

IV Summit of Religious Leaders on the occasion of the G8

Rome, June 16 – 17 , 2009

Final Call

We, leaders of the worlds religions and spiritual traditions gathered in Rome on the eve of the G8 Summit of 2009, are united in our common commitment to justice and the protection of human life, the building of the common good and the belief on the divinely established and inviolable dignity of all people from conception to death.

We speak from the heart of the great majority of the human family who are members of religions or spiritual traditions. In a time of economic crisis when many securities are crumbling, we feel even more acutely the need for spiritual orientation. We are convinced that spiritual life and the freedom to practice it is the true guarantee for authentic freedom. A spiritual approach can touch the hunger for meaning in our contemporary society. Materialism often expresses itself in idolatrous forms and has proved powerless in the present crisis.

We carry forward important work begun in multireligious meetings held just prior to the G8 Summits, (in Moscow 2006, Cologne 2007, Sapporo 2008, Rome 2009) and building on earlier meetings in London. We have been convened by the Italian Bishops Conference, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for whose assistance we are grateful.

We greet the leaders of the nations gathered in L'Aquila and we pray for them as they exercise their heavy responsibilities to confront the challenges facing the human family today.

We commenced our meeting in L'Aquila in solidarity with those who are suffering there from the devastating earthquake and in solidarity also with all those around the world who are bearing the burdens of suffering.

We are convinced that the world politics needs a solid paradigm based on moral values to address today's challenges. Through the notion of shared security we can draw attention to the comprehensive character of our moral and religious concerns. In the light of this understanding of shared security we make the following comments on matters of the greatest importance. We are using the term "security" in a new way. We add the word "shared" to draw attention to a fundamental moral conviction: the wellbeing of each is related to the wellbeing of others and to our environment. Shared security focuses on the fundamental inter relatedness of all persons and the environment. It includes a comprehensive respect for the interconnectedness and dignity of all life and acknowledges the fundamental fact that we all live in one world. Ultimately we are convinced that to overcome violence justice with compassion and forgiveness are necessary and possible.

Shared security is concerned with the full continuum of human relations from relationship amongst individuals to the ways that people are organized in nations and states. It follows that the security of one actor in international relations must not be detrimental to another. Those international leaders who are responsible for global decision-making must act transparently and be open to the contribution of all involved.

The current financial and economic crisis weighs most heavily upon the poor. Addressing these related crises call for a new financial pact that addresses squarely (1) the causes of the financial crisis, (2) acknowledges the need basic moral principles, (3) includes all stakeholders and (4) places at a premium the urgent need for sustained financing for development. We are convinced that, in a time of economic crisis and spiritual disorientation for the men and women of our time, religions can and must offer a decisive contribution to the search for the common good. As we confront this crisis, there is the need for the spiritual wisdom entrusted to the great world religions so as to steer an ethical path to justice and human flourishing. Concretely, as part of the reform of the finance system, we urge concerted action to close down the unregulated off shore banking system. Regarding development assistance, we urge the inclusion as partners of civil society organizations including especially religious communities and their organizations.

In continuity with previous world religious summits we continue to call for the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. Their completion has been promised for 2015, but progress has now fallen behind. The current crisis has worsened the situation of those whom the MDG's are designed to assist. We insist that it is an imperative for the lives of millions that the MDG's be fulfilled on schedule and we commit ourselves to work together with the G8 leaders to that end.

Africa is already hard hit by the world financial crisis and it runs the risk of being seriously damaged in its efforts against poverty with a negative impact on the economic growth of its countries. It is our hope that the international community places Africa at the centre of policies for development, by finding new sources for financing cooperation and favoring the involvement of States and civil societies of African countries in a perspective of rebirth of the whole continent. In this same context we would like to affirm that the time has come to commit ourselves decisively to the healing of the entire continent wounded.

Seventy years from the beginning of the great tragedy for humanity that was World War II and the many subsequent conflicts, causing human suffering, injustice and poverty, we call for nations to resist making war a means of international politics and to make every effort to establish a just peace for all. We believe that the attempt to militarily dominate the sea, space, neutral territories or states creates obstacles on the way to nuclear and conventional disarmament. We also believe that conventional disarmament and efforts to ban military technologies and initiatives that could provoke a new arms race should go hand in hand with efforts to advance nuclear disarmament.

We call the G8 Summit to pursue rigorous implementation of nuclear reduction and non-proliferation policies leading to the goal of total nuclear disarmament. We call the five acknowledged nuclear-weapon states should work toward minifying existing nuclear weapons step by step. States with nuclear weapons that have not acknowledged them must acknowledge their possession, make similar commitments to their elimination and enter into the NPT. We press for prompt ratifications and entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and commit to take no action leading toward the reintroduction of any form of nuclear weapons testing.

We call attention to the plight of the ever growing number of “illegal” immigrants and the absence of adequate and uniform standards designed to protect them. We urge that the full rights and dignity of people be respected and cost-sharing introduced where appropriate as states re-evaluate their comprehensive policies for legal residents and immigration. We urge attention to the fact that immigration is growing and that ecological pressure may greatly accelerate it.

We representatives of world religions and spiritual traditions gathered in these days in Rome facing the threats and the challenges of a difficult time of crisis for our societies, reaffirm our commitment to work with all people of good will, for the realization of the common good. In this context we call for the establishment of mechanisms for dialogue between religious communities, political leaders, international organisations and civil society structures.

Our method and our strength, the strength of yesterday, today and tomorrow will always and only be that of the transformation of hearts and shared action through dialogue.

Dialogue is an art that everyone must practise and cultivate within and between religions, culture, politics and especially those who have power in the world. Dialogue requires courage and enables people to see each other more clearly, enabling us to offer life and hope to new generations.

This is our renewed commitment, this is the appeal we address to the world.

We commit ourselves to meet again in Canada in June 2010.

On behalf of the 120 religious delegates,

Rome, June 17th, 2009

H.E. Msgr. Vincenzo Paglia
Chairman of the Commission
for Ecumenism and Dialogue of the Italian
Bishops Conference,
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