

Interfaith Statement on human dignity, diversity and inclusion

Nairobi, 9 December 2021

Preface

We, representing 56 faith organisations from 26 countries, have come together in Nairobi, Kenya, from December 7th to 9th, 2021 to imagine a shared future of flourishing harmonious communities, where everybody, regardless of religion, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, race, ability or any other dimension of diversity enjoys a dignified life.

Our shared vision

We recognize that we all share a common and united vision of human development, where all people have access to justice, peace, health, education, security, and spirituality, even if our approaches and practices may differ towards achieving this vision.

Challenges

We note with concern that our common world faces serious challenges, and our vision seems to be a distant reality, more so considering the current Covid pandemic, climate change, inequal distribution of resources and conflict.

Too often, our people face violence in their homes and communities: For example, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older, around the world have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both, at least once in their lifetime.¹ Too often, our people, especially young people, are forced to migrate because of abject poverty or violent conflicts. By the end of 2020, 78.5 million people were forcibly displaced. This represents the highest number available on record.²

Too often, our people suffer from high mortality of women and children due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth - mostly from preventable or treatable causes.³ The lack of global solidarity and inadequate management of the current Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated injustice and inequality and hugely impacted the lives of people: schools have been closed and people have lost their livelihoods.

Our Mission

We recall that human dignity and the sacredness of life is rooted in our sacred texts.

Realising and protecting human dignity, its fulfilment and wellbeing is at the heart of our mission. We envision inclusive, diverse, just and peaceful societies.

Our religions uphold the values of compassion, respect for each other, equality and non-discrimination.

Leading by example, solidarity, interfaith cooperation and partnerships are important ways to achieve this mission.

¹ Source: WHO (9 March 2021), "Violence against women" retrieved on 2/12/2021 here <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

² Source: Migration data portal (30 June 2021), "Forced migration or displacement", retrieved on 2/12/2021 here: https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/forced-migration-or-displacement#footnote2_iwb3yel

³ Source: WHO (5 October 2021), „New global targets to prevent maternal deaths“, retrieved on 2/12/2021 here: <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-10-2021-new-global-targets-to-prevent-maternal-deaths>

Interfaith Statement

We are aware of the important role we play and the influence we have. In order to fulfil our rights and responsibilities and protect the human dignity of all people.

We recognise that we must make critical choices and informed decisions.

We affirm our conviction that diverse societies are a strength that must be cherished and protected.

We affirm our common and united vision of human development, where all people have access to justice, peace, health, education, security and spirituality.

We are committed to continue fostering inclusive spaces for all people of our communities regardless of their religion, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, race, ability or any other dimension of diversity. We will “welcome the other” and guide our communities towards the virtues of respect, love, solidarity and care for our neighbours.

We are committed to interfaith action and collaboration in order to increase our understanding of each-other, building bridges between different stakeholders to realizing greater impact.

We are committed to seeking constructive solutions to the challenges our communities are facing such as people’s health, specifically sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health and Covid-19, gender and social justice, climate change and peaceful coexistence, and are committed to ending practices that limit the flourishing of our communities.

We are committed to reviewing our own laws, policies, attitudes and practises that enable women’s and girls’ access to decision-making.

We are committed to educating believers so that they may overcome mistrust, prejudices and dehumanising ideas about other religious groups.

We are committed to promote life-affirming theologies and avoid selective interpretations of sacred texts. We acknowledge the compassionate nature of religion and do not accept the practices that have caused harm in the name of religion.

We are committed to promoting alternatives to radical and extremist narratives that are used to fuel discrimination, tensions, mistrusts and conflicts.

We are committed to promoting and protecting the freedom of religion or belief of all individuals.

We are committed towards advocating for greater accountability of all stakeholders to their responsibilities and obligations.

We are committed to participating in civic spaces and contributing to policy-making and implementation.

We believe that together we can build strong, harmonious and flourishing communities where everyone can live a dignified life.

We declare our motivation to work with other partners and stakeholders to achieve these goals.