



WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

ISTANBUL • 23-24 May 2016

Religious Engagement

SPECIAL SESSION

Core Responsibility Three of the Agenda for Humanity



“Honouring our commitment to leave no one behind requires reaching everyone in situations of conflict, disaster, vulnerability and risk.

Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit

CONTEXT

Faith traditions, richly diverse, all teach the importance of compassion and of one common shared humanity, where each human being is important and communities in solidarity and harmony with one another, are ends in themselves. These ideals require honoring by all actors in humanitarian action, and can be exemplified in the critical responses delivered by faith-based organizations, representatives of religious groups and local religious communities’ efforts.

In a world where conflicts affect millions of people, diverse faith-based NGOs share in the responsibility to work for peace at local, national and international levels. This contribution should continue to be supported by the international community, where it already exists, and encouraged where it may not.

Most local religious institutions and faith-based NGOs have unique comparative advantages in humanitarian contexts: they are often the longest standing, furthest-reaching entities, with an established relationship of trust and familiarity to most local communities. They are also uniquely positioned to provide psycho-social assistance, a key need of people in crises, and a service guaranteed under international humanitarian law. They have been present before crises, they are first responders and key providers of assistance and protection during crises and they will stay after international organizations leave.



They can therefore be significant components of mitigation, response and rebuilding of communities, nations and regions. These advantages should be leveraged, and these particular service providers and peace-builders, should be considered as equal partners in international efforts around humanitarian and development responses.

OBJECTIVE

Representatives of religious groups, community-based, and international religious organizations, together with political leaders, and other humanitarian stakeholders, will come together to critically examine:

- Respective activities and comparative advantages as key stakeholders in global, national, and local humanitarian action and response efforts, peacebuilding and long-term resilience;
- Challenges to and opportunities for increased humanitarian partnerships with faith based organisations and representatives of religious groups in order to invest in the local capacities and social capital provided by religious actors in humanitarian contexts;
- Secure public commitment from representatives of religious groups and lead humanitarian agencies on strategies and mechanisms to: enhance humanitarian effectiveness, reduce vulnerability and risk, effectively attend to the needs of people in conflict; continue innovative means of serving communities and nations; and secure efficient partnerships with governmental and other non-governmental humanitarian and development counterparts.

And commit to:

- Upholding the principles of compassion, humanity and impartiality in the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection;
- Working together to prevent, diminish, and resolve conflicts, whether or not these have a religious component, and to promote reconciliation;
- Working together to better contextualize humanitarian response, to use added value to reach people who need assistance and protection and to use their influence to mobilize local communities in support of these efforts;
- Supporting local actors to strengthen their capacity, so that aid becomes locally owned and led;
- Building on faith assets and faith infrastructure in communities, in partnership with other actors, to provide sustainable solutions to humanitarian crises.

BACKGROUND

The first-ever World Humanitarian Summit will take place from 23 to 24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey. Following three years of extensive consultations with more than 23,000 people in 153 countries, this will be the moment to answer their overwhelming call for a renewed commitment to humanity. In his report for the World Humanitarian



Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General calls upon Member States and other stakeholders to endorse and get behind five core responsibilities. These will ensure that we can deliver more and better on behalf of all those who are suffering and who need assistance. The Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity spells out how this can be achieved.

The Special Sessions respond to the specific calls made during the consultation process. They will focus on launching strategic initiatives underlying the five core responsibilities. These initiatives aim to harness the vision, skills and capacities of stakeholders in each relevant area. Istanbul is the opportunity to demonstrate unity and solidarity with the needy, to prevent and end suffering, and to take all the necessary steps to place our common values of humanity back at the heart of the decision-making process.

The Special Sessions will provide a platform for Member States and other stakeholders to make specific commitments in support of these and as a means of achieving the Agenda for Humanity.

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The Special Session will be a roundtable discussion facilitated by a moderator. The Special Session will result in an outcome document which will include the collective calls and commitments made in the lead-up to and during the Session, and will contribute to the Commitments to Action document from the World Humanitarian Summit.

This Special Event will last for one hour. Given the length of the session, there will not be time for all participants to announce specific commitments. Therefore they will be asked to share their commitments in support of this Special Session before or during the Summit.

The Special Sessions will be open to media and be broadcast and webcast live. The time and location for this session will be made known shortly.

REGISTRATION AND SPECIAL SESSION PREPARATIONS

The focal point will engage with interested stakeholders in the run-up to the Summit to assist in the development of commitments. Please refer any queries related to this session to Azza Karam at religiousengagement.session@whsummit.org. As part of the online registration process for the Summit there will be the opportunity to register to attend this session. Details on registration will be circulated to all invitees in the coming weeks.