

PRESS RELEASE

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ANNUAL MEETING 2001

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND 25-30 JANUARY

Concluding Statement of the Meeting of Religious Leaders at Davos

Davos, Switzerland – 30 January 2001

Davos, Switzerland, 30 January 2001 – An extraordinary gathering of religious leaders from the world's major faiths today endorsed a nine-point programme designed to bring the moral authority of religion to the great challenges on the global agenda. On the concluding day of the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, the spiritual leaders issued a call for collaborative efforts by people of all faiths to help solve the problems currently dividing communities and nations.

"The commitment made here today is an important step, but only a first step," said Klaus Schwab, President of the World Economic Forum. "The challenge now is to translate this declaration into practical steps that promote peace, reconciliation and human progress – goals I know we all share."

Mr Bawa Jain, Secretary-General of the Millennium World Peace Summit and Co-Founder, with the Forum, of the World Economic Forum's Religious Initiative, said today's statement of principle marked a new opportunity to make the world's great religions relevant to the challenges faced by people everywhere. "The declaration sends an important message. Religion can be a force for world peace and social progress, and the leaders of the great religions are committed to working with each other to make these words a reality," Mr Jain said.

The statement of principle agreed in Davos on 30 January 2001:

- 1) We, the religious and spiritual leaders gathered here in Davos, express gratitude to the World Economic Forum for their invitation to participate in this extraordinary gathering. We enthusiastically endorse the prospect of initiating and continuing dialogue in order to create a framework that integrates leaders of religion, business, politics and civil society. Let us join forces to seize this opportunity.
- 2) We recognize that globalization offers both opportunities and perils. On the one hand, globalization can help millions of people around the world overcome poverty, improve health and education, participate in economic and political decisions, and improve their lives. On the other hand, partly because spiritual values have not been given due consideration, globalization has produced environmental degradation, sharpened disparities between "have" and "have-nots", and thereby diverted national priorities away from basic services and threatened to homogenize local traditions into a global consumerist culture.
- 3) Globalization poses various challenges to all these communities compelling them to find a shared vision and work toward common responses. It is vital to identify specific problems and discuss them one by one.
- 4) Religions are rooted in the individual conscience and in the lives of local communities. Their leaders can help international organizations such as the World Economic Forum, the United Nations, and others to link global and local concerns.
- 5) As guardians of moral and spiritual values, we commit ourselves to work toward the inner transformation of individuals so that a more caring society is possible.
- 6) We firmly believe that religious traditions have a unique contribution to offer in meeting these challenges particularly in emphasizing human values and the spiritual and moral dimension of economic and political life. We are eager to foster a dialogue in order to learn from our business and political colleagues about globalization, and to identify the role religion can play.
- 7) Recognizing that there are divisions among different segments of society, we affirm efforts to strengthen mutual interdependence. In committing ourselves to participate in a series of World Economic Forum dialogues, we strongly recommend that religious representation be substantially broadened.

8) In the same spirit, we believe we have a role in helping to overcome the division and hostility that the subject of globalization generates. We respectfully urge that critics be welcomed and listened to. Both friends and foes of globalization are members of our communities, and we have a responsibility to heed their different voices. Our goal is to inspire a spirit of universalism while respecting the integrity of particular traditions.

9) We have agreed to engage in a series of ongoing meetings to explore the possibility of creating a council of religious leaders that offers religious, spiritual and ethical guidance to international organizations such as the World Economic Forum, the United Nations and others. We are committed to work in collaboration with the World Economic Forum in this undertaking.

Sheikh Dr M. A. Zaki Badawi Principal, The Muslim College, United Kingdom

His Excellency Mustafa Ceric Grand Mufti of Bosnia

His Excellency Aly El Samman Vice-President, Permanent Committee of Al-Azhar for Dialogue with Monotheistic Religions, Egypt

Vittorio D. Falsina Director, Program on Globalization and Religions, Harvard Divinity School, USA

Bawa Jain Secretary-General, The Millennium World Peace Summit, USA

Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau Chief Rabbi of Israel

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His Excellency Archbishop Diarmuid Martin Bishop, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Dena Merriam Vice-Chairman, The Millennium World Peace Summit, USA

His Grace Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa

Chief Rabbi David Rosen President, World Conference of Religions for Peace, Israel

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, United Kingdom

Professor Klaus Schwab Founder and President of the World Economic Forum

Grand Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat Chief Rabbi Emeritus of France

His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Founder, The Art of Living Foundation, India

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