

## Press release - Faith groups a force for peace in international aid

### UNHCR event highlights contribution of joint Christian and Islamic humanitarian response

GENEVA/LONDON, 5 October 2015 – The role of faith-based organizations as major contributors to humanitarian work will be the topic of a panel discussion by the Lutheran World Federation and Islamic Relief Worldwide at a side event at the annual United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Executive Committee meeting.

The discussion, People of Faith for People in Need, will take place from 08.00-10.00 on 8 October 2015 at the United Nations' Palais des Nations in Geneva. Media are warmly invited.

The panel will comprise Rev. Dr Martin Junge, LWF General Secretary, Dr Mohamed Ashmawey, CEO of Islamic Relief Worldwide, and Ms Nan Buzard, Executive Director of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies. It will be moderated by Dr Volker Türk, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

Discussion will focus on the legacy of the 2012 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, particularly that of faith-based non-governmental organizations. High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres will complete his service at the end of this year. His legacy has included reaching out to faith-based organizations.

"We want to emphasize how, when in our current world religion is all too often seen as a force for division or conflict, faith and religion can be a source of peace," Rev. Dr Martin Junge says. "People of faith can and do work together for people in need."

Dr Mohamed Ashmawey says, "There are many lessons from faith that can help us appreciate diversity in the world and the importance of living in harmony with others. Faith-based organizations can also be uniquely well placed to support faith communities in an appropriate and culturally sensitive way. At Islamic Relief Worldwide, we're inspired by our faith and appreciate the richness and value that faith perspectives can bring to individuals, families and communities."

In August 2014, IRW and the LWF signed a groundbreaking memorandum of understanding to collaborate in humanitarian, research and advocacy work. In doing so, the two global faith organizations created a strong alliance.

In the last year, the organizations have worked together in the Nepal earthquake emergency response and on psychosocial support to Syrian refugees and host communities in Al Mafraq in Jordan. The next joint project is planned to take place in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya.

In March 2015, at a side event of the Human Rights Council, UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt described cooperation between the

LWF and IRW as an example of “meaningful actions that help to enhance open-mindedness and open-heartedness towards freedom of expression and freedom of religion in society.”

**People of Faith for People in Need**

Palais des Nations

8 October 2015

09.00-10.00

**LWF media contact:**

Pauline Mumia

Interim Head of Communications

[Pauline.Mumia@lutheranworld.org](mailto:Pauline.Mumia@lutheranworld.org)

+41 22 791 6369



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