



Sixty-second
session of the
General Assembly

MEDIA ADVISORY

General Assembly High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace

On 4 and 5 October, the General Assembly will undertake its first ever formal, high-level dialogue on issues of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation, including freedom of religion and belief and the need for respect for a diversity of religions and cultures.

In conjunction with the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, an informal interactive hearing with civil society representatives will be held to provide a platform for exchange of views among Member States and civil society, including NGOs and the private sector.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The President of the General Assembly will open the High-level Dialogue on 4 October in the General Assembly Hall. The Secretary-General will also address the meeting.
- Leading academics, religious leaders and other civil society representatives will participate in two interactive panels on challenges and best practices of interreligious and intercultural cooperation (*see over for full programme*)
- The High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations, Mr. Jorge Sampaio, will address the interactive informal hearing.

WHEN: Thursday 4 October and Friday 5 October, 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (*see over for programme*)

WHERE: General Assembly Hall and the Trusteeship Council, UN Headquarters, 1st Ave & 46th St.

BACKGROUND:

- On 20 December 2006, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/61/221 on “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace” which encouraged Member States, the United Nations system and civil society (including the media) to undertake a range of initiatives in an effort to promote understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity of religion, belief, culture and language.
- The resolution also called for the General Assembly to conduct a High-level Dialogue and informal interactive hearing with representatives of civil society. On 25 May 2007, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution A/61/269 setting the dates as 4 and 5 October.
- Both resolutions acknowledged existing initiatives aiming to promote tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity, including the Alliance of Civilizations and other interfaith and intercultural initiatives at the national, regional, interregional and international levels.

MEDIA ARRANGEMENTS: Media wishing to attend the High-level Dialogue or informal interactive hearing who do not have UN accreditation should send a fax on official letterhead to Gary Fowle, Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit, Fax: +1 212 963 4642. For further information on accreditation requirements see: www.un.org/media/accreditation/

For further information or interview requests, contact: Janos Tisovszky, Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly, Ph: +1 917-367-2068 or 1-917-367-0292 E-mail: tisovszky@un.org or gaspokesperson@un.org or Renata Sivacolundhu, Department of Public Information, Ph: +1 212 963 2932 E-mail: sivacolundhu@un.org

**High-level Dialogue and Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society
on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace
4-5 October 2007**

Programme

Thursday 4 October

- 10.00 – 13.00 hrs
- Opening of **the High-level Dialogue** by H.E. Dr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly (Plenary meeting, General Assembly Hall), on the theme “*Interreligious and intercultural cooperation for the promotion of tolerance, understanding and universal respect on matters of freedom of religion or belief and cultural diversity*”
 - Statement by H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations
 - Statements by Member States and Observers to the United Nations
- 15.00 – 18.00 hrs.
- **Informal Interactive Hearing with Civil Society, including NGOs and the private sector** (Trusteeship Council Chamber)
 - Opening of the Hearing with Civil Society by the President of the 62nd session of the General Assembly, followed by two panel discussions
 - Remarks by Mr. Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilizations

Panel 1: Challenges of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Today

- Floor will be open for interaction with Member States after the panel’s presentations

Speakers:

- **Ms. Gulvaira Shermatova**, Director, L’auravetli’an Information & Education, Network of Indigenous Peoples, Russia
- **Prof. Paul Knitter**, Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions and Culture, Union Theological Seminary, USA
- **Prof. Gamal I. Serour**, Director, International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research, Al Azhar Centre, Egypt
- **Dr. Sohan Lal Gandhi**, President, Anuvrat Global Organization, India
- **Mr. Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa**, Joint Executive Director, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Nigeria

Respondents:

- **Mr. Manuel Manonelles**, Director, Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Spain
- **Mr. Thalif Deen**, UN Bureau Chief, Inter Press Service International Association, Sri Lanka
- **Prof. Eliseo Mercado**, Chair, National Peace Council, Philippines
- **Rev. Judith Van Osdol**, Continental Coordinator of Women’s Ministries, Latin American Council of Churches, Argentina
- **Ms. Katy Sarre**, Chief Executive Officer, INFOGEST, Senegal

Moderator

- **Dr. William Vendley**, Secretary-General, World Conference of Religions for Peace, USA

Panel 2: Best Practices and Strategies of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Going Forward

- Floor will be open for interaction with Member States after the panel's presentations

Speakers:

- **Sr. Gerardette Philips**, Representative, Islamic College for Advanced Studies/Religious of the Sacred Heart
- **Dr. Georgette Bennett**, President and Founder, Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, USA
- **Rev. Carlos Tamez**, Representative, Comunidad Teologica de Honduras, Honduras
- **Ms. Mitra Deliri**, Representative of the Bahá'í International Community and Director of External Affairs Office of the Bahá'ís of Tanzania, Tanzania
- **Mr. Effenus Henderson**, Chief Diversity Officer, Weyerhaeuser Company, USA

Respondents:

- **Prof. Steven Rockefeller**, Co-chair, Earth Charter International, USA
- **Sr. Francisca Ngozi Uti**, Representative, Centre for Women Studies and Intervention, Nigeria
- **Dr. Josef Boehle**, Coordinator, UNESCO Chair in Interfaith Studies, University of Birmingham, UK
- **Mr. Tatsuya Yoshioka**, Director, Peace Boat, Japan
- **Ms. Fatima Ahmed**, Executive Director, Zenab for Women in Development, Sudan

Moderator:

- **H.E. Mr. Abdullah Ahmed Mohamed Al-Murad**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations

Invited Guests:

- **Mr. Qamar-ul- Huda**, Scholar of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religions, Pakistan.
- **Dr. John Taylor**, Representative, International Association for Religious Freedom, Switzerland

Friday 5 October 2007

10.00 – 13.00 hrs
15.00 – 18.00 hrs

- **Continuation of the High-level Dialogue**
(Plenary meetings, General Assembly Hall)
- Closing remarks by the President of the 62nd session of the General Assembly
- High-level Dialogue concludes