENNA DECLARATION
by the International Christian-Islamic Conference
“Peace for Humanity,”
which took place in Vienna from March 30 to April 2, 1993

“Our world as a whole is in flux: revolutionary changes in east-west relations go hand in hand with ever more acutely-felt problems in north-south relations. Local and regional conflicts, more and more often and with greater rapidity, impinge upon supra-regional and often even world-wide interests. International and global systems are developing on the technological, economic, cultural and political level.

I.

In a world which is becoming more and more unified, special responsibility devolves upon Christianity and Islam, as two major world-wide religions. Muslims and Christians are united by faith in the one God, the Creator of all human beings, before whom all one day will have to account for their deeds.

Common to Christians and Muslims is the basic moral orientation of their lives towards God and the task to serve the propitious coexistence of all creatures. For Muslims and Christians, God is a “God of peace”. They know that whoever wants to serve him must serve the cause of peace.

Therefore the Christians and Muslims, gathered in Vienna for an international Christian-Islamic conference on “Peace for Humanity” from March 30 to April 2, 1993, make this common appeal to all their sisters and brothers:

1. In the interest of deepening and consolidating peace among all human beings, we call upon Christians and Muslims, at long last, to overcome the negative aspects of the history of their relationship, to find ways of understanding each other better, to redress prejudices and to come to respect and value each other in their religious convictions.

2. We appeal to all Christians and Muslims to strive together, and with all people, for a more humane world, a world in which all can live together in dignity, justice, mutual tolerance and peace, in which the wealth of our earth is distributed justly and in which tensions and conflicts are resolved in a spirit of dialogue coupled with the resolute will for peace.

3. We appeal to Christians and Muslims all over the world to proscribe war and to be themselves an example of peace.

4. We call upon all Muslims and Christians to oppose any attempt to misuse religion for the legitimization of political objectives.

II.

Peace cannot be achieved without the creation of the juridical bases and appropriate political structures required for its establishment and preservation. This is all the more important, since in the future groups with different religious, cultural, ethnic and other historical origins will have to share increasingly a common living space.

Hence we make this urgent appeal to politicians, to all members of international institutions and to those who hold responsible positions in societies and states throughout the world:

1. To this day the dignity of human persons is being violated in manifold and elementary ways. We appeal to those responsible in politics to respect and protect the inalienable dignity of men and women.

2. Human rights are being violated in many parts of the world. We appeal to those responsible in politics to recognize and to secure legally the basic rights of each human being.

3. Discrimination against minorities, persecution of defenceless people and the humiliation of those in need of aid, occurring in many places, are accusations we have to face up to. We appeal to all responsible in politics to remove these injustices and to establish justice on national level and in international relations.

4. The present-day wars demonstrate the ineffectiveness of political institutions for maintaining peace. We appeal to those responsible in politics to create and strengthen international bodies capable of stopping violence and of securing peace.

5. The reckless exploitation of natural and human resources threatens the future of humankind. We appeal to those responsible in politics to direct their activities towards the creation and consolidation of a world-wide solidarity and the preservation of the common living space for all human beings.

In all these matters those responsible in politics should recognize the ethical impact of religions, they should promote education for peace and create institutions which can provide competent advice for decision-makers in the politics of peace."

Conference Votes
by the Second International Christian-Islamic Conference
“One World for All,”
which took place in Vienna from May 13 to 16, 1997

“In the context of their deliberations, the Conference have put forward these votes:

I.

We plead for a *Pact of Friendship* between Christians and Muslims, whose concerns are the following:

1. With reference to the burden of our common history, we declare that we wish and strive for putting a definite end to our mutual accusations and to overcome our failures and injustices through mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.
2. Face to face with our history we endeavour to correct the errors of this past and to overcome these deficiencies. Together we want to search for ways to settle conflicts peacefully, remove their causes and limit tensions.
3. With reference to the present and the future, we want to cooperate in order to make our common contribution to the creation of a more humane present and, for the generations to come, to prepare a world, in which Christians and Muslims are partners and may become friends.
4. This Pact of Friendship shall also be understood as an invitation extended to all human beings.

II.

In analogy to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, our responsibility for the entire creation shall result in the elaboration and passage of a *Universal Declaration of Human Duties*, whereby emphasis is placed on the fact that the recognition of human rights must not be made dependent on the fulfilment of the duties.”

Communiqué

of the 1st Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table, which took place in Vienna from October 19 to 23, 2000

“At the dawn of a new era a group of Muslim and Christian scholars coming from different parts of the world met in Vienna from October 19–23, 2000, to discuss the possibilities for a closer cooperation in face of the urgent questions humanity is facing on our way into the future. This ‘Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table’ emerged as a continuation of the ‘Vienna Dialogue Process’ initiated in 1993. It is an initiative which seeks to find new ways of cooperating and living together among the different cultures and religious communities.

The participants of the ‘Round Table,’ from their Christian and Islamic perspectives, agreed on the following:

I. Points of Concern

1. Injustice and inequality in the distribution of resources and the access to full and equal opportunity in civil society at the national and international levels.
2. Religious misperceptions and prejudice leading to rising discrimination and intolerance.
3. Crisis of general human values and the necessity to rediscover them out of the rich religious heritage of mankind to meet the new challenges of our times.
4. Increasing hostility, conflict, and violence between various groups and communities in the name of religion.
5. Failure of domestic and international institutions and organizations to effectively enforce the laws to secure religious liberty and equality to all individuals, groups, and communities.

II. Plan of Action

1. To engage in inter-religious dialogue as an indispensable tool of promoting cooperation, joint action, and reconciliation.
2. To promote universal education reinforced by moral and ethical values of our respective religions by emphasizing human dignity and mutual respect for each other’s faith with due recognition of the richness and diversity of religions and cultures.
3. To promote religious reconciliation and study ways and means of conflict resolution.
4. To encourage the media to play a more positive role in promoting understanding through fairness and moderation in coverage.
5. To establish a 15-member working group to be known as ‘Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table’ and a 5-member Steering Committee in order to address the concerns and to pursue the action plan stated above.”

Communiqué

of the 2nd Vienna International Christian-Islamic Round Table, which took place in Vienna from February 21 to 24, 2002

“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.”