

Break-out Session 2: Living together at ease in a landscape of religious diversity and differences: education matters

Panelists:

Faisal Bin Adulrahman Bin Muaammar, Secretary General, King Abdullah Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue

Cardinal John Onaiyekan, Cardinal Roman Catholic Archbishop of Abuja

Ibrahim Abubakar Jega, Executive Secretary Abuja National Mosque Management Board

Shulamith Koenig, PDHRE – People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning

Khalek Awang, Chief Executive Officer of Global Movement of Moderates Foundation

Floriane Hohenberg, Head of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department, OSCE-ODHIR

Heiner Bielefeldt, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Moderator:

William Vendley, Secretary General Religions for Peace

Session Summary

Interreligious dialogue, especially between religious leaders, is highly important Faisal Bin Adulrahman Bin Muaammar pointed out. He also put focus on the use of the internet and social media, which in our days have a great potential to promote mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. Khalek Awang gave the example of a religious diversity in his country Malaysia. According to him, religious differences should be celebrated in order to ensure interreligious understanding and coexistence. According to Cardinal Onaiyekan from Nigeria where 80 million Christians and 80 million Muslims are living side by side, the process of globalization is bringing the world nearer to a situation where a peaceful coexistence of religion is possible. As the problem of religious fanaticism can be found within many religions an interreligious cooperation is needed to solve it. By citing various verses of the Koran, Ibrahim Abubakar Jega outlined that Islam is a religion of tolerance and respect. He insisted on the empowerment of the youth and civil societies in the interreligious dialogue as well as the establishment of an interreligious council within the UN framework which could have a consultative function for the other UN bodies.

Shulamith Koenig and Floriane Hohenberg highlight the importance of “learning human rights”. Koenig’s vision of a world in ten years with no human being ignoring human rights will make it possible to perceive human rights as a “way of life”. Additionally, she pointed out that women are suffering under patriarchic religions and have to be seen as full human beings on a global level.

Hohenberg stated that it is not enough to only teach human rights, but national authorities need effective tools to act with.

Heiner Bielefeldt concluded that there is the need to go “beyond tolerance” since tolerance is an ambivalent concept.

Quotations

Faisal Bin Abdulrahman Bin Muaammar:

“Responsible leadership means all of us leading by example.”

Cardinal John Onaiyekan:

“The challenge for religion is not to justify its existence, but its relevance in the days we are living in.”

Shulamith Koenig:

“Human rights are the banks of the river in which life flows freely.”

Khalek Awang:

“We are encouraged to celebrate the differences. We have to make it a celebration.”

Floriane Hohenberg:

“It is important to introduce the human rights discussion within a group of leaders.”