



# URI Europe Dialogue-Letter No. 1

## September/October 2004

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#### **1. From the URI EEC (European Executive Committee)**

Dear friends, peace and blessings to you,

we are offering you today a new format for our dialogue within URI Europe: in this dialogue-letter (newsletter) we are happy to share with you information on interfaith activities, mostly within the URI-framework.

The new format has also risen out of the need for us to remain in touch with each other, while at the same time accommodating the need not to be overburdened by a flood of emails. Our plan is to edit this dialogue-letter approximately once a month.

You can move through the document within Microsoft Word by pressing Ctrl and clicking onto the hyperlinks.

We hope you like the format! – Feel free to share comments, stories and suggestions.

Wishing you all the best in your daily life,

Mr. Dr. Raschid Bockemuehl, Dortmund/Germany, Member URI Europe

Mr. Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz, Bonn/Germany, Member URI Europe

Mr. Patrick Hanjoul, Antwerp/Belgium, Member URI Europe

Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, Eindhoven/The Netherlands, Treasurer URI Europe/Global Council member

Mr. Jean-Mathieu Lochten, Brussels/Belgium, President URI Europe

Mr. Deepak Naik, Coventry/United Kingdom, Vice-President URI Europe/Global Council member

Ms. Heidi Rautionmaa, Espo/Finland, URI Global Council at-large-trustee

Mr. Szabolcs Sajgo, Dobogokoe/Hungary, Member URI Europe

Ms. Karimah Stauch, Bonn/Germany, Co-ordinator URI Europe

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## ***1. a) From the URI EEC – Announcement: URI Europe conference planned to take place in Brussels, September 22-24, 2005***

The URI Europe board (EEC) plans to organize a URI Europe conference in Brussels, Belgium, September 22-24, 2005. Please mark your calendars.

The subject will be “Overcoming prejudices and irritations between people of different cultures and religions in the process of the European unification”.

Like previous URI conferences the focus will be on the interaction between the participants, and we will give our best to create a safe space, where thoughts, feelings, spirituality, information and plans for action can be exchanged to the benefit of all.

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## ***1. b) From the URI EEC - CD-ROM URI Europe Activity Explorer***



The CD “Activity Explorer URI Europe” contains hundreds of pictures and descriptions of the activities different URI Europe conferences from 1997-2002. It explains exercises and activities and thereby enables its user to model their own events along the lines of the URI Europe experiences.

The CD ROM contains a leaflet, explaining the activities in the URI Europe and the Middle East-conference which took place in Berlin in April 2002. It has been put together by URI Europe Treasurer and URI Global Council member Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

The price per CD is EUR 5,-- or \$ 5,--, including packing and shipping. For ordering please send an e-mail to: [urieurope@planet.nl](mailto:urieurope@planet.nl).

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## **2. European URI CC-efforts – invitations, reports**

### **2. a) European URI CC-efforts - Invitation Interreligious House of Learning “Women, men and God’s patriarchy”, co-organized by the German Muslim-League Bonn CC, in the Evangelical Academy Arnoldshain near Frankfurt, Germany, November 19-21, 2004**

You are cordially invited to the Interreligious House of Learning, which takes place from November 19-21, 2004, in the Evangelical Academy Arnoldshain near Frankfurt, Germany. Subject of this yearly event will be this time “Women, Men and God’s Patriarchy – Gender Perspectives on Anthroposophy and Theology of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim Tradition”.

Speakers include - among others - Rabbi Elisa Klapheck, Berlin; Prof. Dr. Ute Eisen, University of Giessen; Dr. Manuela Kalsky, Dominican Centre of Study for Theology and Society (DSTS), Nijmegen, NL; Hamideh Mohagheghi, HUDA-Netzwerk muslimischer Frauen, Hannover; Prof. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, University of Leiden, NL, Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz, DMBL Bonn, Bonn.

The special times of the three religions – Muslim Friday prayer, Kabbalat Shabbat, Shabbat Meditation, Dhikr (Sufi-Meditation), Christian Service - will be celebrated in the framework of the conference.

Friday night will feature a festive dinner and an evening of encounter with stories and music.

During the conference the exhibition “don’t adjust your head” – Living between war and peace – with photographs from Iraq and Afghanistan by Marc Petzold will be on in the Academy.

\*\*Conference-language is German.\*\*

Sponsoring-organisations:

Evangelische Akademie Arnoldshain; Katholische Akademie Rabanus Maurus; Deutsche Muslim-Liga Bonn e.V.; CIBEDO e.V..

Fees:

Conference-fee EUR 20,-.

Accommodation and lodging:

In single room EUR 116,-,

In double-room EUR 110,-.

Students and unemployed (with ID) in double-room EUR 60,-, conference-fee EUR 10,-.

You can register or request more information under: [bletz@evangelische-akademie.de](mailto:bletz@evangelische-akademie.de)

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### **2. b) European URI CC-efforts - ‘Many hands make things move’ - Open House “Movement without a Name CC” – Sunday, October 24, 2004**

This is the slogan that carries the Open House event in Belgium of Bond zonder Naam CC, Antwerp, Belgium.

On Sunday 24th October 2004 the charity association ‘Bond zonder Naam’ (Movement without a Name) will organize an Open House for its 45th anniversary. All the existing initiatives and new projects will present themselves by decorating more than 35 booths. Also a big URI booth will convince the members of the MWN that interreligious dialogue is an important issue for the organization. Different ‘Movement without a Name’ productions will be shown to the public at the cinema corner. There will be an attractive diversity of animation for children and adults. The entire day people can drink and eat at different bars all over the place. Doors open at 9u30 and the entrance is free. Be welcome in the big Zeus Hall, where thousands of people are expected. Welcome! Address: Filip Williotstraat 22 2600 Antwerpen - Berchem Belgium

Patrick Hanjoul

[patrick.hanjoul@bzn.be](mailto:patrick.hanjoul@bzn.be)

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## **2. c) European URI CC-efforts – Invitation to the next meeting of the URI Berlin CC, October 11, 2004, Berlin, Germany**

Dear friends,  
the next meeting of the URI Berlin CC group will take place at October 11 at hours 19:00 in the art club Ha-Atelier in Berlin-Kreuzberg.

Before breaking in to action the URI group Berlin likes once again to introduce religious thought and convincement of its members to get to know better and to create an atmosphere of understanding and confidence.

Our Jewish friend will read a short passage of his new book.

Taufiq Mempel  
URI Berlin CC  
[TNMempel@aol.com](mailto:TNMempel@aol.com)

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## **2. d) European URI CC-efforts - Report Christian-Muslim Dialogue CC event in Helsinki on 9/11 2004**

"This is a peace -greeting from Helsinki.

The picture was taken last Saturday, September 11 our CC, when our Christian-Muslim dialogue CC in Helsinki, hosted a panel discussion among Christians and Muslims with the title: "How to get rid of prejudices that we have." The event was hold in the Cultural Center in Helsinki.

It was very nice occation. Audience felt free to ask many kind of questions and that did not ruin the warm atmosphere. We were a concrete example about how to take those steps toward overcoming prejudices.

Our circle has organized these panel discussions regularly from the beginning, the year 2001. They have taken place either in the Cultural Center or the University in Helsinki.

I am very happy that we can be a part of the URI-family, that there is this wonderful URI-community.

best wishes

Heidi"  
[h.rautionmaa@luukku.com](mailto:h.rautionmaa@luukku.com)



The names of folks in the picture are:  
Lutheran Pekka Y. Hiltunen  
Orthodox Aino Nenola  
Muslim Egal Jama Abdellahi  
Muslim Isra Lehtinen

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## ***2. e) European URI CC-efforts - Report Jewish-Christian-Muslim Summer School in Ammerdown Centre (near Bath, UK), August 15-22, 2004, co-organized by Germany Muslim-League Bonn CC***

An Account by Ms. Nuala Power, Salisbury, United Kingdom

I always get an interesting reaction when I am introduced to people and we get to the stage of 'so what do you do?'

'I teach.' Sometimes I get a look of sympathy, more often it is one of bemusement.

'What age group?'

'11-18 years old'

Things get worse!

'Subject?'

'Religious Studies.'

Well so often that is a conversation stopper. Tradition has it the two things which should never be discussed are religion and politics. Implicit in this remark is the idea that where there is heart felt difference there will be conflict.

I am, however, always keen to explain how lucky I am. Every day I come to work and I don't know what exciting things will come my way. It is a privilege to be in a position to explore issues of real significance with the next generation. This was brought home to me again this summer at the three faiths conference at Ammerdown.

Years ago now, in a class discussion, some students were arguing that because there were so many different religions, and so many disagreements, God could not exist. I put a scenario to them.

I often watch you play a cricket, or football, or rugby, match and maybe you won or maybe you lost, but there will always be post match discussions: was the goal the fault of the goalie or defence? Was so and so 'man of the match' or just a player hogging the ball?

You are one team and the result is real and unchangeable, why the passionate post match discussion? It is even televised these days, and can last longer than the match!

Then came the really insightful comment...

Yes Miss, but even in football they have a place for the 'away team', you don't get religions doing that do you!

That struck a chord with me and I believed that it was possible for such a place to exist but all our suggestions at the time seemed impractical.

In the heady days of the Summer Term I signed up for a conference during my summer holidays and as the time approached I wondered if those odd looks I get for being a teacher were well deserved, but off I went.

It was an inter-faith dialogue between Christians Muslims and Jews exploring the themes of creation and the environment. I was not sure what to expect. It was a mixture of academic seminars, formal discussions sessions and less formal 'personal groups'. All the course contributors offered a mixture of scholarly presentation and interesting commentary. The participants were a diverse bunch of people from Germany and the UK and I made some new friends. It was fascinating to discover various aspects of our three traditions with people who were prepared to discuss their beliefs and ideas openly and reflect on them too.

The topic for the week was ecology and as part of our studies an environmental engineer came and explained how they assessed the ecological impact of the various methods of construction they were exploring when restoring the Kennet and Avon canal. We had a welcome opportunity to see their handiwork when we spent part of the day walking along the canal.

He explained that whole ecosystems had to be studied and 'value' had to be assigned to both concrete species, their relationship to each other and to the effects of the environment as a whole on those who use it for work leisure... 'Key stone species' need to be identified because of their relationship to the ecosystem. These are species which keep every thing else in balance. The clear example he gave was that on the coral reef it has been discovered that otters are needed to control the numbers of urchins who graze on the coral.

He used wonderful PowerPoint slides to demonstrate the abundance of species which can exist in the shelf on the margins of the canal, and which disappear if the canal has a straight edge, or no defence against the wash of passing boats. He explained how certain things in the environment have intrinsic value and that diversity is one of them. One of the participants pointed out how relevant this insight was to our own gathering.

I feel that I learned these things, first hand, at the conference too; that diversity leads to more fertile soil on which to grow, that through our gathering we may be a force for balance in our world, that we need to take the time out in a safe space in order to grow. Meeting in our personal groups increased my knowledge about the three faith traditions, and I felt privileged to share in the spirituality of others and to have found a place to celebrate with the 'away teams'.

Often I found that I shared things in common with those of another tradition, and found issues of conflict in my own. My faith and my spirit were nourished from unexpected sources; through the creative dance workshop, through the introduction to the Sufi poet Rumi, through the funny stories shared late into the night, and through the delightful young people – the youngest of whom, aged 7, taught us a song about two different trees, planted in the same soil and demonstrating different qualities of righteousness before God.

It was a very productive conference. As you can imagine, the session on the Middle East, presented in the company of a Muslim Shaik was difficult. Loyalties run deep, and it is a testament to the openness of the speaker and the participants that these divisions, and others, were not covered over. We often seem to think that agreeing with others, fitting in, makes for an easier life. I discovered that openness about how each one of us sees the world, and the ability to listen to others means that difficulties can be understood, and new ways forward from received positions can be found. The speaker wondered why the Middle East discussions are not facilitated by trained negotiators, a simple idea which could mean progress in that area.

At this session recognition was made of the need to allow God space to act. Right here we were at the heart of a problem, what could we say, or do together, without too much compromise? The suggestion that we sing the song taught to us by our youngest member was so fitting. It seemed to me that in this space made for us, to be, and share with, the 'other', the 'away team,' God is active.

I am enormously grateful to all the participants but in particular to the three excellent leaders, Dr Tina Beattie (and her husband Dave the engineer), Shaik Bashir Ahmad Dultz (and his wife Khadija the creative dancer), Rabbi Michael Hilton (and his family who taught us so much and provided musical accompaniment on many occasions), and Ismail Mohr resident artist and calligrapher.

Nuala Power, Salisbury, UK

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## ***2. f) European URI activities - Report about the Parliament of the World's religions in Barcelona, July 6-14, 2004, by Heidi Rautionmaa, Espoo, Finland***

Impressions from the Parliament by Heidi Rautionmaa, Finland

I first want to apologize that I have not sent these greetings earlier and that this is mostly full of my personal thoughts. The Parliament has been very important motivator for me and it has inspired me to continue walking in the interfaith path. The Parliament in Cape Town was meaningful by the encounters I made and so it was the latest as well. I have noticed in my life that the most valuable things happen when people meet: when they are given to notice the value of dialogue. Last time in Cape Town URI was introduced to me and at this time I had chance to tell about URI in the booth we had at the Cultural Forum area. This tells me about the power of deep dialogue which was possible to experience in the Parliament again.

Because of having the URI- booth at the Cultural Forum area I did not have chance to participate every interesting occasion that took place at the Parliament and of course the huge amount of programmes also made it impossible. But I was satisfied with the programmes I experienced. No wonder it is mentioned that the Parliament is one of the world's greatest interreligious gathering. I personally enjoyed the atmosphere it had as being as Dirk Ficca said a festive celebration of cultural and spiritual diversity, and a demonstration of understanding, against all forms of violence perpetrated in the name of religion. At this time I gave more space for me to feel the spirit and did celebrate the diversity of expressing the existence of spirit. The Parliament of world's religions showed me the richness we have in expressing love and good will.

But because of being at the Fair I was able to meet people who had not so much knowledge about the interfaith work. I found it very beautiful to see how participants of the Cultural Forum were fascinated by the information they heard about faiths being in dialogue at the Parliament and elsewhere and how all of us can take a part of this peace work no matter if we are members of any interfaith groups or if we are taking a part of any interfaith conferences such as this Parliament or if we are not religious persons at all. I found it very needed that every one is encouraged to be in dialogue and that every one is able to take a part of this processive journey.

It was seen that the societal issues were quite well addressed at this time but I still missed more practical goals to be raised to agenda. We need the change in our cultural behaviors and the Parliament is indeed a good

forum where we can learn together from our experiences to take those steps toward the better world. That is the reason why I would like also some difficult questions to be more heard there. I liked the themes such as intrareligious dialogue, which I found very important as well.

I am specially pleased with the themes that reminded me about the urgent economical and environmental issues facing the world. The search for the common good was there. The Parliament is a wonderful memory which I will not only keep it only as a memory but also a new step toward the better. It is a step which I need to take every day.

I am very grateful for God that He has created such a beautiful world that we can all celebrate about. I feel that Parliament was a huge celebration of the beauty of creation. I noticed that the big change had happened in me since the last Parliament. At this time I did not pay attention to people's religious identifications: I only saw people.

One practical thing that came out from the Parliament besides couple articles and some radio-interviewings is the giant Dove that flew at my daughter's school. UN's ambassador for peace, Dr. Jane Goodall was in Barcelona and she introduced us her Roots and Shoots program and the project that takes place on the UN's Peace Day. These Finnish children were happy to "help" the Dove to fly in order to spread out the beautiful wish: May Peace Prevail on Earth.

Heidi Rautionmaa, Espoo, Finland

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## ***2. g) European URI activities - Report about the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, July 6-14, 2004, by Isra Lehtinen, Helsinki, Finland***

I am most grateful to URI to have had that wonderful chance to take part in the Parliament of World Religions. I am sorry that I didn't write earlier, but I've been having problems with my arm. It has been most interesting to read the reports by others.

Those days were so full of interesting program that one had to choose. Even though there were some sessions I would have liked to attend, but...

After lecturing and writing on Islam and having other activities all the time at home I enjoyed recharging my batteries by listening to the lectures and panel discussions. The intellectual contribution by such as Tariq Ramadan, Ataullah Siddiqui (whom I knew through his visit to Helsinki last year) and many others motivated me a lot, in my ongoing dialogue among others things.

I didn't put much culture into my schedule, but for me the Sacred Music Festival in front of that unique church by Gaudi was a highlight of the atmosphere of the Parliament.

It was so nice to meet again with those I got to know in Berlin 2002 (URI conference for Europe and Middle East), but also to see the faces behind many names in their e-mails. It was a good idea to accommodate URI-people from Finland and Germany to the same apartment, which gave us a chance for deepening the contacts.

If the meaning of this kind of interfaith events is to get to know more about some religion, for me it was Sikhism. I knew hardly anything about it before. I also had a chance to see some of Barcelona.

Back to Finland, I have tried to share my experiences with others. Our CC had an evening where we informed the other members on the Parliament. I wrote a three-page report on the Parliament to an

Islamic monthly journal, called An-Nur (The Light), which I am an editor-in-chief to. I also wrote a shorter article to an official multicultural quarterly. But what is most important is that I got more energy to go on in interfaith activities, and helping Muslims to get more understanding on Islam and the importance of dialogue in today's world.

Isra Lehtinen, Helsinki, Finland  
[isralehtinen@suomi24.fi](mailto:isralehtinen@suomi24.fi)

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## **2. h) European URI activities - Report about the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, July 6-14, 2004, by Claudia Balzereit, Bonn, Germany**

### **Parliament of the World's Religions Barcelona 2004**

by Claudia Balzereit

I come to Barcelona as a member of the German Muslim-League Bonn, which is part of the United Religious Initiative.

On the huge ground of the Forum, a week among 7000 religious people of all nations and cultures lies ahead of me. From all great world religions, indigenous and spiritual communities, they meet in order to engage in interreligious encounter.

The program is gigantic: every day there are more than 60 lectures, discussions about current ethical issues, mystical presentations, the opportunity of prayers and meditation, some video films, musical performances and so on. In the large hall are built up more than 80 exhibition and sale booths. In a big tent at the seashore the Sikhs celebrate their meals twice a day with thousands of us.

The remarkable pluralism of the world religions has its roots perhaps for what is written in the Holy Qur'an. Here it is said:

„If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given to you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah (5;48).

In the struggle for peace and justice I already experience the United Religious Initiative as a multireligious unit.

All over the world the URI is technically connected in global network. In my perception the URI's activities – although they are not recognized in the real world – are like an invisible power, coming from a hidden world and trying to influence the development of the world and the future of our planet. Their members act according to their belief for example as servants of god in order to preserve creation.

Maybe that here can be noticed a relation to the often postulated hidden and unseen world in the Qur'an in which to believe He always admonishes. So already in the second sura the Qur'an turns as a sure guidance to those who fear Allah and who believe in the Unseen (cf. 2;3).

Very touched I follow the lively meetings of the World Council of Muslims for Interfaith Relations with members from all over the world.

I am very grateful to the URI for having had the opportunity of coming back to Spain in fulfilment of my personal religious aspirations and I liked very much to apply my knowledge of languages several times in this week.

Finally it has to be mentioned the enormous effort of the city of Barcelona for having made possible this interfaith encounter in such an enormous extend.

SALAMALEIKUM

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### **3. URI global**

#### **3. a) URI global – New CCs (Cooperation-Circles) September 2004**

We are very happy to welcome new Cooperation Circles (CCs) - as below - from different world regions!

They are located in India, Argentina, Australia, Taiwan, Uganda, Latin America and Iran.

Note for your information: A **\*\*CC\*\*** is a URI-membership-group. It consists of at least 7 members of at least 3 different religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions. A URI CC agrees to work according to the principles of the URI Charter (see <http://www.uri.org/resources/publications/Charter%20PC%20format.doc>).

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#### **[uri-contacts] URI welcomes new CCs! Approved September 1, 2004**

Dear friends,

URI offers a warm welcome to the following CCs approved by the Global Council Approval Committee on September 1, 2004. May an abundance of mutual benefit arise from our newest CCs and the URI global community.

With appreciation,  
Sally Mahé  
[sally@uri.org](mailto:sally@uri.org)

CC's Approved September 1, 2004

##### 1. Indian Dalit Ecumenical Federation CC

Region: Asia  
Contact person: Joseph Chacko  
Tiruvalla, Kerala 689103  
India

Current Membership: 10

Traditions: Hindu, Muslim, various Christian denominations

Governance: By an Executive Council elected by the Annual General Body.

CC Purpose: To promote harmonious co-existence among religions and to work for the betterment of the oppressed sections of the society.

CC Dream: To work for the unity of all humankind and creation.

CC Highlights: We have organized a series of conferences and seminars for the weaker sections of the society. We have undertaken government and church-related programmes for this cause.

Summary: This CC is a group of the Dalits (aboriginees) who have been very active in the uplift of the down trodden classes. They have organized various programs with the help of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Mr. Joseph Chacko, teacher, is a reputed social worker and Dalit spokesperson. He was one of the official delegates of the Mar Thoma Church to the Harare Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

##### 2. Mata Ikya Vedi CC ( Religious Union Organization)

Region: Asia  
Contact person: George Panicker, Bank Officer  
Kottarakkara  
Kerala 691542  
India

Current Membership: 15  
Traditions: Hindu, Muslim, various Christian denominations  
Governance: By an Executive Council elected annually by the general body.  
CC Purpose: To promote harmonious co-existence among all religions and sects.  
CC Dream: To see the world as God's own Kingdom.  
CC Highlights: This is a new organization. But all our members are social workers of long-standing repute, who have been office bearers in various social voluntary organizations.

Summary: This CC is an organization with members from various communities of Kottarakkara. They have been quite active in different organizations like the YMCA, Y's Men's Club, Rotary Club, Muslim Youth League and so on. Since they are drawn to the ideals of the URI, they decided to form a new CC.

### 3. International Centre for Study and Development CC

Region: Asia  
Contact person: Mrs. Mariamma Mathew  
Kollam District,  
Kerala, India.

Current Membership: 20  
Traditions: Hindu, Muslim, Christian Mar Thoma, Christian Pentecostal, Christian Catholic  
Governance: By the Governing Council elected by the General Body.  
CC Purpose: To promote the development of the weaker sections of society and to encourage study of religions and ideologies.  
CC Dream: To see the establishment of Ramarajya or God's Kingdom.  
CC Highlights: The International Centre for Study and Development (ICSD) is a social voluntary service organization started in 1982 and currently conducting the following projects: a Drug Counseling Centre, a Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, a Home for the Aged, a Family Counseling Centre, a Creche and a Continuing Education Centre. From November 2003 to February 2004, ICSD organized the following activities: a World AIDS Day Campaign, Children's Day, Human Rights Day, and Republic Day.  
Summary: This organization is one with great reputation among the NGOs of India. They have about 39 full-time staff members working in various projects. They have their own office building with meeting hall and a library, where the Federation of the blind community of Kerala is also housed. In addition to their service programs, they have a khadi (Indian cloth) production centre also where so many poor women find employment.

### 4. Qewna Cooperation Circle

Region: Latin America  
Contact person: Raul Mamani  
Palpala, Jujuy  
Argentina 4612  
Latin America

Current membership: 17  
Traditions: Catholic, Protestant, Cosmovision indigenous  
Governance: consensus  
CC Purpose: to provide inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue  
CC Dream: to begin to change life in Jujuy (area in the north of Argentina)  
CC Highlights: held a Pachamama Celebration August 2003, Celebration of the Earth  
Summary:

This CC formed with the need of rescuing their heritage of indigenous values and to project them in the search of intercultural dialogue. We value in URI the effort to obtain through dialogue a better understanding among religions and indigenous traditions. QEWÑA works with a lunar calendar related to the feasts of the KOLLA culture of which all of us form part. Their plan is to broaden their extension to children and youth helping them to be conscious of the importance of dialogue to strengthen the work for PEACE and the care for our Mother Nature- PACHAMAMA

#### 5. UPM - Unity, Peace and Multiculturalism CC

Region: Southeast Asia and the Pacific

Contact persons:

1. Dr. Ratnam Alagiah  
Labrador, Gold Coast,  
Queensland 4215  
Australia

2. Komala Jayapalan

Current membership: 7

Traditions: Hindu, Serbian Orthodox, Bahai, Catholic, Buddhist

Governance: research, group meeting and consultation

CC Purpose: to bring unity, peace and multi-culturism to our community

CC Dream: to cultivate harmony

CC Highlights:

Summary: Unity, Peace and Multiculturalism CC is a new interfaith group organized sometime in July 2004 in Queensland, Australia by Dr. Ratnam Alagiah. Dr. Alagiah, a Ph.D. in Accounting and a Lecturer in a university, is the younger brother of Sabapathy Alagiah of Mozambique. This CC is planning programssuch as: 1) growing in interfaith understanding; 2) rendering interfaith community service; and, 3) promoting spiritual education for youth.

#### 6. Buddha Heart World Headquarters CC

Region: ASIA

Contact person: Lin, Hsiao-Mei, Deputy Chief of Section of International Affairs  
Songshan District, Taipei City 105  
Taiwan (R.O.C.)

Current membership: 99

Traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Catholic, Taoism, I-Kwan-Tao, Confucianism

Governance: After discussion with major staff, decision is made by the chairman, Dr. Wu, Hsi Ming (Venerable Master Dari)

CC Purpose: First to promote charity, and secondly, doing research on solutions for the problems of poverty, disease, death and war, while personally doing physical and spiritual practice at the same time. To bolster peoples' understanding of the world's Cosmo's reality, so as to reduce people's greed, disputes, robbery and wars. As such, a world full of love and concern will be realized and world peace will come true.

CC Dream: There is a new science which comes from the result of our chairman, Venerable Master Dari's teaching, research, and experiments for more than 30 years. Such new science would provide human beings with the knowledge to realize the Cosmos in order to reach the goal of attaining people's everlasting inner peace and world peace.

CC Highlights: 381 different community based service/ volunteer camp activities in 2003.

Summary: Buddha Heart World Headquarters is a well established organization (with 40 full time staff and 40,000 volunteers). This organization provides service work and spiritual education. They believe that "more uniting can bring more good things to people." They are involved in public welfare work such as environmental protection, social service, peace work, and enriching cultural understandings. Articles by Venerable Master Dari include, "Praying for World Peace" and "Cooperation of Religions for World Peace"

#### 7. Pamoja Cooperation Circle

Region: Africa, Uganda

Contact persons:  
Shabnam Olinga  
Dorothy Nampala  
Dominica Kulia

Current membership: 17  
Traditions: Christian, Muslim, Bahai  
Governance: democratic organizational structure  
CC Purpose: Religious tolerance through peace education and communication.  
CC Dream: To cultivate a free and fair world that encompasses religious harmony and better living.  
CC Highlights: It started with a workshop at Makerere University. Now it involves both students and professors at the university.

Summary: Pamoja CC came into existence after an initiative of a few youths who had just finished Makerere University. The most important highlights of their work is to bring young people together who are professionals in different fields; and, visiting worship places and holding "a question answer" session in these places to enable the members to first appreciate the different religious traditions in order to promote religious tolerance. This CC hopes to benefit by interacting with people of different faiths and indigenous expressions and learning more from them and also sharing and gaining experience of skills from one another.

8. Project 3rd Millennium Foundation  
Region: Latin America  
Contact person: Susana Federica Reich

Current membership: 9  
Traditions: Christian, Jewish, Catholic, Buddhist, Indigenous Kolla,  
Governance: Decisions are made by consensus and by democratic means and by interpersonal communication, listening and asking for opinions of members or specialists.  
CC Purpose: to work to install new ways of thinking and acting in the areas of education and peace and through the diffusion of new paradigms.  
CC Dream: to work to rise above the ancient model of dominator/dominated and rise above models of those who impose hierarchy, inequality and those things in culture that impede people from practicing cooperation, solidarity in daily life.  
CC Highlights: Since 1996, 3rd Millennium Foundation has worked actively for the construction of a culture of peace through dialogue, reflection, roundtables, with prestigious specialists and free public conferences. Also this project has published books and videos in order to diffuse the old paradigm.

Summary:  
Proyecto Tercer Milenio Foundation develops ways to help educate children and youth to create cultures of peace, including annual programs and experiential and innovative ceremonies dedicated to helping people and students and school communities understand the deep and transformational qualities of peace.

9. Iran Youths for Peace and Inter-religious Dialogue CC  
Region: Middle East & North Africa, IRAN  
Contact person: Atefeh Sadeghi  
Department of International Affairs  
Institute for Inter-religious Dialogue  
Tehran, Iran  
Web Page: [www.iid.org.ir](http://www.iid.org.ir) <<http://www.iid.org.ir>>

Current membership: 7  
Traditions: Muslims, Jews, Christians  
Governance: group suggestions, votes and a leader  
CC Purpose: To get familiar with different religions and to create friendship between youths of different religions. To promote the culture of peace and justice among youths. To hold small meetings for Iranian youths to acquaint them with the common ground that religions share in the building of peace and peaceful co-existence.  
CC Dream: Building a global network of friendship among the youth of different nationalities, religions,

creeds, colors and races.

CC Highlights: Members have been involved in different cultural activities.

Summary: not available

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### **3. b) URI global – URI-book ‘Birth of a Global Community – Appreciative Inquiry in Action’ by Charles Gibbs and Sally Mahe**

The birth of the United Religions Initiative (URI) is the story of how hundreds, then thousands of people across cultures, oceans and faith traditions began to share a common call to make the world they lived in more like the world they yearned for in their dreams. This book tells how one person’s vision and conviction evolved to include a global community working together to make their dreams real– dreams reflected in a call of the sacred within a world-wide, faith-based organization.



The book also tells the story of how an emergent process of organizational change – the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process – came along at just the right time to provide the engine for the new organization and its development. AI as a process lent the ability for an organization to be formed which would be: inclusive, decentralized and self-organizing. AI and the URI together embarked upon a “spiritual journey”; the theme of this narrative.

Benefits:

- Provides a blueprint of a working, Global, vibrant community; one that is ongoing and sustainable.
- Details (with worksheets and other tools) the application of an emergent, powerful methodology for inducing Positive Change: the model of Appreciative Inquiry in Action.
- Provides a readable narrative, interspersed with application tools, of how the organization grew from idea to a practicing set of Cooperating Circles embracing 26,000+ members, worldwide.
- In these uncertain times, as Peacebuilding efforts gather momentum worldwide, this book provides a Bridge to an Uncertain Future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Foreword (David Cooperrider);

I. Birth of a Vision;

II. URI meets AI;

III. URI and AI meet the World;

IV. Growing “Appreciative Genes”: Pregnancy of the Organization;

V. The Birth;

VI. Living into the Questions and the Ideals of the URI;

VII. URI and AI dance into the future.

VIII. Afterword and Appendices (“The Surprise of Friendship”).

Rev. Canon Charles Gibbs, United Religions Initiative

Sally Mahé, United Religions Initiative

Publication Date: 12/03

ISBN:1893435-423

Pages: 320 (PB)

US Price \$24.95

You can order the book online – and at the same time support URI - under <http://www.uri.org/resources/bgc.asp>.

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### **3. c) URI global - URI Annual report 2003 – how you can download it**

The URI Annual report 2003 has been released – it can be downloaded under:  
[http://www.uri.org/resources/URI\\_Anuual\\_Report\\_2003.pdf](http://www.uri.org/resources/URI_Anuual_Report_2003.pdf) – size of the file, which contains a wealth of URI-information and many pictures, besides a URI-map – is 619 KB.

Also see other URI-resources under <http://www.uri.org/resources/>.

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## **4. Further announcements**

### **4. a) Further announcements- Book-Announcement by Sally Mahé: “A Greater Democracy Day by Day”**

September 21, 2004

Dear URI friends,

I am excited to share with you something special I have been working on this past year.

My response to the US attack on Iraq, eroding democratic principles and rising fear in the US was to take time out last year to create a book, A Greater Democracy Day by Day. It is a collection of 365 quotes, organized by monthly themes that connect the reader to spiritual qualities of democracy.

This book expresses my passion to connect the practical and the spiritual and inspire us to embrace a deeper understanding of democracy.

My co-author and I would love A Greater Democracy Day by Day to have as much impact as possible before the November elections and into the future. We believe it can help.

Please take a look at our website: [www.democracyblog.org](http://www.democracyblog.org) - in the USA ask for it at your favorite bookstore; out of USA look on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and think of ways it might inspire participation in this election.

With gratitude to the URI community always,

Sally Mahé  
Organization Development  
URI  
Co-author, A Greater Democracy Day by Day,  
Mahé and Covert,  
Council Oak Books Publishing, 2004  
\$13.95

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THE END