



URI Europe Dialogue-Letter No. 2

November/December 2004

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[1. From the URI EEC \(European Executive Committee\)](#)

Dear friends,

peace and blessings to you!

- We are **very glad to welcome 20 new CCs (Cooperation-Circles)** into our URI-family. **4 of these CCs belong to the European region** and are located in countries which are new to the URI:
 - the URI-Aarhus CC (Cooperation Circle) in Aarhus, Denmark,

- the URI-Copenhagen CC in Copenhagen, Denmark,
- the Society for Intercultural Research and Friendship (SIRF) CC in Ankara, Turkey,
- the Center for Peace and Dialogue of Cultures CC in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

A cordial welcome to all of you - we are happy that you are with us!

For your information: a Cooperation-Circle (CC) needs to have at least 7 members, from at least 3 religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions and function in accord with the URI Charter (- see <http://www.uri.org/abouturi/charter/>).

URI Europe has now 17 Cooperation-Circles in Belgium, Catalonia (Spain), Denmark, Finland, Germany, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom.

- The planning for the **URI Europe conference** taking place in **Brussels, September 22-24, 2005**, continues. Please mark your calendars for this opportunity to come together as URI-friends and colleagues from across Europe.
Subject: "Overcoming prejudices and irritations between people of different cultures and religions in the process of the European unification".
We would like to repeat that - like in previous URI conferences – **we will focus once more 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.
- From January 1, 2005, on URI Europe will have a **new treasurer, Dr. Raschid Bockemuehl** from Dortmund. He will take over from Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, who has served in this important function for several years. We are **very grateful to Annie Imbens-Fransen** and sad that she will quit her work as a treasurer. But we are confident that she will continue to be linked to and active in URI, also on the European level. We are glad to have been able – with the help and efforts of Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz – to find and convince Dr. Raschid Bockemuehl, a very capable person, to take this task over.
- The **CD-ROM "URI Europe Activity Explorer"** is now available featuring reports and photos of **6 URI Europe conferences and symposia**. It also includes global URI activities from 1997 through 2002. The URI Charter is available on the CD in American English, British English, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Arabic. **There are 166 documents in all and over 517 different photos of URI in action!**
More info on the CD-ROM is available under:
<http://www.uri.org/regionalnews/europe/cdactivity.asp>.
To order this CD, which has been put together by Annie Imbens-Fransen, send an e-mail with your request to Activity Explorer at actexp@xs4all.nl. **The cost is EURO 5 or US\$5 which includes shipping costs.**

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 Luchten, 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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2. European URI CC-activities – invitations, reports

2. a) European URI CC-activities - News about the Initiative Interfaith Magazine CC, Lancaster, UK

Initiative interfaith magazine

This is an exciting time for all who work on the magazine **Initiative**. As our three-year grant from the Community Fund came to an end with the production of issue 12, we were concerned that we would be unable to continue publication.

All members of the editorial team, and our many writers, photographers, artists and poets have always given their services freely, believing that the magazine contributes to interfaith dialogue and understanding in a unique way. But the financial cost of quality printing, production and distribution presented us with something of a dilemma. I am delighted now to tell you that due to the kind generosity of private donors, and a greatly valued increase in subscriptions, we are looking forward to a new stage in our development.

Our funding is limited however and we have therefore had to review our production format. We have taken an editorial decision to publish two issues of **Initiative** a year instead of four. This will cut production and distribution costs, but the magazine will now be double the size and content thus meeting subscriber expectation. Each issue will carry 48 pages in all, covering two themes and a variety of topics, poems, prayers and artwork. We are presently collating materials for issue 13 which will give focus to two contrasting themes 'the ethics of bio-technology' and 'sacred fire', and we anticipate that publication will be sometime in November 2004.

A further development has been that the editorial team has now become an independent Co-operation Circle within the global structure of URI, allied to URI Europe. We believe that **Initiative**, which promotes the purpose and principles of the URI but is not an in-house publication, will flourish further as an international interfaith magazine, drawing on its contacts from around the world. Our main focus is multi-faith communities, schools and colleges where we hope to stimulate debate and discussion. Please see our website www.initiativemagazine.co.uk and support us in whatever way you can.

In peace,

Heather Wells

Editor

Telephone 0044 (0)1524 822183

Email info@initiativemagazine.co.uk

Postal address:

Initiative Magazine

PO Box 110

Lancaster LA2 6GN.

England.



The picture shows:

Heather Wells, editor Initiative Magazine, (right) and
Lorna Douglas, co-editor Initiative Magazine (left).

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2. b) 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

Please note that the following conference, for which we sent the details out in the last URI Europe Dialogue-Letter, is by now **fully booked. No registration is possible anymore at this time.**

The Interreligious House of Learning 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.

Sponsoring-organisations:

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

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2. c) European URI CC-activities - Diary of Events of the URI UK CC

Diary Note URI UK CC

November 2004

November 24, 2004

Spiritual Elders meet Emerging Visionaries

Attlee Suite, Palace of Westminster, London, 7.00pm

November 26-28, 2004

**Art and Spirituality Workshops
and Residential Weekend**

Snowdonia: ‘Drawing the Land’ a weekend workshop

at Tyn Gerddi, Cym y Gglo, Gwynedd (North Wales) on Eve.

Friday 26th November midday to Sunday 28th November 2004.

cost £60 including food, accommodation, and materials

(please bring: warm clothes, water bottle, waterproofs,

jumper/jacket, woolly hat, camera, pillow case, sheets

or sleeping bag, towel ... blankets provided)

For any more details or to book a place please contact

Adam on: 07957286360, adam.boulter@virgin.net

December 2004

December 1, 2004

The Annual General Meeting of URI UK will be held at Saint Stephen's Church Wallbrook
(tube to Bank) at 12 noon.

A buffet lunch will follow at 1pm.

At this meeting the Trustees will announce their plans for the next five years.

John Battle MP (the Prime Minister's Inter Faith Envoy) will be the Keynote Speaker.

Please consider placing this date in your diary and let us know if you can come.

The Trustees would be hugely encouraged by your presence.

February 2005

Spiritual Elders meet Emerging Visionaries - Nottingham,

Date and venue to be advised

April 2005

April 26, 2004

Spiritual Elders meet Emerging Visionaries - Bradford City Hall, 7.00pm

For further details of all these events please look onto the website www.uri.org.uk or
e-mail: info@uri.org.uk or phone: 0044 (0)17687 77671 the URI UK office

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2. d) European URI CC-efforts - Report about the URI Berlin CC meeting of the URI Berlin CC , October 11, 2004, and invitation to next meeting on December 9, 2004, Berlin, Germany

The last meeting of the URI Berlin CC took place on October 11th, 2004, in the art-club "Ha-Atelier - workshop for philosophy and art" on the suggestion of our Jewish friend Egon Savelsberg.

The club was founded by leading scientists, artists and intellectuals from Europe, the USA, Latin America, Israel and Berlin as an international society for Jewish culture and arts in September 2001.

Initiator of Ha-Atelier was Mrs. Almut Shulamit Bruckstein, Professor for Jewish philosophy at the Freie Universitaet in Berlin.

The workshop is aiming at forming a cultural and intellectual presence to integrate Jewish and Islamic tradition into European literature and performing arts and giving them a public space.

In 2003 to 2004 the club arranged a photo exhibition under the title "Islam in Cathedrals - Pictures of the Antichrist with Claudio Lange. For further Information see <http://viadrina.euv-frankfurt-o.de/~lange/islam/index.html>.

As there were newcomers at our URI-meeting, people introduced themselves and presented objects with which they connected a story or experience which they had on their way. We quickly learnt that some members wanted to say so much that we will need another meeting to say more about our personal convictions in our religions.

On the second day of Ramadan I had, however, the idea to show to the members in our URI group the town from my special (Muslim) perspective. And so can the others be invited to do. In this way we can get to know places in our town which we would never discover by ourselves.

"Show me Town from your perspective" one may call the project.

The next meeting will again take place again at the art-club Ha-Atelier,
Oranienstr.22, at 7 pm.

Date: December 9th, 2004.

Taufiq Mempel, URI Berlin CC

TNMempel@aol.com

P.S. Shaikh Bashir Ahmad, Karimah, Taufiq (all DMLBonn CC/URI Germany) and Peter Amsler (Baha'i Community) prepared the ground for this Berlin CC, following the URI Europe Berlin conference "Facing Violence as a Way to Peace", April 6-10, 2002, at the Catholic Academy Berlin.

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2. e) Report on the interfaith-prayer and celebration at Namedy Castle in Andernach, Germany, with participation of the German Muslim-League Bonn CC (DMLBonn CC)/URI Germany

Peace Prayers at Namedy Castle in Andernach, Germany

Report by Claudia Balzereit / Translation: by Gisela Preutenborbeck

During this year's "Summer Night" Countess Heide of Hohenzollern invited representatives of all the religions of the world to a peace prayer and a short explanation to open the project "Art in the Park" formally.

After the reception Szya Topper, the cantor of the Jewish community in Koblenz, recited a psalm in front of the 150 guests in the castle yard.

After that Dr Paul Koeppler of the German Buddhist Union gave a lecture about life in meditation and peace. Father Dr Alfred Schuchart from Vallendar interpreted a passage from the Bible and Christian Hohmann, a priest at the Protestant parish in Koblenz (and JCM Bendorf), delivered a sermon. Claudia Balzereit said a prayer of request by Muhammad (Pbuh). A short Ilahi (Muslim religious song) lead to an explanation by Wilhelm Sabri Hoffmann (both Claudia Balzereit and Wilhelm Sabri Hoffmann are members of the DMLBonn CC/URI Germany and represented Shaikh Bashir).

Two musicians began singing a short song corresponding to the different religions.

Finally, the representatives of the religions talked intensely about religion as such in this world and the state of the world, especially in Palestine. Dominique Caillat, who was responsible for the organization at the castle, took part in it, too.

After saying good-bye to the countess it was possible to look at the artists' exhibits which can be visited until next year. (Artists from the German, Spanish, and Japanese cultural environment had got their inspiration from this place and had work created that was integrated into the countryside of the park.) On walking around visitors encountered and some mentioned that the Islamic part could have been longer.

The same event has been planned for July 17, 2005. The DMLBonn CC will again take part in it (insha'LLAH – God willing).

c.balzereit@gmx.de

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2. f) European URI CC-efforts - Report about the development of the URI UK CC over the last 4 years

How URI developed in the UK

The United Religions Initiative UK was launched in the UK at the Millennium Dome on 14th August 2000. Perhaps it was one of the best things that came out of that great building!

There were four hundred people present. The Prime Minister sent a message. Ken Livingstone sent his deputy, Lee Jasper, who pleaded with each and every religion to work together to help create a society of some depth and compassion and a society which rejoiced in the Diversity of our country. Bishop Bill Swing, who had founded URI as a global community to work beside the United Nations to bring Peace - Peace between religions - spoke of work begun in South Africa, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Israel/Palestine. Malcolm Stonestreet envisioned a new bridgebuilding organisation in the UK. He said we were living in a global market and a global village.

There must be conversation between individuals of different faiths - a nationwide conversation that would be a blessing on this country. Then leaders of the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Jain, Baha'i, Buddhist and Zoroastrian faiths stepped forward and pronounced solemn blessings on the work of the United Religions Initiative in the UK. They all signed the Charter. Over two hundred members present stepped forward and handed in their signature to add to the Signing of the URI Charter.

However 14th August 2000 was not the beginning. Some thirty interested parties from the UK Faith and Inter Faith community had met for three days some months earlier at Saint George's House Windsor. At that meeting we began to thrash out the work we should undertake, the partners we would need, the possibility of funding and other priorities.

For the last four years we have been looking at this country and its present political, social and spiritual situation. We have recognised that during the last millennium much war involved faith groups. There was much to be sorry about the way we had behaved. The present felt strangely fragile. In many of our great cities and towns there was unease. There had been, during the last fifty years of the last century, a large influx of people from India, Africa and the Caribbean. These people were making a substantial contribution to our national life and economy. On the whole they were happy to be here and grateful for opportunities offered - yet there was a strong undercurrent of fear. The question asked was one about Britishness. The emerging new Britain was to include substantial numbers of people who wished to hold on to their own culture - religion, language, food, art forms and dress habits. And this when the endemic community was going through great change in all these subjects. I suggest that the endemic community was insecure and so both new comers and old Britain felt insecure and threatened. When one talks of Culture, Religion comes pretty high on the list.

So here we felt there was some work to be done. Those from existing UK Inter Faith organisations encouraged us to work with Young People and we felt there was ample opportunity and a real need to build bridges of respect here. The question was how to do this and in which spheres of people's life and experience should we start working?

Craig Russell worked out of our office in Manchester for Year One. He brought with him a great understanding of the Arts. Our Transcending Images Conferences allowed groups of up to forty from different faiths to use Music, Clay and Drawing to express their deepest beliefs - and to find commonality which bridged different traditions. At this stage we began to try to understand how the different faith groups needed and used sacred Space. Craig saw that 'projects' were the way forward rather than just setting up URI Groups in every County (such groups are called Cooperating Circles in other parts of the world in which URI operates). Always there was a determination not to be an hierarchical organisation but one that would facilitate appropriate groups to do their own Inter faith thing in their own situation.

Year Two saw the arrival of Dr Jonathan Lockhart. He helped us understand the possibilities of developing work with students in the academic world. We began to see the possibilities of a Certificate or Diploma or NVQ in Inter Faith Studies. It was during Jonathan's time as Executive Officer that we heard Eboo Patel, an executive member of URI UK, talk of conversations, spiritual conversations between older and younger members of the faiths. Spiritual Elders meet Emerging Visionaries.

In 2003 Mandip Singh Sohal took over as Chairman of the charity and asked for a tighter approach to our thinking and a proper Business Plan. For a year the Trustees, building on the last three years' work, developed a series of projects and networked with Faith Leaders, Government and other Inter Faith organisations. As a result the Five Year Business Plan was agreed by the Trustees on 28th July of this year.

The Plan recognises the crucial importance of the Faith Groups of this country working together. It sees diversity as a blessing not a threat. It works towards a society which finds space for the Spiritual nature of all people and of the environment. It believes that the Faith Groups can help each other in their journeying and that together the Faith Groups can help the Nation find its way.

In recognising the spiritual nature of creation; in a desire to work with young people of all the Faiths and in trepidation that all too easily religion can again be used to stimulate or abet conflict, the Trustees committed themselves to 3 areas of work during the next five years.

1. To exploring the meaning of Sacred Space and creating Sacred Space appropriate to all the Faith Groups
2. To providing an NVQ and other educational opportunities for young people in Inter faith Community Work.
3. To using the Arts as a release to the latent spirituality of our society.

These objectives are developed in The Five Year Business Plan 2005-2009 and also shared on our Website: www.uri.org.uk

Malcolm Stonestreet
info@uri.org.uk

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2. g) European URI CC-activities – Projects of the Centre for Peace and Dialogue of Cultures CC, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Current projects of the Centre for Peace and Dialogue of Cultures CC / by Farangis Nurulla-Khoja

Dear all in the URI family,

Thank you for your warm welcome! We are busy with several upcoming events and projects, including publication of Fonus (a journal dedicated to the promotion of culture as a peace-making tool), issue #8, and preparations for our second International Contemporary Music Festival, to be held here in Dushanbe in May 2005. Our celebration of the International Day of Peace was a success, and was attended by representatives of many faiths and cultures.

We look forward to sharing more news of our activities soon, and to hearing from all of you.

Best wishes to the whole family,

Farangis Nurollah
farangis@yahoo.com
www.shahidifoundation.org

Account of the Day of Piece in Tajikistan from Dr. Munira Shahidi

An International Peace Day celebration, initiated by the CC of Dialogue of Cultures under the direction of the Ziyodullo Shahidi International Foundation, with the partnership of the UN Tajikistan Peace-Building Office, was held at the Ziyodullo Shahidi Museum of Musical Culture and the Slavic University of Dushanbe.

There were more than 1500 participants, including representatives of different faiths present in Dushanbe, and perhaps for the first time in the last few years, direct conversations were held between Christians and Muslims. Representatives of the Islamic University of Dushanbe Mohammadjon Oumarof and Mullah Khoja Said spoke about Suras of the Koran and popular hadhithes about peace and openness and hospitality as the main features of the Islamic ethic. The head of the Russian Protestant Church in Dushanbe spoke about the devout Christians of Tajikistan, who sing songs of peace very similar to those which are sung by the Muslims. The head of the Russian Baptist Church in Dushanbe also joined the discussions, speaking of the importance of praying for peace. Candles were lit to express our collective wishes for peace, and songs were sung in several languages in order to give voice to this hope.

The seminar "Dialogue of Religions for the Culture of Peace" was held at the Slavic University of Dushanbe. The speech about Islamic tolerance for diversity of cultures and religions elicited many questions from the students. UN representative Vladimir Schmidt and students exchanged many interesting and constructive points of view during the seminar, as well as the celebration at the museum.

For those who would like to see the pictures from the events please let me know.

Peace and love,

Dr. Munira Shahidi
munira_shahidi@yahoo.com

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2. h) Report on the Open Day of Bond zonder Naam CC (Movement without a Name CC) on October 24, 2004, Antwerp, Belgium

Open House: An overwhelming success!

That is what we can call the Open House from 'Bond zonder Naam' (Movement without a Name) on Sunday 24th October 2004. The charity association proved once more on its 45th anniversary to be a very well known social cultural initiative in Flanders.

From very early in the morning members came along. At the end of the day at least 3000 people had passed by. More than a hundred staff members and volunteering people had decorated 35 booths. Every aspect of the Movement showed itself to the public. Quality and professionalism are the aim in the organization working for all kind of problem groups in our society.

Also a URI both presented itself as a globally connected and locally rooted initiative. People showed a lot of interest and asked more questions than one could give answers. The new URI video '*Be a Peace Builder*' was showed in Flemish language and attracted the attention of even children. There is an increasing awareness among ordinary people of the necessity of interreligious dialogue. They experienced URI as a hopeful and important platform for all kind of religious men and women longing for peace within their religion and among the different traditions.

At the end of the day MWN could not close its doors. The indoor pavement with drinks and snacks was such a cosy corner that no one was ready to go home.

'Movement without a Name' surely is moving forward towards a promising full and open future.

Patrick Hanjoul
Movement without a Name CC (Bond zonder Naam CC)
Patrick.Hanjoul@bzn.be

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2. i) European interfaith-efforts – Account of Interfaith Celebration in The Hague, Netherlands, on the occasion of the opening of the parliamentary year

Stranger – Fellow human being

To mark the occasion of the opening of the parliamentary year on September 21, 2004, an Interfaith Celebration has been held, for the fifth time, in the Great Church in The Hague.

Invited to this gathering were The Prime Minister (unable to attend due to health reasons), all other Ministers and State Secretaries and all members of the Dutch Parliament. Besides them, representatives of the different religions and also the Dutch citizens - particularly the citizens of The Hague, were welcome to join the celebration. There were about 700 people in the church.

This year the theme was: Stranger – Fellow human being.

Texts, prayers, meditations and quotes were given and lead by the six representatives of the Hague Council of Religions and Faiths: Jews, Humanists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims and the Brahma Kumaris Spirituele Akademie. Behind the speakers was a big screen where all the symbols of the various different religions were beautifully pictured in full colour.

Essence of the contents of the speech and of the guided meditation by Marie-Lisette Derks were:

“Knowing the self and knowing God brings light into the darkness, and brings love back into our lives whereby we can reach out to others.

The world will change when we are able to share this Godly light and this endless love.

When I know myself I can really meet others. My vision will not be disturbed by our differences but I will recognise the same essence in others.”

Sound and vision and combined action showed the harmony created during the year of preparation of this event.

That same harmony was visible and tangible when, after the event, almost all of the organisers came to a lunch to the Brahma Kumaris. It was a very special gathering of 25 representatives of the different religious branches. Everyone enjoyed the lunch and also a speech given by the Reverend Jacob Korff, president of the Hague Council of Religions. He called the Brahma Kumaris the “Daughters of Light” and expressed his feelings of gratitude for this special gathering.

Marie-Lisette Derks,
member of the Brahma Kumaris Spirituele Akademie and the URI-Steering-Committee in the Netherlands

bkdenhaag@bksa.org

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3. URI global

3. a) URI global – Partners in Leadership manual available on websites

Subject: Partners in Leadership manual available on websites

Date: 07.10.2004 00:54:39 Western European Summertime

Dear friends,

Greetings. An updated version of the Partners in Leadership Manual, Best Practices that Exemplify URI Values and Enliven Leadership, is available on the public website www.uri.org (RESOURCES); and on the CC website www.uriglobal.org. (LIBRARY).

Please go to these web addresses if you wish to review this material. This booklet is a collection of good ideas about URI initiated programs and organizing offered at URI assemblies or developed by regional teams or by CCs.

If you have questions about access, contact Deepak Jagannath, URI tech assistant.

djagannath@uri.org

In peace,

Sally

sally@uri.org

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3. b) URI global - URI's Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide available online

The URI Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide, containing different exercises and activities for interfaith-groups, is now available online.

Enthusiastic responses to the Guide are coming from around the world. The Wollongong, Australia City Council has included sections of the Guide in its new resource kit for building interfaith harmony in their community. In the Philippines, the Guide has been used in training sessions at the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute. The interfaith peacebuilding skills symposium presented at Parliament of World Religions was based on the Guide. To give feedback and tell stories about using the Guide, contact Barbara Hartford under Barbara@uri.org.

To purchase or preview the Guide, visit <http://www.uri.org/peacebuilding/guide/>.

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3. c) URI global – 20 new CCs (Cooperation-Circles) approved October 20, 2004

Subject: **20 new URI CCs approved**
Date: 20.10.2004 21:43:46 Westeuropäische Sommerzeit
From: sally@uri.org
To: uri-gcandstaff@uriglobal.org
CC: uri-contacts@uriglobal.org

Dear friends,

Take a moment to learn about and warmly welcome 20 new CCs! Narrative information is included so this list is several pages. Regional coordinators and trustees, please welcome and help new CCs connect with other like-minded CCs in your region. CC leaders, please feel free to contact these new CCs and share common interests.

With gratitude,
Sally

October 20, 2004 Minutes CC Approval Meeting

In attendance: Jonathon Rose -Chair, Yoland Trevino, Mohinder Singh, Heng Sure, Deepak Naik (part of the time), Sally Mahé. Missing: George Khoury, Despina Namwembe.

- 1) Welcome and blessing.
- 2) Recommendation: CC Approval Committee members would complete a poll prior to each meeting regarding their response to each application. This will insure that Committee members are prepared with comments and questions so that phone meeting can be more efficient.
- 3) Important that CC Approval Committee retain the simple sacred ritual of asking a blessing for CCs in addition to following formal approval procedures. "May the members of these CCs achieve their aspirations and live in peace."
- 4) The CCs approved October 20 are eligible to nominate a candidate and vote in the 2004-2005 Trustee Selection Process. Practical steps will be taken to inform these CCs about this right and responsibility and invite their participation.
- 5) This meeting completes the rotation of this year's committee members. With gratitude to Jonathon and mutual appreciation, the committee bid each other farewell and wished the next group well.
- 5) Two CC applications are pending and will be reviewed next meeting: Buddha Light CC (Bangladesh) and Association of Disabled Females International (Liberia) Also, another CC from Gujrat, India is on the way!

- 6) Noted that this list includes CCs from countries new to URI: Turkey, Tajikistan, Denmark, China and Bangladesh; and, in India, places such as Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Himachal Pradesh!
- 7) Special appreciation to Dr. Mohinder Singh and Dr. Nirmala Deshpande for their effort in bringing about CC growth in India, Bangladesh, and China.
- 8) Regional coordinators and trustees are invited to offer your own warm welcome and contact these CCs. Several new CCs focus on areas such as: environment, care for children, women's rights, and interfaith efforts within an academic setting. The Committee encourages members of URI to help new CC members connect with like-minded CCs so that they can build good relationships CC to CC and share areas of interest and skill.
- 9) Some CCs were approved and a request was made for more biographical information to understand better the work and aspirations of these CCs.
- 10) Next meeting: December 2004.

CCs APPROVED:

1) B. V. N. Memorial Service Society Region: Asia, Bangladesh

Contact person: Mr. K. V. V. S. Murthy

Address: 13-5-169 Ashoknagar Colony
Bhadrachalam 507112

PHONE: 9848572502

EMAIL: kvsmurthy2@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 8

Traditions: Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Indigenous (Tribal faith)

Governance: We will make decisions based on the majority opinion at the meetings of our general body.

CC Purpose: To make peace and harmony among people. To raise awareness about rural education.

CC Dream: Equal living and equal rights of choosing and worshipping a deity.

CC Highlights: We have been running a bi-monthly magazine called "Satyam" (Truth) for the last three years. We hold meetings of different faith during festival seasons.

Interview (Mohinder)

I heard about URI in a G. K. Book. URI Principles & Commitment towards religious harmony and global peace attracted different religious groups and we decided to form a CC. Yes, basic requirements are met as URI norms mentioned. We have Hindu, Christian, Muslim and Tribal Faith traditions included. Our highlights have been donating spiritual books of different faiths to the rural libraries. We hope to spread message of peace and harmony among the people by assisting in local area according to URI Principles of the Charter. Yes, we understand the Charter principles. I know more about the URI through URI's newsletters. We will be waiting to learn about more of its activities in future. I don't know about its benefit to our group yet. The (URI) commitment attracted me & other members. Yes, we understand that a CC is responsible for its own finances. (K. V. V. S. Murthy)

2) Center for Peace and Dialogue of Cultures Region: Europe - Tajikistan

Contact person: Munira Shahidi (GC trustee)

Address: Ziyadullo Shahidi Foundation
108 Loiq Sheralli Street

734002 Dushanbe

Tajikistan

Phone: +(992 372) 242342

Fax: +(992 372) 246711

Email: munira_shahidi@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 15

Traditions: Muslim (diverse sects), Christian (different denominations), Zoroastrians Bahai's, Buddhists

Governance: We make our decision by respecting everyone's point of view.

CC Purpose: To expand our network via art, we are inspired to raise our voices for Peace and Understanding and to widen our cooperation further between the diverse cultures and religions. To encourage people to create a peaceful society locally and globally without any discrimination of human rights.

CC Dream: In order to change the world we must see the change in ourselves first. Strive individually in the path of peace and understanding. Our dream of making a difference in this world is to see equality among people regardless of their race, religion, and ethnic origins in order to respect each other in a true sense. We must use the tools we have in our hands to bring peace and harmony to the world. We must unite to create a great union of people who are willing to bring peace and happiness.

CC Highlights: Bringing peace to kindergartens and schools (partners UNDP, UNTOP), Festival of Music (partners Union of Composers); Seminar of Survival of Tajik Opera and the International Conferences on Dialogue of Cultures, Nov. 2003. May 2004.

Interview: (Karimah)

I just had the appreciative phone-conversation with Farangis, the daughter of Munira Shahidi, in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Farangis is a composer and currently lives with her baby and husband in Dushanbe, and she is one of the main leaders of the CC. The CC has a membership from different countries of Central Asia, of all whom currently live in Dushanbe. Their diversity includes Muslims, Christians, a Jew, a Zoroastrian and a Buddhist. Their main focus is the dialogue of cultures, and they have organized various seminars, roundtables and concerts in this field. Their last happening was an event around the International Day of Peace, for which Munira sent the report over the CC-list.

P.S. I have known Munira and Farangis since 1992, when we met in London for the first time. Munira was giving some lectures at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies (University)) and the Muslim Institute.

Day of Peace in Tajikistan, from Munira Shahidi

see Munira's report above, under 2. g) in this Dialogue-Letter

3) Society for Intercultural Research and Friendship

Region: Europe, Turkey

Contact person: Semsettin Turkan

Address: Konur Sokak

36/15 Kizilay-Amkara

Turkey 06690

Phone: 0090 312 4255009

Fax: 0090312 4256659

Email: semsturk@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 7

Traditions: Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist

Governance: Democratic decisions are made by our Board of Directors

CC Purpose: To arrange a peaceful atmosphere among 4000 members from 70 countries studying in Turkey.

CC Dream: a peaceful love-full world full of tolerance

CC Highlights: Series of seminars about different cultures weekly, intercultural trips to historical places in Turkey, arranging accommodation/Scholarship when needed for foreigners.

Interview: (Karimah)

Our 20-minute phone-conversation was very interesting. SIRF is an organization involving 4000 students from different countries who study in Turkey, who come from many different backgrounds and religions.

Last week they organized a trip to Pamukkale (a tourist site in Turkey) with 92 students (Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists) from 20 countries in two busses.

Currently they are organizing a welcome-party, a dinner, for the new students who arrive for the new academic year with about 400-500 guests. For the graduation at the end of the academic year they organize a party, - last time the President of the Turkish Parliament was with them, and they issued an intercultural friendship certificate to all students. SIRF was established in 1995, and

they have seminars and events every other week. Semsettin Turkan himself is also associated with three other NGOS: ICANO (International Council of Awqaf and Nonprofit Organizations), the aim of which is to connect Turkish NGOs with the international level. The two other orgs are a Turkish-Japanese Cultural Organization and the Turkish Teacher's Union.

4) URI-Aarhus Cooperation Circle

Region: Europe, Denmark

Contact person: Soren Hauge

Address: Theosophical Association Aarhus

Home Byvej 43,

1.th. 8270 Holjberg

Denmark

Phone: 86 27 53 60

Email: sophia@post6.tele.dk

Current Membership: 23

Traditions: Islam, Bahai, Theosophical Association Aarhus (Theosophy), Sufism, The Liberal Catholic Church (LCC), The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, Unitarianism, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhism, Reiki, Scientology, The Diamond Approach.

Governance: We strive at consensus and use democratic decisions with simple majority when necessary, remembering the spirit of URI, listening to all and with respect for diversity. We have chosen a Coordinator (Mr. Søren Hauge – Theosophy/LCC), a Treasurer (Mr. Ole helbo – Bahai) and a Secretary (Mr. Soroush Zand – Theosophy). The Coordinator will be the contacting link between URI-groups in Denmark and the URI-Community. The treasurer will pay the yearly contributions to URI, as well as take care of financial matters. The Secretary will summon the meetings, keep records of the URI-members data and keep account from the meetings of URI-Aarhus.

CC Purpose: The same as URI, especially with the purpose of: working for greater understanding and mutual respect between people of diverse faiths; taking initiatives; and participating in visible projects that build bridges between people of diverse faiths and create hope for the common future of humanity.

CC Dream: Through our meetings and activities we want to further openness and harmonic co-existence, respect for diversity, care for the wholeness and hope for the future.

CC Highlights: Simply that we formed our CC in less than two months after the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona in July 2004, and that we managed to gather a diversity from 12 different religions and traditions and constitute ourselves in the city of Aarhus in an atmosphere of harmony and commitment on 11 September 2004 at 9.00 PM.

Interview: (Heidi)

As we know there is great news from Denmark: Two interfaith-circles with 23 members/each has been created there by Soren Hauge who took a part of the Parliament of World's Religions. He knew URI before last summer because he had looked at URI's websites which he has really enjoyed and has noticed that URI does the most work in the interfaith field but after meeting URI-people in Barcelona he really got inspired. He thinks the Parliament was the crucial point for his life even though he has done the interfaith work 10 years so far. He specially thanks Sally and Charles for their marvelous workshop about URI they gave at the Parliament.

Soren has given theosophical lessons in his country some 20 years and today he also teaches in Norway so there is a wonderful net of connections that he has been building during these years. It is seen in these circles: there are people from different convictions and most of them have already gained experiences from encountering different faiths.

Some of the members are the key figures in the interfaith work in Denmark: for example a general secretary and a co-chairman of ISKON are involved with these new circles and also some Muslim leaders and also people who carry the love and knowledge of the dialogue among Buddhists and Christians.

Soren sees that during these years the attitude toward so called new age religions have been changing for better in Denmark little by little because of the work they have done so far. He thinks that to be linked to URI means that they are able to go further with their work. These groups want to be visible factor in the Danish culture. Members are now getting to know each other in order to build up

trustworthy common ground to do things together. The CCs could for example host an exhibition, organize pilgrimage or some other interfaith events near in the future - perhaps international URI-gathering.

According to Soren, these CCs can be good examples of what can happen if time and atmosphere is right: There has been a need for URI to come to Denmark. Soren says that it can be seen in people's eyes when they hear information about URI. People are fascinated by this initiative and some have already mentioned their willingness to be supporters. Soren sees that one of the resources they have is counted by economics. It is possible that Denmark can give good financial support to URI.

The talk with Soren was warm and inspiring. Soren has been active in making contacts with people in URI so many things about URI are already clear to him. And we already know quite a bit about these circles.

Soren and I talked approximately half an hour and during those minutes we also shared some changes that have taken place specially in the Scandinavian cultural climate and some that still need to come. We were both happy about the variety that exists in these Danish new groups. The Scientology was mentioned by Soren himself. As we know the CC members are all representing themselves individually and are all responsible to be self-critical in healthy way about their convictions and way of living in general. Danish CCs are good models to show us how we can make a difference and by doing so we need to widen the dialogue. In order to create something new you don't only need to have wisdom; you also need to own courage, trust, hope and patient - and especially patience.

Recommendation: With great joy I recommend that these two new groups will be accepted as URI-CCs. Let's give them warm welcome-hug! I am looking forward for new era to come with these all European new and old CCs and the ones that are still waiting to be born - Perhaps with the help of Danish we can welcome Swedish people soon to this URI-family. It was noticed that Soren can speak Swedish very well. And of course there are Norwegian people next door as well.

Addition to interview: Thank you, Heidi, so much for the notes from our telephone conversation. It was a joy. Your notes are also very fine. Thanks for that!

I just want to add one thing: I myself took up the fact that in Aarhus we have a dedicated participant from Scientology. This has given some speculations to a few, because they could fear that manipulation, dominating methods etc. could perhaps enter the arena and damage the good work. Here my answer has been that in the name of dialogue and bridgèbuilding I am ready to defend this individual, simply because he fully and completely accepts and respects the URI-declaration and spirit, he is keenly interested in dialogue (and has been so for years), he has a sound, critical attitude towards his own community, he is interested in learning from others and developing friendships and he is so inspired about URI. So here is a good example of how the individual commitment must come first, and the affiliations and "labels" are only secondary. This has been a very important initial process, and we have stressed it so clearly, that we are individuals who participate because of personal attunement to the ideals and practice of URI. We are not primarily responsible for all that our traditions/churches etc. has been involved with during decades, centuries or more. If so, this would probably disqualify all of us! And I am happy to say that this understanding is shared by us.

5) URI-Copenhagen – CC for URI

Region: Europe, Denmark

Contact person: (Mr) Søren Hauge & (Mrs) Jette Hauge Westerlund

Address: Holme Byvej 43, 1. th.

8270 Højbjerg - Denmark

Tel/fax: +45 86 27 53 60

Phone: 86 27 53 60

Email: sophia@post6.tele.dk

www.teosofi.org

www.sophiaundervisning.dk

Current Membership: 22

Traditions: Islam, Theosophical Association Copenhagen & Aarhus (Theosophy), Bahai, Brahman Kumaris, Catholic Church, Evangelical Lutheran in Denmark, Sikh, Amma Mata Amritanandamayi, LCC Liberal Catholic Church, Unitarian.

Governance: we strive at consensus and use democratic decisions with simple majority when necessary, remembering the spirit of URI, listening to all and with respect for diversity.

We have chosen two Coordinators (Miss Sonja Ohlsson, Brahma Kumaris and Mr. Sune Hjerrild, Theosophical association Copenhagen), a helping International Coordinator (Mr. Søren Hauge, Theosophical Association Aarhus), a Treasurer (Mr. Arne Kærlyt, Theosophical Association Copenhagen) and a Secretary (Miss Marie Louise Lefevre, Christian - Focolare-movement). The two Coordinators will coordinate meetings and communicate with the Secretary. The helping International Coordinator will be the contacting link between URI-groups in Denmark and the URI-Community. The treasurer will pay the yearly contributions to URI, as well as take care of financial matters. The Secretary will summon the meetings, keep records of the URI-members data and keep account from the meetings of URI-Copenhagen. The chosen people can share these tasks with others and the functions can rotate in the CC.

CC Purpose: The same as URI, especially with the purpose of: 1) working for greater understanding and mutual respect between people of diverse faiths; 2) taking initiatives and participate in visible projects that build bridges between people of diverse faiths and further hope for the common future of Humanity

CC Dream: Through our meetings and activities we want to further openness and harmonic co-existence, respect for diversity, care for the wholeness and hope for the future.

CC Highlights: Simply that we formed our CC in less than two months after the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona in July 2004, and that we managed to gather a diversity from 10 different religions and traditions and constitute ourselves in the city of Aarhus in an atmosphere of harmony and commitment on 24. September 2004 at 9.45 PM.

Interview: see above (Heidi)

6) Muncie Interfaith Fellowship

Region: N. America, USA -Indiana

Contact person: George Wolfe

Address: 3304 W. Ethel Ave.

Muncie, Indiana 47304

Phone: 765- 285- 1622

Fax:

Email: gwolfe@bsu.edu

Current Membership: 23

Traditions: Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Native America, Jewish

Governance: monthly dialogue group discusses and makes decision regarding projects, activities, and events.

CC purpose: an organization serving East Central Indiana that seeks to foster understanding between religious faiths and serve as an opportunity for people from different religious traditions to share and appreciate each other's teachings while working together for the good of the Muncie community.

CC Dream: demonstrate that people from different religious traditions can learn from each other and work together for the good of the community.

CC Highlights: 15 minute interfaith radio show every Sunday, community interfaith dinners every 3 months, monthly interfaith community services.

Interview: (Susanna McIlwaine)

The Muncie Interfaith Fellowship is an existing group that has been going strong for a number of years. In addition to a monthly dialogue group that attracts a core of 10-20 people, they hold larger public interfaith events drawing hundreds of people, such as 9/11 commemorative services, Thanksgiving events, interfaith dinners, events honoring the International Day of Peace, and fundraisers for the local food pantry. They have a weekly radio show on a local station (archives are available at <http://www.bsu.edu/cpcs/fellowship.htm>).

George Wolf first heard about URI when he had a chance to hear Bishop Swing speak in Michigan two years ago (think he heard him twice). What interested him in becoming a CC was the national and

international connection that URI can bring, the chance to be connected with more people, to go to conferences, to share a sense of identify beyond the local.

Their group includes members of 7 religious traditions.- Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Bahai, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu. They try to get two people from each tradition to represent the fellowship in their own places of worship, and to be a liaison.

When they completed the CC application in August, they read the charter and other documents. George would like to find ways to bring the Charter and PPP to the awareness of the group more often, perhaps replacing his Thanksgiving sermon!

7) Peace Foundation CC Muzaffar Garh
Region: Asia, Pakistan

Contact person: Dr. Ashiq Zafar Bhatti
Address: Peace Foundation CC, Muzaffar Garh
Aims Complex Permit Road
Jatoi
Distt. Muzaffar Garh, Pakistan
Phone: 0092- 6906 - 591674
Email: aimsorganization@yahoo.com

Current Membership: 11

Traditions: Hindu, Muslim Christian

Governance: democratic

CC Purpose. To promote peace, love and harmony among the people of different religions. To work for the respect of human rights and to end violence done in the name of religion. To work for peace and justice for all humankind, especially for women and children.

CC Dream: To make this world a more humane and peaceful world and offer our full contribution for this vision.

Interview: (James Channan)

I am well aware of the activities of Dr. Ashiq Zaffar Bhatti for the past five years. I am pleased with his work and that of the Peace Foundation Muzaffar Garh. Dr. Bhatti visited me in Multan at least three times and he wanted to know about the URI and its activities in Pakistan and around the world. He seems very impressed by the activities of the URI. He has shared the Charter of the URI with the members of the Peace Foundation and have expressed desire and thus sent an application to become a Cooperation Circle.

I am impressed by the dedicated work of this organization and this way our URI circle will reach out to the Southern Punjab, where interfaith harmony and to work against religiously motivated violence is very much needed. This organization will take vision of the URI to three more districts: Muzaffar Garh, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajan Pur.

Therefore, in the light of my personal appreciative inquiry, interview and contact with Dr. Bhatti and about the Peace Foundation and seeing their deep interest to work for the URI I would recommend this application for your favorable consideration.

8) The Hope Flowers School
Region: MENA - Bethlehem

Contact person: Ghada Issa
Address: PO Box 732, Bethlehem,
West Bank (Via Israel)
Phone: +972 2 274 0693/ 274 4975
Fax: + 972 2 274 7084
Email: hopeflowers@palnet.com

Current Membership: 10

Traditions: Muslims (different sects), Christians (different denominations)

Governance: The decision making process at Hope School is usually shared by students, teachers, parents, and people affiliated with Hope Flowers. We have student committees, parent committees and the Board, who are all involved in the decision-making process of the school.

CC Purpose. To educate a new generation in the sense of peace and democracy so that we find and strengthen positive attitudes for peaceful coexistence among different nations in the basis of equality and justice.

CC Dream: To develop attitudes and skills that foster peaceful resolutions to conflict. At the same time, we seek to cultivate values within the Palestinian society, relationships between our Palestinian children and other cultures as a basis for creating understanding among peoples in the world and peaceful relations among nations.

Highlights:

- 1) Progressive educational methods (Montessori educational techniques, male and female integrated classes)
- 2) Inter and Intra cultural understanding (classes taught by both Christian and Muslim teachers, long-standing programs of bridge-building with Israelis who share our philosophy in peace and democracy education.
- 3) Exchanges (that kept taking place until the beginning of the Intifada in 2000) with progressive rabbis, "sister school" relationship with the Democratic School of Hadera, etc).
- 4) Peace education and activities (peace curriculum, networking, community programs).
- 5) Joint activities with schools outside of Palestine. Such activities have included various students and teachers exchange programs. One example of such a program is the partnership that included students and teachers exchanges with the Freidrich gymnasium School in Frankfurt, Germany. The school also has a sister relationship with the American International School in Tel-Aviv and continues to develop sister school relationships with other schools outside of the Middle East region.

{Please refer to our web site for further information on our uniqueness: www.hope-flowers.org}

Interview: (Yehuda Stolov)

We heard about the URI through a dear friend of the Hope Flowers named Yehuda Stolov, the Director of the Interfaith Encounter in Israel. What we really value about the URI is its principals and approaches that aim for uniting the faiths and spiritual lives of people for the sake and well being of the global community. Our CC group had formed through the common activities we used to do together through the Hope Flowers School.

There are more than 7 members in our CC who are Muslims and Christians (the Palestinian society is a mixture of Muslims and Christians).

The highlights of our work through the Hope Flowers School have been bringing people together from different places, faiths, nationalities and from different cultures to work together on issues of joint interest and unite in one culture of peace, justice and equality.

We see the Hope Flowers in living the purposes and preamble and principals of the URI in working and contributing to and sharing the responsibility of building bridges among different people. We are looking to make real this purpose by doing our best efforts to promote and work for these principals in our community and in every aspect of our work.

We are looking forward to be part of the URI and to share our work and experience and to have the honor to deepen our experience in building bridges among nations from the good work that the URI is doing. Yes, we know that CCs are responsible for their own funding.

From Yehuda: I have known the Hope Flower School and the Issa family, especially Ghada, for many years of good relations and good cooperation. They are doing wonderful work and I strongly recommend their approval. On the issue of faith diversity: I asked Ghada about denominational diversity and she replied that it is alien to the Palestinian society to use denominations breakdowns that refers to all Christians as Christians and all Muslims as Muslims. I fully accept her position and it sounds very much accurate so I don't see that as an obstacle.

**9. URI in Bangladesh CC
Region: Asia, Bangladesh**

Contact person: Dr. Kazul Nurul Islam

Address: Professor and Chair, Department of World Religions

University of Dhaka

Dhaka -1000 Bangladesh

Phone: 880-2-8612651 (office) 880-2-8615687 (home)

Fax: 880-2-8615583

Email: religion@bangla.net

Current Membership: 7 (will increase very soon)

Traditions: Hindu, Buddhist, Christianity, Islam

Governance: absolutely democratic. We will form a committee that will run the Bangladesh Chapter of URI.

CC purpose: To remove inter-religious hatred and promote understanding among people belonging to different faiths.

CC Dream: we want to initiate a moral revolution in the society through systematic study and training of the religious ethics in the world.

CC Highlights: For many years we have been working as interfaith and human rights activist.

Interview (Mohinder)

We came to know about the URI from Dr. Mohinder Sing of Delhi. The principles of the URI impressed us most. Now we are group of seven consisting of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian and Muslims. Yes all the basic requirements are met. There are seven members. They belong to five religious traditions. In Bangladesh we have been working for interfaith understanding and for the promotion of peace among people different faiths. This group has arranged national and international seminars during the past few years. On of the most remarkable programs we had on the 26 July this year. This was an "International Seminar on Inter-religious Harmony." Participants from USA, Canada, Japan, Pakistan and Bangladesh took part in the seminar among the participants seven religions covered namely Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Sikh, Jew & Bahai. The Preamble, Purpose and Principles of the Charter are excellent. Our members have clear understanding of the charter.

Bangladesh is a pluralistic society. But recently Muslim fanatics are creating trouble for minorities. Our relation with URI will help us to fight these fanatics. If we get support from different parts of the globe and from organization like URI we will be able to train up our young people to fight against any kind of fanaticism and prompt inter-religious cooperation. Yes, of course, we do understand about fiscal responsibility.

10. Sri Garib Dass CC

Region: Asia, India, (Rajpura District – Patiala)

Contact person: Mrs. Karamjit Kaur

Address: Satkar Vihar

Behind Eagle Hotel Near Focal Point

Rajpura District, Patiala 140401

Phone: 01762-232032

Fax:

Email: jdeep5@rediffmail.com

Current Membership: 8

Traditions: Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Nirankari

Governance: all decision taken through consensus

CC purpose: to create an environment where every one lives in compete peace and harmony with each other.

CC Dream: to bring changes in the lives of people so that this world is a more beautiful place to live for everyone.

CC Highlights: We have been working as a loosely knit social group until now. Our main area of interest has been education to rural children, care for the elderly and perseverance of the environment.

Interview: (Mohinder)

Mrs. Kaur came to know URI from Mr. Ashwani Kumar, CC convener at Patiala. Yes, our religious diversity requirement is met. Our members work as a group in close association with some NRI's and work for the rural children in and around Rajpura town. A nonformal school was opened where more

than 100 children came to study. It was hugely popular with the parents and students. We were happy to give all the necessary inputs to students. The students belonged to all segments of the society. All members are committed to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of Charter. Our group shall be greatly benefited as we shall imbibe new ideas and part of a larger movement for the betterment of civic society. We understand that we are responsible to fund our activities.

11. Swami Ganganand Ji Bhuriwale URI CC
Region: Asia, India, Ludhiana, Punjab

Contact person: Jagdeep Singh
Address: Executive Director, SGB
International Foundation
Dham Taswandhi Khurd,
Via Swaddi District, Ludhiana
Phone: 01624-245988, 94-174-72223
Fax:
Email: jdeep5@rediffmail.com

Current Membership: 11

Traditions: Sikh, Muslim, Garibdasi Hindus

Governance: highly decentralized

CC purpose: To work toward socio-religious harmony in society

CC Dream: as multi-colored threads get woven into beautiful fabric, so is a peaceful world feasible through the blend of various faith and religions.

CC Highlights: Most members of the Swami Ganganand ji Bhuriwale CC are involved in working for religious and social causes, Arranging "Sarbh Dharm Samelans" which roughly translated means "all religions seminars". And working for needy children, women and the aged is our prime collective area for volunteer work. A SGB Children's Home is being run for orphaned and abandoned children where they are brought up in a family environment. Free Ayurvedic medical dispensary runs every Sunday for poor patients for the last 22 years. Marriages for poor girls are arranged.

Story: A ten year old child named "Lura" comes from Nepal with relatives in search of work and lands in Patiala District of Punjab. He falls prey to some superstitious people who abduct him with intention of sacrificing him at the altar of god (perceived god if one such exists). Innocent child is led to the altar and is chained to be sacrificed. His heart rending cries are heard by some passer by. The dare devil intervention of these good Samaritans save the child's life. Police are informed and they rescue the child and put the culprits behind the bars. Police seeks the help of one of the URI member who help the child to come to SGB Children's Home. This institution for needy children is also run by URI Members here. After initial psychological shock and trauma, Lura is a happy and healthy child today.

Interview: (Mohinder)

Our group was introduced to the URI by Dr. Mohinder Singh from Delhi. We do meet the requirements for religious diversity. Our main activities are: working for orphaned children; conducting special games for mentally retarded children; conducting all religion conference at Dham Talwandi Khurd, and conducting rural games at Village Talwandi Khurd. All Members are committed to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of the charter. Our basic query is to know how we can help take message of URI to rural parts of Punjab more effectively. Is there any outreach program already available which can be replicated and how we shall be helped by the parent body? Our main expectation being part of URI is that we shall be working as a change catalyst to bring positive change in the society. Yes, we understand that we are fiscally responsible for our CC.

12. Ambala District CC
Region: Asia - India (Haryana)

Contact person: Mr. Pawan Kumar
Address: Jai Durga Automobiles and Service Station
Ambala-Nahan Road
Naraingarh District, Ambala, INDIA
Phone: 01734-314914

Fax:

Email: parliament_religion@rediffmail.com (c/o Dinesh Bhatia)

Current Membership: 7

Traditions: Hindu, Sikh, Muslim

Governance: all decisions are taken through consensus

CC Purpose: Live and let live

CC Dream: We help ourselves when we help others

CC Highlights: We are a dedicated group of people who have been helping people in all kinds of difficulties irrespective of consideration of caste, class or religion. We worked to rescue people and also to provide them with food during recent floods that hit the Ambala area. We worked day and night in cooperation with other organizations.

Interview: (Mohinder)

Mr. Pawan Kumar came to know URI from Mr. Jagdeep Singh, CC convener at Ludhiana. We have seven members from three different traditions – Hindu, Muslim, Sikh. We worked to rescue the people and also provide them with food during recent floods that hit the Ambala area. We worked day and night for this purpose in cooperation with other organizations. All members are committed to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of Charter. From joining the URI we see that our group shall be greatly benefited as we shall imbibe new ideas and part of a larger movement for the betterment of civic society. We understand that we are responsible for funding our own initiatives.

13. Sangrur District CC

Region: Asia, India, (Malerkotla, Punjab)

Contact person: Dr. Latif Mohd

Phone: 01675-255198

Fax:

Email: parliament_religion@rediffmail.com (c/o Dinesh Bhatia)

Current Membership: 7

Traditions: Muslim, Hindu, Jain, Sikh

Governance: very de-centralized

CC purpose: to make co-existence of different communities possible in a healthy way.

CC Dream: everyone has unique potential to contribute toward the growth of humanity.

CC Highlights: we have been collectively working for the development of education among rural children.

Interview (Mohinder)

Dr. Lohd came to know URI from Mr. Jagdeep Singh, CC convener at Ludhiana. Yes, basic requirements are met with members numbering 2 Sikhs, 3 Muslims, one Jain, and 1 Hindu. We help people maintain communal harmony during recent disturbed days in this communally charged town of Malerkotla. All members are committed to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of Charter. Yes, our group shall be greatly benefited as we shall imbibe new ideas and part of a larger movement for the betterment of civic society. Yes, we understand that our CC is responsible for funding its activities.

Addition: Malerkotla is significant region in India because it is an area where Muslims stayed during and after partition due to the blessing and leadership of a guru. The BBC made a documentary about this historic place.

Request: Please send URI more bio information about this CC.

14. Sirmour District CC

Region: Asia, India, (Himachal Pradesh)

Contact person: Rohid Kathuria

Address:

Phone: 01704-222662

Fax:

Email: rohithathuria@sancharnet.net.in

Current Membership: 7

Traditions: Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim

Governance: very de-centralized

CC purpose: living together makes life better for everyone

CC Dream: united efforts lead to better results

CC Highlights: working with people spreading the message of universal brotherhood and tolerance.

Interview: (Mohinder)

Mr. Rohid Kathuria came to know about URI from Mr. Ashwani Kumar, CC convener at Patiala, Yes, our diversity requirements are met and all members are committed to the Preamble, Purpose and Principles of Charter. Our group shall be greatly benefited as we shall imbibe new ideas and part of a larger movement for the betterment of civic society. Yes, we know that our CC is responsible to fund its own activities.

Request: Please send URI more bio information about this CC.

15. Banglanet Cooperation Circle

Region - Asia, Bangladesh

Contact Person: Professor Ishrat Shamin

President, Centre for Women and Children's Studies

Address: 92 New Eskaton Road

Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

Telephone: 880-2-9351126 (off) 880-2-9344685 (res)

Email: cwcs_bd@hotmail.com

Current Membership: 20

Traditions: Muslim, Hindu, Christian

Governance: participatory

Purpose: to initiate interfaith actions and ensure interfaith cooperation in Bangladesh and in the South Asian region.

Dream: ensuring peace, harmony and tolerance towards different religious groups and faiths.

Highlights: secular, peace and tolerance towards different religious groups.

Interview (Mohinder)

I heard about the URI from Dr. Mohinder Singh whom I met at the Social Forum in Bombay. Yes, the basic requirements are met of having at least 7 members from 3 different religions. We have members from both genders as well as from Muslim, Hindu and Christian religious groups. We are especially working with women and child rights and in combating violence against them which are also part of maintaining overall peace in the community and society at large. We have worked with police sensitivity on gender issues and child rights so that women and children get social justice in the hands of the law enforcing agencies. We do advocacy for pro-women and child-friendly policing at all levels.

Our future plans will be to coordinate with our South Asian partners in advocacy for restoring peace and harmony in the region as well as share each other's experiences to undertake future activities in the region. Our members have been advocating for peace and tolerance in our country through their deliberations in various seminars and workshops. We will try to achieve the purpose of the URI as far as possible in our humble way. Members have an understanding of the Charter of URI and they are committed to it. We hope our Banglanet CC will benefit by gaining more insights as part of the URI. Our expectations will be to organize a South Asian Regional Seminar at Dhaka in future to disseminate the purpose and principles of URI more widely in the region and invite other South Asian networking organizations. We do understand that URI CCs are responsible for funding their own activities. However, we would need other technical support from URI to invite relevant persons in future seminars to be organized in our country.

16. Kashmir Valley CC

Region: Asia, North India

Contact: Ms. Babita Chaudhary

Address: 1st Floor, Mukherjee Nagar,

Delhi – 110009 INDIA

Telephone: mobile - 9811798703,
Email: nirmala_desh@mantraonline.com

Second contact: Mr. Balbir Singh
60, Sulhra Shahi,
Distt. Srinagar
Jammu and Kashmir, India

Membership: 7

Traditions: Hindu, Islam, Sikh

Governance: all decisions will be taken by the consent of every member

Purpose: To promote interfaith Harmony and Peace especially in the most violent state like Jammu & Kashmir.

Dreams: Removing the religious boundaries from the hearts of every individual.

Highlights: We have been working for the above purpose from a long time without forming a formal Cooperation Circle.

Interview: (Mohinder) We heard about the URI through Dr. Nirmala Deshpande. The purpose of URI attracted us because we are already working for the same without any formal recognition. Yes, the basic requirements are met. We are 7 members from 3 different religions i.e. Hindu, Sikh & Islam. We are into promoting interfaith cooperation, harmony and peace. As the world knows the situation of Jammu & Kashmir because of the communal violence and terrorism, we do hope we will be able to work towards the purpose of bringing harmony and peace among people and also hopes to create more & more cooperation circles of URI. So that one day people can understand the value of peace. All of our members have the basic understanding of the Charter and they are committed towards it and also believe to implement them very soon. Our CC will definitely benefit from the membership of URI. Specially in this state (Jammu & Kashmir) the purpose of the URI has a significant role to play and we are committed towards it. Yes, we do understand the financial responsibilities of CCs.

17. Bhatinda District Cooperation Circle

Region: Asia, India

Contact: Mr. Surinder Singh

Address: 207 Kawal Street

Bhatinda, India

Phone: 0164-2255294

Membership: 8

Traditions: Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Christian

Purpose: To work toward bringing people together

Dream: People alone can bring positive change in society through self-initiatives and community leadership.

Highlights: We as a group have been active in providing timely help to needy students in Bhatinda for many years.

Governance: Through consensus most of the time

Interview Summary: (Mohinder)

We came to know about URI from Mr. Ashwar Kumar pf the URI Patiala CC. Our group meets all of the minimum requirements. We have been working rigorously toward bringing different people together. We see it as an opportunity. All members are committed to the URI Charter and we understand that we are financially responsible for our CC.

Request: Please send more bio information from this CC.

18. Jammu District CC

Region, Asia, India

Contact person: Mr. Satish Kumar

Address: C/o Mr. R. C. Mathawan,
95, Sector 7, Nanak Nagar,
Jammu, INDIA

Phone: 0191-2436360

Membership: 9

Traditions: Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhist, Christian

Purpose: To bring relief to suffering humanity

Dream: People in distress can be helped better if fellow brothers start taking empathetic view of their suffering.

Highlights: we as a group have been working for some months to help needy children affected by militancy who are living in various shelter camps around Jammu.

Interview Summary (Mohinder)

We came to know about the URI from Mr. Ashwani Kumar of the URI Patiala CC. Our group meets all minimum requirements. We have been helping many people especially children affected by militancy. We mobilize people to be more sympathetic about the plight of displaced people and arrange for basic necessities for them. All members are committed to the Charter. Our association with URI shall increase our understanding of survival and provide us chance to learn more tolerant behavior. Yes, we understand that we are financially responsible for our CC.

Addition: Mohinder knows Mr. Satish Kumar personally. He attended the Pre-Parliament event in Delhi. Very hopeful that interfaith peace efforts are happening in this area.

19. Dragon CC

Region: Asia, China

Contact Person: Zhang Zhanshun

School of International Studies
Peking University,
Beijing, PRC

Phone: 00861051604052

Email: zzvicotry@hotmail.com

Membership: 7

Traditions: Marxism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism

Purpose: To increase understanding and promote peaceful development in the world.

Dream: Beijing China

Highlights: This will be the first URI presence in China

Governance: By consensus

Interview Summary: (Mohinder)

I came to know about URI through Mohinder Singh during my visit to Delhi, India. The basic requirements of membership are met. My visits to India for research have created in me an interest in the study of Indian religions. I am working on a Sikh theme for my doctoral research. We hope to promote URI's Preamble, Purpose and Principles in the near future. We believe that URI can help promote better understanding among people of China and in other parts of the world. We will have simple functions since we do not have any resources.

Request: Ask Mr. Zhang Zhanshun to say more about his understanding of Marxism.

20. Gujrat CC

Region: Asia, India

Contact: Mr. Jayesh Patel

Manav Sadhna Kendra
Gandhi Ashram

Ahmedabad - 27
India
Phone: 079 7560002, 7556247

Membership: 7 (soon to increase)
Traditions: Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Christian
Governance: participation by all
Purpose: to spread the message of harmony and peace
Dream: "We must be the change we wish to see in the world." Gandhi
Highlights: For along time we have been working individually towards our purpose, mw after becoming a member of URI, our team will put forth their best efforts to achieve the purpose if URI.

Interview: (Mohinder)

I heard about URI through Dr. Nirmala Deshpande. URI is working for the same purpose we are working for and this is what attracted us to become a member of URI. Working in the same field we formed a formal group under the banner of URI. The basic requirements are met – we are 7 members from 4 different religions. We have done lots of activities till now but they can't be recognized as big achievements but those small achievements gave us a sense of satisfaction that at least we are doing something towards the better understanding of the world. Yes, all members have a basic understanding of the Charter and they are committed to it. Becoming am member of the URI will surely boost our morale and help work as a team toward our purpose. Yes, we understand that our CC is fiscally responsible for itself.

Request: Please send more bio information about this CC.

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4. European Interfaith News

4. a) House of Lords celebrate 400 years of Guru Granth Sahib, London, UK



The Queen at the opening of a Sikh Gurdwara in London

(DER SPIEGEL 43/
18.10.04)

Dear friends,
many of us still remember the wonderful opportunity to be guests of the Sikh community in Barcelona at the Parliament of the World's Religions. And we are truly happy about the first time celebration of 400 years of Guru Granth Sahib in the House of Lords in London (see article below).
While in France Sikh boys wearing a turban are now also getting into trouble in French schools - after France's ban of "auspicious religious symbols" had created a huge problem for Muslim girls wearing a headscarf – and while Germany is moving more and more in the same direction, England really seems so much more advanced, considering freedom of religious expression. Hope you enjoy the article by Rishi Singh! – Karimah

House of Lords celebrate 400 years of Guru Granth Sahib
Rishi Singh
London, October 26
http://www.hindustantimes.com/news/5983_1074792,00430005.htm

On October 19, the Sikhs celebrated 400th year of installation of Guru Granth Sahib at Sri Harmandir Sahib in the House of Lords, London. This was the first time when Sikh Forum (UK) organised the event in the British Parliament.

Lord Viscount Slim, who has a long association with the Sikhs since the Second World War, was the host to the August gathering. Many prominent Lords, MPs, Deputy Police Commissioner, Barons and distinguished personalities of Britain joined the Sikhs to mark the occasion. Lord Slim also released a book by the Sikh Forum.

President of the Sikh Forum, UK, Ranjit Singh OBE, began the programme by reciting the mool mantra from the Jap Sahib. Singh laid stress on the fact that Sikhs have done well for whichever country they have adopted to live in. He said they have contributed and gained recognition in every sphere of British society.

Justice Mota Singh (Retd) QC, patron of the Forum, commented that even though world citizens are connected well with each other, not much is being done to bridge the divide between different world communities. He stressed – as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib – that Sikhs will stand with the right cause with right reason, as they have done throughout their history.

The Sikh Forum also honoured Advocate KTS Tulsi, a distinguished advocate of India, for his contribution to the Sikh community. In his speech Tulsi pointed towards the pioneering contribution of British historians about writing and understanding the Sikhs and their scriptures. He also explained the meanings of 'Sat Sri Akal' and said that Gurbani voiced 400 years ago what United Nations stated as the Human Rights declaration.

The Deputy Commissioner of Metropolitan Police shared his vision of policing in London where every citizen has a right to be protected. He also said that Metropolitan Police was the oldest Police to recognise the Sikh identity.

(Rishi Singh is Ph D Candidate, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is also the author of the book, Maharaja Ranjit Singh (UBSPD), which was released by the former president of India, Dr K R Narayanan, at Rashtrapati Bhawan in a special function.)

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THE END