

Conference of Muslim-Christian Religious Leaders of Asia
Jakarta, February 25 -March 1, 2013

There were 141 Muslim and Christian religious leaders from 16 countries of Asia who gathered in Jakarta, Indonesia at The Acacia Hotel from 25 February to 1 March 2013. Gathered together for this historic conference they reflected on the open letter of October 13, 2007 by 138 eminent Muslim scholars and intellectuals addressed to all the leaders of the Christian Churches entitled “*A Common Word between Us and You.*”

The conference opened with the participation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The closing supper and cultural program was hosted by the Governor of Jakarta.

The conference focused its deliberations on the theme “Bringing a Common Word to Common Action” in Asia. The final statement of the conference used the title: *Striving Together in Love Towards Common Action – Solidarity and Collaboration in Asia, Generating the Needed Synergy. “Love God, Love Neighbor, Love all Creation.”*

The participants reflected deeply about the helpful role that religion can play in the present day difficulties on the global scene, but more particularly in the region of Asia. They together affirmed their commitment to bringing the Common Word into Common Action by intensifying efforts for peace and justice, trying to prevent violence in contexts of tension and facilitate dialogue or mediate agreement in situations of conflicts. This endeavor also allows religion to serve as an agent for ushering in a New Civilization of love and peace.

This conference began with the initiative of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA) and with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). This initiative was warmly welcomed in Indonesia by the International Conference of Muslim Scholars (ICIS), the Indonesian Catholic Bishops’ Conference (KWI), and the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) who jointly collaborated in hosting and organizing this conference.

This conference was over two years in planning because it was a joint effort of all of the organizers to work together. The major portion of the work fell to the Indonesian organizers (ICIS, PGI and KWI) who did a wonderful job. They worked together to decide all of the details. This even included a common holding of the funds for the conference. This joint-planning-working-funding was one unique feature of this conference. They also gathered volunteers, many of them youth (Catholic, Muslims and Protestants) to work in assisting in the different needs for the conference who also experienced organizing and working together.

The participants became familiar with the letter “A Common Word” and discussed this as practiced by Muslims, Catholics and Protestants in Asia. They also had a day to visit in Jakarta the Catholic Cathedral and the Istiqlal Mosque that are across the street from each other. Then visits were joined in by all participants to experience the role of religion in promoting justice in Indonesia. Such topics as globalization, migrants, labor, religious freedom, corruption, Muslim-Christian relations at the local level and environmental issues were included. This day out of the conference center aside from leaning about the local realities was an opportunity to promote deeper personal friendships among the participants.

The final day was parallel discussion groups where presentations on each topic were made by Muslim, Catholic and Prostate speakers. These topics included impact of globalization in Asia, migration and human trafficking, youth and the future of interfaith relation, and the role of religion in development. Other emerging issues were discussed such as peace work in Southern Thailand, the role of women in Interreligious Dialogue, HIV – AIDS, and peace work in Ambon, Indonesia.

To discuss a road map for the future toward common action for peace and justice in Asia, the participants gathered in country groups or country groupings so that plans would be realistic for each group. The level of trust and friendship that was built up over the days together greatly facilitated these sessions.

The committee that worked on the final statement throughout the conference presented a statement that needed very few changes. The resolutions are in the final statement.

One comment was that these types of conferences, while very necessary and helpful, do bring together the like-minded, open to dialogue and to working together with and respecting the religious differences. In the future, what is needed is to find ways to include the “excluded” – especially the “self-excluded” (in reference those who are not yet part of the dialogic movement, often labeled as fundamentalists and extremists).

The conference was perceived as a catalyst for new initiatives so that all could move beyond tolerance and mere coexistence to accepting the other in love and respect. A commitment was made to share the fruit of the discussions with each one’s co-religionists in their respective places and follow it up with the needed action.

Here is a list of the FABC speakers and participants from outside of Indonesia with only a partial listing of the Catholic Indonesian participants.

Speakers:

Archbishop Felix Machado, Vasai, India. Keynote Speaker
Father Andrew G. Recepcion, Naga City, Philippines. Globalization
Father Patrick Simon Gomes, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Youth
Archbishop Charles Maung Bo, SDB. Yangon, Myanmar. Role of Religion in Development.

Country Delegates

Bishop Thomas Dabre - India
Archbishop Murphy Pakiam - Malaysia
Father George Anthony Gomes - Bangladesh
Bishop Joseph Chusak Sirisut - Thailand
Mr. Javaid William - Pakistan
Archbishop Charles Maung Bo, SDB - Myanmar
Father Edward Chau King Fun - Hong Kong
Father Kasmir Nema, SVD - Timor Leste
Bishop Emmanuel T. Cabajar, D.D. - Philippines

FABC Secretary General

Father Raymond L. O’Toole SFM

FABC Guests

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil - India
Bishop Bejoy Nicephorus D’Cruze, OMI - Bangladesh

Father Paulin Batairwa Kubuya, SX. - Taiwan
Ms. Lou Solijon - Philippines
Ms. Jana Jean G. Dacobor - Philippines

Catholic Organizers in Indonesia (partial list)

Archbishop Ignatius Suharyo – Jakarta, President KWI
Bishop Martinus Dogma Situmorang, O.F.M.Cap. – Padang, Past President KWI
Cardinal Julius Darmaatmadja, SJ - Retired
Archbishop Aloysius Sudarso, S.C.I. - Palembang
Father Antonius Benny Susetyo - Komisi HAK KWI
Father Edi Purwanto - Executive Secretary KWI

OEIA

Archbishop Fernando Capalla - Chairman Emeritus
Archbishop Felix Machado - Chairman
Father William LaRousse, MM - Executive Secretary

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