

ECRL: Embrace and celebrate religious freedom and diversity of Europe

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Gathering in Turku May 17th-19th, Religious leaders from all traditions throughout Europe reject popularist ideologies which incite fear, acknowledge the need to work in close partnership with European institutions.

“As a European wide Council we support the social and humanitarian benefits which working as a pan-European community can bring, and therefore reject the popularist ideologies and movements which incite fear, and advocate division and national interests for political gains”, ECRL representatives from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian traditions state in a common declaration.

The European Council of Religious Leaders met in Turku, Finland, on the 17th-19th May 2017, discussing Migration, Human Security and Multi-faith Action. “People increasingly recognise religion’s role as a stable guiding force in people’s lives”, thus ECRL President Thomas Wipf. “However, media

tends to view religion only as one of the causes of argument and violence. I call for the ECRL to make much greater use of the resources that make up our innermost substance and conviction: understanding, reconciliation and resistance to violence and abuse of our religions.”

As leaders and spokes-people, ECRL members condemn acts of violence, aggression and discrimination committed by anyone in the name of religious, political or national ideologies: “We unanimously and unequivocally reject erroneous interpretations of religion used to justify these indiscriminate and abhorrent acts.”

Concerning recent migration challenges Europe is facing the declaration continues: “Evidence demonstrates that religions working closely together can have a significant and positive impact on the integration process, both for those escaping conflict and host communities. We call on National governments and European institutions to recognise the valuable work being achieved by multi-faith collaborations, and do more to support this vital instrument for sensitive integration.”

ECRL acknowledges the need to work in close partnership with governments, European institutions, and civil society organisations across Europe. Members “are committed to working with anyone who shares our goal of creating a just, peaceful and harmonious Europe”.

“We call on all religious communities and leaders to embrace and celebrate the religious freedom and diversity and freedom of Europe, and work closely together to create respectful and harmonious societies in which everyone can flourish and be respected for who they are and what they believe”, the declaration closes.

The next Council meeting will be held in Hungary, 6th-9th May 2018.

The European Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace (ECRL) brings together senior religious leaders from Europe’s historical religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam together with Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs and Zoroastrians. ECRL has participatory status with the Council of Europe. ECRL is one of five regional Interreligious Councils with the Religions for Peace network. Religions for Peace – accredited to the United Nations – is the world’s largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action for peace since 1970.