



***Breakout Session 4: “Many Cultures, One Humanity:  
The Role & Responsibility of Religious Leaders & Faith-Based Organizations in  
Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies”***

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 November 2018  
11:00 - 13:00, Conference Room 11

**THEME AND POINTS OF DISCUSSION**

The theme of Breakout Session 4 is “*Many Cultures, One Humanity: The Role & Responsibility of Religious Leaders & Faith-Based Organizations in Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies*”. In many ways, this session reflects the motto of UNAOC. Through multiple events and forums, UNAOC expanded the space for inclusive dialogue among religious leaders representing different denominations.

**Date & Venue:** 20 November 2018 from 11:00 to 13:00. Conference Room 11, UNHQ

**Format:** interactive discussion with short presentations from the speakers highlighting good practices on the theme. The last 20 minutes will be dedicated to interventions from the floor.

**Points of discussion:**

1. Is there a clear definition and understanding of the role of religion in conflict settings?
2. Do religious actors have the potential to act as peace-makers? What messages should be disseminated to build peaceful and inclusive societies?
3. What is the role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations (FBOs) in strengthening interfaith relationships?
4. How can the role of FBOs move beyond social services to peace-building? What are good practices of religious leadership for possible replication?
5. What are the obstacles and challenges that hinder the work of FBOs?
6. How do you assess the existing partnership between UN entities and FBOs?
7. What are concrete recommendations to strengthen the role of faith actors?

**BACKGROUND**

The core causes of conflict are complex. Among the driving forces, religious intolerance, fanaticism and sectarianism are acknowledged to have fueled or exacerbated some of the most intractable and violent conflicts around the world. It is important to note that conflicts may take on religious garb yet not necessarily be about the religions themselves.

Despite the tragic entanglement of religion in conflict, religious leaders and their communities are well-placed to prevent conflict and promote reconciliation. They are frequently a trusted entity within a community with the ability to bridge different levels and groups in society. Working together, they can build social cohesion and advance justice essential to preventing conflict. In addition, they can deploy their deepest experiences of mercy

and compassion to absorb the grave sufferings caused by human violence, thereby advancing healing and reconciliation.

Within the United Nations, there is a growing interest in and understanding of the role religious leaders and FBOs play in advancing the three pillars of the organization – peace and security, development, and human rights. They are important actors in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. FBOs are already vested in all processes of human development. Religious leaders are uniquely placed to mobilize support for peace at all levels of society. In conflict and post-conflict settings, religious leaders and FBOs are oftentimes the primary catalysts of nonviolent transformation, reconciliation, and stability.

Over the past 6 years, **UNAOC has amplified its engagement with faith actors given their capacity in triggering social mobilization that can shift attitudes and behaviors.** UNAOC has strengthened its engagement with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion which provided the opportunity to explore additional avenues of collaboration with FBOs.

### **SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR**

- Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar, Secretary General, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)
- Rabbi Michael Melchior, President, Mosaica Religious Peace Initiative
- John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria
- Dr. Kamal Boraiqa Abdelsalam Hassan, Professor, Al-Azhar University
- Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Executive Director, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Moderator: Azza M. Karam, Senior Advisor on Culture, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).