

---

Promoting enduring daily interfaith co-operation, ending religiously motivated violence, creating cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

---



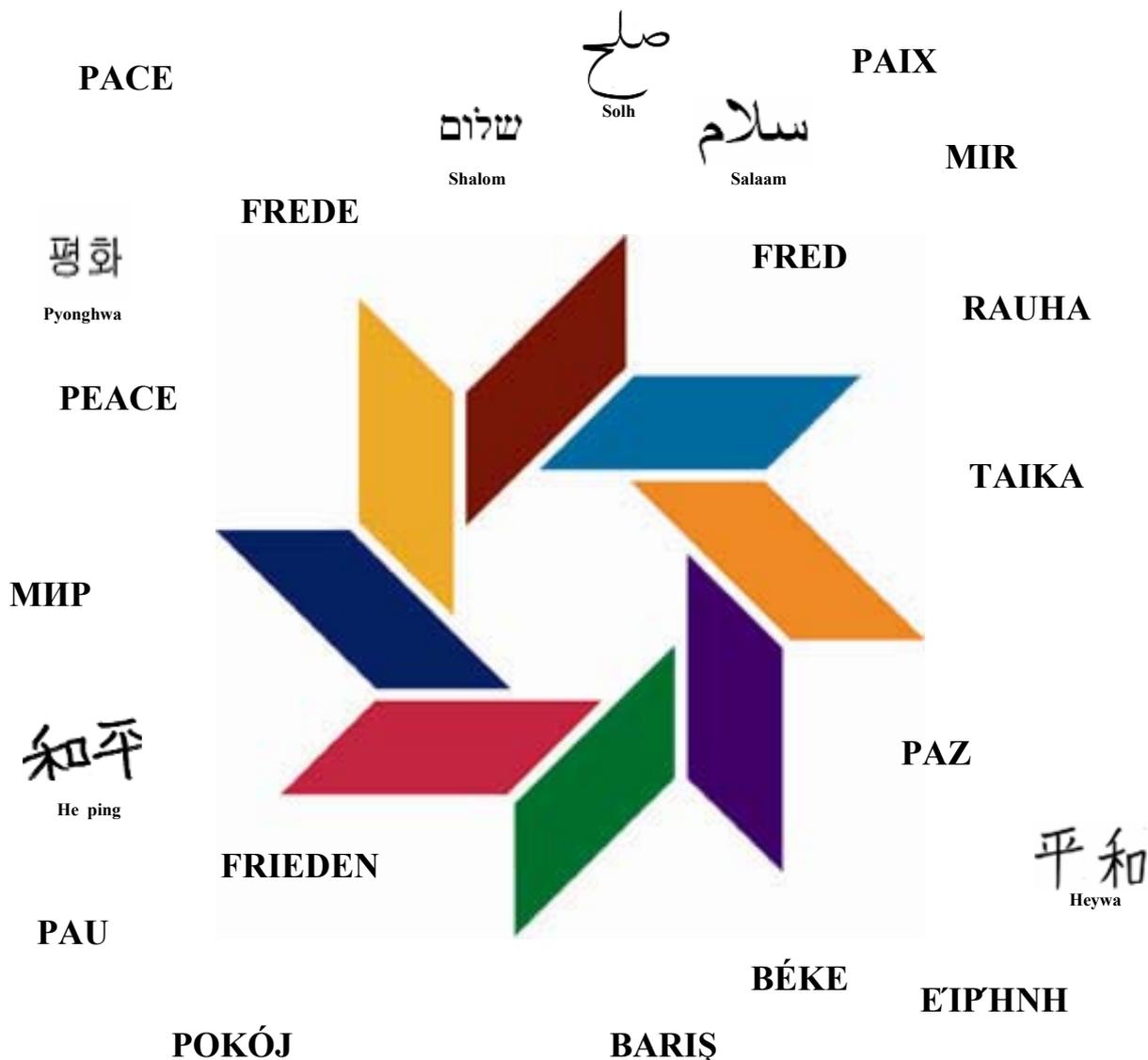
# URI Europe Dialogue Letter

---

Issue 1/2008 (Vol. 5, No. 9)

February 2007 – April 2008

---



---

Whether someone believes something or not, believer or non-believer, as long as you are a member of the human family, you need warm human feeling, warm hearted feeling. The question of world peace, the question of family peace, the question of peace between wife and husband, or peace between parents and children, everything is dependent on that feeling of love and warm heartedness.

-- The XIVth Dalai Lama

---

\*\*\*\*\*

**Table of Contents:**

1. **Welcome and news from the URI EEC (European Executive Committee) 2**  
2. **URI Europe news: The Global Council meeting and the URI Europe Conference in Antwerp in June 2007, hosted by URI Europe and the Bond zonder Naam CC..... 3**  
3. **URI global news: Information by URI Executive Director, Charles Gibbs, about the upcoming Global URI Assembly in Mayapur, India, the URI Global Council elections and the URI Bowes Award ..... 13**  
4. **URI Co-operation Circle news: Interfaith event of the Forum of Religions in Helsinki CC in Espoo, Finland, February 27, 2008 ..... 14**

\*\*\*\*\*

**1. Welcome from the URI EEC (European Executive Committee)**

**Dear URI Community,**

**warm greetings to you and best wishes to you, your families, your friends, your organizations, your countries and the worlds!**

It has been some time since you have received the last URI Europe Dialogue Letter, and we are happy to be **offer a new edition with the following articles:**

1. A report about the **Global Council meeting and the URI Europe conference in Antwerp June 2007,**
2. an email by URI Executive Director, Charles Gibbs, about **important global URI events** this year, namely the URI Global Assembly in Mayapur, India, November 30 – December 5, 2008, the URI Bowes Award call for proposals and the URI Global Council election process, as well as
3. a report about an event by the “Forum of Religions in Helsinki CC”.

**We encourage all URI members to send us your notes about your URI Co-operation Circle and activities, as we plan to edit the Dialogue Letter regularly again in the coming months.**

**About the URI Global Council meeting and the Interfaith Symphony in Antwerp (June 2007),** covered by our Dialogue Letter, we are pleased to be able to **offer you two DVD films for sale:**

1. a **DVD film of the Interfaith Symphony**, a symphony of interfaith choirs, soloists, testimonies, which brought together 1.200 people in Antwerp. The film is structured, using statements of Mahatma Gandhi. The DVD is in English and offers a 55-minute and a 5-minute edition of the Interfaith Symphony; the cost is EUR 15,- plus postage and packing;
2. a 19-minute **DVD film of the URI Global Council meeting and the European URI Conference in Antwerp** in June 2007, offering interviews and impressions of the conference and the public events in Antwerp. The cost is EUR 10,- plus postage and packing.

For orders please send an email Aminah Bach (BachBirgit@web.de) or Karimah Stauch (info@dmlbonn.de).

Warm greetings and all the best

Mr. Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz, Bonn/Germany, Member URI Europe / Global Council Member  
Mr. Patrick Hanjoul, Antwerp/Belgium, President URI Europe  
Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, Eindhoven/The Netherlands, Interim Treasurer, URI Europe  
Ms. Elisabeth A. Lheure, Barcelona, Catalonia/Spain, Secretary URI Europe  
Mr. Jean-Mathieu Lochten, Brussels/Belgium, Vice-President URI Europe  
Mr. Deepak Naik, Coventry/United Kingdom, Vice-President URI Europe  
Ms. Karimah Stauch, Bonn/Germany, Co-ordinator URI Europe, info@dmlbonn.de

## **2. URI Europe news: The Global Council meeting and the URI Europe Conference in Antwerp in June 2007, hosted by URI Europe and the Bond zonder Naam CC**

The European URI Assembly “Interfaith Dialogue: A Tool for Peace in Europe” took place June 15-18, 2007, at the Theological and Pastoral Centre (TPC), in Antwerp, Belgium.

**56 people attended the conference** of which approximately 40% were male and 60% female. They had come from **19 countries**, namely Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Catalonia (Spain), Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Sweden, the Netherlands, Turkey, the United Kingdom. International guests came from Argentina, Ethiopia, India and the United States of America.

The participants came from a variety of different **religions and traditions** including Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Daoism, Hinduism, Judaism, Indigenous traditions, Islam, Sufism, Theosophy, Ananda Marga, Brahma Kumaris, Quaker as well as no religion, and many more denominations.

**Of the 25 European URI Co-operation Circles (CCs = interfaith groups) 19 CCs were represented** – an equivalent of 75% - plus at least 9 international CCs.



For the first time a **URI Europe meeting was held in connection with a Global Council and staff meeting**, with an overlap of both meetings on Thursday and Friday, June 14 and 15, 2007.

This gave both the European interfaith activists and the global URI delegates a **beautiful and unique chance to intermingle** and get to know each other.

### **Note about URI’s Global Council and staff:**

The **Global Council (GC)** is URI’s global governing board. Three Global Council members are elected by the URI Co-operation Circles (CCs) in each of the eight URI regions for a period of three years.

The eight URI regions are: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, North America, South East Asia and the Pacific and the Multiregional Region.



Currently the GC trustees for Europe are Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz and Heidi Rautionmaa.

The **global URI staff** comprises full time and part time staff members, namely the regional Co-ordinators in all regions and the URI staff in the global support office in San Francisco.

In the evening of Thursday, June 14, 2007, an **Interfaith Forum at Antwerp University** took place for European URI delegates and global URI activists, as well as numerous guests from the city of Antwerp and the region of Flanders.

In a first part of the evening four speakers of international stature presented their perspective about the international interfaith movement, its development, challenges and successes:

- Ján Figel (Member of the European Commission in charge of Education, Training, Culture and Youth),
- Charles Gibbs (Executive Director of URI global),
- Jehangir Sarosh (President of WCRP Europe),
- Patrick Hanjoul (President of URI Europe, Director of Bond zonder Naam (BZN) and President of the Flemish Partnership for Interfaith Dialogue (FP-ID)).



After their contributions Ms. Görel Byström ("Same same but different") presented a very successful Swedish interactive interfaith exhibition – "God has 99 Names". The exhibition was sponsored by the Swedish state and had attracted literally hundreds of thousands of visitors, among them a lot of school children and other youngsters. Görel Byström's presentation included slides illustrating the exhibition and its concept.

Afterwards a panel featured interfaith speakers from the region of Flanders, who discussed the importance of grass roots interfaith initiatives. The panellists were:

- Yolande Iliano-Duponchel, Chair WCRP Belgium;
- Frans Goetghebeur, Chair Buddhist Union of Belgium;
- Frank Stappaerts, Chair Humanistic Liberal Union Antwerp;
- Aharon Malinsky, Rabbi Jewish Community Antwerp;
- Prakash Goossens, Coordinator FP-ID/VPiD.

Ms. Karima Adouiri, Assistant of the Integration Service of the City of Lier, of the Muslim faith, unfortunately had had to cancel her participation at the last minute for medical reasons.

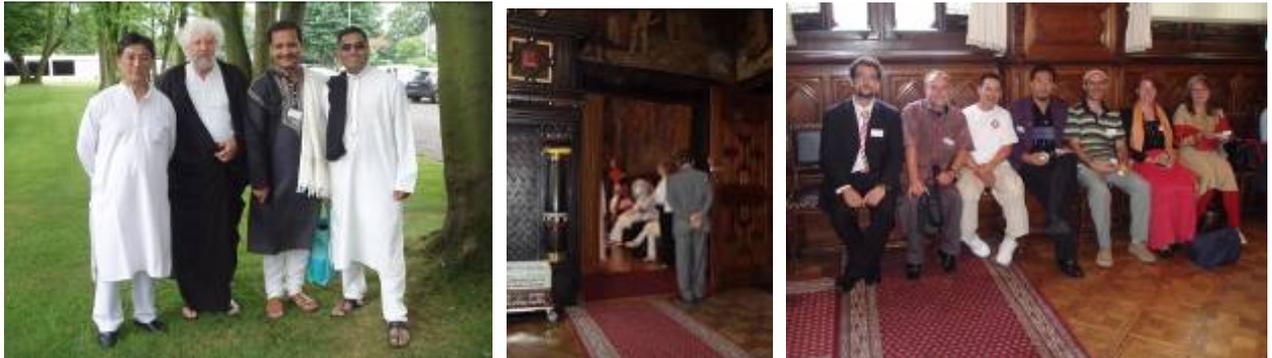


The Deputy Director of Academic Affairs of UCSIA (University Centre of Saint Ignatius Antwerp), Luc Braeckmans, led through the evening, which was concluded with a beautiful reception, still at the

University center, with drinks, snacks and live music, giving a chance for the approximately 250 guests from Antwerp and Flanders to meet with the international interfaith activists and vice versa.

On the next day, Friday, June 15, 2007, in the afternoon, European conference participants and members of the URI Global Council and staff enjoyed a guided walking tour of Antwerp.

After the tour they were welcomed at an official **reception at the town hall of Antwerp**, where the **“Flemish Partnership for Interfaith Dialogue” (FP-ID) was officially launched. Here this new interfaith movement for Flanders was warmly welcomed by the Vice Mayor of Antwerp, Mr. Philip Heylen, and the Deputy of the Governor of the Province of Antwerp, Ms. Inge Verhaert.**



From the town hall the 125 international URI activists, many in their religious garbs and colourful clothes, walked in **procession to the Schelde River**. From there they went by boat to Linkerover where a historic event was to take place in the evening: the **“Interfaith Symphony”** at the Royal Yacht Club Belgium.

This remarkable event, for the first time in history, brought together 1.200 people of different faiths, countries and traditions, in a symphony of choirs, solo singers, prayer, conversations, statements, dance and silence.



Rev. Patrick Hanjoul, President of URI Europe, Director of Bond zonder Naam (BZN) and President of the Flemish Partnership for Interfaith Dialogue (FP-ID), led through the evening.

Speakers – women and men of different backgrounds – bore witness in testimonies that interfaith harmony is possible and spoke about their experiences.

The entire ceremony made a strong and amazing statement: interfaith co-operation is possible and direly needed in this world, and the time for coming together is now, in each and every area and in each and every place of the world. The choirs from different backgrounds in the end merged into one big choir, singing in harmony, being joined by the audience.



The event was broadcast live all over the world via the internet.

A 5 minute trailer can be watched or downloaded on the internet under: [http://www.bznevents.be/EN/Bznevents\\_livestream.php](http://www.bznevents.be/EN/Bznevents_livestream.php).

A DVD film version – 55 and 5 minutes - of the Interfaith Symphony is available at the Bond zonder Naam offices in Antwerp or via URI Europe.



**Bond zonder Naam** (BZN – Movement without a name), which is also a Co-operation Circle (CC) of the URI, had taken the lead in organizing the Interfaith Symphony – with a team, including URI Europe activists Jean-Mathieu Lochten and Annie Imbens-Fransen. Likewise BZN under the leadership of Rev. Patrick Hanjoul had planned the other events on Thursday and Friday and acted as a partner and co-organizer with **URI Europe** for the URI Global Council and European URI Conference. BZN's and particularly Patrick Hanjoul's contribution was a highlight for the events in Antwerp, and the United Religions Initiative is grateful and proud to be able to work with such amazing, wonderful partners.

The **European URI Conference** took place from Saturday, June 16, 2007, till Monday, June 18, 2007.

It began with a **Spiritual Opening** in which participants from Turkey, England and Spain shared prayers from the Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist faiths in a beautiful setting with candles and flowers, all arranged excellently by Elisabeth Lheure. The spiritual openings and closings were part of each session in the course of the conference. This spiritual element helped all those present to centre and connect with our sources of strength and goodness, and at the same time were a beautiful opportunity for learning more about different spiritual traditions as well getting to know and experiencing different URI activists.



After the Opening the **URI Charter** was read in turns. This has become an important part of URI meetings as the Charter is the founding document of the network, in which the

wisdom of Thousands of participants is incorporated. The Preamble expresses the motivation and momentum of a large number of people uniting for the common good, the Purpose statement explains that URI exists in order “to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings”. The Principles explain the basic rules of interaction which are to guide URI processes on all levels.



Then participants were guided by Annie Imbens-Fransen into an **Appreciative Dialogue** which served as an opportunity for warming up and getting to know some new people. All participants were invited to come together in groups of three and then introduce each other with their spiritual or religious background, to exchange impressions about the Interfaith Ceremony the day before, to talk about their reasons for wanting to participate in the conference and / or their views about the URI purpose statement.

The second session on Saturday was dedicated to the **Co-operation Circles in Europe**. A Co-operation Circle (CC) is a URI interfaith group consisting of at least 7 people of at least 3 different religions, spiritual expressions or indigenous traditions, who have agreed to work in line with the URI Charter. At present there are 25 URI Co-operation Circles in 13 countries of the European region.

As a means for introducing all Co-operation Circles (CCs) to each other, posters were fixed upon the walls: There was one poster for each CC, giving the name and country of the CC, and the CC-members were asked to write the following information about their CC onto the respective poster:

- a) successes,
- b) challenges,
- c) goals and aims for the coming year.

After completing their own posters all participants had a chance to wander around and see all posters and get to know the other Co-operation Circles through that information.

A large map of Europe had been prepared beforehand by the planning team showing the locations and names of all CCs.

Finally we took time for a plenary conversation in which we exchanged observations and reflections about the different interfaith groups and the work they do.



After the lunch break the afternoon began with **Open Space sessions**: All participants had been informed beforehand in the invitation, that there was open time, reserved for contributions by participants, covering their group’s interfaith work and activities as well as any other subject which was relevant to our interfaith and intercultural dialogue work.

In line with this, participants were now asked by Deepak Naik to sign up and offer input, and many delegates did so, suggesting a variety of different topics. The option to run different sessions parallel

was discarded by the group, and participants chose to rather extend session hours and stay longer, in order to give everyone a chance to see all presentations, one after the other instead of simultaneous.

A **first round of Open Space** presentations began after the lunch break, when **three different CCs presented themselves and their activities**, namely the “Religions for Humanity CC” from Moscow, Russia, the “Society for Intercultural Research and Friendship (SIRF) CC” from Ankara, Turkey, and the “Unitheum CC” from Bad Zwischenahn, Germany.

The CC in Moscow is focussing on academic dialogue among and about different religions, especially the Eastern religions as Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and most of the CC members are university teachers. The SIRF CC in Ankara, Turkey, offers various activities for international students who are living and studying in Turkey and are from different faiths and countries. The aim of the Unitheum CC in Germany is to establish a house for all religions where anyone has the opportunity to immerse themselves into the spiritual experience of each religion, e.g. in the framework of prayer worships.



The afternoon session was dedicated to **URI Europe AISBL<sup>1</sup>** and its work. Being a URI CC, URI Europe is at the same time an international NGO (Non-Government Organisation) registered in Belgium. The aim of the URI Europe CC is to support the development of interfaith co-operation in Europe within the URI framework.

In a Powerpoint presentation and in cooperation with the URI Europe team Karimah Stauch gave a detailed report about URI Europe’s past activities and plans for the future. Then Annie Imbens-Fransen explained the historic development of the URI and specifically the development of the URI Charter focussing on European contributions to this process.

The Assembly confirmed the current URI Europe Executive Committee team and asked the team to continue their work: Patrick Hanjoul, Jean-Mathieu Lochten, Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz, Annie Imbens-Fransen, Elisabeth Lheure, Deepak Naik and Karimah Stauch. Heidi Rautionmaa had been part of the team for several years, but was recently unable to take an active role because of family and professional obligations. Dr. Raschid Bockemuehl has also left the team and URI.

In the evening a **second round of Open Space presentations** was given by participants, this time more general in nature. Sonja Ohlsson from Copenhagen, Denmark, showed a film featuring reflections about the search of the Divine by people of different religions and spiritual traditions as well as philosophers and atheists.

---

<sup>1</sup> Association Internationale sans but lucratif – non—profit-making organisation.

Sarah Talcott, Cyprus, presented a slide show about the one week youth programme “People for Peace” which she had organized and managed in Cyprus. The programme was conducted for the second time in June 2007 – it had actually just come to a close a few days before the Antwerp conference. Approximately 30 young people of different religions from European and the Middle Eastern countries had come together for a week of exchange and learning.

Dada Jyotirupananda from London, England, introduced reflections about universalism and the underlying unity of different religions and spiritual paths.

On Sunday morning the **global URI guests**, who had spent the Saturday in Bruges, were warmly welcomed to the conference:

- Yoland Trevino (USA/India, Global Council chair),
- Charles Gibbs (USA, URI global, Executive Director),
- Sally Mahè (USA; URI global, Director for Organizational and Regional Development),
- Maria Eugenia Crespo de Mafía (Argentina, URI Global Support Co-ordinator),
- Mussie Hailu (Ethiopia, URI Continental Co-ordinator for Africa),
- Biswadeb Chakraborty (URI Sub-regional Co-ordinator for East India),
- Barbara Hartford (USA; URI global, Peacebuilding Director),
- Hira Paul Gangnegi (URI Sub-regional Co-ordinator for North India)

and some other international URI guests.

Yoland Trevino and Charles Gibbs then were invited to introduce some current **global URI issues and developments**, which they did graciously through a conversation between them. They explained, among others, how the Global Council work was practically conducted, spoke about the most important results of the Global Council meeting in Antwerp which had just ended and gave some indications about the upcoming Global Council election. One remarkable result of the recent Global Council meeting in Antwerp were specific plans for the establishment of a URI foundation as a basis for supporting the URI infrastructure and day-to-day work.



Sally Mahè then showed a slideshow about her recent **visits of Co-operation Circles (CCs) in Europe**, which took her to five countries and nine CCs: two CCs in Denmark, two in Belgium, one in Catalonia/Spain, two in The Netherlands and two in Germany. She also shared her experiences and learning. It was interesting seeing interfaith activists – through the pictures taken during that journey - within their Circles and networks. It was also very informative and

interesting for CC representatives hearing Sally’s reflections. One of these was how different Co-operation Circles are, comparable to flowers where each one has its own unique shape, smell and colour. Some are big established organizations and others are groups of individuals meeting in private homes in order to get to know each other. Remarkable are examples of Co-operation Circles like Bond zonder Naam CC in Antwerp or the UNESCOCat CC in Barcelona who work in partnership with public entities like the municipalities and others.



The second session, too, on that morning was dedicated to **European – global interfaith exchange**. But now some additional movement set in: Deepak Naik asked people to split up into five groups and divided them among five tables dispersed in the room. Each table was connected with a specific topic and had a host who remained at that specific table and welcomed all five groups, one after the next, for a round of conversation and exchange.

Following the hosts and the topics:

- Sally Mahè, Director for Organizational and Regional Development, hosting the conversation about CC visits and regional development,
- Barbara Hartford, Director for Peacebuilding and Communications, hosting the exchange about the “Moral Imagination” peace building programme,
- Maria Eugenia Crespo de Mafía, Global CC Support Co-ordinator, hosting the conversation about CC support,
- Biswadeb Chakraborty, Sub-Regional Co-ordinator for East India, leading the exchange about URI work in East India,
- Mussie Hailu, Continental Co-ordinator for Africa, facilitating an exchange about URI work in Africa.

The groups stayed at each table for 15 minutes and were then invited by some lively music to move to the next table. Feedback from participants showed that this was a very successful format which everyone enjoyed and felt it was very useful for learning a lot.



After lunch it was again time for a **third slot of Open Space presentations** by participants:

Semsettin Türkan from Ankara, Turkey, showed a film which expressed that Islamic teachings were in strong opposition to terrorism. Montse Castella, Barcelona, Catalonia/Spain presented the idea of an international solidarity CC.

Then Sarah Talcott from Cyprus gave some information about the youth participation at the URI Global Assembly which is to take place in Mayapur, East India, in December 2008. There is a commitment to bring 200 young people to this Assembly which will have overall approximately 500 – 1.000 participants.





In the afternoon session Görel Byström Janarv of *World Wide Vision*, Stockholm, Sweden, introduced the very successful Swedish exhibition “God has 99 names” and the follow-up project “Same same but different”. She is the curator of the “God has 99 names” exhibition which has attracted more than a hundred thousand people in Sweden, among them many youngsters. Her exhibitions are interactive and speak to the whole person, including the senses. E.g. she uses religious artefacts, such as religious clocks, as a tool for interfaith education. Also films are used as

an educational tool: e.g. she showed a short film, which she had produced, presenting statistics about different world faiths in a very graphic, interesting and beautiful way.



After her contribution Ajit Singh of the URI UK CC from London, United Kingdom, presented the the Co-operation Circle’s vision for a National Peace Centre in the UK.

Sunday evening was dedicated to an evening of celebration and joy in **a cultural programme**. Participants shared drumming, songs, exercises, magic, stories and games with each other in an atmosphere of happiness and laughter. Soroush Zand from Denmark was the host of the evening.



On Monday morning the first session started with a sharing of **reflections about the topic “How can we co-create peace?”** by Shaikh Bashir Ahmad Dultz (Bonn, Germany), Govardhana das (Budapest, Hungary) and Annie Imbens-Fransen (Eindhoven, The Netherlands). Unfortunately a lack of time prevented a more in-depth-conversation, which had originally been planned.

Instead participants once more divided into groups for four rounds of coffee-table conversation, for 10 minutes each. The purpose this time was to **collect and exchange ideas for URI's future interfaith work**. Each table was associated with a specific topic and had a moderator, facilitating the conversation and summing up the shared ideas and reflections. The topics were:

- support of Co-operation Circles/interfaith groups (moderated by Anneke Tan, The Netherlands),
- CC action (moderated by Patrick Hanjoul, Belgium),
- youth engagement (moderated by Matthew Youde, UK) and
- working with partners from different areas of society (moderated by Gisela Preutenborbeck, Germany).

After 10 minutes of brain storming and conversation, participants moved over to the next table and topic. The moderators reported back from the groups after the break.



After the reports from the coffee table conversations two presentations were made from the global interfaith point of view:

Sally Mahè showed a slide show with **photographs from the Co-operation Circles and pictures of activists from different URI regions worldwide**, namely: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, North America, South East Asia and the Pacific and the multiregional region. She explained about the work done by the different interfaith groups and introduced various interfaith activists.

Charles Gibbs - in co-operation with URI team members from India - presented **a slide show about the Global URI Assembly** which will take place in **Mayapur, India**, in December 2008. He explained about the venue and the host committee, the ISKCON, who have a spiritual centre in Maypur.

Both presentations were very inspiring and motivating for participants, as they expressed, to continue their interfaith work with renewed dedication, supported by the awareness of a global network with the same passion and ideals.

Finally it was time for the **Closing Session**: thanks were expressed to all who had contributed: the global URI guests, all who had given presentations, offered prayers, who had offered entertainment, , the host team and volunteers in Antwerp, as well as to the people of the Theological and Pastoral Centre who had given their best to make our stay very pleasant. Global URI friends, Mussie Hailu from Ethiopia and Biswadeb Chakraborty from East India, both interfaith leaders in their respective communities, handed presents and certificates of honour to Patrick Hanjoul, representing the Belgian and European members of the hosting team. Thanks were expressed to all participants for engaging in the Assembly and for their dedication to their interfaith work for peace, justice and healing.

The conference was concluded with a Closing Ceremony led by Elisabeth Lheure and Patrick Hanjoul: all participants were invited to step forward and briefly express their feelings and learning of the past few days and their commitment which they took back home to their interfaith work. Participants expressed gratitude and said they had been enriched by the encounters, learning and reflections of the past few days and refreshed for taking up the day-to-day interfaith work in their home countries.

One final word about the practical aspects of the European URI conference: Many thanks are due to the teams of URI Europe and BZN. Aminah Bach helped greatly in the registration process. She worked closely with Karimah Stauch as the co-ordinator, who had the overall co-ordination, and the BZN team, particularly Kris De Witte and Christine Willems and their team of dedicated and capable volunteers. Kris De Witte and Christine Willems in Antwerp worked capably and diligently on so many logistical and practical aspects of the events. Deepak Naik did a wonderful job facilitating several sessions during the European URI Conference. Karimah Stauch and Patrick Hanjoul also led through several parts of the Assembly with grace. Elisabeth Lheure co-ordinated the meditations and spiritual openings and closing in a very creative, pleasant and beautiful fashion. Shaikh Bashir as ever brought his stories and wisdom into the conference in a wonderful way as well as his manifold experiences. Annie Imbens-Fransen and Jean-Mathieu Lochten – apart from Annie Imbens-Fransen giving several inputs to the European conference - were part of the dedicated and courageous planning team for the Interfaith Symphony. Jean-Mathieu Lochten once again shared his marvellous hospitality and generous spirit. - Therefore much gratitude is due to the URI Europe and BZN teams and their remarkable commitment and capabilities.

Finally the global URI guests – international staff and Global Council members – who participated in the URI Europe Assembly contributed enormously to show that URI is a global organisation with a rich variety of activities, visions and approaches and this was of an amazing value to all who participated.

### **3. *URI global news: Information by URI Executive Director, Charles Gibbs, about the upcoming Global URI Assembly in Mayapur, India, the URI Global Council elections and the URI Bowes Award***

**San Francisco, USA, April 2, 2008**

**Re: Elections and New Hope**

Dear Friends,

Greetings of love and peace.



I know I join many people around the world praying and meditating for a peaceful and positive resolution to the elections in Zimbabwe that might bring new and desperately needed hope to the people of that challenged country.

And it is impossible to be in the US these days without feeling the growing energy and hope as we move day by day toward the election of a new president and congress this coming November.

And it is impossible to be in the URI office without sensing the upcoming deadline (April 18) for CCs to submit their ballots for **URI's new Global Council**. If you are a member of one of the CCs certified to participate in this election and haven't yet sent in your ballot, I urge you to do so before the deadline.

I hope all CCs are aware of the deadline (April 30) for proposals to be considered for the first **Bowes Awards**. Eight CCs, one from each region, will receive a prize of \$5,000 to support a project with the potential for significant local impact and be a model for CCs in other parts of the world.

Bowes Award recipients will be honored at the **Global Assembly in Mayapur**, India, November 30 - December 5.

Hopefully, by that time Zimbabwe will be on the road to a better future; and the US will have a president-elect who help this country be a force for peace, justice and healing in the global community.

And hopefully representatives from most of URI's CCs will gather to live for a week as URI's global community in one place and one time - a week of celebration, sharing, planning for our contributions to be better world for all.

If you have questions about the Trustee election process, the Bowes Award, or the Global Assembly, I urge you to contact your regional coordinator or Mark Mancao (mmancao@uri.org).

I wish you all blessings in your work for peace, justice and healing.

Love,

Charles  
The Rev. Canon Charles P. Gibbs  
Executive Director  
United Religions Initiative  
P.O. Box 29242  
San Francisco, CA 94129  
1-415-561-2300

You can find more information on the URI Global Assembly in Mayapur under [www.globalassembly2008.org](http://www.globalassembly2008.org).

#### **4. *URI Co-operation Circle news: Interfaith event of the Forum of Religions in Helsinki CC in Espoo, Finland, February 27, 2008***

Espoo, Finland, March 3, 2008

Peace and all good,

We had wonderful event on 27th of February in Espoo. Some members of our CC called The Forum of Religions in Helsinki, URI had presentations in the cultural event in the Lutheran chappel near by my house in Leppävaara (Jewish, Bahai and Hindu musicians, Greek Orthodox singer, Muslim poetry writer, poetry reader from Christian Science Church and there was even Hindu temple dancer dancing.) It was linked to my birthday somehow. And there were also few priests from the parish which I belong to, to give speech and music as well.

The comment from one of the priests was:

"If there was this kind of spirit going on in the other occations of the parishes as well, there would be more people attending the church."

Some of the members of this URI CC belong to the group that is called the Bridge group and this event was organized by this Bridge group with the big help of those artistic URI people and some other great people with the interfaith hearts.



Here are a few pictures which were taken after the presentations. The people in the photos are the members of the CC, except the two kids who are my daughters - well, they somehow are the members as well...

There were a nice amount of people in that cultural event.

By the way:

The Bridge group that has its meetings in the Lutheran church, will organize the event on European day, May 9th with the help of the Forum of Religions in Helsinki, URI. We will have panel discussion and one panelist will be Hannu Takkula, who is a member of the Parliament of the European Union and a Vice Chairman of its Committee on Culture and Education. By the way the Jury for the selection of the Golden Stars 2007 was chaired by Takkula.

May all be well with you all,

with peace

Heidi Rautionmaa  
Religious Forum of Helsinki CC  
Espoo, Finland

---

PUBLISHER: United Religions Initiative Europe AISBL– URI European Executive Committee (EEC)

RESPONSIBLE EDITOR: URI Europe Co-ordinator Karimah K. Stauch (info @ dmlbonn.de)

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Amina Bach (BachBirgit @ web.de)

Members of URI European Executive Committee (EEC):

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

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

Ms. Annie Imbens-Fransen, Eindhoven/The Netherlands, Interim Treasurer URI Europe

Ms. Elisabeth A. Lheure, Barcelona, Catalonia/Spain, Secretary URI Europe

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

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

Ms. Karimah Stauch, Bonn/Germany, Co-ordinator URI Europe, info @ dmlbonn.de

Donations/bank information:

Please note that URI Europe has opened a **NEW** bank account in Belgium.

Account holder: United Religions Initiative Europe

Name of bank: Triodos Bank nv

Address of bank: Hoogstraat 139/3, BE-1000 Brussel, Belgium

Account number: 523-0802711-14

Swift / BIC code: TRIOBE 91

IBAN code: BE 94 523 0802711 14

