

A TIME FOR INSPIRED LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

2010 Interfaith Leaders' Summit Statement

We, 80 senior leaders of the world's religions and faith-based organizations together with 13 youth delegates, from more than 20 countries representing Aboriginal, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, and Sikh religious traditions, have convened in Winnipeg, Manitoba on the eve of Canada hosting expanded global summits.

This September, we approach the two-thirds point for the deadline to fulfill the Millennium Development goals-eight goals that, if achieved, would bring hope to millions and be a major step toward a more sustainable global future.

In the spirit of continuity and persistence, we carry forward important work begun in annual gatherings of religious leaders during earlier G8 summits.

Acknowledging our common humanity and embracing the imperative to treat all persons with dignity, we affirm that no one person is more or less valuable than another. We urge the political leaders to consider first the vulnerable among us, particularly our children, and to work together to address the dehumanizing scourge of poverty and injustice, and practice and promote care for our common environment, the Earth.

In our diverse faith traditions we have rich histories and powerful dreams for ending poverty, caring for the Earth and being peace-builders. We acknowledge our own shortcomings and inadequacies, we commit to continuing these life-giving actions in the service of the common good. While recognizing efforts already made to address many of these challenges, we expect government representatives to set aside short-term agendas and work together for a future that allows all people on this planet to thrive.

Military power and economic dominance are the basis for inclusion in a G8 and G20 global leaders' summit. The voices of the other 172 members of the United Nations are absent. In our faith traditions, we strive to listen to the weak and the vulnerable. Their voices must be included in decisions that affect them and all of us. At the summits in 2010 we expect leaders to put first the well-being of the majority of the world's population, of future generations and of the Earth itself. From our shared values we call on leaders to take courageous and concrete actions:

- to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable while simultaneously making structural changes to close the unacceptable growing gap between rich and poor;
- to prioritize long-term environmental sustainability and halt the harmful acceleration of climate change caused by us, while addressing its impacts on the poor; and
- to work for peace and remove factors that feed cycles of violent conflict and costly militarism.

Address Poverty

Almost half the people on this planet live in poverty and insecurity in terms of the fundamental requirements for life with dignity. The most affected are women and children, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities. A record one billion people are now chronically hungry-one in seven does not have the food needed for basic life. All this is happening in the context of a growing gap between the rich and poor, worsened by current undemocratic economic and governance systems.

¹The eight Millennium Development Goals were agreed to by 192 UN member states, to be achieved by 2015. The goals respond to the world's main development challenges.

The magnitude of poverty would be overwhelming were it not for the knowledge that this global inequity can be transformed into a shared life of human flourishing for all. Together, we have the capacity and the global resources to end extreme poverty and its impacts. In the past 18 years, a combination of health interventions and decreasing poverty levels resulted in a 28% reduction in global under-five mortality rates—from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 65 deaths per 1,000 in 2008. Change is possible.

A common tenet in faith traditions is that we should treat others as we would have them treat us. This “golden rule” is a basic human principle that cuts across cultures and faith traditions, and calls us to a collective standard of mutual care.

Poverty is frequently the result of food, energy and economic crises originating in wealthier sectors of society. It is also the consequence of the culture of greed, corruption, conflict, and over-consumption. Poverty is local and international. The suffering of anyone is of concern to us all.

In 2010, we expect inspired leadership and actions to address poverty!

- Wealthy countries must do their share: take all necessary steps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; invest 0.7% of Gross National Income in development assistance in a transparent and accountable manner; cancel debts of poor countries without regressive conditions; halt capital flight from poor countries to wealthy countries; hinder the free flow of speculative money, maintain business and labor ethics, foster conditions for the development of small business, ensure workers earn living wages and receive decent treatment; and make poverty reduction a priority in trade and international financial negotiations.
- All countries must do their part: educate girl children to high school level as one of the most effective development interventions; practice good governance; combat corruption, and put in place poverty reduction policies that ensure everyone has access to basic rights such as nutritious food, safe water, health care, education and economic opportunity.

Care for the Earth

All our faith traditions call us to careful stewardship of the Earth. Climate change has become an urgent manifestation of our collective abuse of the very environment that sustains the fullness of life. We see the consequences in melting ice-caps and rising sea levels, lost habitats for threatened animal and plant species, and erratic weather that threaten the lives of millions.

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As scientists discover new accelerators of climate and ocean change and note the compression of time available to avoid irreparable damage, it is clear that bold action is needed now. We must move beyond short-term political interests and arguments over who pays. In our indivisible planet we all pay – and future generations will pay dearly – if we continue to delay decisive action now.

The Earth, our home, is a gift from the Creator. Our faith traditions call us to relationships of mutual care and nurture between people and ecosystems. Faith communities see the environment through a lens of life on the planet as a unified whole, not unlike the cells of a body, infinitely differentiated in form and function yet

deeply interdependent. In this framework, industrialized countries have caused a disproportionate amount of environmental damage. The strategy of promoting endless development and high consumption lifestyles must be challenged.

The roots of this crisis are spiritual and moral. Consequently, we need a renewed eco-ethic that restores right relations between North and South by generating new economic paradigms and policies that are compatible with the Earth's regenerative abilities and by promoting just distribution of resources. The need for a new generation of rights related to ecology is becoming apparent. As faith communities, we must move to action-oriented results, networking, and building morally sustainable communities.

In 2010, we expect inspired leadership and actions that care for the Earth!

- Wealthier countries must come to a more profound understanding of the interdependence of life and take courageous steps needed to care for the planet. In the realm of climate change, concrete plans must be implemented to ensure global average temperatures do not exceed a 2° Centigrade increase from pre-industrial levels.
- In developing countries, the challenge is complex since growth, poverty reduction and environmental stewardship must journey together. This requires innovative leadership in these countries along with increased collaboration between rich and poor countries to protect agricultural lands from tourism and industrial developments, and support climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Invest in Peace

The well-being and shared security of all can only be realized when grounded in justice. Shared security focuses on the fundamental inter-relatedness of all persons and the environment (World Religions Summit, Sapporo 2008). Civilians in the world's poorest countries are the primary victims of war, insurgencies, criminal activities and other forms of armed violence. At the same time, we are collectively affected and implicated in global turmoil through our common humanity and through the priorities we set.

One clear example of misplaced priorities is global military spending, estimated to be US\$9 billion. NATO countries account for over 2/3 of this global military spending; these payments for military services are more than 20 times the annual world financial contributions to Official Development Assistance. Another example of misplaced priorities is the continuing threat of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that represent a moral affront to human dignity and a grave danger to life.

We are aware that there are those who use religion to justify violent acts against others, and thereby offend the true spirit of their faith and the long-standing values of their faith communities. We condemn religiously motivated terrorism and extremism and commit to stop the teaching and justification of the use of violence between and among our faith communities. Our faith traditions are steeped in the promotion of love for one another and deep respect for all humankind; peace and justice walk hand in hand. Our most inspiring teachings are stories of reconciliation and compassion. We will collaborate to create paths of peaceful and sustainable coexistence.

In 2010, we can expect inspired leadership and actions that invest in peace!

- We call on governments to halt the arms race, make new and greater investments in supporting a culture of peace, strengthen the rule of law, stop ethnic cleansing and the suppression of

minorities, build peace through negotiation, mediation, and humanitarian support to peace processes, including the control and reduction of small arms that every year are the cause of over 300,000 deaths globally.

- We call on states with nuclear weapons to make immediate and substantial cuts in the number of nuclear weapons and to cease the practice of having nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert. Let these be the initial steps in a defined process leading to the complete and permanent elimination of nuclear weapons.
- We call for the establishment of transparent and effective dialogue mechanisms between international organizations and faith communities that takes advantage of the peace-making potential of religion.

Our Commitment

We recognize that we share responsibility to be and act for the change we want to see. We reaffirm our own commitment to call on our communities and members to:

- demonstrate solidarity with the poor and vulnerable in our society and the globe;
- Monitor the compliance of our governments in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and, whenever possible, hold them publicly accountable for such compliance;
- confront consumerism, reduce consumption and change our lifestyle to give testimony to better stewardship and live more lightly on the Earth;
- promote co-existence among different religious and ethnic communities while welcoming immigrants and refugees; and
- grow the collaboration of faith traditions to provide leadership, research and action, work to engage our own communities on the issues, and maintain continuous consultation and evaluation of these global political summits in the coming years while building political support for the changes we seek.

Our Deep Desire for 2010

As people of faith and as concerned global inhabitants, we urge our communities to do our part to end poverty, care for the Earth and invest in peace, including building a movement of political participation that makes seemingly impossible change possible. In a spirit of positive collaboration, acknowledging that both political leaders and faith leaders carry tremendous responsibility for setting the parameters for our common life, we will monitor the decisions our government leaders take, including decisions made at the 2010 political leaders' summits in Canada. We expect follow-through on past promises. We expect bold new actions based on the values and recommendations outlined here. If we fail in these goals, we fail our children who look to us to secure a viable future for them. Our prayers and wishes for wisdom and compassion are with our political leaders at this crucial moment.