



**THE MILLENNIUM WORLD PEACE SUMMIT  
OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS  
OPENING AT THE UNITED NATIONS, AUGUST 28,2000**

**For Immediate Release**

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**RELIGIOUS LEADERS CALL TO SUPPORT THE INTERNATIONAL DAY  
AGAINST RACISM**

**Millennium World Peace Summit brings Religious and Spiritual Leaders to support and join the United Nations in the battle against all forms of intolerance and racism**

**A book commemorating this battle “*Sacred Rights*” will be published in May featuring statements by Pope John Paul II and the Dalai Lama**

**New York, New York (March 22, 2001)**—Religious leaders from all the world’s faith traditions joined the call from United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, by calling upon their faith communities to battle all forms of intolerance and racism. Gathering support yesterday in Geneva, for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance—August 31-September 7, 2001 in Durban, South Africa—Robinson called on the leaders to support a United Nations awareness campaign laddering up to the conference as well as to participate in the conference.

The invitation to religious leaders to participate in this year’s World Conference Against Racism reflects the growing recognition that religion plays a critical role in the global agenda. Forum leaders are calling for an integrated framework that includes business and political leaders, civil society and religion to address the major challenges facing the human community. Religious leaders stressed their aim to be the voice for all sectors of society and to foster an inclusive rather than exclusive economic order.

“We must build on the momentum of the Millennium World Peace Summit in harnessing the power of religion in the fight against discrimination of any kind. The work of these leaders in rebuilding faith and unity within their own societies has prepared them for this support of the World Conference Against Racism,” says Bawa Jain, Secretary General of the Millennium World Peace Summit. “We are grateful to High Commissioner Mary Robinson for acknowledging the role religious leaders play in the world arena. We hope to use this forum and the relationships fostered here to launch a series of initiatives worldwide.”

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The Millennium World Peace Summit took place August 28-31, 2000 in New York City. The Summit opened at the UN with Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressing the leaders and

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continued with the religious leaders engaging in working group sessions to devise ongoing initiatives to address regional conflict, poverty and environmental problems. In addition to the signing of *The Commitment to Global Peace*, another outcome of the World Peace Summit is the formation of an “Advisory Council” of religious leaders who would be available as a resource to the United Nations in its conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

The Summit represented the first time in history that religious and spiritual leaders of the world’s diverse faith traditions came together to discuss forging a partnership of peace with the United Nations and to identify ways that the worldwide religious communities can work together on specific peace, poverty and environmental initiatives.

*The Commitment to Global Peace* condemns all violence in the name of religion and makes a strong appeal to all religious, ethnic and national groups to seek a cessation of all hostilities. The signing of the Commitment signifies an unprecedented collaboration among religious and spiritual leaders to commit to cooperate in building peaceful societies.

*The Commitment to Global Peace* was developed with the contribution of the Summit’s International Advisory Council and with input from the Scholars Group at Harvard Divinity School and other Summit strategic partners in the months preceding the Religious Summit. It was then circulated among religious leaders for their input and changes. The Commitment includes input from all the major religious faiths.

#### **Participants:**

Very Reverend William McComish - Dean of St. Pierre Cathedral  
Gary Vachicouras – For Monseigneur Damskinos, Metropolitan of Switzerland and Exarch of Europe  
Rabbi Francois Garai – Liberal Synagogue – CIL of Geneva  
Imam Yahia Basalamah – Imam of the Mosque in Geneva  
Hafid Ouairi – UN Representative of the Islamic Cultural Foundation  
Mme Nimat Mardam-Bey – Fondation de l’Entre Connaissance  
Joel Stroudinsky – Eglise protestante de Geneve  
Jean Claude Basset – Plateforme inter-religieuse  
Archbishop Diarmuid Martin – The Vatican representative to the UN  
Reverend EPPF Dwain – Director of International Affaire, World Council of Churches  
Gonsar Rinpoche and Yeshe Sangpo – Tibetan Center Rabten Choeling  
Sue Nightingale – Acting Chaplain, The Church of England  
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp – Hope Foundation, Netherlands  
Alfredo Sfeir-Yonis – The World Bank Special Representative to the United Nations and the World Trade Organization  
Bertrand Piccard – Winds of Hope  
M. Comelio Sommaruga – President of Moral Rearmement Foundation & President of Geneva International Center for Human Demining  
Elena Ponomareva – Chief Public Relations, UN Information Service  
Francoise Buffat – Board Member, Fondation pour Geneve  
Yves Oltramare – Board Member, Fondation pour Geneve  
Tatjana Darany – Secretaire Generale, Fondation pour Geneve