REPORT OF THE CONVENING GROUP* OF THE
CONFERENCE ON INTERFAITH COOPERATION FOR PEACE:
ENHANCING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION TOWARDS
PEACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

22 June 2005, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Organization of the Conference

The Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace was organized under a
tripartite partnership among governments, United Nations system and civil society
representing religious non-governmental organizations. This tripartite conference is of
historic significance bringing together three main sectors that have much to gain in
working together. It was held on 22 June 2005 immediately preceding the informal
interactive Hearings of the President of the General Assembly with non-governmental
organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector in preparation for the
High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly.

The Conference aimed at enhancing interfaith cooperation, promoting the
culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, as well as translating shared values
into practical action, to achieve sustainable peace in the twenty-first century. The
organizers of the Conference drew inspiration from the United Nations Millennium
Declaration and the recent efforts to promote interfaith cooperation at the international,
inter-regional, regional and national levels.

The Conference organizers reaffirmed relevant United Nations General Assembly
resolutions, in particular the “Promotion of interreligious dialogue” (A/RES/59/23), the
“Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation”
(A/RES/59/142), the “Global Agenda for Dialogue Among Civilizations” (A/RES/56/6),
the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of
the World (GA/RES/53/25), the “International Day of Peace” (GA/RES/55/282), the
“Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance” (A/RES/59/199), and the UNESCO
Director-General’s report (A/59/201) to the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly
“Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation”
(A/RES/58/128).

H.E. Dr. Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Philippines, chaired
the Conference. The messages of H.E. Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the
Republic of the Philippines; H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations;
H.E. Mr. Jean Ping, President, General Assembly, United Nations; H.E. Mr. Munir
Akram, President, Economic and Social Council; H.E. Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-
General, UNESCO; and Mr. Hiro Sakurai, President, Committee of Religious NGOs at
the UN were read during the opening ceremony.

Professor Diana L. Eck of Harvard University and former United Nations
Undersecretary-General Giandomenico Picco moderated the morning and afternoon
sessions, respectively. The discussions on the theme of the morning session *The role of religions in promoting intercultural understanding towards sustainable peace* the theme of the afternoon session *Exploring strategies to enhance interfaith cooperation for sustainable peace* were led by panelists and discussants from governments, UN system and civil society. Dr. Maleeha Lodhi gave a keynote statement in the afternoon. The names of the panelists and discussants appear in the Conference Programme. Their statements and those of the inaugural and keynote speakers will appear in the proceedings of the conference.

**Conclusions of the Conference**

1. More deliberate and strategic efforts in interreligious dialogue and cooperation are needed to foster relationships and interdependencies and advance understanding between diverse peoples, cultures and religions.

2. Issues of peace and justice, human rights, religious freedom, poverty, education, sustainable development, the rights and well being of children, the equal dignity of men and women, indigenous peoples and the protection of the environment are our common concerns. The partnership of governments, the UN and religious NGOs is of crucial significance in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

3. Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation are essential and can facilitate the work of enhancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere.

4. Dialogue and understanding, including the awareness of differences and commonalities among peoples and civilizations contributes to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes, and reduces the potential for animosity, clash and even violence.

5. Non-governmental organizations representing different religions and multi-religious coalitions are an important part of civil society and have long supported the goals of the United Nations throughout the sixty years of its existence.

**Recommendations of the Conference**

1. The tripartite conference calls upon the High Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2005 to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of this conference. The High Level Plenary Meeting in September 2005 should recognize that dialogues among civilizations, cultures, and religions constitute vital contributions towards the promotion of a just and sustainable peace. The 2005 September Summit should call for an expansion and deepening of the relationship between the United Nations and civil society, including religious NGOs.
2. Member States of the United Nations, in partnership with the United Nations system and civil society, should undertake practical actions such as those proposed in the Global Agenda for the Dialogue among Civilizations (2001), in particular education and media, to foster understanding, tolerance and cooperation between peoples of different religions and beliefs so as to overcome intolerance and combat stereotypes and misperceptions.

3. An open-ended tripartite consultative group composed of representatives from Member States, the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations should be formed to follow-up on the conclusions and recommendations of this Conference with an emphasis on practical actions. The open-ended tripartite consultative group should tap available resources and abilities, and develop ways and means to affirm the role of Interreligious and intercultural cooperation in attaining a just and sustainable peace through the mechanisms already available in the United Nations system, such as the efforts to promote a Culture of Peace and a Dialogue among Civilizations, the intercultural and Interreligious work of UNESCO and the annual International Day of Peace on 21 September. The open-ended tripartite consultative group should also identify new ways to address interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational issues and concerns, including the opportunity and mechanism for religious leaders to speak, interact and respond more clearly and quickly in times of violence, crises and conflict.

4. The Secretary-General is invited to explore enhancing the implementation mechanisms and to follow up on the Declaration on a Culture of Peace and the Programme of Action, and the Global Agenda for the Dialogue Among Civilizations and its Programme of Action of 2001 adopted by the General Assembly and other initiatives on dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

* The tripartite convening group is made up of Argentina, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Gambia, Germany, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Kingdom of Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Spain, Thailand, Tunisia, UN organizations (DESA, UNESCO and World Bank), and civil society (Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations representing its 110 member-organizations).