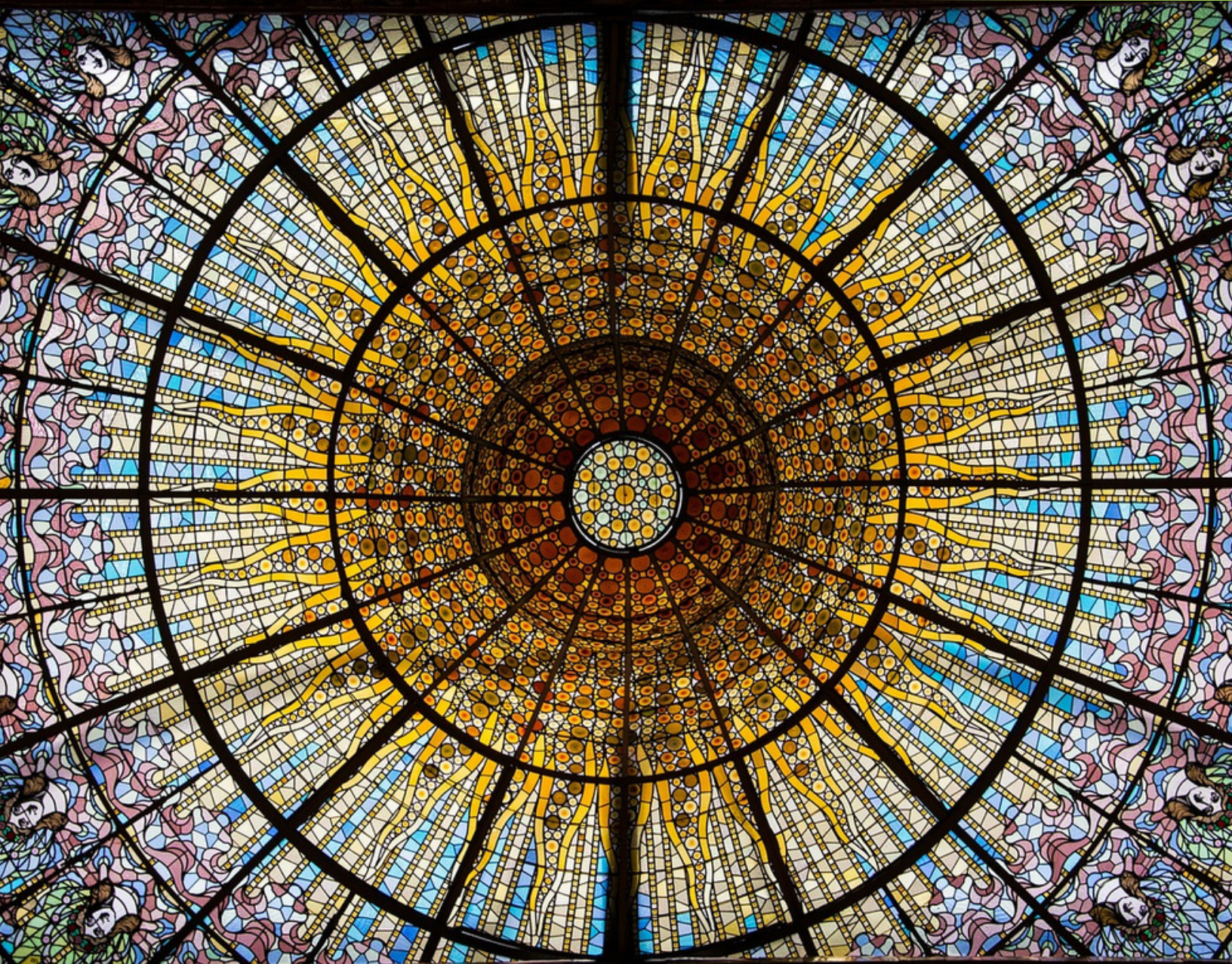


# IF20



G20 INTERFAITH FORUM

Year End Document 2023



# Table of Contents

## 2 Introduction: Piecing Together Different Perspectives

## 3 Event Summaries

3 G20 Interfaith Forum 2022 – Engaging Faith Communities: G20 Agendas and Beyond

5 Pre-Meeting with the Institute of Islamic Understanding

5 2023 International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit

6 G20 Interfaith Conference held in conjunction with the African Union World Harmony

7 International Conference on Islamophobia

7 Advancing Security and Sustainability at the G7 Hiroshima Summit

8 2023 G20 Interfaith Forum

### 9 **The G20 Interfaith Journey by Dr. Katherine Marshall**

13 Interreligious Forum of the Americas (FIDELA)

13 Islamic Perspectives on Human Dignity

14 Philippines Regional G20 Interfaith Meeting

15 Organizational Gathering for the 2023 G20 Interfaith Forum

15 Brazilian Symposium on Religious Freedom

16 Turkish Regional G20 Interfaith Meeting

17 G20 Interfaith Forum: Shaping World Peace and Sustainable Development Through Interfaith Harmony

### 19 **To the G20 Leaders: An Interfaith Call to Action**

22 Interfaith Workshop on Refugees

22 Annual Forum of Partnership of Religion and Development (PaRD)

23 International Conference on Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy

24 IPPFoRB Academy

24 Pre-Conference in Rio de Janeiro

24 Meeting with Brazilian VP

24 CEDIRE/Oslo Coalition Training Session for Justice System Actors

## 25 Webinar Summaries

25 Religicide: Examining Religious, Ethnic, and Racial Violence

25 IF20 Webinar in Geneva: Conflict, Children, Climate, and COVID

25 Prioritizing Vulnerable Communities in Global Finance

25 The 1896 Battle of Adwa, Ethiopia: Insights on Africa's Contemporary Challenges

26 Women and Girls at the Frontline of Climate Change

26 Spirited Seas: Science and Spirituality, an Interfaith Exploration of the Environmental Consequences of Deep Seabed Mining

26 Manifestation of Neo-Colonialism: The Case of Cacao and the Dark Secret of Chocolate

26 World Refugee Day with UNHCR: The Power of Inclusion in Developing Durable Solutions for Refugees

26 The Refugee Crisis in the Americas

27 Providing Refuge for Climate Refugees in International Law

27 Climate Change and the Importance of Indigenous Knowledge

## 29 Analytics

## 30 Appendix



# Introduction

## Piecing Together Different Perspectives

In 2023, the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) brought together diverse minds, linked by religious, governmental, and academic affiliations, to discuss global concerns. Like the pieces of a stained-glass window, which we have used as a motif running through this report, each perspective, idea, and contribution has played a crucial role in crafting a beautiful, cohesive picture of understanding and collaboration.

Marking IF20's tenth anniversary, this year in India has been particularly significant. From New Delhi's Lotus Temple to Pune's World Peace Dome, IF20 has pieced together vibrant discussions into action. In the face of the polycrisis - the aftermath of COVID-19, world conflicts, climate crisis, and the impact on children - IF20 has focused discussions on these pressing global problems.

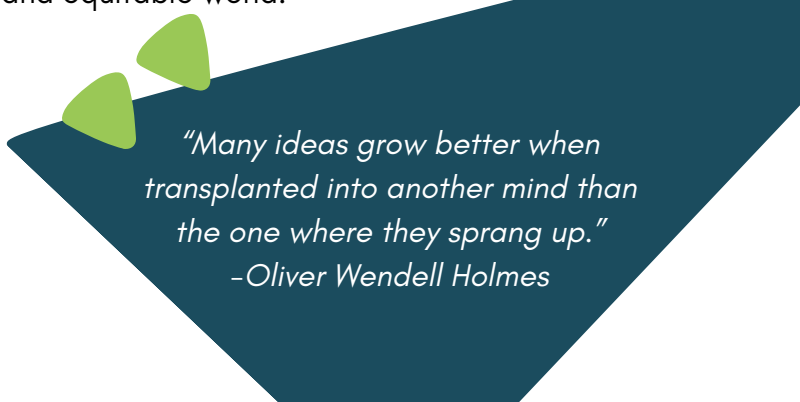
The three overarching concerns - addressing international financial architecture, advocating for the inclusion of the African Union in G20, and proposing an international commission to address racism - underscore our commitment to redress patterns of global inequalities. These discussions are encapsulated in summaries on our website, our blog Viewpoints, and our videos of the events on the IF20 YouTube channel. We are also introducing an IF20 podcast where the discussions at our regional meetings and forums will be reviewed. Also, we will be interviewing individuals who are experts in areas of global concern.

Throughout the year, our regional meetings, webinars, and forums have been platforms where voices from various faith traditions and philosophies have found common ground. This year-end document will give you highlights of what we have accomplished this year. Each occasion represents a brilliant and strengthening part of the finished picture of this year's events. The synergy of these interactions drives us into the future with renewed purpose and hope.

As we transition into a new year, let us carry forward the lessons and insights gained in 2023. Let the connections made in the forums and regional meetings be the foundation for further collaboration and let the shared commitment to address global challenges be the guiding force that propels us toward a more harmonious and equitable world.

In the spirit of unity and understanding,

Dr. Marianna Richardson  
G20 Interfaith Forum  
Director of Communications



*"Many ideas grow better when  
transplanted into another mind than  
the one where they sprang up."  
-Oliver Wendell Holmes*

# Event Summaries

## G20 Interfaith Forum 2022 – Engaging Faith Communities: G20 Agendas and Beyond

December 12-13, 2022 | Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.

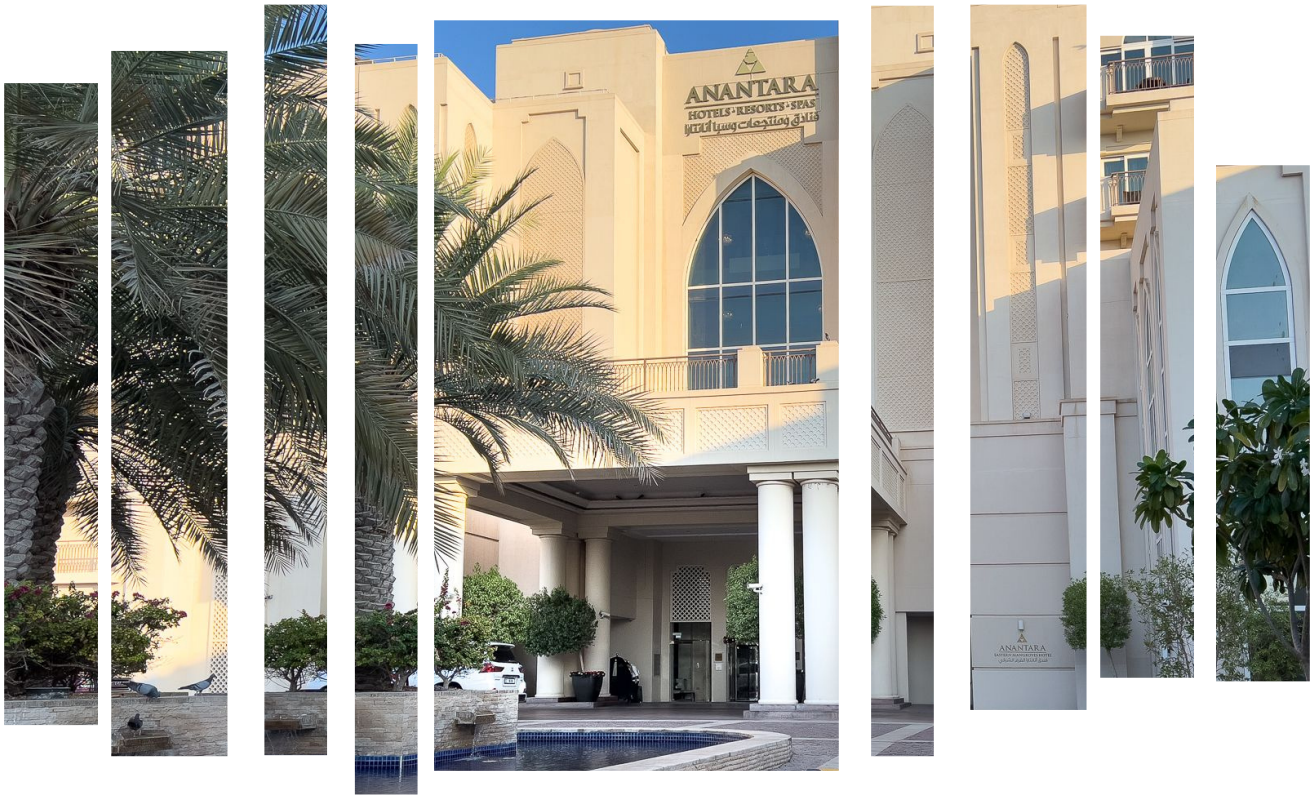
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On December 12-13, 2022, a Forum was held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, gathering religious leaders, scholars, faith-based organizations, and activists, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi and President of the United Arab Emirates.

The event was co-hosted by the Geneva-based Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC). The IAFSC's aims and values are closely aligned with those of the G20 Interfaith Forum, as they seek to facilitate the building of bridges between key stakeholders – including faith communities, NGOs, and experts in various domains – to empower them to work for the safety and security of our communities.

The UAE Forum marked the transition from the 2022 Indonesia to the India 2023 G20 presidency. Its focus was the IF20 agenda for 2023 and beyond, building on prior G20 Interfaith events, analysis, and continuing dialogue.





“Engaging Faith Communities: G20 Agendas and Beyond,” the Forum’s theme, highlighted the commitment to engagement and listening, especially to voices of those who are most vulnerable and seldom heard in global forums.

The forum established the central question which IF20 gatherings focused on throughout 2023: How, in the midst of the polycrisis the world faces today, faith communities can best engage with G20 leadership and others to address four C’s that are integral and interconnected to the contemporary crisis and agenda: Conflict, Climate, COVID, and Children.

Partnerships and ideas exchanged at the UAE Forum empowered and sustained the engagement of faith communities at global tables throughout 2023, and will continue.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was an invited participant in the 2023 G20 process and lent valued support to the global interreligious process. The UAE Forum also enriched discussions with its focus on coexistence and on Muslim perspectives.

*“We view this event as key in beginning to frame the agenda for what we’ll work on as the G20 Interfaith Forum in the next months, working more than ever before not only with the G20 host country, India, but with other countries as well. We look forward to your involvement and help in developing proposals and feeding them into the G20 process.”*

*–Professor W. Cole Durham, Jr.*

# Pre-Meeting with the Institute of Islamic Understanding

January 18 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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IF20 President W. Cole Durham met with representatives of the Institute of Islamic Understanding and the Institute of Islamic Studies Malaysia (IKIM) to help plan and organize an ongoing series of events in Malaysia centered around Islamic Perspectives on Human Dignity.

# 2023 International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit


January 31 – February 1 | Washington, D.C.

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G20 Interfaith President W. Cole Durham and Vice President Katherine Marshall, along with various members of the IF20 communications team and several working group members, attended the IRF Summit and participated in two important panel discussions.

In the January 31st session entitled “Human Dignity: Punta Del Este Declaration,” IF20 participants Brett Scharffs, Dr. Ewelina Ochab, Ján Figel, and others discussed the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Punta del Este, Uruguay in 2018.

In the February 1st session entitled “What is Religious Freedom, and What is it Not?”, W. Cole Durham and others discussed the philosophical and theological underpinnings of religious freedom, looking into how this essential human right is defined and how that definition is reflected in law and practice.



*“Religious freedom is not a mask to cover bigotry. It’s pluralistic, leaving open a real framework for us to live together—and it’s a modern key to living together in peaceful ways, protecting everyone. ... A good way to start thinking about it is freedom OF religion, FOR religion, FROM religion, and IN religion.”*

*–W. Cole Durham*

# G20 Interfaith Conference held in conjunction with the African Union World Harmony

February 27 - 28) | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This event, held by the African Union in celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week, celebrated “The Role of Religious Communities in Africa: Advancing Peace, Human Dignity, Preservation of the Environment, Sustainable Development, and Freedom of Religion or Belief.”

The G20 Interfaith Forum acted as an organizing partner of the event, which brought together around 350 religious leaders, policymakers, diplomats, government and NGO officials, youth representatives, and more with the aim of fostering mutual understanding.

W. Cole Durham, G20 Interfaith Forum President, offered a keynote address, and various IF20 advisory council and communication team members attended and led panel sessions in the IF20 conference the following day, including advisory council members Audrey Kitagawa and Christina Tobias-Nahi. A large focus of the event was IF20’s agreement, in conjunction with the African Union, to push for the African Union to become part of the G20 as one of the

IF20’s official 2023 policy recommendations. This push was supported by others and was ultimately successful, with the African Union being invited to be a G20 member.





## International Conference on Islamophobia

March 15–16 | Baku, Azerbaijan

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This conference, “Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and discrimination: New global and transnational challenges,” was organized around the UN’s International Day to Combat Islamophobia. It was organized by the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre and the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center) in partnership with the G20 Interfaith Forum, and aimed to provide an academic platform for discussions on the alarming trend at international and national levels of Muslims and countries with majority Muslim populations being targeted in various ways.

W. Cole Durham, G20 Interfaith President, gave an inaugural address in the opening plenary session, and Durham, along with members of the IF20 communications team and Audrey Kitagawa, head of the IF20 Anti-Racism Initiative, participated in several of the panel discussions. Discussions covered everything from case studies of Islamophobia throughout the globe to common conspiracy theories and colonialism. Durham represented IF20 in the panel discussion on the role of international organizations in the fight against Islamophobia, focusing his comments on creating partnerships in the international sphere to reduce Islamophobia and its counterparts.

## Advancing Security and Sustainability at the G7 Hiroshima Summit

March 29 | Tokyo, Japan

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In May 2023, the G7 nations convened in Hiroshima to discuss the global threats of nuclear war in Europe and Asia, climate change, and global health. To assist in addressing these issues, the G7 Research Group, Soka University, Soka Gakkai International, and the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation sponsored a conference at Soka University in Tokyo.

Experts from educational, academic, civil society, and government communities gathered to share their perspectives and provide policy recommendations to the G7 Hiroshima Summit Leaders. Audrey Kitagawa, Chair of the G20 Interfaith Forum Anti-Racism Initiative, was a central participant.



# 2023 G20 Interfaith Forum

May 7-9 | New Delhi, India

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An international and Indian group met in New Delhi at the Baha'i Lotus Temple in the first of two large G20 Interfaith Forum events of 2023, in preparation for September's G20 Summit meetings with India as host. The focus of the Delhi forum was broad, but a unifying theme was the priority for action to serve vulnerable communities, with special attention to those forced to migrate by conflict or climate change and children. The event was co-hosted by the Baha'i Center, whose focus is on inclusion and harmony, the Geneva-based Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC), which facilitates the building of bridges among key stakeholders, and IF20.

The Forum's theme, "Partnerships in Action: Towards One Earth, One Family, One Future," echoed the Indian Government's G20 Theme, as did the emphasis on inclusion of differing viewpoints for the common purpose of serving the common good. The reality of the global crisis, which many term a polycrisis, echoed through the meeting as different facets of this crisis, which were framed as four interconnected C's—Conflict, Climate, COVID, and Children—demanded attention and a prophetic voice alert to the urgent need for action at global and local levels.

These meetings, held well in advance of the G20 Summit meetings, acted as a space for lively dialogue around real action, paths forward, and policy recommendations for G20 leaders. H.E. Shri Harsh Vardan Shringla, Chief Coordinator of India's G20 Presidency, spoke at a pre-event reception and emphasized the government's determination to include voices of those who aren't at the G20 table but are affected by G20 decisions, namely many of the most vulnerable.

Panel discussions and dialogue involved religious, community, and political leaders from around the world, and covered topics including ethics and technology, vulnerable communities, women's empowerment, human trafficking, education, health systems, humanitarian reform, climate, protecting cultural heritage, and peacebuilding.

Conclusions from the forum were taken forward into considerations for 2023 policy recommendations for the G20 sherpas and more.



*"The outcomes of your deliberations are important. We as the India G20 Presidency are looking for an inclusive approach that involves the most vulnerable and is global in nature, working toward the common good of One Earth, One Family, One Future. I look forward to receiving your recommendations."*  
-H.E. Shringla

# The G20 Interfaith Journey

Dr. Katherine Marshall, Vice President, G20 Interfaith Association

My mission here is to highlight the key milestones on the G20 Interfaith Forum's journey that have brought us to New Delhi today. The central questions are why the interfaith voice is critical within the G20 process, how this Forum relates to the broader G20 process, and priority issues that are the Interfaith Forum's focus. The G20 Interfaith Forum's journey is approaching a ten-year mark; a few participants here have been part of work and events each year. So where have we come, where are we today, and how do we see the path ahead?

**First, why the G20?** The G20 (Group of 20) is very much part of global governance structures today. It was created in 1999 with the prime mission of crisis management, and a tacit recognition of some of the difficulties of working within the United Nations system: notably, its complexity and size. The idea was to establish a more flexible, more adaptable, less formal mechanism, yet one that was more inclusive or less exclusive than the G7/8. Thus, the G20 or Group of 20 came into being, essentially as an annual summit of powerful world leaders, and it took on increasing importance after the 2008 economic crisis.

A feature of the G20 (like the G7/8) is that its presidency and thus location rotates every year. That's why we are in India, as India is the 2023 host. In December 2022 Indonesia, the 2022 host, passed the presidency baton to India, which in December 2023 will pass it to Brazil and then on to South Africa. So, it is very much a rotating presidency, and each presidency takes on its own character.

A feature of the G20 is that there is no Secretariat. In other words, there is no permanent body of the G20. Because of this, the focus does tend to be on the central meeting, the actual summit of the leaders, which will take place this year in Delhi (September 9-10, 2023). Here in Delhi in May, we are thus focused on the annual G20 Summit. That, by the way, is why we talk about Sherpas (a Sherpa supports each G20 leader) because Sherpas guide the leaders as they move towards the summit.

The G20 has focused and to a large extent still focuses on the management of global crises. We are now in what we call the *Polycrisis* or *permacrisis*; in other words, the extraordinary combination of continuing crises that we face today. That is very much what's on the G20 agenda. Their agendas have, however, broadened over the years so that they do now include the Sustainable Development Goals, which essentially means the entire global agenda. There is far more to say about the G20, but its power and focus on both crises and global agendas are the reason we focus on both the Summit and its broader roles.





***So why faith and interfaith in the G20 process?*** The vital and central role of the G20 explains why the G20 Interfaith Forum exists; at its core, the idea is that the experience and voice of world religious institutions can and should be part of setting and implementing global agendas. The world of religion, articulated in large part through interfaith efforts, belongs as a part of the G20. There are predecessors to that notion, for example in efforts to engage religious voices in the G7/8 processes since the 1990s. Parallel efforts include the faith representation at the United Nations. But our efforts as an institution and a collaboration since 2014 have focused on the G20.

Looking to the heart of the argument, with some 84% of the world's population having some religious affiliation, there needs to be a way for that voice to be part of these global discussions. You hear this argument in many different voices and cadences, but the core idea is that leaving aside this large aspect of global life is a grave mistake.

And from there, our idea and objectives are that there should be a structured, systematic, and continuing voice of religious bodies in the G20 process.

The G20 Interfaith Forum has evolved over the years, becoming steadily more ambitious in its goals and broader in its focus. It began, was born, in 2014, when a meeting was organized alongside the G20 Summit in Australia. The G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) has focused each year since then (Turkey, China, Germany, Argentina, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Indonesia, and now India) on the G20 process and agenda, normally centered on a meeting in the host country. (In 2022, the central meeting was in Abu Dhabi in December.) While there is a focus on a specific meeting or forum, increasingly the IF20 organizes and participates in a wider set of meetings and collaborations where the G20 agendas and issues are integrated in broader discussions on leading agendas, for example on refugees, children, climate, and religious engagement.

Notably following the German G20 process in 2017, the Forum has shifted its focus from a more academic discussion on diverse religious perspectives to a more explicit focus on the G20 agendas, and notably the most relevant Sustainable Development Goals, and on specific global issues such as the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath. The core idea is that the G20 Interfaith Forum supports and draws wisdom from the most active and relevant interreligious networks and thus, describes itself as a "network of networks."



***So where does the G20 Interfaith Forum fit within the complex G20 world, that some describe as a constellation?***

The G20 process has expanded to include many institutions and efforts, posing the question of where and how the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) fits. There are different engagement groups, government or ministerial roles, focus groups, and beyond—a rather bewildering set of institutional forms centered on the G20, all with the basic objective of influencing G20 agendas. Beyond that, the broader global agendas involve a still wider set of institutions, both public and private. We thus debate and have explored where the IF20 fits within other G20 orbits. There have been some suggestions that we join different engagement groups, notably the C20 which focuses on civil society, the W20 (women), Y20 (youth), or even the B20 (business). We have worked with the T20 (think tanks) in the past. Our sense, however, is that there is something so distinctive about the interfaith perspectives that they need to have a separate voice with a distinctive place in the G20 system. But for a variety of reasons, the IF20 remains an informal part of the G20 process. There are advantages and disadvantages to having the IF20 as a valued and respected member of the G20 process, but maintaining its own distinctive qualities, character, and organization.

That is basically where we fit at present: somewhat less formal, but very much a continuing part of the G20 process.

The IF20 is run as a virtual collaboration, engaging people from G20 countries and beyond, and represented by an Advisory Council that meets regularly. It has a small secretariat, is a US 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and works with a variety of universities, non-governmental organizations, academic and other policy experts, and religious communities around the world.

We are now in the 10th year in which there has been an active IF20 process. This process consists in forums, virtual and in-person meetings, coupled with continuing reflections and analysis, working groups, and partnerships that characterize the group that is gathered here and now in New Delhi. We are all working through a variety of networks on a wide variety of topics. The networks reflect a proliferation of different groups seeking to bring out the qualities of the inter-religious world with more coherence and achieve better coordination towards the stated objective of the 2023 G20 process: One Earth, One Unity, One Spirit.

***So what is the central focus of the G20 Interfaith Forum, now and looking ahead?***

We see the G20 Interfaith Forum very much as offering the opportunity of a “network of networks” to come together to coordinate, to look at what each other is doing, to set priorities, and therefore to bring more effectively the best of religious work and ideas to the tables where global policy issues, urgent and long term, are the focus. We aim to amplify both the powerful and the prophetic voices and the day-to-day knowledge of lived religions in the deliberations of the G20.



We are living in an extraordinary time of crisis. That puts an even greater premium on the G20 leadership than has been true in the past and thus on the G20 Interfaith Forum. What we are seeing today is the constant, dynamic intersections of different crises. There is no clear line that separates the climate crisis from hunger, the refugee situation from conflict and peacebuilding, and health and education from the plight of women and children. The conflicts that the world faces all come together in ways that demand of the G20 leadership and of its G20 partners the kind of distinctive, varied, and in-depth focus that groups such as the IF20 can provide. As a collaborative group, we address all these diverse dimensions. Within the constraining reality of a focused, targeted effort, the G20 Interfaith Forum aims at authentic inclusion of diverse perspectives and actors that can make practical, concrete and substantive contributions to global policy formation.

It is not difficult to take the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 targets, and for every single one, to highlight some faith dimensions. Many, however, forget or ignore this complex reality. But we, as the IF20, never forget that the world's religious communities are part of every single one of the crises the G20 addresses. Our challenge is much less to focus on water, for example, or to zero in on any specific issue, but to try to discern how the common elements and shared values emerging from religious diversity can help build livable habitats in which a common life is possible.

That brings me to a final point: the effort to look at recommendations and our ideals for what we think that the G20 leaders should do when they meet at their summits.

We develop specific recommendations in a number of sectors on a continuing basis, particularly on the issues around health and COVID, which has been the crisis for the past few years, on education, conflict, which link to the crisis of refugees, on climate and environment, and on a theme that unites us all: the welfare of children. But if we look for the theme that we, as this group, put to the G20 leaders as they meet in their Summits, it is **"never forget the most vulnerable."** That is in many senses the ideal, the idealistic mission of religious communities in this particular setting. And that requires bringing together specific ideas on each one of the sectors. As India's G20 leader, Harsh Shringla, said when he addressed the IF20 pre-meeting, the G20 has had a very sectoral focus but needs to rise above it. Our IF20 mission is to try to see the common themes, and above all, to keep a laser focus on the problems of the most vulnerable, particularly children, women, refugees, the hungry, and too many other groups. We see that as the primary focus and our primary message.

Here in India, we will work to sharpen and highlight the different ideas, proposals, and urgings we have worked on to date. We see this very much as a continuing process, as the IF20 pursues its journey, moving on from India to Brazil and to South Africa. We count on all of you and your networks to be part of our journey forward.



# Interreligious Forum of the Americas (FIDELA)

June 20 | Washington, D.C.

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The theme of this year's FIDELA meetings was "Promoting Human Dignity in the Americas in the Framework of the 53rd General Assembly of the Organization of American States." Co-sponsored by IF20, the event featured keynote speeches by IF20 President Cole Durham and Vice President Katherine Marshall. Various religious leaders and scholars from the Americas presented on topics under the themes of Interfaith Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Development, FoRB, and Human Dignity.



# Islamic Perspectives on Human Dignity

July 5-6 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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G20 Interfaith President W. Cole Durham, Jr. assisted in organizing this conference and gave an address on Legal and Jurisprudential Perceptions of Dignity. The conference, organized in partnership with the Institute of Islamic Studies Malaysia (IKIM) and the ICLRS Human Dignity Initiative, was part of an ongoing series of events held in Malaysia and focused on Islamic Perspectives on Human Dignity. Several papers from the conference will be included in an upcoming book on Islamic Perspectives on Human Dignity, edited by the ICLRS.



## Philippines Regional G20 Interfaith Meeting

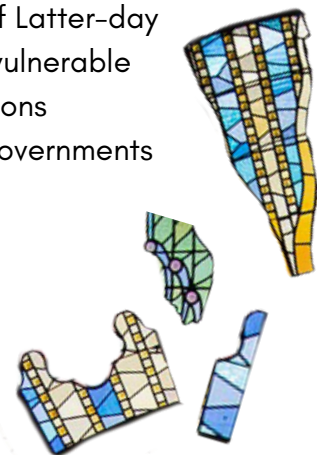
July 7 | Manila, Philippines

In conjunction with the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC) and the International Justice Mission, the G20 Interfaith Forum held a regional meeting in the Philippines to discuss solutions to pressing global challenges from a regional perspective. Topics included climate change, online child exploitation, human trafficking, disaster resilience, education of children's rights, and freedom of religion and belief.



Over 50 diverse civil society and faith leaders gathered in discussion, aiming to uplift marginalized voices and perspectives and mobilize the vast networks of faith communities. Recommendations and discussion points from the regional meeting were discussed and fed into the policy recommendations submitted to G20 Sherpas in advance of the India 2023 G20 Summit.

This forum, which was hosted as an interfaith event by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, offered critical insights from local faith leaders and advocates on uplifting vulnerable communities within the context of complex, intersecting global challenges. Discussions illuminated practical opportunities for cooperation between religious groups and governments to foster inclusive, ethical policies that uplift “the least, the lost, and the left out.”



# Organizational Gathering for the 2023 G20

## Interfaith Forum

August 8 | Brasilia, Brazil

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International officers of the G20 Interfaith Forum convened a small gathering to initiate planning for 2024 G20 Interfaith Forum initiatives and to support Brazil's leadership of the G20 Summit process. Discussion centered around focuses for the 2024 IF20 Forum meetings, building the IF20 "Network of Networks," and more. Representatives from various Brazilian ministries attended.

## Brazilian Symposium on Religious Freedom

August 8-10 | Brasilia, Brazil

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The 2023 Brazilian Symposium on Religious Freedom was the second installment in what is hoped will become a regular series of symposia where Brazilian and international thought leaders and specialists can engage on the fundamental human right of Freedom of Religion or Belief. Organized by The International Center for Law and Religious Studies (ICLRS) and Centro Brasileiro de Estudos em Direito e Religião (CEDIRE), the conference involved religious and civil society leaders from around the world and centered around the theme: "Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers: The Role of Religious Freedom in Building a Free, Just, and Mutually Supportive Society."

The conference was especially significant due to Brazil's upcoming G20 Presidency in 2024. Several delegates from the G20 Interfaith Forum Association were in attendance, including IF20 VP Katherine Marshall and IF20 President W. Cole Durham, Jr., who offered a keynote speech and participated in several sessions.







Aims of the Symposium included the following:

- Foster improved understanding of religious freedom and related rights.
- Identify religious freedom challenges and explore effective solutions.
- Facilitate discussion that can inspire improved institutions, better laws, social cohesion, commitment to pluralism, and respect for equal human dignity.
- Help raise awareness of the many positive social goods that religiously motivated actors contribute to society.
- Provide opportunities for networking and collaboration.
- Build the academic field of study concerning religious freedom.

## Turkish Regional G20 Interfaith Meeting

August 28-29 | Istanbul, Turkey

The Turkish Regional G20 Interfaith Meeting took place in Istanbul under the patronage of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, and was co-organized by the G20 Interfaith Forum and the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC).

30 participants, including senior Christian and Muslim faith leaders and select representatives from faith-based organizations, gathered to advance interfaith dialogue in the context of the G20 process. Discussions centered on the theme of India's G20 Presidency: "One Earth, One Family, One Future," and covered climate change, food security, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, child sexual abuse and exploitation, human trafficking, and hate crimes.

The meeting included participants from 15 countries, including Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Greece, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Portugal, Singapore, Turkey, UAE, the UK, the US, and Venezuela.

*"Words are but the beginning: the real testament of our commitment will be the projects we initiate, the communities we uplift, and the environment that we safeguard. Through initiatives grounded in our shared values, we can inspire transformation on both individual and collective levels. To realize the vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future," we must transcend mere tolerance. True dialogue entails deep respect, mutual understanding, and collective action."*

*-His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*



## G20 Interfaith Forum: Shaping World Peace and Sustainable Development Through Interfaith Harmony

September 5-7 | Pune, India

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The second G20 Interfaith Forum of India's 2023 G20 Presidency was held at the World Peace Dome in Pune, India, bringing together over 3000 attendees to discuss solutions to global challenges. Co-hosted by MIT World Peace University, the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC), and the G20 Interfaith Forum Association, the event's theme was "Shaping World Peace and Sustainable Development Through Interfaith Harmony." More than 1000 university students participated from MIT World Peace University.

King Husein, a major contributor to the planning of the event, highlighted the World Peace Dome itself as "a living laboratory for interfaith peace among all religions." He noted how the Peace Dome, with its statues of so many religious leaders, scientists, and philosophers, would be a living example of how to meld academics and spirituality, thereby embodying what interfaith is all about. He also challenged each audience member to observe what the building embodies and incorporate that into their local countries and communities.

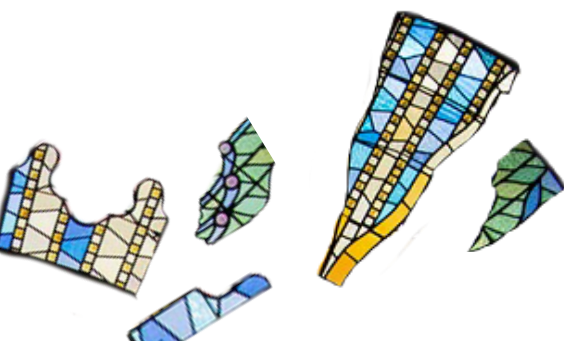


The Forum included a traditional procession featuring many national and global leaders, the joint ringing of the World Peace Bell, a formal ceremony including the Lighting of the Lamp, a World Peace Prayer, and a World Peace Meditation. Calls were made to end hatred, violence, and war; to protest the politicization of religion; to address climate change and food/water shortages; and to restore peace and coexistence between conflicting countries.

Panel discussion topics included ethics and technology, religion in the workplace, women empowerment, social cohesion, vulnerable communities, Indian National Education, peace building, food security, the "4 C's," global education, health care, protecting children, climate, religious and cultural heritage, human trafficking, a global youth dialogue, and more.

A letter to G20 leaders encapsulating IF20's main recommendations and calls to action was read at the conclusion of the forum, paving the way to further action and change.

*"Peace, wherever it still exists, is continually threatened. Leaders of all religions should come together for peace, to move away from hatred, violence and war."*  
-Archbishop Felix Machado of Vasai







# To the G20 Leaders: An Interfaith Call to Action

“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, or “One Earth, One Family, One Future”, the overarching 2023 G20 theme set by the Government of India, encapsulates the complex and deeply interconnected challenges and hopes that face world leaders and their invited guests when they meet in New Delhi for the September Summit. Extraordinary demands confront them: economic and financial perils, raging conflicts and, linked to them, over 110 million people forced to move, mounting pressures to mobilize the finance needed to address climate change, urgent agendas on health and education, political and social tensions, and many others.

Facing these formidable agendas, the G20 Interfaith Forum highlights two critical anchors to action: To focus first and foremost on those who are most vulnerable, most affected by today’s intertwined crises; and to keep a constant eye on the impact of each action on children. This appeal reflects the common and deeply held values of diverse religious traditions which call for compassion as a lodestar for action to benefit a common humanity and a vision towards the future, exemplified in the welfare of children.

Specific proposals for action draw on IF20 discussions in New Delhi, Abu Dhabi, and different world regions. They focus on four broad agendas, inspired by the demands of this Kairos moment, a time of critical demands and grace. The extraordinary COVID-19 global crisis demands a common framework for action that addresses health system weaknesses and inequalities and preparedness for future pandemics; both involve religious communities and the assets they bring. Contemporary conflicts have multiple causes, religious factors among them, and peacebuilding benefits when interreligious and religious actors are involved. The deeply worrying plight of some 110 million forced migrants is intricately linked in both causes and the search for solutions. The climate crisis demands both extraordinary leadership and public mobilization, both instances where faith communities play vital roles. And world leaders, secular and religious, political and private sector, need urgently to gauge the impact of crises on children’s welfare.





Three overarching concerns follow from the “four Cs” agenda: a concern that action on international financial architecture is urgently needed, starting with addressing pressing country indebtedness and the capacity of multilateral institutions to support the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agendas and humanitarian needs as well as continuing efforts to combat corrupt practices. Attention to the poorest nations is central to the G20 agenda. The IF20 thus supports the proposal to include the African Union as a G20 member. The G20 members carry special responsibilities to lead in redressing patterns underlying inequalities, and the IF20 urges serious consideration of its proposal for a Commission to address racism.

### *Paths to Action*

The G20 Interfaith Forum has focused in 2023 on specific areas for action, that follow from the broad agenda inspired by the four C’s. More detailed policy briefs supporting many of these points are available at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/if20-policy-briefs/>.

(a) Children. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted urgent gaps in politics and approaches to children’s welfare, both those in vulnerable situations (refugees, marginalized communities and people, and well beyond.) Child sexual abuse and exploitation is one of the biggest threats to children and the family can play a critical role in their well-being. Mental health merits concerted action. In action on digital challenges the impact on children needs special attention at international, national, and community levels.

(b) Climate: With climate and environmental issues pressing forcefully on global agendas, G20 leaders need to take specific and bold action to address bottlenecks to action and galvanize tangible progress. Priority areas within the G20 mandate are climate finance and energy transitions. G20 leadership can and should also offer inspiration and practical guidance on the innovative cross sector engagement that can galvanize faster action. A promising example is the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative that engages religious leaders, governments, multilateral institutions, and local communities to protect tropical rainforests in the Amazon, Congo, and Southeast Asia basins. Support for IRI from G20 leaders could both advance action and highlight the potential for similar engagement.

(c) Conflict and forced migration. World religious communities are primary actors in addressing conflicts and its profound disruptive effects on so many communities. IF20 urges G20 countries to be actively involved in seeking peace worldwide. These efforts can benefit from active efforts to work with religious communities

(d) With the COVID-19 emergencies largely behind us, G20 leaders and nations need to engage religious communities in concrete reflections on lessons learned. Focusing on health systems with a view towards filling gaps and greater equity is a high priority. With near certainty of future pandemics engaging religious communities in work for preparedness is an urgent matter.

(e) Massive disruption of formal education by the COVID-19 emergencies demands urgent measures that go beyond a “return to normal”. G20 leaders can press nations to take the opportunities to address growing educational disparities among communities, and gaps in civic education that weaken society and accentuate polarization. The IF20 calls for active dialogue about the needs of youth and children, drawing on actionable proposals for inclusive planning in education, with trauma-informed approaches that draw on faith-inspired and indigenous traditions.

Education holds the key to making progress in each of the foregoing areas. There is a need for global coordination of interfaith educational efforts through a global body, consortium, or some other appropriate agency. The World Peace Dome where the culminating session of the 2023 G20 Interfaith Forum was held would be pleased to provide a venue for pursuits along these lines.





## Interfaith Workshop on Refugees

September 18 | New York City, USA

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This workshop, co-organized by USA for UNHCR and Islamic Relief USA and supported by IF20 and Fragomen, created a space for interfaith conversations around humanitarian response for refugees.

## Annual Forum of Partnership of Religion and Development (PaRD)

October 17-19 | Berlin, Germany

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Around 100 global participants gathered at PaRD's Annual Forum on Religion and Sustainable Development in Berlin, echoing a message of hope, dignity, peace, and cooperation. Several IF20 delegates were present, including G20 Interfaith President W. Cole Durham, Jr., who assisted with formulation of the Forum's concluding recommendations.

Participants exchanged ideas and successful approaches to contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During this time, the attendees collectively dedicated their efforts to crafting new action plans for the year 2024 within the PaRD framework. These plans encompassed critical areas, including but not limited to water, environment and climate action, gender equality and empowerment, health, sustaining peace, freedom of religion or belief, as well as localization. A positive outcome is that PaRD and the G20 Interfaith Forum have agreed to pool resources and conduct overlapping annual meetings from August 19-23, 2024 in Brasilia.



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# International Conference on Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy

November 13-14 | Jakarta, Indonesia

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The Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) International Conference with the theme “Human Dignity and Rule of Law for a Peaceful and Inclusive Society” held by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia together with Leimena Institute in Jakarta further strengthened commitment and solidarity in upholding human rights in a law state.

The conference was attended by approximately 200 participants and invitees, consisting of academics from various countries, religious leaders, teachers who participated in the CCRL program, and at least 20 ambassadors from friendly nations, including those from the ASEAN Secretariat. The CCRL International Conference was comprised of five panel sessions and seven selected sessions involving 30 world-renowned speakers with simultaneous interpretation facilities. In addition to the participants who were invited to attend in person, this conference was also attended by 1,900 online participants via Zoom.

IF20 President W. Cole Durham and Vice President Katherine Marshall, among other representatives of the G20 Interfaith Forum, attended and participated in the conference, supporting the progress made in the meetings in alignment with IF20’s mission and purpose. Durham and Marshall both spoke in a panel on building peaceful and inclusive multi-faith and multicultural societies in the ASEAN community, in addition to leading a breakout session on religion and human trafficking that was chaired by Kevin Hyland, the head of our working group on this topic. Marshall spoke at another panel on the role of faith-based organizations in facing global challenges to human dignity.





## IPPFoRB Academy

December 11-14 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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Leaders of the G20 Interfaith Forum met with parliamentarians from Brazil and various Latin American countries to support Brazil's leadership during the G20 Summit process. Discussion centered around the focus for the 2024 IF20 Forum meetings in Brazil and more.

## Pre-Conference in Rio de Janeiro

December 14 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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A Pre-Conference in Rio de Janeiro on "Justice, Sustainable Development and Religious Engagement: Interfaith Contributions to the G20" was held with Latin American parliamentarians, justice system actors, government representatives, religious leaders, researchers and other stakeholders. IF20 President Cole Durham gave a presentation entitled "Religious Engagement, Justice, and Sustainable Development: Contributions to the G20."

## Meeting with Brazilian VP

December 14 | Brasilia, Brazil

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As part of preparations for the 2024 Brazilian G20 Summit, IF20 President W. Cole Durham had very successful meetings with Vice President Geraldo Alckmin (Vice President of the Republic of Brazil).

## CEDIRE/Oslo Coalition Training Session for Justice System Actors

December 14-15 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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Leaders of the G20 Interfaith Forum met and provided training for Brazilian justice system actors. Thanks to Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves, chair of the local organizing committee for the 2024 G20 Interfaith Forum, and to Damaris Moura, committee member, for making arrangements for events.





# Webinar Summaries

## ▶ Religicide: Examining Religious, Ethnic, and Racial Violence

February 23

The G20 Interfaith Forum Anti-Racism Initiative, in cooperation with the Tanenbaum Center for Religious Understanding, the International Academy of Multicultural Cooperation, and the United Religions Initiative (URI), brought together experts on multi-faith work and violence prevention to discuss the concept of “Religicide,” framed around the arguments of a new book: “Religicide: Confronting the Roots of Anti-Religious Violence.”

## ▶ IF20 Webinar in Geneva: Conflict, Children, Climate, and COVID

March 13

The G20 Interfaith Forum held a webinar on the sidelines of the UN Human Rights Council meetings in Geneva, bringing together global interfaith experts on human rights for a discussion on “The 4 C’s,” which have been the main focus of IF20’s 2023 efforts: Conflict, Children, Climate, and COVID.

## ▶ Prioritizing Vulnerable Communities in Global Finance

April 6

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace World Affairs at Georgetown University, in cooperation with the G20 Interfaith Forum, brought together experts in global finance to discuss ethical imperatives to guide the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and G20, with a focus on vulnerable populations.

## ▶ The 1896 Battle of Adwa, Ethiopia: Insights on Africa’s Contemporary Challenges

April 27

The IF20 Anti Racism Initiative, in partnership with The International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation, brought together African historians, journalists, anthropologists and scholars to discuss the decisive and historic Battle of Adwa, which resulted in victory over Italy and the sovereignty of Ethiopia (the only African country not colonized by a European power), and its rippling effects on Africa ever since.

## ▶ Women and Girls at the Frontline of Climate Change

May 24

IF20, in cooperation with Islamic Relief USA and Islamic Relief Worldwide, brought experts from the Indonesian region together to discuss findings and recommendations of a recent report (by Islamic Relief Worldwide) on the effects of climate change on women and girls in Indonesia.

## ▶ Spirited Seas: Science and Spirituality, an interfaith exploration of the environmental consequences of Deep Seabed Mining

May 30

The IF20 Anti-Racism Initiative, in partnership with the IF20 Environment Working Group, the International Academy of Multicultural Cooperation, and Purdue University Fort Wayne, brought experts from the Pacific region together to discuss the dangers of upcoming Deep Seabed Mining initiatives and their consequences from a perspective based both on scientific evidence and indigenous faith/tradition.

## ▶ Manifestation of Neo-Colonialism: The Case of Cacao and the Dark Secret of Chocolate

June 8

The IF20 Anti-Racism initiative, in cooperation with the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation, brought together experts on the environment, cacao industry experts and advocates, and scholars to examine manifestations of neo-colonialism in the cacao and chocolate trade in Africa (Ghana and the Ivory Coast), including child labor, slavery, and other human rights violations.

## ▶ World Refugee Day with UNHCR: The Power of Inclusion in Developing Durable Solutions for Refugees

June 16

Surrounding World Refugee Day, IF20 and The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) partnered to host a discussion for audience members unfamiliar with the refugee crisis, beginning with an overview of the crisis by a UNHCR representative, then highlighting the stories and experiences of two former refugees.

## ▶ The Refugee Crisis in the Americas

July 18

IF20, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Organization of American States (OAS), gathered experts on the refugee crisis in the Americas to discuss the plight of America's refugees, current trends in the American Hemisphere, resolutions to protect asylum seekers, and future problems.



## ► Providing Refuge for Climate Refugees in International Law

August 10

IF20, in cooperation with the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation and Purdue University Fort Wayne, brought together experts on climate justice, migration, and refugee advocacy to discuss the growing problem of lack of resources, protection, or assistance for climate migrants who leave their homes due to climate change-related problems.

## ► Climate Change and the Importance of Indigenous Knowledge

October 12

IF20, in partnership with the KAICIID Dialogue Centre, brought together indigenous leaders and climate action advocates from the Pacific region to discuss how indigenous spiritualities and climate wisdom might promote environmental justice if integrated holistically into climate action plans.



# Analytics



## G20 and Viewpoints Blog Websites

Google Searches: 13.8K

Total Impressions: 788K



### YouTube

New subscribers: 96

Views in 2023: 17,824

Watch time (hours): 516.6



### Zoom Webinars

\*These numbers account only for webinars hosted from the G20 Interfaith Zoom account. Webinars hosted by other organizations or parties are not included.

Attendees: 336

Registrants: 496

Webinar views on YouTube: 536



# Appendix

## International Conference on Religion & Freedom of Expression | Lisbon, Portugal (Feb 7-8)

Asher Maoz of the IF20 Advisory Council attended this conference, hosted by AIDLR (of which he is Honorary Vice President) and presented a lecture on “Freedom of Dispute in the Jewish Faith.” Other advisory council members, including Ganoune Diop and Elizabeta Kitanovic, also participated.

## Global Youth Interfaith and Intercultural Forum | Qatar (Feb 11)

As part of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, A Common Word Among the Youth (ACWAY), in partnership with the Doha Centre for Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue (DCID), organized the Global Youth Interfaith and Intercultural Forum. 65 youth aged 18-35 from 42 nationalities and 35 countries participated, in addition to 15 guests and speakers. The G20 Interfaith Forum acted as an international partner for the event, which focused on peace through interfaith understanding and more.

## Religion and Rule of Law Conference | Stellenbosch, South Africa (Feb 20)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham presented a paper entitled “International Human Rights Relating to Freedom of Religion or Belief: Emerging Challenges.”

## Human Dignity Initiative Conference: Asian Perspectives on Human Dignity | Hawaii (April 17-18)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham delivered the opening remarks introducing the second day of the conference and moderated a panel on “Bangladeshi and Malaysian Perspectives on Human Dignity.” The conference was held at Brigham Young University Hawaii.

## 2023 Conference of the African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) | Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire (May 14-17)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham acted as co-organizer of the event and participated heavily.

## Religious Freedom Laboratory International Conference | Torun, Poland (May 31-June 2)

Speakers from around the world reported the main threats and trends in the field of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) through 35 speeches, sharing interdisciplinary expert knowledge. Asher Maoz, a member of the IF20 Advisory Council, was one of those speakers.

## Seminar on “Religious Freedom in Comparative Perspectives” | Krakow, Poland (June 5-10)

Asher Maoz of the IF20 Advisory Council presented a lecture at the Centre for Law and Religion at Poland’s Jagiellonian University diving into comparative perspectives on Religious Freedom. He also took part in a seminar concerning related issues of constitutional law.

## Women, Religion, and Climate Change | Wilton Park, UK (Sept 6-8)

Sherrie Steiner of the IF20 Environment Working Group represented the G20 Interfaith Forum at an international gathering on “Women, Religion and Climate Change: Working Together to Move Faster on Climate Change”. Leaders discussed climate change and the environment at Wilton Park in Sussex, England. This event focused on the urgent priority of greater collaboration on climate action and scaling up women’s leadership by drawing women of faith and women leading in secular contexts into closer collaboration.

## 30th Annual Law and Religion Symposium of ICLRS | Provo, UT (Oct 1-3)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham presented a paper entitled “Freedom of Religion or Belief, Diplomacy, and the Values of the UDHR.”

## Memorandum of Understanding & Meetings with Vietnamese Officials (Nov 8-10)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham participated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute of Global Engagement and the Vietnam-USA Society, in addition to meeting with Vietnamese Officials.

## University & Mosque Lectures | Indonesia (Nov 16-18)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham gave a lecture on Dignity and Sustainable Development at Istiglal Mosque in Jakarta, a lecture as part of the International Lecture Series at the State University Sunan Ampel Surabaya, and a lecture at Hasyim Asy’ari University in Jombang.

## 2023 International Ministerial Conference on FoRB | Prague, Czech Republic (Nov 28-30)

IF20 President W. Cole Durham attended and participated.

