

Religions, Creeds and Value Systems:
Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights
25 June 2018, United Nations, Geneva Switzerland

*Under the Patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of the
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*



Outcome Declaration

**“Moving Towards Greater Spiritual Convergence Worldwide
in Support of Equal Citizenship Rights”**

Geneva, 25 June 2018

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world

The United Nations General Assembly, proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Signed by all Member States in the world, Universal Human Rights Declaration, 1948

Preamble

The world is witnessing a steep rise in xenophobia, racism and intolerance resorting to the distortion and abuse of religions and faith as a pretext for violence, exclusion and discrimination. This is undermining national unity in many countries, as well as global cooperation. A universally shared understanding and recognition of the concept of equal citizenship rights, its protection and implementation, is a requirement to overcome the manifold challenges which the World Conference intends to tackle, through consensual adoption of this Declaration, through its follow up action and strategic plan, and its coordination across regions and within all nations.

The World Conference is intended to promote and foster an international consensus - anchored in the principles of equity, non-discrimination, inclusiveness and solidarity, and which transcends religious, ethnic, national and linguistic divides.

Therefore, the World Conference on “Religions, Creeds and Value Systems: Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights” taking place in Geneva on 25 June 2018,

reaffirming its commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights celebrating its 70th anniversary, and to the 2030 UN Agenda on Sustainable Development to promote peace, mutual respect and understanding across cultures and generations;

underlining the importance of Declarations and outcome documents, adopted at major inter-religious and inter-cultural summits calling upon, *inter alia*, religious, spiritual and national leaders to advance the well-being of humanity and to promote global peace and which provide seminal points of departure¹;

recalling that the concept of equal citizenship rights is rooted in the vision of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereinafter “UDHR”) referring *inter alia* to the “*equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family*” as “*the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.*” It constitutes the foundation for national identity, societal belonging and self-fulfillment;

recognizing the need for societies worldwide to recommit themselves to Article 18 of the UDHR, which stipulates *inter alia* that “*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*”, and to warn against any form of proselytism, or imposition of one’s faith on others. The concept of equal citizenship rights is also a direct consequence of **Article 18 of the UDHR’s** proclamation of religious freedom in belief and practice in the public as well as in the private spheres;

emphasizing that the promotion and enhancement of equal citizenship rights, encompassing economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights, including the right to freedom of religion is a common challenge for rich and poor countries alike. Although citizenship rights are proclaimed in national constitutions, they are often denied in practice by inadequate governance, through action of interest groups or by the pressure of events. This is at variance with Article 7 of UDHR stipulating that “*All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.*”

¹ i) **The 1994 UNESCO Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace**; ii) **The 1999 Geneva Spiritual Appeal** signed by the UN and Government dignitaries, Religious and Spiritual Leaders and Lay-people (24 October 1999); iii) **The 2000 Commitment to Global Peace at the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders** signed by all Religions and Faiths at the United Nations in New York (28-31 August 2000); iv) the **2001 Global Agenda on the Dialogue among Civilizations** adopted by the UN General Assembly; iii) **The 2008 Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue**; v) the 2001 World Economic Forum Concluding Statement of the Meeting of Religious Leaders at Davos (30 January 2001); vi) The 2005 **C-100 Initiative on Islamic-Western Peace Building**, World Economic Forum, Dead Sea, Jordan (23 May 2005); vii) **The 2005 Call for Spiritual Empowerment of the United Nations** by the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns, UN Geneva, (7 December 2005); viii) **Baku Process: The 2008 Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue**; ix) **The 2009 Lille Declaration on a Culture of Peace**; x) the **First Christian – Muslim Summit** organized in Washington D. C. from 1-3 May 2010); xi) **The Second Christian – Muslim Summit**, Beirut, Lebanon (18-20 June 2012); xii) **The Third Session of the Christian - Muslim Summit**, The Vatican (2-4 December 2014); xiii) **The Sixth Meeting of the Istanbul Process** entitled “*A Cross-Regional Perspective on Best Practices and Policies for Promoting Religious Tolerance and Strengthening Resilience*” Singapore (20-21 July 2016); xiv) **Declaration of The Fifth Baku International Humanitarian Forum** from 29 to 30 September 2016; xv) the **Fourth Session of the Christian - Muslim Summit**, Tehran, Iran (6-9 November 2016); xvi) **The Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East** organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Alicante, Spain (14-16 November 2016); xvii) **Resolution 71/47 of the UN General Assembly** adopted on 16 December 2016 as a follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace; xviii) **The 2017 “Freedom and Citizenship: Diversity and Integration” conference**, co-hosted by the al-Azhar University and the Holy See in Cairo, Egypt (28 February-1 March 2017); xix) **The 2017 Beirut Declaration** and its 18 commitments on “*Faith for Rights*”; xx) the **Rabat+5 Symposium** held in Morocco (6-7 December 2017); xxi) **Panel discussion entitled “Role of Religious Leaders in Peacebuilding in the Middle East”**, United Nations New York (18 July 2017) as a follow-up to the 2016 Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East; xxii) **The 2018 “Religion and Rights: Strengthening Common Ground”** conference organized by OHCHR in collaboration with Musawah, United Nations, Geneva (16 February 2018). [*Non exhaustive list in progress*].

We, the participants to the World Conference “Religions, Creeds and Value Systems: Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights” taking place in Geneva on 25 June 2018 by signing the present Declaration commend therefore for adoption by all people of good will the present Ten-Point Strategic Plan and Follow Up Actions for achieving equal citizenship rights as the essential means of moving universally towards social cohesion through an all-encompassing and conciliatory social contract.

Ten-Point Global Strategic Plan

1. To unite in a common endeavor of religious and lay institutions, and their respective leaders, to harness the collective energy of all religions, creeds and value-systems to uphold equal citizenship rights, to reject the instrumentalization of religions, to promote their authentic meanings and universal values, and finally to advocate openness and plurality of approach towards other faiths, creeds and value-systems;
To move towards a world where the generalization of equal citizenship rights contributes to social and cultural diversity to be celebrated in resilient and inclusive societies thus preventing conflict among diverse sub-groups in society;
2. To address the legitimate concerns relating to the connotation of “minorities” as allegedly exogenous groups when referring to segments of the population which are an integral part of a nation’s citizenry. Harmonious integration of all segments of the population in resilient and inclusive societies should be enhanced through effective achievement of equal citizenship rights making the re-grouping of citizens into denominational sub-identities superfluous as a political tool;
3. To enforce all rights and duties of people on the basis of their role as rights-holders of civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights. The promotion and safeguarding of equal citizenship rights should encompass the concept of entitlement and preclude a freezing of accumulated inequalities;
4. To preserve the diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious heritages of transit and host countries, while, at the same time, offering opportunities for integration to arriving refugees and migrants. The aim is to promote mutual contributions and respective resilience, thus avoiding forced assimilation of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, in line with the provisions set forth in Sustainable Development Goal 16² of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to avoid proselytization;
5. To work towards the full realization of equal citizenship rights which will require not only vertical interaction between society and the State but also horizontal interaction within society itself. To be successful, both forms of interaction will require, where necessary, to transform a culture of compliance into a culture of accountability based on answerability and enforcement. This initiative will involve local, national or regional initiatives for promoting spiritual convergence and commonality of social purpose. The implementation of equal citizenship rights will gradually weaken discrimination, whether gender-related or based on other specificities including *inter alia* disability, ethnic or religious origin, age bracket, access to employment, health care, or sharing of resources;
6. To guarantee respect for the equality of women and men, girls and boys, within families, local communities, and society at large, by integrating in all efforts the promotion and the implementation of equal citizenship rights. Gender discrimination with respect to citizenship rights is a salient issue that needs to be addressed as a matter of priority. In many parts of the world there are States that deny female citizens equal rights with male citizens with regard to acquiring, changing and retaining their nationality, and to conferring nationality to non-national spouses or children. Religious traditions can and should play an important role in understanding and accompanying societal changes as they address progress toward recognizing equality between women and men and to prevent potential tensions between such evolving social mores and traditional teachings and practices;

² UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Sustainable Development Goal 16. Online. URL: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

7. To promote equal citizenship rights as a sustained objective, starting with its implementation at school level. Education *about, through and for* equal citizenship rights can only be achieved by promoting a change in national policies, reviewing school development plans and developing inclusive classrooms and teaching methodologies. Decision-makers must acknowledge and embrace the idea that equal citizenship education is essential to promote peace, dialogue and social cohesion as well as to alleviate social tensions;
8. To encourage political and civil authorities to dialogue with spiritual leadership in order to assist in promoting inter-religious literacy and in applying ethical principles to the local context. Whether religion is central or either marginal or absent from public discourse in a given country, while at the same time being central to social components thereof, it is important to encourage the state authorities including those that identify as secular, to engage with the relevant religious traditions thus enlisting the collaboration and understanding of all to prevent potential social and/or religious tension or conflict;
9. To respect within and between all countries, whether there is a separation between State and faiths or not, the right to freedom of religion and ensure that public laws and policies are applied equitably through an inclusive approach to religious diversity and not through exclusion of their public and private expression, so as to comply with article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights
10. To spread equal citizenship rights as the gateway to the concept of global citizenship, a gateway in other words, to world peace.

Follow-Up Actions

We therefore call for the following immediate actions:

1. the periodical holding of a *World Summit for Religious, Governmental and Civil Society Leaders for the Advancement of Equal Citizenship Rights* - under the auspices of the United Nations;
2. the setting-up of an *International Task-Force on Equal Citizenship Rights* with a five year implementation review mechanism composed, *inter alia*, of governments, IGOs, NGOs and faith-based organizations. The Task-Force would adopt measures taken by UN member-States to promote equal citizenship rights and recommend to governments guidelines to promote and enhance models of equal citizenship in a manner which reconciles secularity with the religions, creeds and value-systems that are held dear by different population segments;
3. the inclusion of *a special item in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) state report* – in the context of the Human Rights Council - on progress achieved towards implementing equal citizenship rights.



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