



G20 INTERFAITH FORUM

2024



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Broadening Our View to Inspire Action

December 1, 2024

Dear IF20 Supporters:

The theme for G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) for 2024 was “Leave No One Behind: The Well-Being of the Planet and Its People.” IF20’s five policy priority areas included the following:

1. Food Security on the Alliance against Hunger
2. Environment: Interfaith Action to Protect Rainforests
3. Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion Challenges: Focusing on Religious Literacy
4. Debt Relief: Economic and Financial Imperatives for “Leaving No One Behind”
5. Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery: Partnerships for Solutions

G20 Brazil 2024 picked themes that also focused on the most vulnerable in society: (1) hunger, (2) sustainability and climate issues, and (3) transforming global governance. Brazil’s addition of the G20 Social allowed more voices to be heard at the G20 Summit in November.





The motif of windows running through this report is based on the premise that the IF20 five policy priorities and Brazil's three focus areas exemplify the hope G20 countries have that they can change the world. Apostle Paul's poetic statement that "for now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12) illustrates the difficulties people of the world have in viewing their own problems, and the problems of others. But the metaphor of looking through a window indicates that people are trying to gain a perspective on the world's problems and issues. People are willing to look outside their own four walls and see the problems of others and to find permanent solutions.

As philosopher John Stuart Mill stated, "He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that." The people of the world must look outside their borders to understand how others' problems affect their own existence because we are all interconnected. This perspective of looking outside encourages empathy and understanding, which is essential for meaningful change.

By observing the world through a window of hope, we reflect on past and present issues, fostering a deeper awareness and commitment to addressing them. This underscores the importance of broadening our view to inspire action and transformation.

In this year end report, you will read short summaries of our events and webinars. Data visualizations will illustrate the numbers of people who have been a part of these events, and the numbers of people who have attended our webinars, as well as those who visit our website and receive our newsletters.

We look forward to G20 South Africa 2025 and the views we shall see during our regional meetings, forums, and webinars. Through these discussions, we hope to find solutions that will leave no one behind.

In a spirit of unity and understanding,
Dr. Marianna Richardson
G20Interfaith Forum
Director of Communications

President's Perspective

W. Cole Durham, Jr.



The event summaries that fill this report identify the major landmarks of the past year, but in the nature of things, they cannot fully describe the richness of experience, learning, and impact that these events have had. For those of us working within the G20 Interfaith Forum organization, they are a reminder of the treadmill on which all of us have been running. But they are also a reminder of priorities that have been identified, relationships that have been built, networks that have been strengthened, and concrete recommendations that have been made and moved into stages of implementation.

Collaboration and networking is baked into the core nature of the IF20. We constantly depend on the assistance, both in kind and financial, of strong and willing partners. For example, we were particularly blessed this year by an impressive local organizing committee, headed by Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves, and ably supported by Ivo Pereira da Silva, and by numerous others that made immense contributions of time and talent to make the year's events possible.

The strength of the local team played a particularly critical role in making connections with Brazilian government officials who were uniformly supportive and who went out of their way to speak at various events that we organized and to help strengthen partnerships between religious communities and various government ministries and agencies. They consistently recognized the role that religious actors could play in helping to achieve their objectives. The result was a strong sense that we were able to accomplish more in the year of the Brazilian presidency than we as the G20 Interfaith Forum have ever been able to accomplish before.

In addition to the local Brazilian team, we need to recognize the important role played by the *Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)*, which was a key partner in organizing our culminating annual Forum. We were particularly grateful for the organizational leadership, the ability to draw heavily on the talents of PaRD members, and the added strength they brought to the overall effort. We also owe thanks to the *Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities*, that has worked closely with us since 2023, and has been particularly significant in helping us direct ever greater attention to the most vulnerable in our midst: children.

As an organization, we now have a decade of experience working with the G20 process. As we look forward to South Africa in 2025 and beyond, we are deeply conscious of the need to build stronger networks to address the needs of the most vulnerable more effectively. This is a core concern of religious communities. One of the particular strengths of the G20 Interfaith Forum is its ability to provide a platform where religious communities can come together in all their diversity to identify shared priorities and to mobilize the political will to solve the urgent problems vital to the vulnerable and to everyone else. We welcome people of good will everywhere to join us in this vital process.

“Leave No One Behind” in Action: The G20 Interfaith Forum’s Appeal to the 2024 G20 Summit

May 2024

The world’s religious communities, serving a large majority of the world’s population, contribute to the public good every day. They provide essential services in health and education, support the destitute, work to prevent conflicts and build peace, and offer hope and meaning to countless lives. Their insight, experience, and commitment to human rights and dignity can benefit policy processes at every level of governance, including the topics Brazil has identified as G20 priorities. Engaging with religious communities can improve policy development and enhance popular engagement with policy implementation.

- **Brazil**, a witness to creative religious collaboration for centuries, is well positioned to incorporate this insight— that policy engagement with faith communities should be a priority—into the G20 process.

The central common focus of religious communities worldwide is action and advocacy for and with the most vulnerable, including those forcibly displaced and children. Actions include charitable support, compassionate service, and programs that enhance human and community capabilities—Brazil’s Pastoral da Criança is a prime example. Visions that can help bridge the divides that trouble the world underlie many religious approaches to human welfare and relationships with nature. In 2024, the G20 Interfaith Forum urges priority action on five areas:

- **Food Crises.** Religious actors offer untapped potential to strengthen global, national, and local efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition. Assets include teaching and practical actions that address and link urgent hunger needs and their root causes. Faith actors can, for example, be leaders in reducing food waste, investing in local, smallholder farming practices, and supporting nutritional health.
- **Environment.** Finding workable and adequate solutions to climate and other environmental concerns are G20 priorities. The moral and practical voices of religious communities can help bring rainforest protection (vital to natural carbon sequestration) to scale, working with indigenous communities who live there. The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative exemplifies such approaches. Engagement with religious constituencies can also enhance public support for a fair and inclusive energy transition.

- **Peacebuilding.** Failures of trust across institutions and rising hate speech and incitement to violence call for urgent leadership responses. Programs and models like Indonesia’s Cross Cultural Religious Literacy Program and Arigatou International’s Ethics Education demonstrate how education reforms that include strategic religious engagement can help foster social harmony. Strong international leadership support is needed to help G20 members expand and learn from such promising programs. Strategies for dealing with Artificial Intelligence should include engagement of religious actors.

- **Debt Relief.** The year 2000 Jubilee Movement calling for urgent action to address debt burdens of poorer countries harnessed the powerful ethical voice of religious communities united around this common cause. As we approach the 2025 Jubilee year and seek to address unsustainable debt burdens and rising demands for reforms of global governance, active and continuing involvement of religious communities in dialogue is essential.

- **Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery.** Specific commitments by G20 leaders, supported by the G20 Interfaith Forum, to step up funding against human trafficking (labor, sex trafficking, organ trafficking and other forms) by 2030 would signal renewed commitment to truly “leave no one behind”. The G20 Interfaith Forum proposes to organize and lead a G20 Working Group in support of such a commitment.

The United Nations and G20 calls to “leave no one behind” and achieve the sustainable development goals are seen by too many as empty slogans. The G20 Communique should therefore include specific actions and commitments to priority humanitarian needs (especially for those forcibly displaced) and to address poverty. The G20 Interfaith Forum is committed to fostering continuing and active engagement between policymakers and the G20 interfaith community to assure that those who are excluded and left behind are lifted up with care and compassion.

Expanded analysis and action recommendations related to these five focus areas and other important issues are available at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/if20-policy-briefs/>.

Suggested Guidelines

One of the major project undertaken during 2024 was development of Suggested Guidelines for Assessing the Intersection of the Rights of Traditional and Indigenous Peoples, Group Rights, and Freedom of Religion and Belief. This project was guided by Nicholas P. Miller and Alexis Artaud de La Ferrière, representatives of the International Religious Liberty Institute and members of IF20's Subcommittee on Freedom of Religion or Belief. An initial version was framed during the IF20 Event held in Belem in June, 2024, and various refinements were added during the annual G20 Interfaith Forum held in Brasilia in August, 2024. The Suggested Guidelines were developed on the basis of discussions with indigenous leaders, representatives of diverse religious communities, and experts on group rights and on freedom of religion or belief. The aim of the resulting document was to suggest practical considerations that apply when wrestling with the overlap between indigenous and traditional religions, group rights, and general freedom of religion or belief principles.

The full text of the suggested Guidelines is available on the G20 Interfaith Forum website at: <https://www.g20interfaith.org/2024-policy-briefs/>





Background: The G20 Interfaith Forum

June 2024

The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), since it was established in 2014, has engaged with a diverse and dynamic set of religiously inspired and supportive networks that address global policy and practice agendas. It thus aims to serve as a “network of networks”, bringing priority and actionable ideas and experience involving religious communities to the G20 process.

The priority recommendations in IF20’s Appeal to the 2024 G20 Summit draw on input from the IF20’s Advisory Council and Working Groups. They reflect analytic work and a refining of ideas developed over IF20’s ten-year history, including through consultation with the G20 Presidency hosts. Thus, IF20 and its linked organizations engage in continuing debate and exchange on a wide range of issues. The five pillars of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda (Peace, People, Planet, Prosperity, and Partnership) reflect many of the issues on which IF20 networks are focused. In recent years, IF20 has focused sharply on religious responses to the COVID-19 emergencies, food insecurity, and the plight of refugees. The beneficial impact of religious engagement and religious freedom in fostering an environment for effectively addressing many of these issues has been a central theme for several of IF20’s engaged networks.

The IF20 has been actively engaged with the 2024 Brazilian G20 presidency, including through discussions with Brazilian authorities at conferences in Brasilia in August 2023 and Rio de Janeiro in December, 2023. Brazilian leaders also participated in two 2023 events that IF20 organized during India’s G20 Presidency. Other events that enriched understanding and generated proposals for action included meetings in Berlin (with PaRD, Oct. 2023), Kyoto and Tokyo (January 2024), Washington DC (February 2024), Geneva (March 2024), and Addis Ababa (April 2024). Additional meetings were also held in Belem and Manaus, Brazil (June 2024), Jakarta (July 2024), and Brasilia (August 2024). The IF20 has also benefited from participating in a variety of other events contributing to dialogue on key G20 themes.

Every topic on the global agenda, and thus on the agendas of the G20, involves religious communities -- hence, the lengthy list of topics that the IF20 reviews and continues to analyze. Selection of the five priority topics in the Appeal to the 2024 G20 Summit was guided primarily by the Brazilian government’s priorities for its G20 Presidency and our sense of the deep urgency for action in several areas. Thus, food security is listed first as an overarching and central priority. For its part, the IF20 grounds its proposals on its abiding concern for the most vulnerable, and thus its appeal to global leaders to prioritize its oft repeated promise to “leave no one behind.”

Expanded analysis and action recommendations related to these five focus areas and other important issues are available at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/if20-policy-briefs/>.

Event Summaries



Overview

Religious voices and institutions hold distinctive power and influence, yet they are often absent, muffled, or polarized at policy tables where critical decisions affecting people and planet are made. The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) has worked to address this gap, aiming to bring positive ideas and experience to global governance through the G20 Summits, drawing particularly on perspectives that reflect the world's most vulnerable communities.

In 2024, under Brazil's G20 presidency, our engagement expanded significantly. The Brazilian government's central theme of action on poverty and support to those at risk of being left behind shaped our year's activities. Through meetings in Belem, Manaus, Brasilia, and Rio, we focused on interfaith action addressing hunger, protecting the Amazon rainforest, and strengthening interreligious relationships, particularly with communities of African descent and indigenous peoples. Significant discussions also took place in Addis Ababa with the African Union, in Geneva, and in Indonesia.

Today's extraordinary times place heavy demands on both G20 leadership and the IF20. The different crises we face intersect and evolve constantly; no clear line separates the climate crisis from hunger, conflict from refugees, and the plight of women and children from issues of peacebuilding and prosperity. As a "network of networks," we worked to coordinate diverse religious voices and bring their insights to policy tables. Our mission remained focused on highlighting common themes while maintaining a laser focus on the problems of the most vulnerable—particularly children, women, refugees, and the hungry.

Brazil's innovation of a Social Summit in Rio de Janeiro in November, bringing together all civil society actors to present recommendations to the G20 Summit, offered new opportunities for religious voices to influence policy. The IF20 highlighted five priority topics in our recommendations: food and hunger, global support for development including responses to unsustainable poor country debt, climate action, education for harmonious living in plural societies, and action on human trafficking.

Throughout the year, we worked to balance our appreciation for diversity with the imperative of focused action. While each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals has faith dimensions, our challenge was to distill common themes that could bring communities together for meaningful impact on global policy. We did this through the events we helped organize and the events where we were active participants. The following event summaries give you an overview of the discussion themes and the meaningful impact we tried to have during these events.

IF20 Events

Religion and Sustainable Development: Emerging Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

January 13, 2024 | Kyoto, Japan

The workshop, "Religion and Sustainable Development: Emerging Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities," was co-organized by the CISMOR Center of Doshisha University and the G20 Interfaith Forum Association. The event explored themes, such as religion, security, and cultural heritage within the G20 and G7 agendas. Sessions covered topics like Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar, Islamic sectarianism, and religious cultural heritage. Notable speakers include Yukiko Nishikawa, Hisae Nakanishi, Ada Taggar-Cohen, Peter Petkoff, Matius Ho, and W. Cole Durham, Jr.



Religion and Sustainable Development: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities Ahead of the 2024 G20 Summit in Brazil

January 20, 2024 | Tokyo, Japan

The workshop, "Religion and Sustainable Development: Emerging Challenges and Opportunities Ahead of the 2024 G20 Summit in Brazil," was co-organized with Tokai University Research Institute for Environment and Sustainability (TRIES), the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, and Oxford University. The co-sponsored event featured notable participants such as Nobuyuki Asai, David Burrows, W. Cole Durham, Jr., Yukihiro Fujita, Audrey Kitagawa, Jonathan Luckhurst, Yoshinobu Miyake, Naoto Yoshikawa, and Michael K. Young, and others.

The program began with opening remarks by Naoto Yoshikawa, followed by a presentation by Peter Petkoff on cultural bridges, religion, and development. The first discussion, moderated by Cole Durham, explored the roles of religion in social and economic development and international cooperation. The second discussion, moderated by Peter Petkoff, focused on cooperation and sustainable development, covering topics like religion and culture, ethics and economics, and establishing a global religious network. The event addressed specific ways that religion can contribute to sustainable development.



Tolerance and Respect: Educational Initiatives in Indonesia

January 29 | Washington, D.C.

The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), in partnership with the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University convened a panel discussion examining Indonesia's innovative Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) program. The panel featured Matius Ho of the Leimena Institute, Chris Seiple of the Institute for Global Engagement, Katherine Marshall, IF20 Vice President, and was moderated by IF20 President W. Cole Durham, Jr.

The discussion centered on Indonesia's CCRL program, which has reached over 9,000 teachers across 34 provinces in its first three years. The program teaches three core competencies: self-evaluation of beliefs, understanding others' perspectives about one's own faith, and building collaborative skills across religious differences. Through a comprehensive training approach, including online courses and practical implementation, the program has shown remarkable success in addressing religious intolerance among educators.

"CCRL moves discussions beyond platitudes or clichés into nuanced mutual understanding," noted Chris Seiple. "It imparts competencies and skills regarding how to engage with people who don't look, act, vote, or pray like you do." The panel concluded by emphasizing CCRL's potential for implementation in educational systems, diplomacy, and law enforcement globally.

IF20 Geneva Side Events at the UN Human Rights Council

March 12–26 | Geneva, Switzerland

IF20 leadership, including President W. Cole Durham, Jr. and Vice President Katherine Marshall, participated in several significant side events during the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. The events focused on two critical areas: humanitarian priorities and addressing social cohesion challenges.

A key discussion on “The Role of Interfaith Education and Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy in Combating Intolerance” brought together ambassadors from the Republic of Gambia and Indonesia, along with experts from multiple organizations. Ambassador Muhammadou M.O. Kah emphasized that “freedom of religion or belief and the respect of this freedom are indispensable elements in the foundation of the culture of peace.” Indonesia’s Deputy Permanent Representative Ambassador Achsanul Habib was even more specific, stating that “Cross-cultural religious literacy has been an integral part of Indonesia’s foreign policy.” The session showcased successful educational initiatives from Indonesia’s Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy program, Arigatou International’s Ethics Education Program, and other global efforts. The session showcased successful educational initiatives from Indonesia’s Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy program, Arigatou International’s Ethics Education Program, and other global efforts.

In a separate roundtable on humanitarian needs and priorities, participants addressed the growing challenges of resource allocation and the critical role of faith-based organizations. The discussion, hosted at the World Council of Churches, highlighted the dilemma of rising humanitarian needs amid declining resources, with particular focus on how religious organizations can contribute to both immediate response and prevention efforts. As Katherine Marshall noted, “We need a more intelligent, nuanced discussion about localization” in our humanitarian response.





World Interfaith Harmony Week Celebration with the African Union

April 15-16 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Under the patronage of H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, President of Ethiopia, the G20 Interfaith Forum partnered with the African Union, the Interreligious Council of Ethiopia, the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities, and various other interfaith organizations to host a significant two-day conference celebrating World Interfaith Harmony Week. The event brought together 240 participants, including religious leaders, policymakers, diplomats, and officials from across Africa and beyond at the Hilton Addis Ababa Hotel.

“Our world, more than ever, needs the teaching of the Golden Rule which says ‘Treat others the way you want to be treated,’” noted the Addis Ababa Declaration that emerged from the conference. The declaration emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue in addressing critical challenges facing Africa and the world, from climate change and humanitarian crises to peace-building and economic development.

In coordination with the AU-Citizens and Diaspora Directorate, the AU Interfaith Dialogue Forum, and the AU-Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), participants explored twelve key areas including the African Union Agenda 2063, urgent humanitarian action, human dignity, refugee issues, women’s empowerment, and climate finance. The conference particularly emphasized Africa’s youth population while highlighting the importance of experience and wisdom linked to elders.

Following the previous year’s successful advocacy for African Union membership in the G20, the conference focused on strengthening Africa’s voice in global governance. Katherine Marshall observed in the closing plenary: “The conference highlighted the rich religious traditions of Africa, their deep roots, and their direct involvement in all issues that affect Africa’s present and future.”

The event concluded with the signing of the Addis Ababa Declaration, which outlined concrete commitments including promoting peace education in schools, prioritizing green economy transitions, supporting the African-led Great Green Wall initiative, and establishing April 5th as Golden Rule Day. Participants also had the opportunity to join an optional spiritual and historical site tour in Addis Ababa following the main sessions.

Regional Conference on Indigenous and African Descent Communities' Rights

June 13-14 | Belém, Brazil

The G20 Interfaith Forum, in partnership with the International Religious Liberty Institute and several Brazilian institutions, convened a significant conference addressing the rights of both indigenous peoples and communities of African descent. The event brought together religious leaders, government officials, academics, and community representatives to explore the intersection of group rights and religious freedom, with particular attention to the ongoing challenges faced by African-derived religious traditions.

"Our ancestors' knowledge slips away," noted Almires Martins Machado, an indigenous anthropologist, while Marilu Campelo emphasized that "religious racism recognizes that the illness lies in prejudice and discrimination." The conference highlighted alarming statistics showing a 300% increase in religious intolerance cases from 2020 to 2021, with 244 specifically targeting religions of African descent.

A key outcome was the development of guidelines for protecting traditional spiritual rights while ensuring individual religious freedoms. The discussions emphasized that African traditions are often misunderstood, with Mameetu Nanguetu noting the following: "We reject the notion of demons within our African descent religions and harbor no secret messages. As priests, pastors, and adherents of all faiths, we embrace a culture of peace."

"These issues of peace and security are never far away," concluded Katherine Marshall, praising the strong presence of women leaders at the conference. "It has been very rewarding and refreshing to see so many active, wise, and determined women here. I think that we need to find ways to bring that wisdom into the G20 process."





Regional Conference: Manaus Workshops on Environment and Religious Engagement

June 17-21 | Manaus, Brazil

The G20 Interfaith Forum, in partnership with the Brazilian Center for Studies in Law and Religion and several other institutions, conducted a significant series of workshops in the heart of the Amazon rainforest. The five-day event brought together religious leaders, indigenous representatives, academics, and environmental experts to explore the intersection of faith, environmental protection, and sustainable development.

“Scientific experts were already pessimistic a decade ago, but we now see things spinning out of control much faster than even their most dire predictions,” noted Rabbi David Saperstein in a key dialogue with IF20 Vice President Katherine Marshall. The workshops emphasized practical approaches to environmental challenges, with particular focus on indigenous perspectives and religious communities’ potential contributions to rainforest protection.

Sessions covered critical topics including food security, climate justice, indigenous knowledge, and sustainable development. A particular highlight was the participation of indigenous leaders like Vanda Witoto, who spoke powerfully about their communities’ challenges and traditional wisdom regarding environmental protection. Carlos Vicente, Brazilian National Facilitator on the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, added significant insight into urgent rainforest challenges. Religious leaders, including Cardinal Leonardo Steiner and representatives from various faiths, contributed perspectives on faith-based approaches to environmental stewardship.

The workshops concluded with Katherine Marshall’s summary highlighting both challenges and opportunities: “Religious institutions and beliefs are part of a kaleidoscopic array of forces at work in the Amazon region, as well as beyond, to the global arenas... The discussions pointed the way towards actions that can be both inspirational and practical, that engage the global and the local.”

G20 Interfaith Forum Annual Meeting

August 19-22 | Brasília, Brazil

The G20 Interfaith Forum convened its annual meeting in Brasília, bringing together over 400 in-person participants from 55 countries and 338 online attendees. The forum, co-hosted with PaRD (Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development), focused on the themes of Brazil's G20 presidency: fighting hunger and inequality, sustainable development, and reform of global governance systems.

The opening plenary featured diverse religious voices and a powerful keynote from Mary Robinson, Chair of The Elders and former President of Ireland, who emphasized the urgent need for climate action. A youth representative, Taissa Silva da Costa (Taissa Kambeba), provided a compelling indigenous perspective, while Brazil's Minister of Environment, Marina da Silva, delivered a comprehensive address highlighting Brazil's environmental commitments and the need for global cooperation in addressing climate challenges.

Five priority recommendations emerged from the forum:

1. Support for Brazil's Alliance Against Hunger initiative
2. Action on debt relief
3. Advancement of climate finance
4. Comprehensive anti-trafficking agenda
5. Greater investment in interfaith dialogue and cooperation

Gustavo Westmann from Brazil's President's Office noted that the forum achieved the most diverse representation of foreign countries during the Brazil G20 year.

The forum's sessions addressed critical global issues through an interfaith lens, including religious freedom, food security, COVID-19 recovery, protection of sacred sites, women's empowerment, climate finance, and artificial intelligence. Particular emphasis was placed on indigenous perspectives and the rights of communities of African descent. Brazil's environmental challenges, especially concerning the Amazon rainforest, featured prominently in discussions about sustainable development and climate action.

"The religious dimensions, though especially sensitive, are intertwined with broader social tensions in important ways and therefore need to be and can be an integral part of the various approaches that were outlined in the side event," noted Katherine Marshall, IF20 Vice President.

The forum concluded with plans for follow-up webinars and participation in the G20 Social Summit in Rio de Janeiro in November, demonstrating ongoing commitment to integrating religious perspectives into global policy discussions.





The G20 Social Summit

November 14-16 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The G20 Interfaith Forum achieved a significant policy victory at the inaugural G20 Social Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where over 200 civil society organizations gathered to contribute recommendations to the G20 process. The IF20 was invited to host a dedicated session, which it structured around five key priority areas identified during its August meetings in Brasilia: food security, environmental protection, financial reform, social cohesion, and human trafficking. Each topic was introduced through video messages from religious leaders who had spoken at the Brasilia meetings, followed by expert presentations highlighting both challenges and solutions.

The session featured powerful interventions from global experts, including Asma Lateef of the SDG2 Advocacy Hub on food inequality, Eric LeCompte of Jubilee USA Network on the global financial crisis, and Kevin Hyland OBE on human trafficking. Hyland's presentation, comparing annual child labor deaths to "110 Boeing 737's crashing every year," particularly resonated with participants and helped build momentum for policy change.

Following the main session, IF20 delegates participated in international working groups reviewing and revising policy recommendations for Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Working in both English and Portuguese-language groups, the delegation advocated for four key additions to the recommendation document, with particular emphasis on including human trafficking and forced labor in the G20 agenda and establishing an official G20 working group on the issue.

Through the dedicated efforts of Rodrigo Vitorino Sousa Alves of CEDIRE and other delegates, human trafficking and forced labor were successfully incorporated into the Social Summit's final document presented to President Lula. Most significantly, this language appears to have directly influenced Article 31 of the G20 Leaders' Declaration, where all G20 leaders committed to "eradicating forced labor, ending modern slavery and human trafficking, as well as eliminating all forms of child labor."

This progression - from IF20 advocacy at the Social Summit, to successful inclusion in the recommendations to President Lula, to incorporation in the G20 Leaders' Declaration - represents one of the forum's most concrete policy achievements to date. It demonstrates the growing influence of religious voices in global governance and validates the IF20's sustained advocacy on issues of human dignity and social justice, while setting the stage for continued progress as we look toward the 2025 G20 in South Africa.



Networking Events



Photo: IRF Summit

International Religious Freedom Summit

January 30–31 | Washington, D.C.

The G20 Interfaith Forum participated prominently in the 2024 International Religious Freedom Summit, with IF20 President W. Cole Durham, Jr. and Vice President Katherine Marshall attending and presenting. The organization also maintained an information booth throughout the event to engage with other participants and share IF20's mission and work.

Durham moderated and participated in several key sessions, including “Law and Religion: Legal Victories and Tools for IRF,” which featured experts from Notre Dame University, Catholic University of America, and Brigham Young University. The panel emphasized the importance of relationship-building, international law frameworks, and patience in advancing religious freedom globally. At a separate event during the summit, Pres. Durham addressed Japan’s obligations under international religious freedom declarations, arguing against the dissolution of religious entities based on individual misconduct.

“We must be conscious of micro and macro levels in religious freedom work,” Pres. Durham noted in his concluding remarks. “When governments are the bad actors in human rights scenarios, we frankly need both the ‘name and shame’ people AND the honest brokers doing what’s possible in trust relationships with those governments.”

Multi-Faith Collaborations in an Inclusive Society

July 10-11 | Jakarta, Indonesia

IF20 leadership had the opportunity to help with the planning and to participate in an International Conference on Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy that was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Leimena Institute, and was carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia, the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University (USA), and the Templeton Religion Trust.

The aim of the conference was to examine multi-faith collaborations for an inclusive society from different cultural perspectives, with a focus on promoting global citizenship. . In particular, it aimed to discuss the role of education, including initiatives such as Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy, in fostering collaboration between people of different religions and beliefs.

Because of the strong nexus of this event to the work of the G20 Interfaith Forum, Professors Cole Durham and Katherine Marshall from IF20 participated in key sessions of the conference. Cole Durham joined a session on multi-faith collaboration as part of global citizenship which featured addresses by Alwi Shihab, former Foreign Minister of Indonesia; Abdul Mu'ti, Secretary General of Muhammadiyah's Central Board, and recently appointed as Indonesia's Minister of Education, and Rabbi David Saperstein, former United States Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom.

Katherine Marshall was featured in a session on promoting multi-faith collaboration through education. Her panel included Amin Abdullah, a member of the Steering Committee of the Agency for Pancasila Ideology Development; Didik Darmanto, Director for Religious Affairs, Education and Culture in the Ministry of National Development Planning, and Renee Hattar, Director of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies from Jordan.

In general, the Indonesia conference gave major impetus to several themes in the education domain that have been of particular interest to the G20 Interfaith Forum. It looked beyond Indonesia to see how many of the ideas and programs under development in Indonesia could be shared with ASEAN and more generally through G20 Interfaith initiatives.

World Economic Forum and Refugee Events at UNGA

September 26-27 | New York, USA

During the UN General Assembly meetings, the G20 Interfaith Forum participated in several significant events focused on faith engagement in global challenges. The World Economic Forum (WEF) hosted key discussions on “Faith in Action: Rebuilding Trust in the Age of Intelligent Economies,” continuing dialogue initiated at Davos and furthered at the G20 Interfaith Forum in Brasilia.

A major panel on refugee support, organized jointly by Islamic Relief Worldwide, HIAS, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, highlighted both achievements and challenges in faith-based refugee assistance. The discussion notably addressed the successful partnerships between Muslim and Jewish communities in refugee welcome initiatives, while also confronting difficult questions about divisions within religious communities regarding immigration policies.

The WEF events, introduced by Managing Director Mirek Duš, featured diverse panels exploring themes from AI ethics to climate action. Katherine Marshall moderated the closing panel on “Championing Faith, Ethics and Values in Intelligent Economies,” which brought together business leaders and religious representatives to discuss value-driven solutions to global challenges. The initiative aimed to “bring together the foremost leaders from business, government, religious institutions and civil society who are committed to integrating their values and beliefs into efforts aimed at fostering positive collective impact.”

The week also included several other faith-focused gatherings, including events by Religions for Peace, PEPFAR, the Global Fund, and a dinner with the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the Muslim World League, demonstrating the growing integration of religious perspectives in global policy discussions.



Photo:
Lucas Jackson



Photo: Mike Segar,
UNGA Hall at UN HQ in New York

ICLARS Conference at Notre Dame

October 21-23 | Notre Dame, Indiana

W. Cole Durham, Jr., President of the G20 Interfaith Forum, delivered a presentation on “A Fair World and a Sustainable Future: Engaging Religion” at the 7th International Consortium of Law and Religion Studies (ICLARS) Conference. Speaking at the University of Notre Dame, Durham emphasized the importance of religious engagement in addressing global challenges, drawing on the IF20's experiences in promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation. The presentation highlighted the intersection of law, religion, and sustainability in creating more equitable societies.

The Global Summit of Religious Leaders on the Margins of COP29

November 5-6 | Baku, Azerbaijan

Approximately 300 world religious leaders gathered in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 5-6 in anticipation of the 29th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). His Virtue Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh, supreme Muslim leader for the Caucasus region, hosted the event, which received significant support from His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Summit co-organizers included the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations, the Muslim Council of Elders, the UN Environment Program (UNEP), and the Caucasus Muslims Board.

Addressing the Summit theme “World Religions for a Green Planet,” nearly 100 of the attendees presented and discussed topics considering (1) the perspective of religious organizations on the impact of the climate change crisis, (2) raising awareness about and combating climate change, (3) engaging in interfaith and inter-civilization dialogue to fight climate change and (4) the harm to the environment which accompanies armed conflict. Emphasizing the importance of religious organizations in climate change policy development, G20 Interfaith Forum Association President Cole Durham called on religious groups to lead in building a sustainable future and teaching their followers to embrace earth care and advocate for communities most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Concluding the Summit, the participants, under the guidance of His Virtue Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazadeh, issued the Baku Declaration. This significant document calls upon states, international, regional, religious, and public organizations, as well as spiritual leaders, to take steps to combat climate change and build a greener future through an inclusive process. The Declaration also emphasizes the importance of protecting all life and nature, furthering the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement, and supporting religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. In addition, the participants made a unique proposal, appealing to COP29 leaders to call for a global ceasefire, recognizing the interconnectedness of peace and climate action. They also proposed the establishment of a Permanent Advisory Council of Religious Leaders under the UNFCCC COP.



The Faith Pavilion at COP29: Week One

November 12-16 | Baku, Azerbaijan

Despite the disappointment expressed by many on the world stage in response to the agreement arising from the 29th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), participants and attendees of presentations of the Faith Pavilion at COP29 left Baku with reason to hope: increasing engagement of religious leaders and faith-based organizations in ongoing climate action and future climate discussions and negotiations. The Muslim Council of Elders, organizers of the Faith Pavilion, brought ninety-seven organizations representing eleven different religions and sects to the Pavilion in Baku. The focus was on the importance of integrating spirituality, morality, and ethics into climate debate, negotiation, and action, inspiring a new perspective and motivation for climate action.

Early sessions at the Faith Pavilion focused on the role of religious leaders and religious groups in the climate conversation. G20 Interfaith Forum Association President Cole Durham delivered the opening keynote, urging leaders to revitalize and renew the virtue of proper reverence—reverent awe—for all creation. As the week progressed, the discussion focused on the application of spiritual beliefs and perspectives to climate finance and the non-economic impacts of climate change, on the role of women in achieving climate justice, on helping youth understand faith teachings on earth stewardship, on encouraging partnerships for climate adaptation, and on employing Indigenous and interfaith wisdom in climate and sustainable development solutions. G20 Interfaith Climate Working Group members Husna Ahmad and Arnie Saiki participated on a panel promoting women's leadership in achieving climate justice, highlighting the climate work of women leaders of spiritual movements and faith-based organizations. In addition to providing a forum for discussion, the Faith Pavilion fostered networking opportunities for future G20 Interfaith Forum events and policy development.



The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Sixth Forum

November 13-15 | Abu Dhabi, UAE

Millions of children suffer from hunger, abuse, and violence, exacerbated by conflict, poverty, and climate change. The GNRC, the world's largest interfaith network for children's rights, held its Sixth Forum titled "The Child is Calling: Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children" which was convened by Arigatou International and hosted by Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC). This event worked to unite diverse stakeholders to create a safe, secure, and sustainable world for children.

Katherine Marshall, IF20 Vice President, attended and spoke at the event. The Forum featured discussions and panels with faith leaders, UN representatives, and other stakeholders, focusing on progress since the GNRC Fifth Forum in 2017 and making new commitments looking forward to the future.





Project Liberty: Summit on the Future of the Internet

November 21-22 | Washington, DC

On November 21-22 coinciding with the 55th anniversary of the birth of the Internet, Project Liberty held a summit focused on crafting solutions to make a better web. The agenda of the summit was far-reaching, seeking national and global efforts to align legal, technical, and economic codes for a new digital era. Top leaders in policy, government, finance, and civil society, as well as technology creators of the Internet attended the event. Frank McCourt, the founder of Project Liberty, has a vision that this new social media app would allow people to own themselves again, by regaining ownership of their identity. McCourt is a driving force behind the People's Bid to buy Tik Tok.

Even though Project Liberty was established five years ago, this was the first summit that specifically had an interfaith component. Tomica Tilleman, President of Project Liberty, has opened the better web discussion to interfaith voices, bringing important insight into how the web should treat these voices. Rather than asking for ideas on how to fix social media and artificial intelligence after it has become a part of society, interfaith voices are now being asked during the reinventing and creation of the better web and social media. This discussion included Marianna Richardson as the G20 Interfaith Forum representative. IF20 will continue to be a part of these discussions in the future.

Neylan McBain, the new interfaith initiative director for Project Liberty, commented that this interfaith digital consortium is a group of people "dedicated to healthy faith communities and healthy digital communities. Bringing in our faith systems and exploring how they inform our creative processes and motivation is an overdue and welcomed conversation with the tech community." As the new digital age becomes a reality, creators need to focus on people of faith, since they constitute 85% of the world's population. Project Liberty looks to the future, seeing it optimistically with our tech stack becoming more aligned with our value stack.

For written summaries, full videos, or editorials about these events, please visit our website at www.g20interfaith.org.

Webinar Summaries



Introduction

In addition to the active schedule of formal meetings described above, the G20 Interfaith Forum has conducted an impressive series of webinars. In the weeks immediately following the G20 Interfaith Forum, a series of webinars were held on our key recommendations. See our YouTube channel for the recordings of the following webinars: www.youtube.com/@g20interfaith89. The webinars are also available on our website at www.g20interfaith.org.

Five IF20 Priority Policy Webinars

Religious Action as Part of the Global Alliance to End Hunger and Poverty

September 24, 2024

This webinar explored the role of religious communities in addressing global hunger and poverty challenges. The discussion highlighted the stalled progress against hunger and poverty, emphasizing the need for renewed political commitment and introducing the proposed Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.

A Jubilee Policy Agenda for the Brazilian G20 Summit: Debt, Climate, and Tax

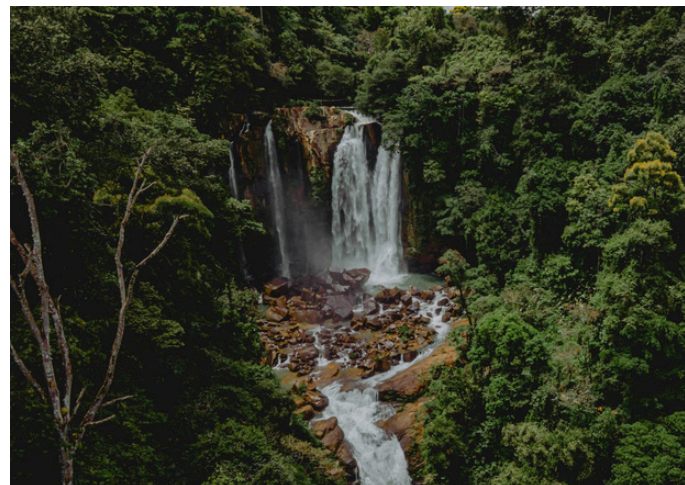
October 1, 2024

The webinar examined the interconnections between debt relief, climate change, and taxation in the context of the upcoming G20 Summit. Speakers emphasized the need for substantial economic aid to eradicate global poverty while addressing climate crisis financing through creative economic solutions.

Environment and the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

October 8, 2024

The webinar focused on rainforest preservation efforts across the Amazon, Congo Basin, and Southeast Asia. Speakers emphasized the urgent need for a sustainable development model in the Amazon region and highlighted the critical role of faith communities in addressing climate change and protecting rainforests.



To End the Scourge of Human Trafficking

October 15, 2024

This webinar brought together experts to discuss human trafficking as a complex international crime affecting communities globally. The discussion emphasized the need for coordinated response between governments, criminal justice systems, and civil society, while highlighting the role of faith-based organizations in combating trafficking.

Education Programs that Build Social Cohesion and Religious Literacy

October 29, 2024

The webinar explored innovative approaches to building religious literacy and social cohesion through education. Speakers discussed successful educational initiatives including Georgetown's Global Citizenship Curriculum Project and Indonesia's Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy program.



Additional Webinars

Nationalism, Religion, and Discrimination in the Western Balkans

January 25, 2024

This webinar examined increasing instances of nationalist-driven religious discrimination in Western Balkan countries, including Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The discussion focused on the conflict over Montenegro's independence and national identity as manifested through the Serbian Orthodox Church's actions, as well as the complex ethnic and religious issues in Bosnia that have become codified into law through the Dayton Agreement.

Ubuntu: Traditional Southern African Philosophy

February 8, 2024

This webinar explored Ubuntu as a traditional African philosophy emphasizing shared humanity, community, generosity, and kindness. Key scholars discussed how Ubuntu transforms social institutions when embraced, with its qualities of empathy, kindness, and compassion providing guidance for building community and enabling reconciliation across divisions.

What is Gender Equality?

March 21, 2024

The webinar examined different interpretations and practices of gender equality across countries and religious traditions. Speakers addressed both the triumphs and trials of women globally. They also discussed the need for both gender equality and gender equity, while emphasizing the importance of education and changing patriarchal mindsets.

Sacred Values and Traditional Wisdom of the Indigenous Peoples

May 9, 2024

The webinar explored how indigenous peoples' sacred values and traditions can help address pressing climate challenges. Speakers emphasized the profound connection to Mother Earth, the importance of observation and learning from nature's cycles, and the power of indigenous knowledge systems in building sustainable solutions.



Local Data Sovereignty: Cultivating Marginalized Access Toward Technological Stewardship

May 21, 2024

This webinar explored the ethical handling of data, particularly in marginalized communities, and the importance of respecting fundamental and spiritual values when dealing with data. The discussion emphasized the need for protecting certain types of sensitive data while ensuring communities have access to their own digitized cultural information.

Climate Change and the Importance of Indigenous Knowledge

May 27, 2024

The webinar highlighted the significance of indigenous knowledge and spiritualities in addressing climate change and building sustainable communities. Speakers discussed the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge into university curricula and emphasized the need for a new approach based on the relational way of life of indigenous communities.

Towards Indigenous Sovereignty: Exploring Rights and Solidarity in Self-Governing Territories

June 27, 2024

The webinar examined the complexities of indigenous sovereignty and its relationship with state and federal authorities. Speakers emphasized that indigenous self-governance predates the US constitution and discussed the challenges and opportunities in exercising sovereign rights.

Preventing Modern Slavery: Future Policy and Practice Challenges

July 29, 2024

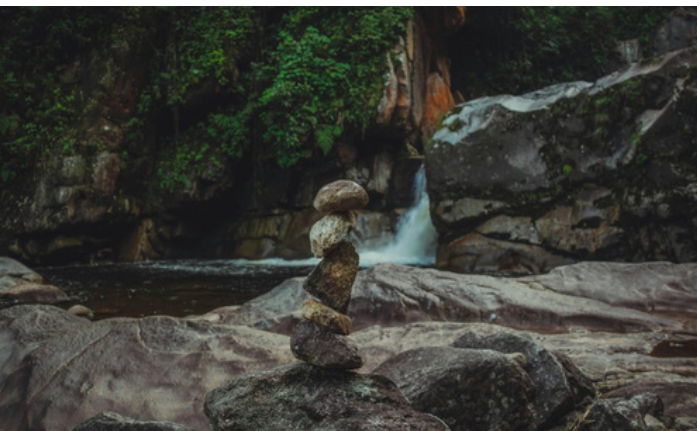
This webinar examined the progress and challenges in combating human trafficking and modern slavery, 25 years after the Palermo Protocol. The discussion highlighted alarming statistics about human trafficking's global impact and emphasized the need for honest assessment and real action from G20 countries.



Ukraine and Russia: The Causes of the Conflict, Diplomacy, and Possibilities for Peace

October 24, 2024

The webinar examined the historical context, current challenges, and potential pathways to peace in the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Speakers discussed the legal implications of the conflict, the failure of international agreements, and the existential risks posed by nuclear weapons.



Restorative Justice: Reclaiming the Klamath River for Indigenous Peoples

November 1, 2024

This webinar examined the historic removal of four dams on the Klamath River, representing the largest dam removal project in U.S. history. The discussion highlighted the immediate positive environmental impacts and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge in restoration efforts.

Indigenous Women Thriving

November 14, 2024

The webinar explored the vital work of Indigenous women leaders in community building, cultural preservation, and intergenerational mentorship. Speakers shared experiences in language revitalization, supporting young Indigenous women, and addressing health challenges in Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Peoples Building Climate Resilience

November 21, 2024

This webinar explored Indigenous approaches to climate resilience and the crucial role of traditional ecological knowledge in addressing contemporary climate challenges. Speakers emphasized the importance of community-controlled renewable energy initiatives and the need to shift away from resource extraction-based paradigms.

Cultural Revitalization and Indigenization

November 26, 2024

In this webinar, three Indigenous leaders shared their initiatives: the Karuk community's revival of traditional canoe building, the Northeast Native Network's violence prevention through cultural healing, and the Texas Tribal Buffalo Project's work reconnecting communities with buffalo and ancestral lands. These projects showcase Indigenous communities successfully revitalizing traditional practices while addressing modern challenges.



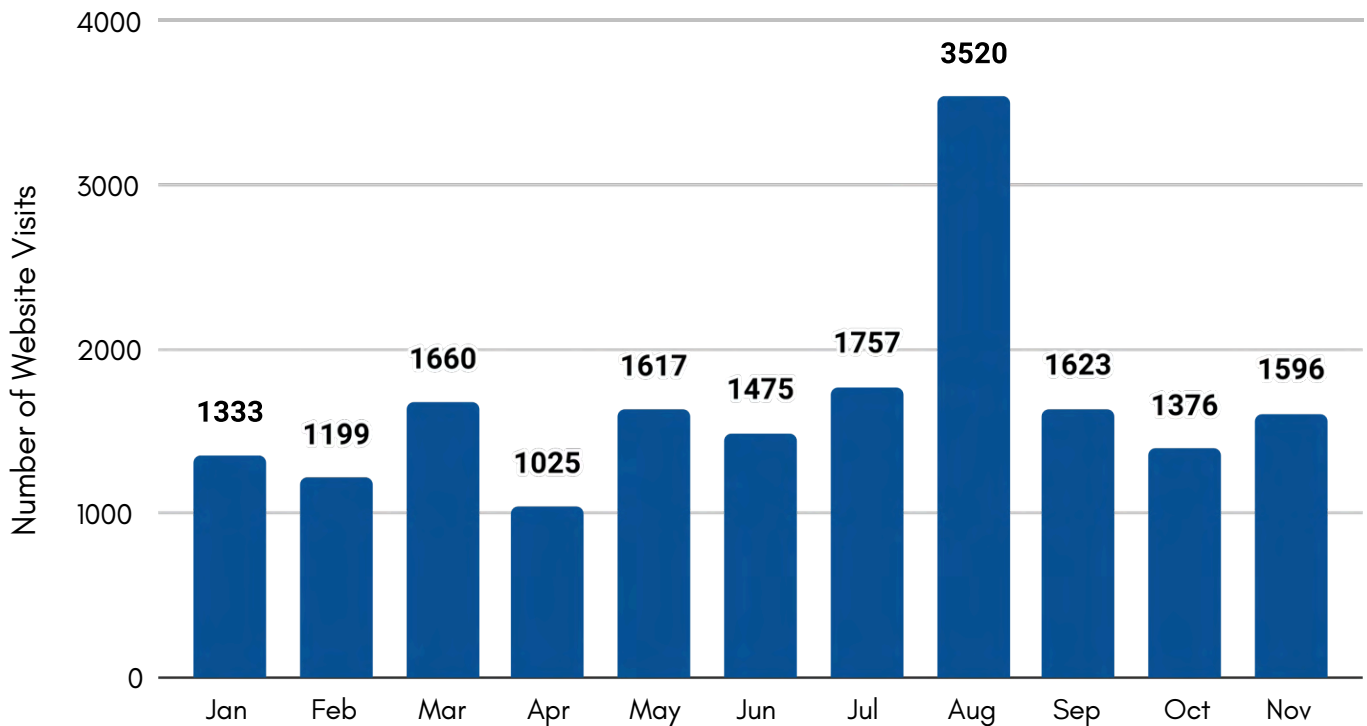
Analytics



Analytics Overview

The following numbers illustrate a small part of the reach of G20 Interfaith Forum. The number of people who are listening to our message is larger than just the number of attendees at our events. Instead, the events and webinars are videotaped so that people who cannot attend may watch the proceedings on our YouTube channel. The website (www.g20interfaith.org) is a repository of information with summaries of our forums for the last ten years, policy briefs, and press coverage. IF20 sponsors the Viewpoints blog which publishes summaries of our events and webinars, as well as op-ed pieces by supporters of IF20 from a variety of interfaith backgrounds. The latest addition to our outreach is the G20 Interfaith podcast which is published in multiple venues (i.e., Spotify, Pandora, Apple Podcasts, etc.). Our viewers have significantly increased over the past three years, and we see that increase continuing in the future. Please join us on the YouTube channel, the website, and the podcast to learn more about IF20.

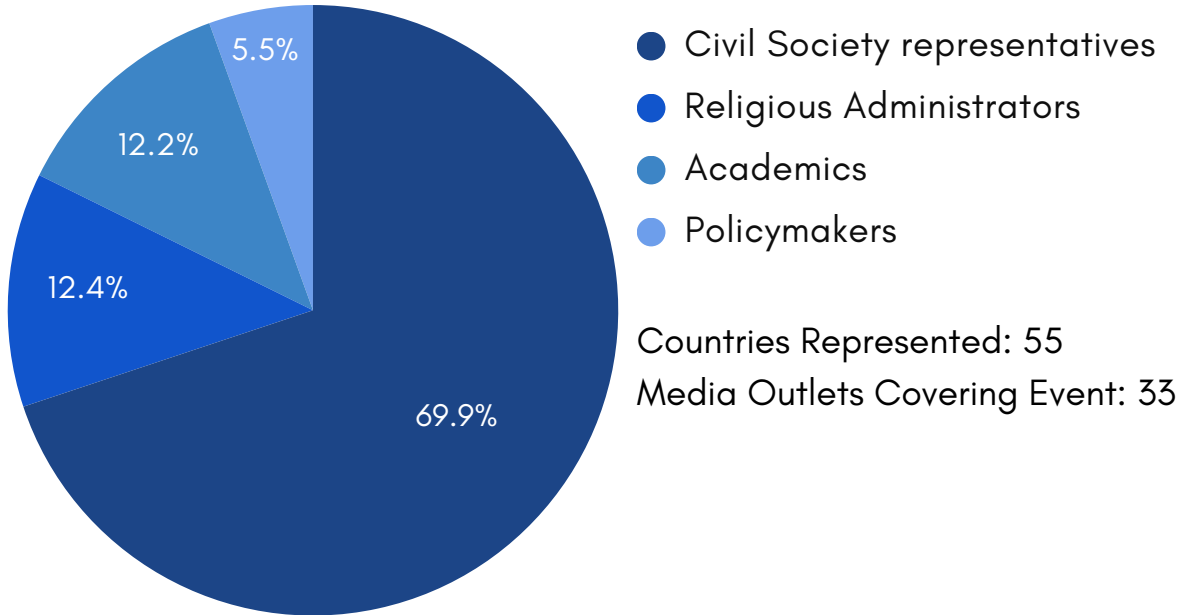
IF20 Monthly Website Visits 2024



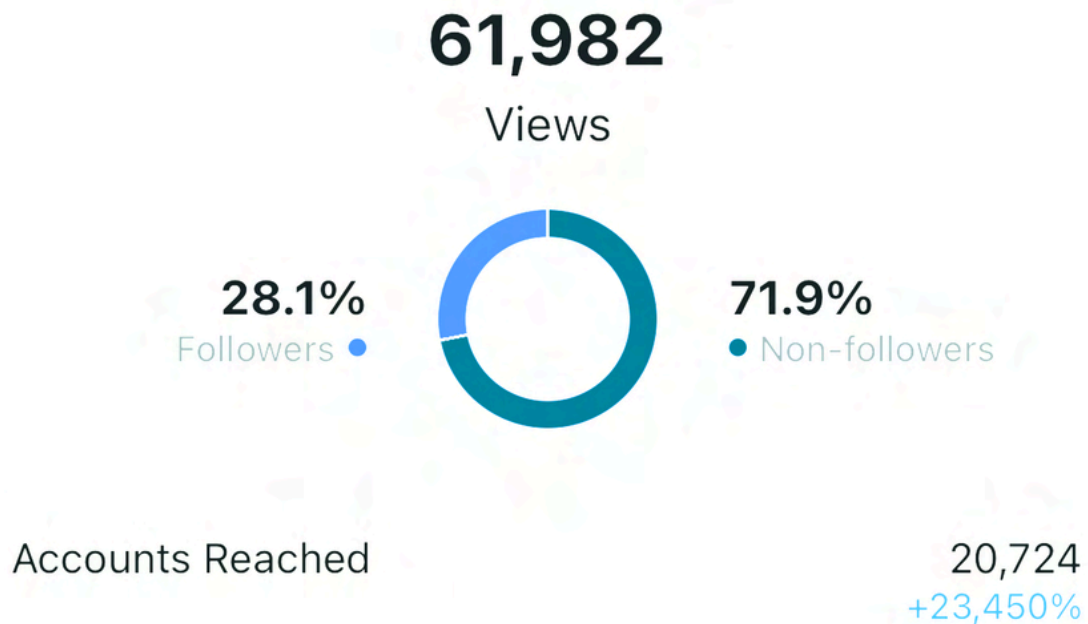
Total Active Website Users: 18,181

G20 Interfaith Forum 2024

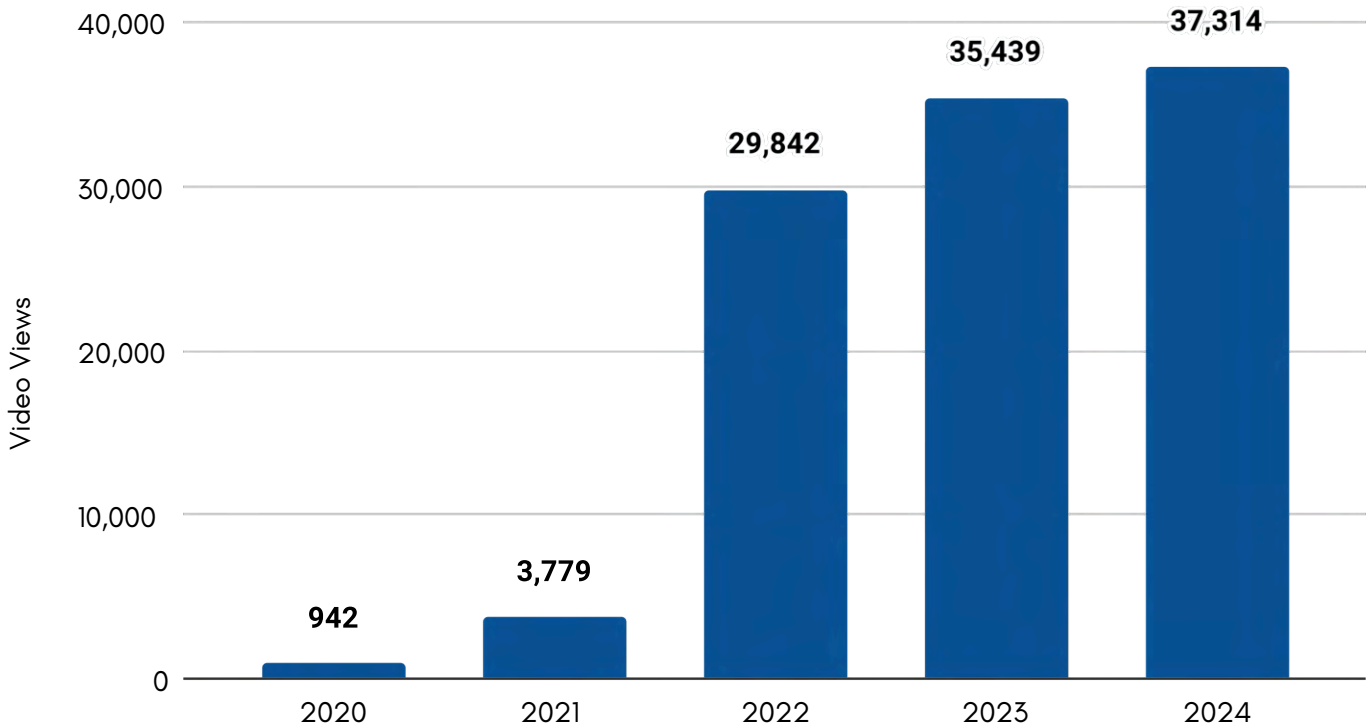
Breakdown of In-Person Forum Participants



Instagram Views During the G20 Interfaith Forum Brazil 2024



IF20 YouTube Video Views



Bringing Faith and Policy Together



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The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) advances global solutions by collaborating with religious ...more

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