

# **The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development**

**Annual Report 2019**







# OVERVIEW

This report provides an overview of the engagement with faith-based actors and faith-related activities by the UN system members of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (short: UN Task Force on Religion/IATF-Religion) covering 2019.

This annual report documents the activities, initiatives and efforts undertaken by diverse UN system entities, members of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development. None of the opinions expressed here reflect those of the United Nations system, its member entities, Governing Board(s), or territory/territories.

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## Members of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development 2019



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# Introduction



## The United Nations Interagency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Actors for Sustainable Development

This report provides an overview of the engagement with faith-based actors and faith-related activities by the UN system members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development (short: UN Task Force on Religion/IATF-Religion) covering 2019.

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development consists of the following members:

- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): Chair/Convener
- Joint United Nations Program on HIV/ AIDS (UNAIDS)
- United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
- United Nations Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations (UN DPI NGO)
- United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA)
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations International Labor Organization (UN ILO)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR)
- United Nations Office of Special Adviser for Prevention of Genocide (UN OSAPG)
- The United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- World Bank (WB)
- The World Food Program (WFP)
- The World Health Organization (WHO)

## Mission Statement

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development supports the work of UN staff, towards the shared objective of learned, strategic and sustained engagement with key partners in the faith-based world, to support respective and collective efforts to realize international development goals.

## Objectives

- Provide a knowledge exchange on the intersections of religion and religious actors with the UN system's mandate on human rights, sustainable development and peace and security.
- Provide an internal resource pool on experiences of and lessons from partnerships with FBOs within the UN, as well as with other governmental counterparts.
- Strengthen the integration of reliable FBO partnerships within the UN systems' broader civil society outreach and provide informed policy guidance upon request.

**Activities:** to that end, the Interagency Task Force members shall endeavor to:

- Serve as a convener of multilateral experience and expertise around engagement with religious actors, within the UN and with international intergovernmental counterparts, on the intersections of UN mandated areas with issues of religion and faith, based on diverse UN experiences, evidence and analysis.
- Host policy dialogues with faith-based partners and specialists on religion, development and humanitarian assistance.
- Share tools, guidelines, information and other capacity building resources including strategies of engagement, around ongoing outreach and engagement between diverse UN offices and faith-based NGOs, religious leaders as well as diverse religious institutions.
- Provide quarterly fora ('safe spaces') for the UN system members, to internally reflect on and critically analyze experiences lessons, challenges and best practices gleaned through diverse initiatives with religion and faith-based actors at country, regional and global levels.
- Support and advise UN system members in developing and/or ensuring clarity and consistency in outreach to/with faith-based partners, to systematize and strategically inform the modalities of engagement around different development, peace and security as well as human rights endeavors.
- Seek to catalyze regular UN system-wide activities and initiatives with a view to engaging faith actors in a learned and strategic manner around shared global objectives.

# Foreword



## A letter from Co-Chairs of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides us a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for all countries--both developed and developing--cogent actions in a global partnership. The SDGs recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. The Sustainable Development Goal 17, “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”, is the thread that weaves through all the interdependent 17 goals with a strategy of bringing together multi-stakeholders through partnerships. It requires that all stakeholders should intensify their efforts and hold each other accountable to ensure that sufficient means and resources of implementation exist to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

As emphasized in SDG17, partnerships are essential to accelerate the present trajectory of the Sustainable Development Goals and to achieve the commitments made by all UN Member States. In 2010, the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion was established. With the specific aims of convening UN system entities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals while taking into consideration the multi-religious dynamics, the UN Interagency Task Force has established a momentum and modality of collaboration with a diverse range of faith-based and faith-inspired partners. Since 2018, 40 CEOs from across the UN system’s long-standing faith-based partners have come together convening the UN Multifaith Advisory Council, which is committed to “uphold multilateralism and international human rights through multi-faith collaboration around/for Agenda 2030”. The UN Multifaith Advisory Council serves as a unique space for convening faith-based partners as advisors to the United Nations, in their human rights, peace and security, and sustainable development efforts.

One significant initiative stewarded by the UN Multifaith Advisory Council is the Kofi Annan Faith Briefings. It was hosted at the Ford Foundation as a side event of the UN High Level Political Forum with the theme, “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality: the role of UN and multifaith collaboration”. The Kofi Annan Faith Briefings provide a platform for information, celebration and consultation around partnerships with FBOs directly around the work of the United Nations--for the UN and for multilateralism. The 2019 Kofi Annan Faith Briefings involved a total of 231 scholars, religious actors and government representatives.

2019 witnessed the strenuous efforts from the United Nations and faith-based partners in strengthening these effective multi-stakeholder civil society partnerships, to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is therefore a fitting time to underscore the unwavering commitment of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council. We, as co-chairs representing the UN Multifaith Advisory Council, work with a commitment to serve, to amplify and to uplift faith-inspired civil society advocacy and partnerships with the United Nations for the SDGs. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all the members of the UN Interagency Task Force, for their role in ensuring the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

New opportunities are opening up for us. We face a very exciting future.

**On behalf of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council of 2019-2021:**

Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, Secretary General, ACT Alliance

Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative to the United Nations, Baha'i International Community

Dr. Husna Ahmad, Chief Executive Officer, Global One

Mr. Gopal Patel, Director, The Bhumi Project

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