

RELIGIOUS LEADERS AT HISTORIC SUMMIT PLEDGE TO CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS FOR PEACE

New York—[August 31, 2000]—Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the Millennium World Peace Summit including Cardinals, Muftis, Rabbis, Imans, Monks, Patriarchs, and the indigenous people, today, affirmed their support of the Commitment to Global Peace and agreed to sustain the momentum of the Summit through the creation of a Steering Committee that will explore ways in which these leaders can contribute to the United Nations as an interfaith ally.

A Commitment to Global Peace that was presented to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan on Tuesday, August 29th, was circulated extensively to the delegates today and significant numbers of leaders are in the process of signing it. The Commitment condemns all violence in the name of religion and makes a forceful appeal to all religious, ethnic and national groups to respect the right of freedom of religion.

Religious leaders agreed to form a Steering Committee, which will explore ways to bring about future collaboration with the UN , identify specific mechanisms to further that process and present a plan as soon as possible. The delegates felt that a role with the UN must be initiated and that they wanted to bring peoples' interests to the UN and contribute the power of spirituality to the peace making process.

Among one of the important initiatives is an agreement of the women delegates to form their own international religious council, which will ensure equal representation and contribution to all future plans and actions generated by the Summit. It was recognized that women play an integral, role in peace and spirituality, and that it was essential that their contributions to the goals of the Summit be incorporated in all future actions.

In his message to the delegates, the Pope stated, " The problems facing humanity now are so large and complex that no single people or nation can solve them in isolation; nor can the building of peace be the work of politicians and diplomats alone. It is a task to which all must contribute; and religious and spiritual leaders have an especially important role to play."

The Summit also received messages from the Dalai Lama and Hans Kung, the noted theologian.

Mutual forgiveness and healing, compassion and pleas to uphold the dignity of life echoed through the working group sessions inspiring emotional, intense and productive dialogues. Informal encounters occurred among delegates that began to build new relationships. One such encounter took place among Iranian delegates, including His Excellency Ayatollah Abdollah Vaeze Javadi, who met with Rabbis Soedendorp and Schneier from New York and explored discussions of justice and mercy in Islam and Judaism.

The indigenous leaders led a powerful call for protection of the environment, in a session that was overflowing with participants. Ethiopian and Eritrean Patriarchs met in a working session on the role of religion in conflict transformation. Both noted that it was time for religious leaders to lead the people in the quest for peace between their two countries. The Ethiopian Patriarch stated, "The guns are silent now; now it is time for us to fulfill our objectives and seek peace." These leaders will continue

meeting after the Summit closes.

The Summit which attracted over 800 major religious leaders and 1000 observers representing every major faith from nearly 100 countries, brought together leaders who had never previously met and inspired a commitment to continue this historic journey. As David Finn, Chairman of the Summit's Executive Council noted, " The real work starts tomorrow. It is our responsibility to develop the most practical fruitful way to fulfill the promise we have made to each other. We will have the benefit of all your thoughts and blessings."