

Striving Together in Love Towards Common Action

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

Solidarity and Collaboration in Asia, Generating the Needed Synergy

“Love God, Love Neighbour, Love all Creation”

Introduction

God the Almighty be praised for bringing us, 141 Muslim and Christian leaders from 16 countries of Asia, together for this historic Conference in Jakarta, February 25 - March 1, 2013. We spent four full days listening to one another and reflecting 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.

We confess that we have been profoundly impressed by the open letter of October 13, 2007 by 138 eminent Muslim scholars and intellectuals addressed to all the leaders of the Christian Churches on the theme *A Common Word* at the initiative of Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad of Jordan. This has proved to be the most outstanding dialogue-initiative of our times, and which has won wide acceptance by the religious leaders of various traditions.

By the *Common Word* is meant the core teaching of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible about the Love of God and Love of one's neighbour, often called the Golden Rule, which provides a common ground for Muslims and Christians to work together for peace and harmony in this violence-torn world today.

Recalling the Conference held in Manila in 2003 on “*Peace and Development*”, we the participants of this Conference focused our deliberations on the theme “*Bringing a Common Word to Common Action*”. This is an expression of our commitment to the cause of peace in Asia during the Third Millennium through a common effort for justice and solidarity among all the peoples and nations of this Continent. This endeavour also allows religion to serve as an agent for ushering in a New Civilization of love and peace.

Asian concerns today are not only about poverty and threat to the environment, but also the danger that a vision of human realities grounded on Religious Faith is being eroded in these fast changing times. Similarly, as Asian economy is gaining strength on the world scene, inequality also keeps increasing within our society. This gives rise to tensions between classes and communities and threatens stability within the region.

We, the Muslim and Christian leaders of Asia, affirm our commitment to bringing the *Common Word* into *Common Action* by intensifying our effort for peace and justice, trying to prevent violence in contexts of tension and facilitate dialogue or mediate agreement in situations of conflicts.

Resolutions

THEREFORE, WE THE MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ASIA, AFFIRM THAT:

1. We will do all we can to help our brothers and sisters to understand that genuine religion is meant to enlighten believers with regard to the nature of God and their duty to their fellow human beings and the rest of creation. It is a great tragedy when people make a negative use of religion for their own selfish ends. Conflicts that have been attributed to religious causes have actually been engendered by various imbalances in society, or, because adherents to a particular religion had not understood the full implication of their faith. They ought to be guided and assisted rather than condemned and marginalized.
2. The teaching about the Love of God and Love of Neighbour, derived from the *Common Word*, which we have called the Golden Rule, will also help us to integrate universally accepted values with those cherished in local traditions. In times of uncertainty or anxiety during inter-cultural interactions, the deepening of people's religious convictions and strengthening of their confidence in sound indigenous wisdom can help them to develop a holistic view of life and reality.
3. The process of globalization and rapid evolution of society are blessings for humanity, but they can also lead religious or ethnic groups within nation states to question mutual relationships. These may consequently have to be re-structured according to newly emerging needs. But we believe that if human dignity is respected, human values are promoted, and the path dialogue remains open, conflict can be avoided in every circumstance. Freedom of religion is one of the basic human rights that calls for special attention in the context of Asia.
4. Uncritical acceptance of Liberal Capitalism can lead to situations of gross inequality, especially if it means uncontrolled monopolies and totally un-regulated market mechanisms. Even free enterprise should be socially responsible. Problems like poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition or HIV/AIDS are the common concern of all, especially of those who have more resources to be of assistance.
5. Even when conflicts are attributed to religious causes, almost in all cases they can be traced to some political, economic, or social grievances. It is the mission of Muslim and Christian scholars and religious leaders to keep studying the social scenario, interpreting trends and cautioning society about adopting policies that can compromise common interests. Their foresight can help to prevent the outbreak of violence and their persuasive skills can smoothen out a path for constructive dialogue and suggest relevant solutions. They can propagate concepts and relationships that are inclusive.
6. There is a growing awareness of environmental problems in Asia today, e.g. the danger of polluting water or air, degrading soil, emitting carbon, or over-tapping natural resources. Greater social inclusion will be required to ensure that nature is respected and sustainable styles of living and working are maintained.
7. The mass migration of workers to urban centres within a country or to other economically more advanced countries in search of jobs is destabilising families and communities in Asia. In addition, human trafficking, especially of women and children, raises innumerable social and communal problems. The religious leaders of the two communities must find ways of being of assistance to families and communities that are left behind and to workers who are exploited or whose rights are being violated.
8. Corruption at every level of society is a cause for serious anxiety in most countries of Asia. Both Muslims and Christians must join hands together, tapping the spiritual resources of their faith and strengthening the values of good governance and the mechanisms of efficient administration, to root out this evil from

society. Religious believers ought to act as a moral force in society. It is for the younger generation to take this challenge forward.

9. We know that the above mentioned goals can be achieved only if all religious communities make it their aim to preserve values that are considered precious in Asian cultures like religiosity, the sense of the sacred, respect for life, attachment to tradition, and concern for the common good. A path of moderation and a pedagogy of persuasion are more in keeping with the Asian genius than the use of force or mutual denunciation.
10. Equally important is to attend to the healing of memories with reference the painful events that have taken place in the common history of the two communities and to forgive all past injuries. Memories of mutual help and collaboration are to be cherished. As religious leaders we promise to play a helpful role in this respect.

Conclusion

We do recognize that in our shared history we have often experienced painful encounters rather than harmonious living together. We have frequently misunderstood one another and this has resulted in suspicion and lack of positive commitment from either side. Therefore, this invitation to practise the dual commandment to love is a bold step towards fresh perspectives in Christian-Muslim relations. It also serves as a catalyst for new initiatives to move beyond tolerance and mere coexistence to accepting the other in love and respect.

As we conclude this Conference, we commit ourselves to share the fruit of our discussions with our co-religionists in our respective places and follow it up with the needed action. We also resolve to preserve and propagate the spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and understanding among people for the benefit of all humankind and the whole of creation. It falls on the younger generation to take this mission forward.

We acknowledge the thoughtful initiative of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) which was warmly welcomed by the International Conference of Muslim Scholars (ICIS) in Indonesia, Indonesian Catholic Bishops' Conference (KWI), and the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) who have jointly collaborated in hosting this conference. We appreciate their warm hospitality and their hard work to organize this conference. We whole heartily thank those funding partners; solely because of their generosity was this conference even possible. We express our deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Governor of Jakarta, and the people of Indonesia for their assistance in making this conference a success.

To God the Almighty be the glory for what we have been able to achieve together during the few days of intense reflection and prayer, and may God guide us into the path of action and service.

Jakarta
February 28, 2013