



UNAOC and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

“Religious Leaders for a Safe World”

Tuesday 24 April, 3:00 – 6:00 pm, Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters

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 Antonio Gutierrez *“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.

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

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>

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.

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.