



## G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021

### Highlights: Recommendations to G20 Leaders

(July 14, 2021)

The priority of the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) at this historic moment is **healing**: to heal health, social, and economic fractures stemming from the COVID-19 emergencies, and to heal the conflicts and inequities that contribute to these fractures and are accentuated by them. Religious groups and interreligious communities engage the agendas addressed by G20 leaders, in ways that offer distinctive, global perspectives. These can contribute to such healing. In this spirit, the IF20 advances specific proposals that will focus support to the most vulnerable, who risk being left behind especially in this uncertain time.

Each year the IF20 draws on a global network of interreligious groups to address all aspects of the G20 agenda. A number of policy briefs are under review for discussion with a G20 focus, and will be central topics at the IF20 Forum in Bologna, from September 12-14. Key proposals from these briefs are summarized here; the Annex below covers work-to-date more fully. Dialogue in virtual webinars will continue in the months ahead, as will plans to engage the 2022 G20 hosted by Indonesia.

#### *Priorities, Actions*

The **COVID-19 emergencies** are the priority now. G20 leaders and nations need to engage religious communities to: (a) support vaccination campaigns that reach communities worldwide by end 2021; (b) identify especially vulnerable communities and ensure a sharp focus on them; (c) convey positive messages; and (d) address vaccine hesitancy. Religious representatives need to be engaged in planning at all levels for COVID-19 response and pandemic preparedness. G20 nations should include religious communities in aid plans, enhance partnerships, and collaborate to heal tensions around public health restrictions and fractures in social cohesion linked to the global crisis.

**Inequalities within and among nations** are deepened by the COVID-19 emergencies. Extreme poverty has increased and momentum has been lost on global humanitarian and development initiatives. Commendable G20 steps to relieve COVID-19 related financial pressures on governments and communities need to continue and expand. Faith-inspired actors can bring valuable insights on effects, gaps, and priorities, as well as advocating for and providing support to groups in urgent need, including refugees, Internally Displaced Populations, and specific vulnerable communities, among them various religious communities. As focus shifts to recovery, economic and financial reform efforts will benefit from engagement with religiously affiliated networks (Religions for Peace, the Vatican COVID Commission, and Jubilee USA, among them) that can help enhance accountability mechanisms, ensure integrity in use of financial resources, and advance anti-corruption work.

**Massive disruption of formal education by the COVID-19 emergencies demands** urgent measures that go beyond a “return to normal” and make healing and well-being a cornerstone of education. Opportunities exist 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, to include trauma-informed, healing-sensitive approaches that draw on faith-inspired and indigenous traditions. Inclusive approaches are needed for reforms that address the large gaps in communities’ **health-care access** revealed by the pandemic.

**Peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts have suffered during the pandemic.** Notwithstanding calls for global ceasefires during the COVID-19 emergencies, most ongoing conflicts persist and new forms of conflict have emerged, compounding the devastation of the pandemic. This underscores the need to better understand roles of religious engagement in diplomacy and peacebuilding, which often continues when governmental and international organizations’ work is disrupted. The IF20 Working Group on Religion and Peacebuilding calls for a permanent secretariat to study the intersections of religion, conflict, and sustainable development. Collaboration with religious groups that addresses conflict, hate speech, and the dangers of extremism, and advances conflict resolution at local and transnational levels is needed today more than ever.

**The interconnected impact of racism and racial prejudice is a dominant, global concern.** It is an issue the G20 should take on as a central and continuing focus, and in a manner that involves religious communities centrally. Healing, reconciliation, and equity are unachievable without attending to the underlying impact of racism in its diverse forms. In order to establish a solid analytic foundation for continuing action, the IF20 thus recommends that the G20 establish an International Commission on Racism that would (a) give central prominence to an underlying issue that in differing forms affects both nations and international relations, and to task the G20 leaders with responsibility for action; (b) assemble a tightly organized, multidisciplinary group of prominent states-people, scholars, and experts to draw on collective wisdom and positive action paths; and (c) set out in a widely promulgated document specific principles and proposals that will spur appropriate and urgent action.

The G20 2021 agenda includes high aspirations for action on **climate change and threats to the environment**. The Papal encyclical *Laudato Si!* highlights the multiple dimensions of religious concern, advocacy, and action, and includes strategies, as well as pragmatic proposals, such as science-based action accountability measures. As climate action and finance measures are debated during and around the G20 Summit and COP26 in Glasgow, exemplary religious involvement including the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) and Faith for Earth offer promise for action and widening constituencies whose support will be vital.

IF20 proposals to G20 leaders in 2020 and 2021 include the recommendation **that the G20 Interfaith Forum be acknowledged as a formal engagement group of the G20**. Active and distinctive inputs of religious communities during the COVID-19 emergencies highlight the value of religious inputs. The IF20’s far-reaching processes of analysis and dialogue, engaging a global reach of networks and communities focused on the G20 agenda, validate this proposal.

## Process Followed

The G20 Interfaith Forum each year draws on an extensive range of interreligious networks which work on all aspects of the global and G20 agendas. IF20 working groups and initiatives draw on this network of networks, as well as individuals with academic and operational experience that, in turn, elaborate policy briefs and proposals. Policy proposals draw on a far-reaching global group of contacts and networks which reflect broad and inclusive inputs from around the world. They are based in part on webinar input from every continent (except Antarctica). The briefs are currently under discussion and will form part of the agenda for the September 12-14 Bologna Forum. Critical proposals are summarized in this document with additional ongoing dialogue (notably through virtual webinars and analysis planned in the months ahead).

In addition, the IF20 includes a **youth program** which includes three aspects: (a) a youth G20 Interfaith Forum will be held involving approximately 50 young people from around the world on September 11, 2021, immediately preceding the main Forum; (b) youth representatives have been integrated where possible into the ongoing efforts of IF20 Working Groups; and (c) youth participation will be mainstreamed into the events of the G20 Interfaith Forum itself from September 12-14, 2021. The interim recommendations from the IF20 Youth Working Group are included at the end of the Annex and are being posted on the relevant page on the IF20 website (see <https://www.g20interfaith.org/wg-children-and-youth/>).

The Annex to this document highlights work-to-date and plans. This work will continue as plans advance for the 2022 G20 process, hosted by Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> The short summaries present highlights of G20 policy briefs that are currently available. These interim summaries plus further information on the working group leaders and, where available, final policy briefs are available at <https://www.g20interfaith.org/>. Further briefs under review focus on cultural heritage, Hate speech, and Universal Health Coverage.

### 13. Youth Policy Brief: Education, Employment, and Mental Health



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**The COVID-19 Emergencies: Religious engagement**  
July 14, 2021

**Highlights: Challenges and Call to Action**

With religious communities directly involved in many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the broader economic/social crises it has sparked, their active engagement by G20 member governments is crucial to effective responses to pandemic challenges.

The **most immediate priority** is to engage and organize strategic support for the **global COVID-19 vaccination campaigns**, with action centering on global vaccine equity, logistics of rollout, positive messages to communities, countering misinformation, and vaccine hesitancy.

Experience to date argues for proactive consideration and actions that can strengthen pandemic response. **Support to the majority religious communities that support public health measures, social protection efforts (hunger, livelihoods), and conflict resolution is needed.** Careful and strategic attention to the minority of religious communities that resist public health measures, further divisions, and spread misinformation is also important. These diverse faith community roles are sometimes but not always recognized, so clear information for policy makers on their diverse roles and the subsequent lessons learned is important.

Framing and delivering **public health messages** have particular significance in the COVID-19 health crisis. International and national health authorities are engaging faith actors in delivering critical public health messages; WHO's appreciation for the vital role religious leaders play is reflected in outreach efforts and specific guidance directed to religious communities<sup>2,1</sup>. Public health guidelines on gatherings, for example, meet not only some generally positive responses and compliance from religious groups, but also some opposition and resistance. Religious communities are best placed to address and combat this resistance and to counter misinformation, whether false and dangerous information is deliberate or inadvertent.

Religious **delivery of health care** (integrated to varying degrees in health systems) and spiritual care play important roles. Broader religious roles and their potential for positive impact are frequently ignored, with distinctive assets and challenges not taken fully into account. Apart from missed opportunities, tensions can arise when religious dimensions are ignored or not folded into the pandemic response.

The common religious focus on mobilizing urgent **direct assistance to meet the social and economic needs of vulnerable communities** and advocating for the voiceless argues for G20 engagement. This applies to health care and pastoral care needs, and to the much larger numbers

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2021/05/20/default-calendar/covid-19-vaccine-ommunications-webinar-series-co-convended-by-the-world-health-organization-unicef-and-religions-for-peace>

indirectly affected by economic shutdowns and other social repercussions. Religious community efforts to protect and support vulnerable communities suffer from weak coordination with, and limited support from the public health sector and other efforts.

Social tensions linked to the COVID-19 emergency often involve religious communities, including scapegoating of specific, often minority groups. Domestic violence and abuse of children are priority concerns as they have increased during the crisis, calling for swift action. Religious communities can play active roles. Such efforts should be combined with continuing active religious involvement in the broader promotion of social cohesion through education and leadership, including addressing hate speech, which has expanded with the pandemic.

Religious leaders and communities will play crucial roles in the next phases of the COVID-19 crisis and recovery. Priority areas are vaccination programs, including practical aspects of testing, distribution, but also partnering with the scientific and public health communities in earning confidence and trust from local communities. Other crucial roles include addressing health disparities, fortifying primary health care systems, and identifying and supporting vulnerable communities in the continuing socio-economic crises. The potential contributions of faith communities in conflict prevention and resolution, and in peacebuilding will be essential in addressing social tensions, not only in fragile and conflict zones, but also throughout societies where the COVID-19 has shone a bright light on wide inequalities and injustice.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Poverty and Inequality**  
(July 14, 2021)

**Highlights**

Extraordinary financial demands on states (as well as individuals) are a critical effect of the COVID-19 emergencies. While wealthy nations have capacities to mobilize resources including for social protection, less prosperous countries do not. Results are precarious fiscal situations and large gaps in delivery of critical services, notably those to vulnerable communities. Widely disparate access to vaccination among countries is a prime example and threatens an equitable recovery. Cuts in funding going to refugee communities exemplify the depth of the problem. Immediate fiscal pressures mirror wide and often widening inequalities that the emergencies make increasingly visible. The G20 plays central roles in multilateral mobilization of existing and new instruments that, for example, aim to address debt burdens of poorer countries and provide special funding to governments as well as unprecedented new funding.

The central if generally unheralded and uncoordinated roles of religious communities in meeting urgent social protection needs highlights gaps in reach and effectiveness of pertinent programs offer constructive knowledge for policy makers. They argue for further analysis of responses and strategic engagement as pandemic preparedness is examined.

Building on decades long engagement on global financial architecture and with a primary focus on its impact on poverty and inequities, religious actors (individual leaders, coalitions, and institutions) are among leading civil society advocates for bold action. They are part of the complex negotiations involving G20 nations and major multilateral players, notably the International Monetary Fund ((IMF) and the World Bank. A G20 Interfaith objective and recommendation is to broaden and deepen the pertinent coalitions so that their engagement, at global and national levels, is more effective in assuring that the measures involve never stray from a sharp focus on poor and vulnerable communities.

Of particular concern is that the G20 nations act to increase funding of extraordinary humanitarian needs, with a special focus on refugees and IDPs, and on food crises.

The deep inequalities that the COVID-19 emergencies have made unmistakably apparent and, in many instances, accentuated, are a central concern for the G20 Interfaith Forum. These issues belong in a central place for the Italian G20 presidency, which focuses on emergency response and recovery, and for the Indonesian 2022 G20 presidency, opens extraordinary opportunities for bold reforms in financial architecture. The 2015 Global Agendas and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets and indicators offer a constructive guide for global action but the framework and specific approaches and targets call for deliberate review and refreshing post COVID-19 emergencies, with a view to effective responses to future emergencies and exogenous shocks.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2020**  
**Anti-Racism Initiative: Preliminary Recommendations**  
(July 14, 2021)

**Call for Action: An International Commission of Inquiry on Racism and Discriminatory Policies and Practices**

Racism, in its many expressions including multiple practices of discrimination, is globally ubiquitous and stubbornly persistent. While we recognize the day-to-day impact of individual acts of racism, the G20 processes offer a potential to engage systemic and structural racism with a view to bold action. This deserves an explicit priority because of racism’s grave social, ethical, economic, legal, political, and religious and spiritual impacts. The wide and interconnected impact of racism and racial prejudice for all Sustainable Development Goals and targets as well as, more immediately, the multifaceted COVID-19 emergencies, argues for action by the G20 to take on anti-racism as a central and continuing agenda focus.

The G20 Interfaith Forum, through its Anti-Racism Initiative and its other policy work, is committed to confronting racism in all its forms, with the aspiration of supporting actions that eradicate it. Healing, reconciliation, and equity are unachievable without attending to that goal.

The G20 Interfaith Forum recommends that, to establish a solid analytic foundation for continuing action, the G20 establish an International Commission on Racism. The goals of such a Commission would be:

- To give central prominence to an underlying issue that in differing forms affects both nations and international relations, and to task the G20 leaders with responsibility to act.
- To assemble a tightly organized, multidisciplinary group of prominent statespeople, scholars, and experts for gathering the considerable collective wisdom that exists on positive action paths.
- To set out in a widely promulgated document specific principles and proposals that will spur appropriate and urgent action.

**Racism in its Multifaceted Forms is the Crisis of Crises**

Racial injustice permeates the many crises that threaten humanity. It is a common thread that, if root causes are left unaddressed, threatens the legitimacy of the international order. Racist practices influence policies and structures that undermine international cooperation in vaccine distribution, food security, and climate mitigation and adaptation.

Efforts that address racial injustice reinforce the stabilization of the international order and promote economic development.



## **Contributions of Interfaith Organizations and Communities**

Interfaith organizations recognize the importance of commissions of the kind that we are proposing. Although commissions can be imperfect, they provide a principled way of opening up necessary conversations and facing with honesty and courage some of the challenges we face in the world. There are historical examples of such commissions in recent history and in several regions of the world, including several in G20 member states. While religious communities have at times been part of the problem, they can also be part of the solution. As religious communities begin to reclaim their spiritual roots as distinct from their institutional constructs, they may more effectively speak for the needs and aspirations of the 82% of the human community who have a religious affiliation. The antidote for racism is to accept and embrace the full humanity of every person. This includes the sacredness of human conscience and the full dignity and access to all human rights which are inherent in the world's religious and spiritual traditions. These religious attributes require legal protection and promotion to achieve a culture of respect for human beings.

## **Recommendation**

To achieve peace among cultures and peace among religions, it is our conviction that the scourge of racism must be addressed. We believe the background and arguments above to present a compelling case.

We therefore recommend the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry with members from the 19 nations of the G20 and the European Union. We acknowledge that Commissions of Inquiry of many sorts have a rich history with mixed results. While a Commission of Inquiry's findings and recommendations are not binding, they significantly influence public opinion, shape public policy, and promote healing.

The IF20 urges the leaders of the G20 to consider this recommendation and pledge to commit its considerable networks and resources to its realization.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Religion and Peacebuilding: Intersecting Fractures**  
(July 14, 2021)

To strengthen global peace and security, the IF20 urges G20 nations to advocate for and model *constructive engagement with religious communities and influencers*, acknowledging their unparalleled social reach and a singular capacity for moral suasion, to support public health initiatives, strengthen economies, build community resilience, and mitigate drivers of violence.

Faith actors are engaged in all phases of peace and play a wide range of roles. They serve as mediators and advocates in both religious and non-religious conflicts, and are particularly likely to be engaged when parties are divided along ethno-religious lines. The presence of faith actors in conflict mediation demonstrably increases the likelihood of reaching a negotiated settlement.

A direct consequence of the sweeping economic disruption caused by the pandemic has been the scaling back of peacebuilding efforts due to diminished funding. Historically, recessions have significantly impacted peacebuilding operations: in the 2008 recession, funding for UN peacekeeping efforts was cut by approximately 20%. Under COVID-19, 4 out of 5 peacebuilders have had their funding reduced. Peacebuilders report they cannot carry out projects due to limitations on travel and barriers to traditional and digital communication that make it difficult to reach remote populations; they also increased security risks and threats to physical safety. Religious peacebuilders, often underrecognized and underfunded, suffer disproportionately from these effects.

The IF20 **recommends** that G20 members better engage the distinctive peacebuilding capacities of religious stakeholders in the following ways:

- 1) Develop a permanent secretariat to study the intersection of religion, conflict, and sustainable development (including public health). By providing faith-based actors with a forum to systematically contribute their technical and relational expertise, they can help to reduce the severity of future, unanticipated global crises.
- 2) Partner with effective global inter-faith networks to mitigate civil society mistrust and grievances that currently push communities to resist government public health measures, deepen identity conflicts, and radicalize toward violence. This may include an outlet for the expression of shared spiritual values across faith traditions and would require a public commitment by G20 members to pluralism and religious tolerance.
- 3) Build systematic national and global mechanisms to enhance the technical skills and collaborative role of faith actors in responding to increased conflict in vulnerable communities, especially those who were severely affected by the political, economic, and psychosocial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Governance and Accountability: Fighting corruption in the COVID-19 emergencies**  
*(July 14, 2021)*

**Highlights**

Corruption is a continuing G20 priority and both the G20 leaders and engagement groups have highlighted the need for concerted national and multilateral action. For several years, the IF20 has highlighted the distinctive roles that religious actors can and should play in combating corruption as members of integrated global coalitions and partners with committed national governments. The COVID-19 emergencies have magnified the challenges of amplified and new corruption-related issues. These include vaccine equity and effectiveness of vaccination campaigns and, the challenges of processing with integrity large and rapidly-prepared amounts financial assistance, and actions such as debt relief that demand effective mechanisms to guard against misuse and assure that benefits reach those most in need.

Addressing corruption is central to protecting human rights and human dignity, as it jeopardizes the functioning and legitimacy of political institutions and processes, economic development, and the rule of law. This is the foundation for religious engagement on the topic, alongside the direct knowledge that religious communities have of local impact and mechanisms of corruption, for example in health care and education. With wide variation in experience, religious communities have particular responsibilities and potential for action in the poorest and most vulnerable and fragile situations. Religious and faith traditions share teachings that speak to the core values of trust, righteousness and honesty; corrupt practices are considered shameful and reprehensible in light of their most fundamental beliefs and paradigms. There is potential for expanded action and cooperation by (a) building on ethical teachings to bolster effective action, (b) documenting the daily corrosive effects of corruption, (c) mobilizing communities in demanding public integrity, (d) encouraging accountability and transparency, and (e) serving as “watch-dogs” to expose and denounce corrupt actors and practices. Religious actors, however, need to meet several challenges that include limited accountability practices within many organizations, which contribute to sub-optimal engagement.

This brief highlights the need for G20 governments to engage with religious and other civil society communities in the specific context of the COVID-19 emergencies. It also distils the large body of operational and academic counsel as comprehensive recommendations covering public sector corruption, private company approaches and roles, specific actions to address the distinctive needs of vulnerable groups, the impact of new technologies on corruption, and civil society roles. It explores distinctive roles for faith communities and organizations with a view to enhancing engagement with G20 governments, leaders, and other bodies and engagement groups in the fight against corruption.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Education: A Time for Healing**  
(July 14, 2021)

*“Children will never accept a return to “normal” after the pandemic because “normal” was never good enough.” Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF.*

International organizations and scholars alike have emphasized how deeply the COVID-19 emergencies have both underlined and exacerbated inequalities in educational systems worldwide. Mass school closures and attempted shifts to online and hybrid modes of learning highlight significant inadequacies and global disparities in children’s and young people’s educational access facilities. Much can be learned from our collective experiences during the pandemic that can inform educational transformation as we move forward. The G20 Interfaith Education Working Group highlights the central importance of inclusion and equity in access to quality education and meaningful learning experiences, and the need to focus on children, young people, and teachers’ human connections, healing and well-being through education. They call for consistent community-based educational support, e.g. from faith organizations, and intergenerational learning, in a time of disorientation and crisis, highlighting the importance of co-creative solutions for global challenges and the need to strengthen communities Online and blended learning demands that resources to be made available on a fair, democratic, human-centered basis.

Responding to the G20 Interfaith Forum theme ‘*A Time to Heal*’, and calls of international organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, Global Compact on Education, and Global Partnership for Education, to engage young people in educational decision-making processes, the IF20 Education Working Group partners launched a **Global Listening Initiative**, inviting adolescents from across five continents to participate in experiential workshops designed to provide safe and caring spaces for deep silence-listening-dialogue. These approaches are trauma-informed and healing-sensitive, and are guided by the practices of most religions, faiths, and indigenous traditions. They encouraged adolescents to reflect on and explore their experiences of life and education during the Covid-19 pandemic; to share and identify who and what have been most supportive to their learning and well-being at this time; and to propose key priorities for educational transformation towards healing and flourishing in their contexts. Recommendations to the G20 draw on their insights as well as other voices, with a focus on religious communities.

### **Key Recommendations**

1. **Safeguard children and young people’s healing and well-being as a cornerstone of education** by (a) creating spaces in curriculum for enriching students’ and teachers’ healing and well-being, including social-emotional learning support, counselling, personal care, and other relational processes, such as peer-mentoring; (b) providing time for humanizing experiences, such as play, silent reflection, meditation/prayer, experiences in nature, physical activity, music,

arts, as well as community services; (c) engaging in collaborative and dialogic approaches to teaching and learning.

2. **Respect children and young people as active partners and agents in healing and well-being** by engaging them formally and informally in educational decisions at all levels, e.g. in the classrooms, at school, community, and beyond.

3. **Ensure all children and young people's equitable and consistent access to good quality education** by (a) financing education inclusively, equitably, and equally; (b) investing in good quality educational resources and facilities for all, including digital learning platforms, computer devices, and other equipment for blended learning; and (c) providing electricity and sufficient bandwidth for online learning.

4. **Focus on global flourishing as a common educational agenda** by (a) abolishing standardization and high-stakes testing, and instead taking a relational, participatory, and context sensitive approach to educational evaluation; (b) integrating environmental and nature-based learning; (c) Cody zoning learning contents that are community rooted and relevant to global challenges, such as learning about climate change.

5. **Prioritize teachers' professional development** by (a) co-creating a global platform for teachers' learning and well-being; (b) strengthening teachers' digital and online teaching competencies; and (c) nurturing teachers' capacities to facilitate co-creative, collaborative, and dialogic learning spaces.



## **G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021** **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking** (July 14, 2021)

### **Highlights**

Modern slavery and human trafficking have prompted many religious leaders and communities to advocate for action and to pursue programs aimed at preventing and halting exploitative practices and supporting their survivors. The G20 Interfaith Forum has over several years urged G20 leaders to act more forcefully and directly to combat this evil. With many trends exacerbated by the COVID-19 emergencies, the needs for focus and action are greater still.

Human trafficking is a low-risk, high-profit crime for perpetrators and an international focus for more than 20 years. The 2000 United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), the USA Trafficked Victims Protection Act Public Law (No: 115-393), and commitments that are part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect approaches and efforts. However, too little progress has been made to reduce and eradicate it. Root causes include poverty which forces or propels many into exploitative situations and the insecurity that drives movement across continents and borders by individuals and family groups, putting people in acutely vulnerable situations that trap them in debt bondage and human trafficking. People smuggling and human trafficking – at time coincident but distinct -- both prey on the vulnerability of human beings. The COVID-19 emergencies with their profound economic hardship have exposed the most vulnerable to greater risks. A disproportionate share of exploitation for women and girls is a particular concern; an estimated 72% of all victims of human trafficking detected worldwide are female, with sexual exploitation a predominant form of trafficking.

With long traditions of providing education, healthcare, and social services, particularly to migrants, women, and other vulnerable populations, religious institutions help strengthen community structures that should serve as bulwarks **against** modern slavery. Faith leaders are often a trusted resource for victims of trafficking, who commonly confide in them as a first step in seeking help. Places of worship have been used for sanctuary and safety; religious leaders play significant roles in ensuring the spiritual health and well-being of their congregations and communities.

### **Recommendations:**

In this time of crisis, radical new approaches to fight these evils are needed, and possible, at local, national, and international levels. High-level strategic buy-in with political will is needed, based on effective monitoring with meaningful metrics (of incidence, patterns, and efficacy of tested policy interventions). Six focal areas could spur progress:

**(1) Interventions with likeminded governments and multilateral bodies can remove slavery from supply chains and business models.** With government procurement and business transactions subject to a legally binding ‘no human trafficking transparency framework,’ G20 governments can honour their commitments to international agreements and domestic legislation.

**(2) Establish a notion of ‘tainted money’** with financial benefit/profit from modern slavery or human trafficking surrendered or seized for reparation or to assist in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking, and support survivor recovery.

**(3) Make the internet a modern slavery and trafficking ‘free zone’ by legal instrument.**

**(4) Translate international instruments into policy and action for the modern day,** for example for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

**(5) Engage multilateral bodies more actively,** notably assets for action other than UN bodies.

**(6) Work to reset a global ‘moral compass’: people before profit or self-gratification.** The overriding principle should focus on the causes and drivers, with an aim to revert criminal money to finances for good, redirecting the US\$150 billion with urgency and increasing responsibility and accountability.



## **G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**

**Religious advocacy and support on Climate Change and Biodiversity (July 12, 2021)**

### **Highlights**

With “Planet” a central G20 theme and wide-ranging movements, networks, and researchers with religious affiliations contributing to the global efforts to accelerate action on climate change, environment issues and their linkages to broad global agendas will feature prominently in Bologna. Action by these multiple groups address multiple dimensions of advocacy, accountability, and action, and include those that are outwardly focused (often integral parts of broader civil society initiatives) and inwardly framed, for example the World Resources Institute program to establish science-based measures of climate action. With the Papal climate summit on October 4 in Rome and COP26 in Glasgow in October, the G20 Interfaith Forum in Bologna aims to mobilize communities and highlight areas of consensus and debate, notably on topics where religious perspectives have the greatest relevance.

Faith-linked initiatives stand out for their capacity to speak to the moral imperative of protecting the environment. The personal leadership of prominent religious leaders, notably Pope Francis and Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, highlight the moral imperatives and responsibilities of religious communities. Interfaith networks such as Religions for Peace and the United Religious Initiative (URI) have large potential for mobilization and enhancing concerted efforts that bring different religious communities into harmony. They play pivotal roles in directing global attention to the challenges facing the world’s environment and in empowering local communities to pursue sustainable solutions. By engaging with religious communities and organizations, G20 leaders and national governments can strengthen their own response to the numerous challenges posed by deforestation.

Two interreligious efforts merit specific G20 attention: The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative and Faiths for Earth, both initiatives engaged with the United Nations Environment Program and global interreligious networks. Proactive partnerships with religious institutions offer significant opportunities to enhance awareness and spur action.





## **G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021** **An Inclusive Global Conversation on Artificial Intelligence** (July 10, 2020)

### **Highlights**

- Various religious communities and think tanks with theological links are exploring risks and benefits of the rapid development of AI. Their focus on values dimensions of different dimensions positions them well to contribute to global and local dialogue on AI policies and governance challenges at national and international levels
- Religious communities could themselves enhance discourse and identify responsibilities both within religious communities and in interreligious platforms. Specific contributions should focus on framing policy-focused ethical approaches and injunctions, developing an inter-religious understanding of cultural differences, and helping to identify vulnerable social groups in need of protection and uplift.
- The setting is the challenge for governments to act quickly to harness artificial intelligence (AI) for the public good and mitigate negative outcomes. Industry and civil society, including religious communities, should be involved in the governance process. It is at country and regional governance levels that norms and standards to guide regulations are best situated.
- A challenge where religious institutions can be effective advocates is in pressing for more global, inclusive approaches to AI governance, given the diversity of experiences and concerns facing the international community.
- Shared cultural values—often reflected in or emerging from religious practice—can guide national, regional, and international policies so that AI develops as a tool that assists and augments human capability.
- A common and vital theme is to ensure that human beings are central to the organization of AI-enabled cybernetic systems. AI should be used to supplement, rather than replace, human judgment. Respecting human dignity could help ensure, for example, that systems should not influence individual choices by being designed in ways that nudge individual decisions in consumer-choice or democratic participation. Broadly, a human-rights based framework is critical to develop shared norms across countries.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Recommendations regarding Freedom of Religion or Belief**  
July 14, 2021

Contributions of religion/belief communities are necessary to make real progress in the goals of sustainable development, and this applies especially, but not exclusively, in times of crisis such as the one generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such contributions will occur as a natural consequence if there is an appropriate legal and public policy framework that guarantees that all individuals and communities can live and act freely in accordance with the moral values that derive from their religion or belief. Therefore, we recommend:

1. **Respect.** To ensure the highest possible degree of freedom of religion or belief for all individuals and communities, considering that the protection of this fundamental right constitutes a paramount public interest, and recognizing that religion or belief are often essential to the identity and dignity of individuals, groups and institutions. Restrictions on freedom of religion or belief should be imposed only when they are justified by objective and specific reasons, and when they are strictly necessary and proportionate, i.e., when there are not less restrictive means to achieve a legitimate aim linked to the protection of public order, safety, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
2. **Equality.** To ensure that religion and belief are subject to equal treatment with respect to other comparable social phenomena, and therefore to ensure that the exercise of freedom of religion or belief is protected on equal terms in comparison with other fundamental rights. This implies that, in times of national emergency, religious worship and meeting should not be constrained by limitations that are stricter than limitations imposed on other activities considered essential for society. This implies also that governments should consult with religion/belief communities in order to avoid that regulations do not restrict essential aspects of the practice of their religion or belief.
3. **Cooperation/Consultation.** To promote the establishment, design and proper functioning of institutional channels and platforms of mutual cooperation and dialogue between state/international organizations and religious/belief communities. Such channels are particularly important in times of emergency or crisis like COVID-19, as they may facilitate the contribution of the vast network of religious/belief entities and institutions existing in virtually all countries, to the benefit of all citizens. For instance, health institutions, which can be of help in a variety of ways, such as treating people infected by the virus, providing medical material and equipment, contributing to vaccination campaigns, enhancing hygienic measures that would help prevent similar situations to occur, etc. Religious/belief communities and institutions can help also in other less quantifiable areas such as spreading and explaining anti-COVID-19 measures; raising in the population consciousness of the significance—also moral—of complying with government’s rules; identifying situations and sources of risk and conveying them to public authorities; combatting the disinformation—be it the result of ignorance or of mischievous interests—and hate speech that tend to proliferate in this type of scenarios, etc.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Refugees and Forced Migration: Religious dimensions**  
(July 14, 2021)

**Highlights**

Forced migration, a central and growing global challenge, has taken on new dimensions during the COVID-19 emergencies, with rising numbers of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and straitened humanitarian finance. The situation is complicated by the increasing prominence of movement linked to climate change. Forced migrants are among the world's most vulnerable people, subject to immense human suffering and uncertainty. Addressing causes and consequences of forced migration belongs at the center of the G20 agenda.

Religious actors, including faith-inspired operational organizations and movements, moral leaders like Pope Francis, and scholars, play significant roles in direct support to forced migrants at all stages (advocacy, conflict resolution, service provision, resettlement) and places (conflict zones, host countries), in advocacy for support, and in understanding the forces that drive forced migration. Shared core values of religious communities involve compelling and unifying calls to compassion and hospitality. Religious communities, as transnational actors, can provide services and advocacy across borders.

Deeper and more strategic collaboration among religious institutions and faith-inspired organizations, G20 member governments, and those present and working in refugee-hosting communities can foster the tools, partnerships, and funding needed to implement the Global Compact on Refugees and associated action programs. They can bolster the work of local communities driven by humanitarian values to support those in need and address urgent problems like health care, protection, and education. Religious actors bring to the table as a leading concern the imperative of action to protect children in forced migration settings.

The G20 Summit offers a crucial venue to coordinate and advance responses for refugees and IDPs, who are primarily hosted in communities of low- or middle-income countries. With the COVID-19 emergency heightening burdens on both forced migrants and host governments, urgent financial pressures demand action and G20 members can and should assure humanitarian finance at this critical time, cessation of forced displacement to new areas set up solely for warehousing purposes, and access to much needed vaccinations in all these at risk communities.

Specific recommendations draw on the experience and the moral teachings, networks, resources, and experiences that religious communities and faith-inspired organizations can offer to the G20 agenda, looking both to specific priorities in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and longer term action. G20 members should give urgent attention to developing partnerships involving refugee-

hosting countries, G20 members, development finance organizations, and international organizations (including faith communities), to meet immediate health care needs of refugees and IDPs. Sharing promising practices for migrant situations and long-term integration of refugees and IDPs are first steps. Given significant service delivery expertise, and strong networks, faith inspired organizations should be fully engaged in planning and implementation. A priority is to stop dangerous migration; G20 leaders should support approaches that address dangerous migration routes, along the lines of the “humanitarian corridors”, with faith communities natural partners in origin and destination countries. The Global Compact on Refugees foresees expansion of countries involved in refugee resettlement and G20 leaders can advance this goal with clear time frames, including engaging faith leaders to build public support for refugee resettlement. Partnerships with faith-inspired organizations offer particular promise for two urgent issues: education (especially for girls post COVID) and livelihood support.



## **G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**

July 15, 2021

### **Women's Rights during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Need for G20 Member States to Act**

July 15, 2021

The IF20 Gender Working Group highlights both the severe impact of the COVID-19 emergencies on women and affirms both findings about and commitments to supporting international commitments to gender equality. Both G20 states and religious communities can advance immediate support to women during the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing progress towards equity.

The G20 Interfaith Forum calls upon the G20 Leaders and Member States to:

1. Fully engage faith actors in strategies to address obstacles to progress towards women's equality.
2. Engage with existing dialogical platforms where policymakers and faith actors explore ways to optimize faith engagement in gender equality and encourage the creation of similar dialogical platforms in states where such platforms do not yet exist.
3. Support the strengthening of the evidence base on faith influence – both negative and positive – on social norms relating to gender equality, engaging faith leaders throughout the process, to improve understanding of the roles of faith actors.
4. Document, elevate, and support people, institutions, and initiatives leading change at the intersection of faith, gender equality, and women's leadership.
5. Advance faith literacy as it pertains to gender equality within all G20 Member States' institutions.
6. Improve data collection and harmonization among G20 member states and enhance cooperation in eradicating damaging stereotypes and creating public policies to protect women through the recovery period of COVID-19.



**G20 INTERFAITH FORUM 2021**  
**Youth Policy Brief: Education, Employment, and Mental Health**  
(July 14, 2021)

**Highlights**

The IF20 policy brief on global priorities for youth is presented by “ACWAY,” A Common Word Among the Youth. ACWAY is the IF20’s global youth partner and chairs its Working Group on Youth. It is a global movement that brings together young people from many nations and backgrounds to increase understanding among different cultures and faiths and to promote peaceful coexistence by delivering local community activities. Since 2015, ACWAY fellows have engaged in over 200 interfaith and intercultural activities, participating in international forums in Morocco, Australia, Sudan, and Azerbaijan and an online forum for the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The Youth Policy Brief highlights youth-centered recommendations that are integral to the key themes and topics of the 2021 G20 Summit. The United Nations Security Council has affirmed unanimously that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.” This role is recognized by the 2020 G20 Presidency Agenda which states that “the G20 should be forward – looking and adopt a long-term approach to pave the way for the future generations.”

The recommendations in the brief reflect inputs of young interfaith leaders from around the globe, gathered during the pandemic. The consultation process began with a global call for submissions, in which young interfaith leaders were asked to submit the most pressing challenges in their communities, along with potential solutions. At a second consultation during the ACWAY Youth Forum in February 2021, a youth-specific focus group of 75 young people, collected multiple perspectives on further recommendations.

The brief outlines the challenges facing young people around the world, and practical policy-centered recommendations to address them. Areas of policy focus include the following:

- (1) access to education,
- (2) stable employment,
- (3) mental health,
- (4) youth in conflict zones,
- (5) climate change, and
- (6) access to the decision-making processes.

ACWAY recommends that the Interfaith Development Goals be adopted by all G20 member states as a tool to monitor and measure interfaith impact in the sector.