

**Roundtable:**  
**Social Communication in Religious Traditions of Asia**

*Assumption University  
Huamark Campus, Bangkok  
October 3-7, 2005*

**FINAL STATEMENT**

**Introduction**

Studying the different religious traditions of Asia, we the 20 participants of a roundtable of invited scholars at the Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion of Assumption University of Bangkok realized that:

Social communication has been part of all religions right from their beginning and throughout their history. In all religious traditions, communication stands at the beginning of religious experience as in Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity.

‘Social communication’ is understood as communication *of* and *in* human society. It comprises not only the mass media but all means of human communicating as far as they relate to human society.

**Ways and Means**

*The following considerations are derived and applicable to all major religions in Asia:*

- 1) The ways and means of social communication in different religious traditions are reflected, beside others, in:
  - Oral traditions like story-telling, teaching and preaching
  - Use or application of symbols, icons as well as artistic expressions
  - Traditional means like art, music, dance, drama and theater.
  - Languages are important vehicles for conveying the religious message to the people.
- 2) Communication in Religion ideally requires equality between communicators and audiences. It is not concerned about “selling” but rather about sharing and appreciation of experiences and convictions. Communication in Religions is not concerned merely with dissemination of information and news but rather with participation and sharing.

3) Communication in Religion is based on spirituality, growing from silence as a special source of inspiration and experiencing the holy. Communication in Religions has a liberative function in the daily lives and experiences of peoples.

4) Communication in Religion does not rely on technical means only but is also determined by reflection and action. It should see special opportunities in modern information and communication technologies (ICTs).

5) Communication in Religion normally operates on two levels: the *internal*, for communication within the religious community; and the *external*, for communication with other religions and the outside world.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*In the light of our discussions, we came to the following recommendations:*

1) Religious leaders, social activists, artists and scholars as well as communicators from different religions of Asia must engage in inclusive and sustained dialogues leading toward deeper Interreligious understanding. Elaborating the richness of religious experience, and underlining common-ness rather than differences will contribute to deeper and more sincere dialogues.

2) People's awareness of the benefits and pitfalls of the "new culture" of communication – marked by "new techniques, new languages and new psychology" (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 37c) must increase. Efforts in scientific research as well as communication education and communication ethics should be pursued at all levels with the help of academic institutions and religious formation centers in Asia.

3) Government and non-government organizations in Asia must contribute to and facilitate growing efforts for peace both within and among Asian religions. The high values of social communication e.g. fairness, accuracy, impartiality, and others must be upheld to enhance harmony, tolerance, and wholesome understanding between religions.

4) This Roundtable proposes to request the UN Secretary General to initiate the setting up of an "Interreligious Council" within the UN system that will promote harmony among religions. National counterparts of this council could also be set up throughout Asia to help initiate Interreligious dialogue in their countries.

5) Those responsible for social communications in the different religions are especially reminded of their responsibility to foster Interreligious understanding and dialogue. Media professionals must be properly trained in effective reporting of religious news and events. The role of media in peace-building is a special concern.