

Religious leaders from all over Europe committed to tackling violent religious extremism

May 11-13, members of the European Council of Religious Leaders ECRL met in Frankfurt, Germany to debate on the future of the inter religious dialogue platform, bringing together European religious leaders from Judaism, Christianity and Islam together with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians.

More than 40 religious leaders gathered to respond to the urgent issue of religious extremism. With growing tensions rising not only in Europe, but globally, ECRL members strongly believe violent extremism carried out in the name of religion must be addressed directly by religious leaders and their communities. They emphasized the importance of identifying and understanding the root causes of religious fundamentalism in order to identify solutions, and the need to communicate the fundamental values of peace and non-violence that lie at the core of every religious tradition.

During its Frankfurt meeting, hosted at Frankfurt's Jesuit university (Philosophisch–Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen), ECRL members discussed an action plan on tackling violent religious extremism. The action plan is intended to be implemented in conjunction with Religions for Peace International, ECRL's umbrella organization and the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition, bringing together religious leaders and grassroots representatives, academics and activists from more than 100 countries.

"Religion is a sublime ethical and spiritual force that aims to heal human society, provide security and peace among people and ensure human dignity and the rights that flow from it. However, some extremists abuse their religion, distorting its image and using it to achieve non-religious objectives. They project violent images that contradict and violate the essence of their religion", ECRL moderator Thomas Wipf quoted an important statement recently released in Abu Dhabi, calling violent religious extremism "a plague to the entire world". Wipf described a multi-religious response to be "a concrete and effective religious demonstration against violent religious extremism".

Katharina Von Schnurbein, European Commission Adviser for the Dialogue with Churches, Religions and Non-confessional Organisations and equally present at the meeting, stressed that since the Paris attacks, the EU commission has recognized the vital role ECRL will play in the future of a safer Europe. The ECRL welcomed representatives of the Interreligious Youth Forum. They expressed their disappointment that the deadline for achieving the millennium development goals has not been met, and called for a new focus on sustainable goals in the years ahead. ECRL supported their statement addressed to the G 7 Summit in June 2015 in Germany.

More information: www.rfp-europe.eu

Founded in Oslo in 2002, the European Council of Religious Leaders brings together senior representatives of Europe's historic religions Christianity, Judaism and Islam, together with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians. Together they address concerns affecting the wider community, including poverty, AIDS, interreligious co-existence, disarmament and the

environment. ECRL answers to the call for action to promote peace and fruitful coexistence in the midst of an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious Europe. ECRL is moderated by Thomas Wipf, former Council President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches SEK-FEPS and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe CPCE. General Secretary of the ECRL is Jehangir Sarosh, London jehangirsarosh@me.com