

# Geneva Conference on Interfaith Cooperation and the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity

September 1-2, 2008

United Nations Office Geneva, Switzerland

*in joint sponsorship with*



The Permanent Mission of  
the Republic of Indonesia



The Permanent Mission of  
the Republic of the Philippines



UPF - Universal Peace Federation



The Geneva Interfaith  
and Intercultural Alliance



Dignity and justice for all of us

Excellencies, Colleagues and Friends

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the "Geneva Conference on Interfaith Cooperation and the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity" on September 1-2, 2008 in Geneva Switzerland. Celebrating the 60th anniversary of the signing of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", we will be bringing together religious and other civil society leaders, diplomats and United Nations representatives to address the contribution of faiths to peace and protection of the dignity of the human person and the role that a prominent interfaith advisory body within the United Nations could have.

The program of the first day will be held at the United Nations and will consist of a simulation of a hypothetical UN "Interfaith Council", which will include the representatives of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Other Faiths. The roles of the Delegates will be played by students and youth representatives of the various faiths. The working documents will be an "Interfaith Declaration on Peace and Human Rights" and recommendations that will be drafted to be sent to the Security and Human Rights Council and other UN bodies.

The sessions of the second day will be at the Ramada Park Hotel, where the International participants will be staying. Eminent speakers have been invited to lead a series of roundtables where issues will be discussed in greater detail and conclusions drawn in light of the recommendations of the day before. This event will correspond with the launching of the "Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance" (GIIA), a network of individuals and organizations working to build relationships between communities of faiths and cultures through learning and working together for peace.

Thank you for joining us today for this historic event.

Sincerely yours,

Amb. Makarim Wibisono  
Founding President GIIA

Heiner W. Handschin  
SG UPF-Europe 2, Co-founder GIIA

# Geneva Conference on Interfaith Cooperation and the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity

**Monday, September 1, 2008**

Palais des Nations, UNOG, Room XII

**Lundi 1<sup>er</sup> septembre**

Palais des Nations, Salle 12

- 09:30-09:45** **Welcome Message • Message de bienvenue**  
Frederico Mayor Zaragoza, Former UNESCO Director General  
**Welcome Remarks • Paroles de bienvenue**  
M.C. Heiner Handschin, Secretary General, Universal Peace Federation, Europe  
Ambassador Erlinda Basilio, Mission of the Philippines, UN Geneva
- 09:45-11:00** **Opening Statements: "Vision for an Interreligious Council at the United Nations"**  
**Déclarations d'Ouverture: «Vision pour un Conseil Interreligieux aux Nations Unies»**  
Amb. Makarim Wibisono, Founding President, GIAA  
Rev. Dr. William McComish, President, Geneva Spiritual Appeal  
Mahaupasika Dr. Bongkot Sitthipol, Founder and President, Daen Mahamongkol International Meditation Centers, Thailand and India  
Hafid Ouardiri, Director, Foundation Entre-Connnaissance  
Dr. Thomas Walsh, Secretary General, Universal Peace Federation
- 11:30-13:00** **Session 1: "Interreligious Council", President, Amb. Makarim Wibisono**  
**«Conseil Interreligieux», Président, Amb. Makarim Wibisono**  
Bureau: Jesus Domingo, Minister, Permanent Mission of the Philippines  
Carolyn Handschin, Women's Federation for World Peace, Int'l, Deputy director, Office for UN Relations  
Kamapradipta Isnomo, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia  
**General Debate (Youth Delegates) • Débat Général (Jeunes Délégués)**  
Niraj Pabari (Hindu), Emmanuel Nachef, Trisha Ann Howard (Catholic), Dorcas Pimizi (Protestant), Johana Ohayon (Jewish), Elisa Ingrosso, Mira Brady (Unificationist), Joban Singh (Sikh), Nan Zhao (Buddhist), Omar Mohammed Noury, Sheima Shaban, Aimen Mokdad (Islam)
- 13:00-14:30** **Lunch • Repas**
- 14:30-16:00** **Session 2: "Interreligious Council", President, Amb. Makarim Wibisono**  
**Debate and presentation of Draft "Interfaith Declaration on Peace and Human Rights"**  
by youth delegates followed by interactive discussion with youth and observers  
**«Conseil Interreligieux», Président, Amb. Makarim Wibisono**  
**Débat et Ratification de la «Déclaration Interreligieuse sur la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme»**  
par les jeunes délégués suivit d'une discussion interactive avec les jeunes et les observateurs
- 16:30-18:00** **Session 3: The United Nations, Peace and Religion**  
**«Les Nations Unies, la Paix et la Religion»**  
Chair: Carolyn Handschin, Women's Federation World Peace Int, Deputy director, Office for UN Relations  
Ali Anwar Ansari, Member of Parliament, India  
Dr. Mohamed Mestiri, Director, International Islamic Thought Institute, Paris  
Dr. Alpha Ayande, Director, Synergy for Development and International Partnership  
Rabbi Joseph Abittan, Nice  
Toshiaki Otsuka, former Minister, Government of Japan  
**Presentation of Special Awards to • Remise de distinctions**  
- Mahaupasika Dr. Bongkot Sitthipol, Thailand and India  
- Amb. Makarim Wibisono, Indonesia
- 18:00-19:30** **Reception & Cocktail** (Restaurant Vieux Bois)

# Conférence de Genève sur la Coopération Interreligieuse et sur la Protection des Droits et de la Dignité de l'Homme

**Tuesday, September 2, 2008**

RAMADA Park Hotel, Genève

**Mardi 2 septembre**

Avenue Louis-Casaï 75-77

**09:30 -11:00 Session 4: Faith Perspectives on Cooperation for Peace and Human Rights**

**«Perspectives Religieuses sur la Coopération pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme»**

Chair: Dr. Astrid Stuckelberger, Secretary, Geneva Spiritual Appeal

Grand Rabbin Izhak Dayan, Communauté Israélite de Genève

Mr. Arun Kumar Maji, Advocate, Supreme Court of India

Dr. Charles Graves, Interfaith International

Dr. Satish Joshi, President, INDOSAC Hindu Forum

**11:00-12:30 Session 5: Regional Perspectives on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Human Rights**

**«Perspectives Régionales sur la Coopération Interreligieuse pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme»**

Chair: Michel Reymond, Vice President UPF Switzerland

Willy Fautre, Director, Human Rights without Frontiers

Ricardo De Sena, Director Office for UN Relations, UPF

Karl Meier, Human Rights activist, Green Party Germany

Dr. Razah Raad, Former Director, Gaullist Party, France

Imam Otmane Aïssaoui, Nice

**12:30-14:00 Lunch** (provided for participants) • **Repas** (offert aux participants inscrits)

**14:00-15:30 Session 6: The Role of Faith in Protection of Human Rights and Dignity**

**«Le Rôle de la Religion dans la Protection des Droits et de la Dignité de l'Homme»**

Chair: Chantal Komagata, Member of "RoundTable of Religions", Bienne

Dr. Rosario Carole Avestegui, Director Radio Station, Bergamo, Italy

Peter Zöhrer, President, Forum Religious Freedom Europe

Dr. Buddha Priya Mahathera, General Secretary, SUSWM

Minister Jesus Domingo, Permanent Mission of the Philippines

**16:00-17:00 Closing Plenary: The Way Forward**

GIIA, Finalization of the Declaration, Amb.Makarim Wibisono

GIIA Founding Committee

**Séance Plénière de Clôture : Comment Poursuivre notre Tâche**

Alliance Interreligieuse et interculturelle de Genève: Finalisation de la Déclaration





Amb. Makarim Wibisono  
Founding President

# **GIIA** Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance

## **Vision**

**To be an innovative international multi-stakeholder initiative bringing interfaith and intercultural dialogue and co-operation to the practical “grassroots” level in order to prevent enmity through understanding, solidarity and trust.**

## **Mission**

- 1) To develop a corps of “GIIA Ambassadors” among both diplomats and local stakeholders through education and training activities and establish a corps of “GIIA Youth Ambassadors” building upon the well known UPF “Ambassadors for Peace” model.
- 2) To network interfaith stakeholders: members of the diplomatic community, faith-based /religious bodies, government, civil society, etc. for the practical advancement of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, particularly to the local community.
- 3) To organize interfaith education and interaction activities particularly for local government, primary faith-based communities (ie, parishes, congregations, mosques, temples, etc), immigrant communities, NGO’s and the youth sector.

## **Projects**

### **1) GIIA Seminar (GIAS)**

The GIAS is the flagship program of the GIIA. It is a 12 hour/ 2 day seminar including an overview of the IIF initiative, comparative study of relevant aspects of the world’s faiths, a review of practical problems confronting interfaith cooperation, other relevant topics and an “immersion” with local faith communities. Speakers and resource persons will include diplomatic/NGO/ interfaith experts. Participants will include a mix of representatives from among the various stakeholders.

Graduates will then be recognized as “GIIA Ambassadors”, linked to the worldwide UPF “Ambassadors for Peace” movement. GIIA will then conduct a program of continuing education and recruitment of peers for subsequent seminars, formulate and execute relevant local projects/ activities that promote interfaith cooperation and present themselves as GIIA resource persons for their local community.

### **2) GIIA Youth Seminar (GIIAYS)**

The GIIAYS is a special version of the GIAS tailored to the youth sector with an aim to prevent future inter-religious, inter-cultural misunderstandings by building friendship and solidarity. GIIAYS graduates will be recognized as “GIIA Youth Ambassadors”

### **3) Model UN Youth Interfaith Council (MUNIFC)**

The MUNIFC is a student “Model UN” simulation of a diplomatic conference of a hypothetical “Inter-faith Council” as a new UN organ or high-level body. It will be held annually in Geneva, possibly on two levels- university and secondary school, and jointly organized by the GIIA/GIYA and UPF and possibly UN- missions. It may also be held in other cities where there is an GIIA Corps.

## **Organization**

Ambassador Makarim Wibisono serves as the Founding President of the GIIA, with the secretariat (including founding members) located in Geneva. An GIIA Convener’s Group will include leading Interreligious practitioners and experts. GIIA Corps may be organized in other cities under the umbrella of the Geneva Office.

The Founding Committee,

Geneva, September 1, 2008

**By Carolyn Handschin, GIA Vice-President**

Tuesday, September 02, 2008

**Geneva, Switzerland** - The “Geneva Conference on Interfaith Cooperation and the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity” on September 1 and 2, 2008, in Geneva, Switzerland, brought together nearly 280 religious and other civil society leaders, diplomats, and United Nations representatives to address the contribution of faiths to peace and human dignity, focusing on the potential role of an interfaith advisory council within the United Nations.

Marking the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Permanent Missions of the Republic of Indonesia and the Philippines to the United Nations, together with the Universal Peace Federation and the Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance, invited 16 youth representatives of ten religions to sit as delegates to a hypothetical “Interreligious Council” while Ambassador Makarim Wibisono, former president of the UN Human Rights Commission and the Economic and Social Council, presided over the deliberations.

Echoing the opening message by Frederico Mayor, the youth discussed the beneficial role that religion and spiritual values could and should play in supporting the global governing framework’s quest for peace. Representing their communities but in an individual capacity, the youth insisted on the need to go beyond mere tolerance and even mutual acceptance. “Creating a human family demands much more. We need to know and understand each others’ dreams and sufferings,” explained one delegate.

As the Islamic community had just begun their Ramadan fast, the chair of the opening session, Heiner Handschin, UPF Secretary General for Europe Region 2, reminded the participants that families share and empathize deeply with the sacrifice of other family members. Taking this to heart, some of the youth representatives chose to share the experience by fasting with their Muslim brothers and sisters.

Ambassador Erlinda Basilio, permanent representative of the Philippines Mission to the UN in Geneva, delivered the opening remarks, followed by a session on “Vision for an Interreligious Council at the United Nations” that led into the youth segment. Ambassador Wibisono stated that politics and religion should relate like two sides of the same coin, each reinforcing the other. The following speaker, Rev. Dr. William McComish, former dean of the main Protestant cathedral in Geneva, confirmed his trust in his partner in interfaith, Mr. Hafid Ouardiri, the spokesman for nearly 30 years for the Islamic community and mosque in Geneva, when he said that he had once asked Mr. Ouardiri to replace him at the cathedral pulpit when he was unable to give the sermon himself. Mr. Ouardiri, another panelist who works tirelessly with youth in interfaith educational projects, expressed his profound joy in being there with some of his young students for this experience that seemed like a dream come true.

Mahaupasika Dr. Bongkot Sittipol, founder of the Daen Mahanongkol Meditation Center, gave a warm message about “ordaining the heart for world peace.” The final speaker of that session, Dr. Thomas Walsh, Secretary General of the Universal Peace Federation, explained the vision and practical guidelines that Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon expressed when he first announced the idea of an interreligious council within the United Nations in 2000 while addressing the ECOSOC assembly, during which time Ambassador Wibisono was the president.

In the style of a Model UN, the next two sessions simulated the way an “Interreligious Council” might function. Minister Jesus Domingo of the Philippines Mission and Carolyn Handschin, Coordinator of the UPF Office for United Nations Relations in

Carolyn Hanabusa, Coordinator of the U.N. Office for United Nations Relations in Geneva, served as the Council Bureau and facilitated the preparatory sessions that were held the previous week. The representatives of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Unificationism were role-played by youth representatives of these faiths who had been selected in many cases by their religious leaders, who assisted as observers for the council sessions. The combination made for a very serious, enthusiastic, and emotional atmosphere in the chambers. In supplementary sessions held parallel to the main conference, delegates drafted a [Declaration on Interreligious Cooperation](#) that was presented during the closing session. All participants signed the document, which will be forwarded to relevant UN bodies and other organizations.

Eminent religious leaders, experts on human rights and interfaith relations, theologians and other religious scholars, as well as remarkable interfaith practitioners participated in five round-table sessions on such topics as “The United Nations, Religion, and Peace” and “The Role of Faith in the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity.” Here youth delegates and other participants had the opportunity to listen and comment on the wisdom and experience of their elders. It was a notably rare day at a UN venue with so little disagreement and so much hopeful determination among those with the capacity to implement decisions.

The remarkable message that resounded throughout the conference was the depth of commitment to nothing less than interfaith cooperation and the change of mindset and lifestyle that accompanied it. Rabbi Joseph Abbitan and Imam Othmane Aissauoi from France offered but one of many examples of a depth of commitment to their interfaith engagement that was witnessed by many in the spontaneity and warmth of the embrace that they shared upon meeting each other again. For the youth delegates, the embrace was “worth a thousand words.”

This conference and the first “Interfaith Council” were an inaugural project of the Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance (GIIA), a network of civil society organizations, governments, and international organizations that will have its international headquarters in Geneva and be linked to the Universal Peace Federation’s International Leadership Conference and Ambassadors for Peace network as a founding organization. The GIIA will reinforce understanding and appreciation of the diversity among communities of faiths and cultures through educational and training programs including the interreligious youth councils that involve practical learning by experience about other faiths and building deep and trusting familial bonds among people from diverse religious and cultural communities.

# **Déclaration de Genève sur la Coopération Inter-Religieuse**

(DGCIR)

Nous, l'assemblée des dirigeants des religions du monde et des communautés de croyants, unis dans la conviction que la paix mondiale est réalisable, conscients de nos responsabilités envers cet idéal, déclarant solennellement les principes de la Charte des Nations Unies et de la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'Homme, à savoir dépasser la tolérance pour embrasser la diversité afin de créer une seule famille mondiale, déclarons par le présent acte que les religions et les communautés de croyants peuvent et doivent :

1. Contribuer positivement à l'avancement de la paix, du développement et des droits de l'homme dans le monde ;
2. Encourager le respect des Valeurs Humaines et Spirituelles par tous, ainsi que la protection de la dignité Humaine ;
3. Vivre et travailler ensemble dans un esprit de respect mutuel, de compréhension, de tolérance, d'harmonie et de coopération, en étant un vivant exemple ;
4. Collaborer avec les Nations Unies, les Organisations Internationales, les Gouvernements et la Société Civile à travers le bon fonctionnement de ce conseil inter-religieux, afin de créer un monde meilleur ;
5. Inclure la discussion et la conscience des problèmes sociaux plus généraux dans les préceptes religieux fondamentaux ;
6. Travailler à la réalisation des Millennium Development Goals à travers des actions concrètes et spécifiques ;
7. Promouvoir le respect et la protection de l'environnement ;
8. Redoubler d'efforts pour instaurer la paix dans les régions troublées du monde ;
9. Condamner les actes de violence, de discrimination et d'exploitation d'autrui commis dans le nom des religions et des croyances religieuses ;
10. Mettre sur pied des mécanismes multisectoriels pour aider à assurer la transparence et prévenir l'extrémisme dans les affaires religieuses ;
11. Apporter leur soutien à une forme d'éducation des jeunes qui insiste sur le respect et la compréhension de toutes les croyances, de toutes les religions et de toutes les cultures ;
12. Encourager l'enseignement complet des religions, des éthiques et des cultures du monde, ainsi que les Droits de l'Homme, comme une partie importante de l'éducation, par des représentants de ces religions, aussi bien dans les écoles laïques que non-laïques, à tous les niveaux, pour améliorer la compréhension mutuelle et en collaboration avec les organismes gouvernementaux chargés de l'éducation ;
13. Coopérer davantage à la défense des droits de l'homme, comme le prévoit la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'Homme ;
14. Encourager une bonne gouvernance pour nos dirigeants, nos nations et nos sociétés ;
15. Célébrer le 1er septembre comme la journée mondiale de la « Coopération Inter-Religieuse » ;
16. Développer le dialogue, la compréhension et la coopération entre les croyants et les personnes sans convictions religieuses, pour marcher la main dans la main vers la paix ;
17. Promulguer un Programme d'Action pour que les religions du monde mettent cette Déclaration en pratique.

Fait dans le Bureau des Nations Unies à Genève le 1er septembre 2008.

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## Déclaration de Genève sur la Coopération Inter-Religieuse Programme d'Action

A la lumière de la Déclaration de Genève sur la Coopération Inter-Religieuse (DGCIR), les dirigeants et les membres des religions du monde et des communautés de croyants sont instamment priés d'entreprendre les actions suivantes :

- (1) Faire traduire la DGCIR en autant de langues du monde et en autant d'autres moyens de communication, que possible ;
- (2) Diffuser largement la DGCIR, en s'assurant que tous les lieux et tous les centres de culte ont eu connaissance et possèdent des exemplaires de la Déclaration ;
- (3) Présenter la DGCIR dans les cours appropriés de toutes les universités, collèges, séminaires, écoles et autres lieux d'apprentissage des religions et des communautés de croyants ;
- (4) Définir et mettre à exécution des actions concrètes et spécifiques pour réaliser les recommandations de la DGCIR.
- (5) Encourager les centres, groupes ou organisations religieux et inter-religieux dans le monde à travailler avec le conseil inter-religieux pour créer un réseau international et pour intégrer les objectifs de la DGCIR dans leur programme d'activités, dans le but d'avoir des centres inter-religieux DGCIR dans le monde entier.

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## **Geneva Declaration on Inter-Religious Cooperation (GDIRC)**

We, the assembled leaders of the world's religions and faith communities, united in the conviction that world peace is attainable, conscious of our responsibilities towards this goal, affirming the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to go beyond tolerance, and to embrace diversity, in order to create a global family, hereby declare that religions and faith communities can and should:

1. Positively contribute to the furtherance of world peace, development, and human rights;
2. Encourage the appreciation of Human and Spiritual Values by all persons, and the protection of Human dignity;
3. Live and work together in the spirit of mutual respect, understanding, tolerance, harmony and cooperation, by being a living example;
4. Collaborate with the United Nations, International Organizations, Governments, and Civil Society, through the good functioning of this inter religious council, towards creating a better world;
5. Include discussion and awareness of broader social issues in basic religious teachings;
6. Work towards the completion of the Millennium Development Goals through concrete and specific actions;
7. Promote respect and protection of the environment;
8. Exert more effort in bringing peace in the troubled areas of the world;
9. Condemn acts of violence, discrimination, and exploitation of others, committed in the name of religions and faiths;
10. Establish multi-sectoral mechanisms, to help ensure transparency and prevent extremism in religious affairs;
11. Support education for youth emphasizing respect and appreciation of all creeds, faiths and cultures;
12. Encourage comprehensive teaching of world religions, ethics, cultures and Human Rights, as an important part of education, by representatives of those religions, in both secular and non secular schools, at all levels, to improve mutual understanding and in collaboration with government education agencies;
13. Cooperate further in the defense of human rights, as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
14. Support good governance for our leaders, nations and societies;
15. Celebrate the 1st of September as the world "Inter-Religious Cooperation" day.
16. Promote further dialogue, understanding and cooperation among followers of religions and the non-religious, to walk hand in hand towards peace;
17. Promulgate a Program of Action for the world's religions and faiths to fulfill this Declaration.

*Done in the United Nations Office in Geneva, on September 1, 2008.*

## Geneva Declaration on Inter-Religious Cooperation Program of Action

In light of the Geneva Declaration on Inter-Religious Cooperation (GDIRC), the leaders and members of the world's religions and faith communities are called on to undertake the following:

- (1) To have the GDIRC translated into as many of the world's languages and other means of communications, as possible;
- (2) To widely disseminate the GDIRC, ensuring that all places and centers of worship are made aware and have copies of the Declaration;
- (3) To introduce the GDIRC in the appropriate courses of all universities, colleges, seminaries, schools and other venues of learning of religions and faith communities;
- (4) Identify and carry out concrete and specific actions to realize the recommendations of the GDIRC.
- (5) Encourage religious and inter religious centers, groups, or organizations around the world, to work with the interreligious council to create an international network and to integrate the objectives of the GDIRC in their program of activities, with the goal to have GDIRC interreligious centers, throughout the world.



A collection of approximately 15 handwritten signatures in blue ink, scattered across the lower half of the page. The signatures vary in style, from highly stylized and abstract to more legible cursive. Some signatures include names or initials, such as 'Piero Ingresso' in the upper right, 'Aim' in the middle right, 'Katherine' in the lower right, and 'A. Handal' in the bottom right. Other signatures are more abstract, with some appearing to be 'R. G.' in the bottom left and 'K. Anderson' in the bottom center.