

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ARRIA-FORMULA MEETING

“RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR A SAFE WORLD”

**Organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations
in partnership with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**

Date: 24 April 2018

Time: 3:00 – 6:00 pm

Venue: Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Participation: All UN Member States, Permanent Observers and non-governmental organizations accredited to the UN are invited to attend. The Aria-meeting will be open to the press.

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Too often hijacked by extremists, religions are frequently blamed for the on-going violence and terror attacks that threaten global stability. In these times of rising xenophobia and intolerance, religious leaders have a critical role to play in supporting peace. They have the capacity to build bridges between people and to spread essential values to the world, such as mutual respect, compassion, and forgiveness.

As stated by UN Secretary General António Guterres *“Religious leaders can play a particularly important role in influencing the behaviour of those who share their beliefs. [...] It is vital that religious leaders from all faiths show leadership.”*¹ Religious leaders can have a strong and wide-ranging influence on people from all walks of life and it has become urgent to better understand their potential. In that regard, the global community must encourage and incorporate the work of religious leaders within broader efforts to achieve long-term stability and to prevent violent incidents fuelled by hatred and intolerance.

Strengthening the collaboration of religious leaders with international institutions, governments, and civil society has become pivotal to the successful implementation of vital UN recommendations and agendas related to global security, sustainable peace and prevention of conflicts. This event with its focus on the role of Religious Leaders for a Safe World seeks to serve as a platform for Member States and representatives of faith-based organizations to discuss the role of religious leaders in fostering peace. Participants will also be encouraged to share good practices and recommendations on ways to develop effective global cooperation between religious leaders and relevant stakeholders.

This event will build on the crucial recommendations delivered during previous iterations of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions on the role of religious leaders in achieving global stability. Organized every three years in Astana, Kazakhstan, the Congress has addressed essential issues such as the growing efforts of religious actors to collaborate with political leaders and civil society, their commitment to foster tolerance and respect for religious and cultural diversity, their responsibility in engaging young people across the world to prevent them from falling into violent extremism.

¹ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, *“Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes”*, July 2017 <http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan%20of%20Action%20Advanced%20Copy.pdf>

The 6th Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, under the same theme with the Arria-Formula Meeting (“Religious leaders for a Safe World”) will be held on 10-11 October 2018 in Astana.

As one of the leading entities in the United Nations system for the promotion of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) has organized more than 30 events involving religious leaders since 2013. Over the years, the Alliance has developed a thorough expertise in understanding the dynamics and social processes that strengthen interfaith collaboration and drive peaceful coexistence. UNAOC further recognizes that inclusion is essential to a healthy society and that every group – no matter its faith – has a role to play. A safe world for all will not be achieved without a strong commitment to social inclusion and respect for diversity.

Objective

The Arria-Formula Meeting will be an occasion for the United Nations community and other relevant stakeholders, including representatives of faith-based organizations, to stress the significance of fostering respectful tolerance across diverse cultures and religions, to address violent extremism and terrorism, and to reiterate the principles of relevant UN resolutions.

The event will be also designed to:

- Explore international, regional and national measures to ensure global cooperation in order to promote interfaith harmony, inter-religious dialogue and tolerance
- Consider a variety of approaches and strategies for religions and faith traditions to use in contributing to peaceful coexistence;
- Explore how regional organizations and sub-regional structures can enhance international cooperation in promoting inter-religious dialogue and tolerance;
- Promote further the “culture of peace” as an integral approach to prevent conflicts, and serve as an alternative to the culture of war and violence, based on education for peace;
- Build on sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, gender parity, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament as means/tools for peace;
- Support further the “rapprochement of cultures”, which implies that international security and social inclusion cannot be attained in a sustainable manner without a commitment to the principles as human dignity, conviviality and solidarity which are the cornerstones of human coexistence in all faiths and secular ideologies. In particular, contribute to the advancement of the *International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures* (2013-2022).
- Assist Member States in their analyses and understanding of the reasons and root causes underlying violent extremism and terrorism, how these can be addressed and the role of religion and faith traditions. This will result in a valuable input for the comprehensive review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as well as provide insights into further consideration of the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism by addressing the root causes to prevent violent extremism and terrorism.