

## **Biographies of Participants**

### **Informal Interactive Hearing of the General Assembly with Civil Society on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace 4 October 2007**

#### **Panel 1: Challenges of Interreligious and Intercultural Cooperation Today**

##### **Moderator**

##### **Dr. William F. Vendley**

Dr. Vendley has served as the Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* since 1994. He is a member of its World Council, which is composed of outstanding international religious leaders. He also serves as the organization's chief executive officer, overseeing the international secretariat headquartered at the United Nations Plaza in New York. Dr. Vendley coordinates the international activities and projects of *Religions for Peace's* Interreligious Councils in 70 states around the world. He actively works in situations of armed conflict to mobilize and equip religious communities to build peace. In Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Liberia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Iraq, Dr. Vendley has led multi religious efforts to prevent conflicts from developing, to mediate peace among warring parties and to rebuild societies in the aftermath of violence. Under his leadership, *Religions for Peace* and its local affiliates have engaged religious communities in collaborative work to assist some of the more than 12 million orphans of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Dr. Vendley is a theologian and has served as a professor and dean in graduate schools of theology. He lectures frequently in academic, United Nations and NGO fora. He has been awarded numerous prizes for religion and human rights, and serves on the boards of a number of organizations ranging from the fine arts to those committed to peace building. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations Religious Committee. He holds a doctorate in systematic theology from Fordham University and a master's degree in religious studies from the Maryknoll School of Theology. He has served as a Maryknoll lay missionary for eight years.

##### **Speakers**

##### **Ms. Gulvayra Shermatova**

Ms. Gulvayra Shermatova is the President of Interregional public organization "L'auravetl'an Information and Education Network of Indigenous Peoples", where she is responsible for forming the staff, fundraising, public outreach, financial management, coordination of work of regional representatives of the Network in Krasnoyarsky Kray, Karelia Republic, Altai Republic, Altaysky Kray, Kemerovskaya Oblast. She also serves as Regional coordinator for the public movement "The Land of Russia is People's Property" protecting constitutional rights of peoples, including indigenous peoples, and public interests in the development of laws on natural resources (Forest and Water Codes of RF). Previously she served as Chairman for Altai regional public organization of the Kumandin peoples "ISTOK", where she was responsible for project implementation and established effective working contacts with all stakeholders (including indigenous communities, women, youth and others). She has also served as Chief Specialist on questions of management in the Altai Federal Scientific Research Center, Biysk. She is the Organizer of regional and interregional seminars on international standards of human rights protection, training seminars on rights of indigenous peoples. She has participated in UN

activities, including the Geneva UN Working Group on indigenous people, the Working Group on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. Ms. Shermatova pursued her higher education at Tomsk State University where she majored in applied mathematics and cybernetics.

### **Professor Paul F. Knitter**

As of January 2007, Paul Knitter is the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, New York. Previously, for some 30 years, he taught theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH. He received a Licentiate in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1966) and a doctorate from the University of Marburg, Germany (1972). Most of his research and publications have dealt with religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue. Since his ground-breaking 1985 book, *No Other Name?*, he has been exploring how the religious communities of the world can cooperate in promoting human and ecological well-being. This is the topic of: *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (1995) and *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (1996). In 2002, he published a critical survey of Christian approaches to other religions: *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (2002). He is also General Editor of Orbis Books' series "Faith Meets Faith." From 1986-2004, Knitter was on the Board of Directors for CRISPAZ (Christians for Peace in El Salvador). He is also on the Board of Trustees for the International, Interreligious Peace Council, formed after the 1993 World Parliament of Religions, to promote interreligious peace-making projects.

### **Professor Gamal Serour**

Gamal Serour is a Professor, former Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and former Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Al Azhar University, Egypt. Since 1990, he serves as Director of the International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research at Al Azhar University. In this capacity, he leads the Centre's work on reproductive health, population policy, population education, women's rights, empowerment of women, sexual health and children's rights, and medical ethics in developing countries, particularly the Muslim world through projects and programs funded by UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, Ford Foundation, among other organizations. He has organized and chaired workshops for doctors, researchers, midwives, community leaders and policy makers from Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Gambia, Maldives, Guinea, Bissau, Somalia, Bangladesh, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Philippines and Palestine. His current and previous affiliations include Member of the WHO Scientific Group on Recent advances in ART, the IPPF International Medical Advisory Panel (2000-2002); the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee UNESCO (1999-2005) and (2006-2009), as well as Treasurer and member of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Bioethics (IAB) (1992-1999). Prof. Serour established the Al Azhar Endoscopy and microsurgery training unit in 1974 which later became the Al Azhar-JPIEGO (Johns Hopkins University) regional training centers for physicians from Asia and Africa. With two of his Colleagues, he established the first IVF Center in Egypt and delivered the first IVF baby in Egypt in July 1987 and continues to advise national IVF Centres internationally. He has authored and co-authored numerous papers published in international, regional and national journals and has edited various books. He is a reviewer for several international journals, and often addresses scientific meetings. Prof. Serour obtained his M.D. at Cairo University in 1963. He has received numerous National Awards and Honorary Memberships in Obstetrics and Gynecology Societies worldwide.

### **Dr. Sohan Lal Gandhi**

Dr. Sohan Lal Gandhi is currently Honorary President of Anuvrat Global Organization (ANUVIBHA), a Transnational Center of Peace and Nonviolent Action associated with the UN-DPI. He began his career as a Post-Graduate Teacher in English in Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, HRD Ministry, Government of India and retired as Vice-Principal in order to devote full time to the cause of promoting and popularizing Jain ecology embedded in ahimsa. He was active in the Anuvrat Movement (a Jain peace movement) in the fifties and sixties and was later instrumental in creating a worldwide network of people committed to basic human values. He has been in the forefront of national and international campaigns for disarmament, interfaith harmony, reconciliation, nonviolent conflict resolution, global ethic, ecological and environmental harmony, vegetarianism and regeneration of moral and spiritual values. He is honorary Professor of Peace and Nonviolence Studies at the Intercultural Open University (IOU), Opeinde, the Netherlands and is the convener of the South Asia center of the newly established Global Green University of UK. He is on boards of many national and international organizations. In order to popularize ahimsa worldwide and promote nonviolence education and research he has launched Millennium Institute of Transformation Education. In 1992, he organized an international dialogue on nonviolence education and training at Ladnun which was attended by prominent figures. Dr. Gandhi has received numerous honors including the IOU Peace Award in 2000. Dr. Gandhi is currently the Editor of ANUVIBHA Reporter and has authored and edited many books and articles.

### **Imam Dr. Muhammad Nurayn ASHAFA**

Imam Dr. Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa is the Co-Founder & Joint Executive Director, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna / Nigeria. Born in Zaria City, Nigeria in 1960, after his early quranic education, he followed the family vocation and became an Imam. The group he led, the Muslim Youth Council, was committed to the Islamization of Nigeria and incited great violence in the northern part of the country. However, as a consequence of a chance meeting with the Leader of a Christian militant group, Pastor James Wuye, he became a peace activist. Together they founded, in 1995, the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Kaduna, jointly working for inter religious understanding and good governance. This non-governmental organization focuses on Conflict Resolution and Peace Building as well as Good Governance and Democracy. The Interfaith Mediation Centre chose a Faith-based approach using religion as a positive tool and targeting mainly Women, Youth & Religious leaders, and Policy makers. Imam Ashafa has facilitated numerous capacity development programmes on peace-building and religious pluralism locally and internationally. He co-authored *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict*, as well as *Forgiveness: Islam and Christian Perspective*, among other publications. Two documentaries – BBC World's *Beyond 2000* and Fit Film UK's *the Imam and the Pastor from vengeance to healing* – have been based on the Centre. Imam Ashafa's decision to lay down arms and work for interreligious understanding has inspired many to do the same. His work has earned him numerous accolades including the Millennium Peace Activist (2000), the Interfaith Cooperation Award, recognition from the Tanenbaum Center for Religious Understanding, and an Honorary doctorate in Philosophy (2005) from Calcutta University, India.

### **Mr. Manuel Manonelles**

Mr. Manuel Manonelles is currently the Director of the Barcelona Office of the Foundation for a Culture of Peace, chaired by Federico Mayor. In this capacity he has coordinated the international edition of the "World Report Culture of Peace 2005", as well as the study of Good Practices in Culture of Peace 2006, with the collaboration of the Foundation Mario Soares (Portugal) and the Bibliotheca Alexandria (Egypt), in the framework of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace. He is working to create an international network for the promotion of a

Culture of Peace and other projects such as a series of International Consultations on the Culture of Peace and Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue. From July 2005 to November 2006 he acted as Special Adviser to Federico Mayor, Co-Chair of the United Nations High Level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations. Mr. Manonelles formerly served as Executive Officer of the World Forum of Civil Society networks, UBUNTU, and previous to that, was the Convenor on Culture at the United Nations Millennium Forum. As a political scientist, he is specialized in International Relations, Human Rights, and Democratization. He has engaged in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue locally, regionally and internationally. He has also acted as international electoral observer and supervisor for the OSCE'ODIHR and the EU. He is a member of various organizations and think tanks and has published several articles on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the Alliance of Civilizations, conflict prevention and resolution, UN – civil society relations, and UN reform. He has addressed numerous Conferences worldwide.

### **Mr. Thalif Deen**

Mr. Thalif Deen, U.N. Bureau Chief and Regional Director, Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency, has been covering the United Nations since the late 1970s. A former deputy news editor of the Sri Lanka Daily News, he was also a senior editorial writer on the Hong Kong Standard. He has been runner-up, and cited twice for "excellence in U.N. reporting", at the annual awards presentation of the U.N. Correspondents' Association. A former Information Officer at the U.N. Secretariat, and a one-time member of the Sri Lanka delegation to the U.N. General Assembly sessions, he is currently editor of the IPS UN Journal Terra Viva. Since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, he has covered virtually every single major UN conference-- on population, human rights, environment, social development, globalization and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A former Middle East military editor at Jane's Information Group in the US, he is a Fulbright-Hayes scholar with a Master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University, New York.

### **Fr. Eliseo R. Mercado Jr. OMI, PHD**

Father Mercado was President of Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, Philippines (1992-2002). He served as the Director for Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation for the OMI based in Rome from 2003-2006, which he represented to the UN DPI and ECOSOC. A recognized expert on the role of Islam in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, Father Mercado was designated Chairperson of the Independent cease-fire Monitoring Committee of the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. He has been extensively involved in the peace process in Mindanao and was designated by the President of the Republic as the Chief Peace Negotiator with the Muslim Fronts. He is the Lead Convenor of the National Peace Council that works for the resumption of the formal peace talks between the Philippine Government and all rebel fronts including the National Liberation Front. He has lectured at numerous prestigious venues internationally, and has published papers on Islam and Mindanao that have been featured in leading publications in the Philippines and abroad. In 2003-2004, he was chosen as one of the 25 senior scholars worldwide under the Fulbright Millennium Scholars in 2003 on Religions and Conflicts, and in 2006 was a member of the 6-person delegation of the Union of Superiors General that visited the Southern Sudan to formulate the Church response to the pastoral needs following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and is a Consultant to the Sudan Catholic Bishops Regional Conference on Peace building, Healing and Reconstruction. Father Mercado holds a doctorate in Divinity and Humanity, Master's degrees in Theology and Philosophy. He completed work in Islamic Studies and Arabic Studies at the Gregorian

University in Rome and at the Oriental Institute in Cairo. He has received numerous awards including Presidential Citations by President Corazon C. Aquino, President Fidel V. Ramos, and the EDSA Shrine by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

**Ms. Katy Tall Sarré**

Katy Tall Sarré is an Expert in Management and International Business. She is the Chief Executive Officer of INFOGEST sarl, the certified partner of SAGE France, chosen by CYBORG, principal partner of SAGE in Europe, to be the Agent for SAGE in all of West Africa. In 2007, she launched the local network of the United Nations Global Compact in Senegal. Ms. Sarré oversees a multi-cultural team and is dedicated to fostering interreligious and intercultural cooperation in the context of the workplace, including among young entrepreneurs. She has served as Commercial Director of Full Technologies Formations, Director of Management for Plastiques et Elastomeres du Senegal, and Technical and Commercial Engineer for Small and Medium Enterprises. She obtained a Diploma in Business Management and Administration at the Institut Universitaire de Technologie de CAEN, France, and a Diploma in Management and International Business at the Ecole Supérieure de Gestion, Paris, France.

**Rev. Judith VanOsdol**

Rev. Judith VanOsdol is the Continental Director for Women's Ministries and Gender Justice Desk of the Latin American Council of Churches, (CLAI). A Theologian, and Specialist in Violence Issues and Gender Justice, Rev. VanOsdol has experience as a Workshop Leader, Speaker, Author, Researcher, and Leadership Trainer in 20 countries and 170 Churches of Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. She serves as Regional Moderator of the Latin American and Caribbean Women of Faith Network and Executive Council member of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, WCRP.

Rev. VanOsdol is an Ordained Minister with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Uruguay and Argentina, IELU, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA. She has authored numerous publications on diverse topics including "The Feminization of HIV/AIDS—breaking the silence, restoring dignity", "Political Power, Religious Power and Empire", "Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War", "Human Sexuality, Gender and leadership training in the Churches", "Ministry, charisma and Power from a Gender Perspective" and the "Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and pending issues for our Faith Communities, a View from the Global South". She earned her Masters of Divinity at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia; a Bachelor of Arts in Language and Linguistics: Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA and Training in Human Rights, at the University of La Plata Law School, Argentina.

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

### **Moderator**

#### **H.E. Mr. Abdullah Ahmed Mohamed Al-Murad**

H.E. Mr. Abdullah Ahmed Mohamed Al-Murad is the Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Al-Murad served as the Director of International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait. From August 1999 to January 2004, Mr. Al-Murad served as Ambassador to India and on non-residency basis to the Kingdom of Nepal and the Kingdom of Bhutan. Prior to this, he was appointed as Ambassador to Turkey from August 1996 to July 1999 and on non-residency basis to the Republic of Azerbaijan (1997 – 1999). From January 1993 – June 1996, Mr. Al-Murad was appointed Ambassador to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In 17 July 1991, he was appointed as a Director of the International Organizations Department in which he served until October 1992. During the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and until the liberation (August 1990 – March 1991), he served as Minister Plenipotentiary at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Belgrade. Mr. Al-Murad began his diplomatic career as an attaché in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 27 September 1972 and joined the Political Affairs Department in 19 March 1973. He graduated from the Department of Political Science, University of Aix Marseilles, France.

### **Speakers**

#### **Sr. Gerardette Philips**

Sr. Gerardette Philips presently works as a lecturer in Islamic and Western Mysticism at the Islamic College for Advanced Studies, as well as Mistress of Novices for the Society of the Sacred Heart, Indonesia Area. She is also a consultant for the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue – Commission for the Religious Relations with Muslims, a lecturer in Psychology of Counseling and Psychology of Religion in Paramadina Muslim University, and conducts workshops to teachers of a Muslim School for the Developmentally Handicapped and Hearing Impaired. She also provides counseling services, including counseling for interfaith marriages in Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta, Indonesia. She has written extensively and organized national and international programmes on Islamic-Christian relations, also focusing on the role of women and children in interfaith encounters. Sr. Philips holds a Masters Degree in Special Education for the Developmentally Handicapped, a Masters Degree in Islamic Philosophy, and a PhD in Philosophy from Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyarkara – Jakarta.

#### **Dr. Georgette Bennett**

Dr. Bennett is the founder and President of the Tanenbaum Center. She started her career as an academic sociologist. She also addressed human resources issues, instituted crisis management programs, such as crime victim services and rape response units, that later became national movements, and was widely recognized for her work in organizational development. A widely published author, organizational development consultant, popular lecturer, broadcast journalist, and public affairs/marketing specialist, Dr. Bennett is also an innovative and entrepreneurial leader. As President of Tanenbaum since its founding in 1992, she has implemented innovative, practical programs that reach people in the settings where they live and have an impact on everyday life. Starting with young children,

she spearheaded a primary education program *Building Blocks for Democracy: Children Celebrate Their Traditions* that reaches children before they learn to hate. To address deadly sectarian conflicts, she created the *Peacemakers in Action* program, which identifies religiously-motivated individuals who are working on the ground to intervene in armed conflicts – often at considerable risk to their freedom and lives, and has gained the recognition of the United Nations and various prestigious institutions. She has also led Tanenbaum in pioneering the work on religious diversity in the workplace and has given numerous briefings nationwide to management and leadership in major corporations and organizations such as General Motors, and American Red Cross, and has conducted trainings with the New York City Police Department (NYPD). Dr. Bennett has received many honors, including the 1997 Interfaith Gold Medallion from the International Council of Christians and Jews.

### **Prof. Carlos Tamez**

Prof. Carlos Tamez is Chancellor of the Comunidad Teológica de Honduras (Theological Community of Honduras). He has organized numerous seminars on issues ranging from peace and reconciliation, to community building, literacy, sustainable development, sexual education and empowerment, ethics, ecology and culture. Among his various professional titles, he serves as Coordinator of the UN – Latina American Council of Churches Environmental Programme: “Environmental Citizenship”, Member of UNFPA’s Interreligious Committee, and Team Coordinator of the Postgraduate division of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Mexico. He also serves on the Committee of Health and Environment of the Fraternity of Churches of Latin America and is a Board Member of the Latin American Council of Churches, where he also coordinates the Council’s Environmental Committee. He has authored numerous publications on diverse subjects, as well as a Pastoral for persons living with HIV/AIDS and articles on educational strategies. A national of Mexico, Prof. Tamez lectures in six languages. He holds a diploma in sustainable development and alternative Technologies, a degree in Social Psychology, a Bachelor in Adult Education, and a Masters in Education and a Doctorate in Theology.

### **Ms. Mitra Deliri**

Mitra Deliri is the Director of the Office of External Affairs for Bahá’ís in Tanzania. She is the co-founder of Chipua Institute for Social Transformation, an NGO that operates at the grass-roots level, working with marginalized youth in the slums of Dar es Salaam. She has been an active supporter of the interfaith movement. Her work involves collaboration with the Global Network of Religions for Children, the Tanzania Interfaith Forum, the Tanzania Women Interfaith Network, and TrustAfrica, a Ford Foundation initiative. Her aspiration is to combat hatred and prejudice, and promote social cohesion. She has lived in many parts of the world, including 18 years in Africa. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a Masters in Environmental Management.

### **Mr. Effenus Henderson**

Effenus Henderson is the Chief Diversity Officer for Weyerhaeuser Company, Federal Way, Washington. In this role he is responsible for overseeing workforce representation, EEO, diversity, and inclusion activities for over 47,000 employees globally. As Chief Diversity Officer, he advises the CEO and senior management team on diversity related matters and is a recognized expert in the area. He serves as a Trustee, National Urban League Board and member of its Executive Committee. Additionally he serves on the Western Regional Board, Boy Scouts of America. He was awarded the Whitney Young Award for outstanding service in the community by

the Boy Scouts of America. He also serves the Northwest Advisory Council for the United Negro College Fund. He serves as a member of the Board of Advisors, School of Business, Florida A & M University. He is Vice Chair, Attrition Retention Consortium which studies turnover trends in corporate America, and is a member of the Institute for Inclusion, a think tank organization researching global diversity and inclusion strategies. He has been named as one of the top diversity officers in corporate America by Diversity Best Practices / Working Mother Media. He is a graduate of North Carolina Central University with a BA in Psychology, has done further study at East Carolina University in business administration and is a graduate of the Stanford University Executive Program (SEP-1995).

## **Respondents**

### **Mr. Steven C. Rockefeller**

Steven C. Rockefeller is professor *emeritus* of religion at Middlebury College, where he also served as dean of the College and chair of the religion department. He is the author of *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (Columbia, 1991) and the co-editor of two books of essays, *The Christ and the Bodhisattva* (SUNY, 1987) and *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious Issue* (Beacon, 1992). His essays appear in a variety of books and journals. In recent years much of his research and writing has focused on global ethics, sustainable development, and the interrelation of democracy, ecology, and spirituality. Over the past twelve years, Professor Rockefeller has played a leading role in the drafting and promotion of the Earth Charter, which is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful world. The Earth Charter, which was completed in 2000, is the product of a decade long, world-wide, cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The mission of the Earth Charter Initiative is to help create a sound ethical foundation for the merging global community and to advance the transition to a sustainable future. Professor Rockefeller chaired the Earth Charter international drafting committee and today co-chairs the Earth Charter International Council. Active in the field of philanthropy, Professor Rockefeller has served as a trustee of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) for twenty-five years and chaired the Fund's board of trustees from 1998 to 2006. The RBF is an international foundation with programs in democratic practice, sustainable development, peace and security, and arts and culture. Over the past decade Professor Rockefeller has served as a trustee of the Asian Cultural Council, the Council for the University for Peace in Costa Rica, the Philanthropic Collaborative in New York City, and the Wendell Gilley Museum in Southwest Harbor, Maine. He is a member of the High Level Advisory Panel at UNESCO for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In 1999, the Demeter Fund, of which he is president, established the Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge in the Champlain Valley of Vermont. He received his bachelor of arts degree from Princeton University, his master of divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and his Ph.D. in the philosophy of religion from Columbia University.

### **Sr. Francisca Ngozi Uti**

Sr. Francisca Ngozi Uti is the Executive Director of the Center for Women's Studies and Intervention in Nigeria since 1998. She is a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Model Mission of Assistance in Africa (MOMI AFRICA), Member of the Board of Trustees in the Rights Enforcement and Public Centre, Council Member of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, and frequently addresses national and international Conferences. She has worked as a primary school teacher, a lecturer, and as Coordinator for the Justice Development and Peace Commission Issele – UKU. She studied at various institutions



including Mary Mount College, Agbor, University college Cardiff, University of Wales Institute of Science and technology, Cardiff, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria, and University of Bradford, United Kingdom. She holds a Certificate from the West African School, a Bachelor of Sciences in Institutional Management, a Masters of Business Administration, a Post Graduate Diploma in Education and a PH.D. in Women's Studies.

### **Mr. Tatsuya Yoshioka**

Mr. Tatsuya Yoshioka is the Director and founding member of Peace Boat, a Japan-based international non-governmental organization that works to promote peace, human rights, equal and sustainable development and respect for the environment, through the organization of global educational programs, responsible travel, cooperative projects and advocacy activities. Mr. Yoshioka is a leading advocate for peace within Japanese civil society, and works in particular for reconciliation between the people of Japan and its neighboring countries, based on acknowledging the reality of Japan's past actions in Asia. Internationally, Yoshioka has engaged with Peace Boat on projects including peace education for Israeli and Palestinian youth, Eritrea-Ethiopia peoples' peace talks, and de-mining projects in Cambodia. He has authored two books on the Former Yugoslavia and on the Russia-Japan Northern Territories dispute, and is a commentator in the Japanese media on issues including the Iraqi war, and Korea-Japan relations. Yoshioka is serving as a member of the International Steering Group for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and is Head of the Secretariat for Northeast Asia GPPAC. He is currently working on the launch of a Global Article 9 campaign to protect and promote Japan's war-renouncing constitution as a global common value for peace. Since its foundation in 1983, Peace Boat has undertaken 56 around the world voyages and Asia-Pacific regional voyages for peace. Over 30,000 people have participated in the onboard education programs for peace and sustainability, and many thousands more have partnered in cooperative activities in our ports of call.

### **Ms. Fatima Ahmed**

Ms. Fatima Ahmed is a community leader from Sudan, PHD candidate and graduate of the University of Gezira, Sudan, where she pursued her Master degree in plant physiology. Active in fighting for girl students' rights at the University, she also defended the rights of women farmers. She founded the Organization Zenab for Women In Development (ZWD) in order to promote girls' education and education for children with special needs, enhance women's reproductive health - including by fighting against traditions like female genital mutilation - combat HIV/ AIDS , malaria & tuberculoses, by raising awareness and working on preventive measures. ZWD works closely with women farmers on the ground to empower them as key actors for poverty alleviation. The organization is named after the founder's mother, who as the first educator from the Eastern Region of Sudan in 1942, promoted girls' education and opened schools for girls between 1945-1957, when girls' education was prohibited and not welcome by the communities. She and Fatima herself have received numerous recognitions for their contributions, including an Award from WFIP as Ambassador of Peace in 2005.

### **Dr. Josef Boehle**

Dr. Josef Boehle is *Coordinator of the UNESCO Chair in Interfaith Studies* at the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham, U.K., as well as *Research Fellow in Globalisation, Religion and Politics*. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Birmingham in 2001 submitting a thesis on *Inter-religious Co-operation in a Global Age*. His current research encompasses the fields of religion, civil society and international institutions, with a focus on the relations between religious actors and the UN

System. He is also a member of the research team that leads a UK Government (DFID) sponsored Research Consortium on *Religions and Development*, coordinated by the University of Birmingham. Over the last twelve years he also worked with international inter-religious organisations and helped to organise major conferences and symposia addressing inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-civilisational issues.

**Invited Guests:**

**Mr. Qamar Ul-Huda**

Mr. Qamar-ul Huda joined USIP as a senior program officer in the Religion and Peacemaking program, one of the Centers of Innovation, in June 2005. His research focuses on Islamic thought and Islamic philosophy on violence, nonviolence, and conflict resolution. Prior to joining USIP, Huda was a professor of Islamic studies and comparative religion at Boston College's theology department (1997–2005) and a visiting professor of Islamic studies at the College of Holy Cross and Brandeis University.

He serves as adviser on interfaith relations to the archdiocese of Boston and has written on the subject of dialogue and interfaith studies as a critical way to foster peace. Previously, Huda focused on political, theological, and social history of Islamic mysticism and treatises dealing with Qur'anic hermeneutics.

He holds a Ph.D. in Islamic intellectual history from the University of California at Los Angeles and a B.A. from Colgate University.

**Dr. John B. Taylor**

DR. TAYLOR IS THE Representative to the United Nations (Geneva) of the International Association for Religious Freedom (an NGO with General Consultative Status with ECOSOC). From 1993 to 2000 he was Special Consultant to the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches on the Former Yugoslavia and Secretary of the European Churches' Working Group on Asylum Seekers and Refugees. From 1983 to 1992 he served as Secretary General of the World Conference on Religion and Peace/International, and previously as Assistant Director and then Director of Interfaith Dialogue Programme of the World Council of Churches. He studied and taught in various institutions including Cambridge University, England; University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan; McGill University, Montreal, Canada; University of Birmingham, England; Harvard University, Cambridge, USA.