

REPORT OF THE
GNRC SIXTH FORUM

THE CHILD IS CALLING
INTERFAITH COOPERATION TO BUILD
A HOPEFUL WORLD
FOR CHILDREN





About Arigatou International

Arigatou International is “All for Children” and works with people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to build a better world for children. Believing that every girl and boy is a precious treasure of humanity, Arigatou International draws on universal principles of common good found in religious and spiritual traditions and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Arigatou employs interfaith and intercultural approaches to promote children’s rights and well-being, seeking to bring about positive change at all levels—from the grassroots to the global. Arigatou values children for who they are and fully involves them in its work, ensuring their safe and meaningful participation while affirming their human dignity. Arigatou International collaborates with religious leaders and faith communities, international agencies, civil society organizations, governments—and most importantly, children and young people themselves—in more than 80 countries around the world.



About Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) is a global-scale interfaith network of organizations and individuals specifically dedicated to securing the rights and well-being of children everywhere. GNRC members come from all of the world’s major religions and many other spiritual traditions. The GNRC is committed to making the world a place where every child can enjoy not only the right to survive, but also to thrive, making positive contributions of his or her own to a world of peace and dignity for all.



About the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC)

The IAFSC was established to empower faith leaders to work for the safety and security of our communities, tackling issues such as child sexual abuse, extremism, radicalization, and human trafficking.

IAFSC facilitates the building of bridges between key stakeholders, including faith communities, NGOs, and experts in various domains. Its current areas of focus are ‘Child Dignity in the Digital World’ and ‘Hate in our Communities.’ The Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities has been a partner of Arigatou International and a member of the GNRC since 2018.



BUILDING A SAFE, SECURE, AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD FOR AND WITH CHILDREN

1,369

PARTICIPANTS

581

IN-PERSON

788

VIRTUAL

60

CHILDREN

90

COUNTRIES



Preface



BUILDING A HOPEFUL WORLD FOR CHILDREN

I am pleased to present this report on the GNRC Sixth Forum held in November 2024 in Abu Dhabi—a milestone in our shared journey towards building a safe, secure and sustainable world for all children.

The GNRC was inaugurated in 2000 out of the firm conviction that it is the moral responsibility of people of all faiths to protect the lives of children and ensure their safe and sound development. A quarter of a century later, the vision and mission of the GNRC remain more important than ever. Children today face unprecedented challenges—widespread violent conflict, poverty, climate disasters, global shocks and pandemics, and online abuse.

Building on the achievements and addressing the gaps identified during the GNRC Fifth Forum in 2017, the Sixth Forum reaffirmed our shared dedication to building a hopeful and better future for children through interfaith collaboration and working with children. The inspiration at the Sixth Forum was profound and transformative. The commitment of participants to creating a hopeful world for children echoed throughout every session and dialogue, reinforcing the power of multi-religious collaboration and collective actions on a global scale.

This report captures the key discussions, recommendations and outcomes that emerged from the Forum. It highlights the innovative solutions, shared best practices, and forward-looking strategies and concrete plan of actions put forward to address the complex challenges faced by children globally.

Together – in unanimously adopting the GNRC Sixth Forum *Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children* – we have taken the first meaningful steps towards realizing this vision, and together, we will continue to drive this mission forward.

It is my sincere hope that this report serves not only as a record of the Forum but also as a fervent call to action by all—deepening our commitments to build a better world for children.

Rev. Keishi Miyamoto

**President, Arigatou International
Convenor, Global Network of Religions for Children**

Foreword



OUR COMMITMENT TO

Organizing a global interfaith and intergenerational Forum requires tremendous resources, planning and support. The GNRC Sixth Forum would not have been possible without the support and input of numerous individuals and organizations around the world. Your dedication, wisdom, and passion made this gathering truly extraordinary.

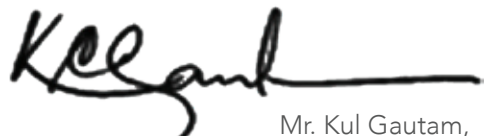
Our heartfelt gratitude goes to Arigatou International for convening the Forum, the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC) for hosting it, and the Government of the United Arab Emirates for their warm hospitality and gracious support.

Our deepest appreciation as well goes to the GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee (IOC), its Senior Advisors, the Children's Advisory Group (CAG), the Sixth Forum Taskforces, the GNRC Sixth Forum Steering Committee, the Declaration Drafting Committee, GNRC members around the world, our friends and partners, respected keynote speakers, panelists and moderators, GNRC coordinators, co-coordinators, contact persons and communication associates, the GNRC Secretariat and consultants, IAFSC staff, Red Event Services, Forum rapporteurs, directors and staff of Arigatou International initiatives, the Arigatou International Advisory Group, and the Arigatou International leadership in Tokyo. While we are unable to list every individual and organization, we are most grateful to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment and support. Your hard work and passion not only enriched the Forum but also planted seeds of change that will benefit children worldwide.

ANSWER THE CALL OF THE CHILD

Above all, we are immensely grateful to everyone who attended and participated in the Forum, in person and virtually. We are deeply moved by the spirit of unity and determination demonstrated by all of you—leaders of faith communities, advocates for children, young change-makers, and devoted partners. Together, you have set a remarkable example of the power of collective action across diverse faiths, cultures, and generations. The ideas, insights, and commitments shared during this gathering were nothing short of transformative. Your voices affirmed our shared responsibility to protect, support and uplift children. Your stories, experiences, and reflections were the heart of our discussions, driving us forward with renewed determination.

Thank you once again for your dedication and partnership. Together, hand in hand, we are building a safe, secure and sustainable world with and for all children.



Mr. Kul Gautam,

Chair, GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee (IOC)



Mrs. Dana Humaid,

President, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities and Co-Chair, IOC

STRENGTHENING THE BONDS OF INTERFAITH COOPERATION

The GNRC Sixth Forum was a truly global gathering that drew the knowledge, expertise, energy, and drive of over 1,369 participants from 90 countries, including over 50 children who also attended the three-day Children's pre-forum prior to the main Forum. Over 170 panelists and speakers, including teens and elders from the world's major religious and sacred traditions, spoke at the Forum.

Over 12,000,000 people were reached in the course of organizing the Forum up until its conclusion. Many more continue to be positively impacted after the Forum, thanks to the mobilization efforts of GNRC members in over 80 countries.

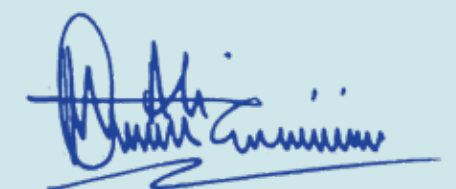
GNRC global Forums are opportunities to strengthen and encourage interfaith cooperation to build a better world for children at every level – the grassroots, nationally, regionally and globally. True to form, the Sixth Forum was the result of an inclusive and collaborative preparatory process that involved grassroots, national, and international stakeholders from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, culminating in the remarkable global Forum in Abu Dhabi.

The key outcomes of the Forum were; *The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children* and its corresponding *Abu Dhabi Plan of Action on Building a Safe, Secure and Sustainable World*.

Regional pre-forum meetings and national consultations provided opportunities for GNRC members and partners to contribute their perspectives, which were subsequently incorporated into the plan of action.

There will be another Forum some five years from now, but in the meantime, we are all hard at work building on the partnerships we formed and fulfilling the *Abu Dhabi Declaration, Plan of Action* and the *GNRC Strategy 2030*. We are focused on implementing the solutions we identified and turning the strategy into action.

There is much to do in answering **the call of the child**. *Building a Safe, Secure and Sustainable World* is that **timeless** and **enduring call**.



Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali,
Secretary-General,
Global Network of Religions for Children,
Executive Director, Arigatou International - Nairobi





ARIGATOU GNRC



GNRC



INTERFAITH ALLIANCE

Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children



CONTENTS

Preface	iv		
BUILDING A HOPEFUL WORLD FOR CHILDREN	v		
Foreword	vi		
OUR COMMITMENT TO ANSWER THE CALL OF THE CHILD	vi		
STRENGTHENING THE BONDS OF INTERFAITH COOPERATION	ix		
ACRONYMS	xiv		
ANSWERING THE CALL OF THE CHILD	xv		
The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children	xv		
BACKGROUND OF THE GNRC SIXTH FORUM	xviii		
The Child is Calling: Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children	1		
Introduction	1		
The Global Context for Children	1		
Objectives	2		
Themes and Focus Areas	2		
Organization of the Forum	3		
Outcomes	3		
SPECIAL MESSAGES	4		
GNRC SIXTH FORUM KEYNOTE ADDRESS	13		
DAY ONE: 19TH NOVEMBER 2024	14		
FIRST PLENARY: OPENING CEREMONY	16		
Welcome Remarks	17		
SECOND PLENARY: BUILDING A SAFE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	18		
Presentation by Children on the Outcomes of the Children's Pre-Forum	18		
KEYNOTE ADDRESSES ON BUILDING A SAFE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	19		
INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A SAFE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	21		
CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSIONS	23		
SUB-THEME ONE: The Dignity of the Child in the Digital World	24		
SUB-THEME TWO: The Role of Families in Ensuring Safe Spaces for Children	26		
SUB-THEME THREE: Collaborative Communities: Interfaith and Intra-Faith Dialogue and Action in Promoting a Safe World	28		
SUB-THEME FOUR: Pathways to Building Resilience and Strengthening Mental Health in the Face of Global Shocks, Emerging Crises, and Pandemics	30		
CONCURRENT SESSIONS: GNRC REGIONAL MEETINGS	32		
Africa	32		
Asia	32		
Europe and North America	33		
Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Meeting	33		
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	33		
DAY TWO: 20TH NOVEMBER 2024	36		
THIRD PLENARY: THE CHILD IS CALLING: INTERFAITH COOPERATION TO BUILD A HOPEFUL WORLD FOR CHILDREN	38		
Opening Remarks	38		
FOURTH PLENARY: BUILDING A SECURE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	39		
Opening Remarks	39		
KEYNOTE ADDRESSES ON BUILDING A SECURE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	40		
INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A SECURE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	41		
CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSION	43		
SUB-THEME ONE: Addressing the Root Causes of Conflicts and Wars Interactive Panel Discussion	44		
SUB-THEME TWO: Stakeholder Participation in Building Resilience to Conflict	46		
SUB-THEME THREE: Building a Peaceful and Inclusive World for and with Children	48		
SUB-THEME FOUR: Addressing Xenophobia, Hate Crimes and Extremism Interactive Panel Discussion	50		
PLENARY READING OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION	51		
FIFTH PLENARY: ALL FOR CHILDREN – PROGRESS MADE ON THE PANAMA COMMITMENTS	52		
TESTIMONIALS FROM GNRC COORDINATORS	53		
SIXTH PLENARY: CELEBRATION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE 16TH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN (WDPAC)	56		
Welcome Remarks	56		
Video Presentation	57		
SPECIAL REMARKS	57		
HONOURING CHAMPIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS	58		
DAY THREE: 21ST NOVEMBER 2024	62		
SEVENTH PLENARY: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	64		
Opening Remarks	64		
KEYNOTE ADDRESSES ON BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	64		
YOUTH-LED INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD WITH CHILDREN	66		
SPECIAL MESSAGE	67		
CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSION	69		
SUB-THEME ONE: Responsible Lifestyles	70		
SUB-THEME TWO: Addressing Hunger, Childhood Poverty, and Inequality	72		
SUB-THEME THREE: Ethical Values and Education for Sustainable Development	74		
SUB-THEME FOUR: Climate Conscious Stewardship	76		
EIGHTH PLENARY: LAUNCH OF THE GNRC STRATEGY 2030	78		
LAUNCH OF THE GNRC STRATEGY 2030	79		
VOTE OF THANKS	80		
INTERFAITH PRAYER FOR PEACE	82		
NINTH PLENARY: CLOSING CEREMONY	85		
GNRC Sixth Forum Senior Advisors	86		
Children's Advisory Group	86		
GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee Members	87		
GNRC Sixth Forum Steering Committee	89		
GNRC Sixth Forum Drafting Declaration Committee	89		
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE	96		

ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
APN	Alliance for the Protection of Children
BRAVE	Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism
CAG	Children’s Advisory Group
CRAVE	Community Resilience Against Violent Extremism
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECP	End Child Poverty
EEC	Ethics Education for Children
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GCCA	GNRC Country Communication Associate
GNRC	Global Network of Religions for Children
IAFSC	Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
IOC	GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LTLT	Learning to Live Together
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAC	Prayer and Action for Children
PADF	Pan American Development Foundation
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WDPAC	World Day of Prayer and Action for Children
WHO	World Health Organization

ANSWERING THE CALL OF THE CHILD

The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children

Our Belief

Every child has an inherent, inalienable right to a safe, secure, and sustainable world free from fear, harm, and deprivation. Our sacred duty is to care for each child’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Across faiths and sacred traditions, children are considered precious gifts, and our universal responsibility is to protect and nurture them.

The Reality We Face

Every year, half of the world’s children – around one billion – experience violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, both physically and online. Almost half of these children are trapped in war and violent conflict zones, exposed to grave human rights violations, injury and even death. Children also account for over 40 percent of forcibly displaced and stateless persons worldwide due to conflict, insecurity, and climate change disasters. Uprooted from their homes and communities, these children face exploitation, trafficking and recruitment by armed groups.

Displaced children make up a significant percentage of the 1.4 billion children worldwide who lack any form of social protection, leaving them vulnerable to disease, poor nutrition, and poverty. The plight of the world’s children is further exacerbated by the current poly-crisis—including food insecurity and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic—that threatens their physical, mental, and psychosocial wellbeing and future prospects.

The Call of the Child

Our voices exist across your communities, asking not for extraordinary measures, but for fundamental rights: safety, education, secure and sustainable environments, and the opportunity to grow in faith, responsibility, and dignity. Our call travels further than borders, cultures, religions, genders, and backgrounds, trying to remind you of your sacred mission to protect and nurture us. We deserve to have a voice, and we deserve to be part of the decisions that affect our lives. At the GNRC Sixth Forum, as children, we persuade you to listen to our voices, which express our ideas, concerns, and willingness to work together, and the urgency for us to become one humanity.

Answering the Call of the Child

Gathered here in Abu Dhabi, we pledge to heed and answer this call as leaders and practitioners from diverse religious and spiritual traditions, members of the GNRC, representatives of governments, the United Nations, NGOs, educational institutions, and civil society, and as adults who deeply care about the future.



We recognize that despite numerous promises, treaties, pacts, accords, actions and initiatives, world leaders, faith actors, and adults have yet to secure a world where children's fundamental rights are universally upheld. Embracing our religious and moral duty, and our traditions and family values, we pledge to highlight the needs of the child, and to do our utmost to build a safe, secure, and sustainable world where every child feels protected, valued, and empowered, leaving no child behind.

We call on all people of faith, conscience, goodwill, and means to urgently unite for this purpose and to answer the call of the child with compassionate and dedicated action.

Our Plan of Action

With commitment and renewed resolve, we pledge to implement the GNRC Sixth Forum Abu Dhabi Plan of Action:

- 1. To Build a Safe World for Children:** We will work to strengthen caregivers—in particular, families and teachers—to ensure inclusive child protection systems, policies, and practices to prevent violence, abuse, and exploitation both offline and online. We will support children's mental and spiritual health and create safe spaces where they can express themselves and be heard. We will promote dialogue across religions, cultures, and generations to prevent crimes against children, eliminate harmful norms and build resilient communities.
- 2. To Build a Secure World for Children:** We will do our utmost to raise a new generation of interfaith leaders to counter hatred, apathy, estrangement, and radicalization into violent extremism. We will strive to lend our voices to diplomatic efforts and dialogue aimed at ending wars and conflicts, and fostering loving, inclusive communities that nurture ecosystems of peace, understanding, and social cohesion with respect and appreciation for diversity.
- 3. To Build a Sustainable World for Children:** To build a sustainable world, we will encourage responsible living and advocate for child-centered policies that address social and economic inequalities, climate change, and environmental preservation. We will promote values-based education, empower children to be stewards of our planet, and end child poverty.

Our Pledge to the Children of the World

We have heard your call. We express our gratitude and celebrate your presence. We will answer and act now together.

Through prayer and action, we pledge to do our utmost to create a world where every child's dignity is honored, every family and community is empowered, every right is upheld, and every voice is heard. We will work together across faiths and sacred traditions, expand our partnerships, and invest at the grassroots level to place the child's best interests and voice at the center of all we do.

Our programs will be child-centered, designed with and for children, prioritizing those who need our interventions the most. We pledge to do our utmost to end harmful practices, especially those justified in the name of religion. Building on two and a half decades of interfaith collaboration for children, we will take forward our commitment to protecting all children, encouraging meaningful child participation on issues concerning them, and promoting their holistic development with a focus on mental wellbeing, while affirming the dignity of every child.

We pledge to monitor and evaluate our impact continuously. We will hold ourselves accountable and ensure that our actions reflect our dedication to creating a better, brighter, and hopeful future for children everywhere.

We express our deepest gratitude to Arigatou International and the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities for convening and hosting this Forum in these difficult times, and to the United Arab Emirates for its support and leadership on child safety. Together, we pledge to build a hopeful world where every child can thrive. May our prayers and actions be blessed with success.

November 21, 2024
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



BACKGROUND OF THE GNRC SIXTH FORUM

The Child is Calling: Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children

Introduction

[Arigatou International](#) convened, and the [Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities \(IAFSC\)](#) hosted the [Global Network of Religions for Children \(GNRC\)](#) Sixth Forum from 19 to 21 November 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The forum brought together over 1,200 leaders of diverse faith and spiritual traditions, representatives from various governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organizations, both in-person and virtually. Prior to the Sixth Forum, over 50 children attended a three-day Children's pre-forum to prepare for their participation in the main Forum.

The [GNRC Sixth Forum](#) presented a timely opportunity to harness the emerging leadership of our children and young people, strengthen our partnerships, build synergies, and co-create solutions for a better world with and for all the world's children. As well, it was a pivotal moment for members to reflect on and celebrate the successes and positive transformations achieved since the Network's inauguration in 2000 at the first Forum.

The Global Context for Children

The GNRC Sixth Forum took place during one of the bleakest periods for children in history. In 2024 alone, violent conflict and its impacts have taken the lives and shattered the dreams of hundreds of thousands of children globally. Over 460 million children are living in conflict zones.¹ They face not only imminent danger to their lives but also a highly uncertain future with the trust between them and the systems that should nurture them at breaking point or having broken already. The current global disregard for the sanctity and inherent dignity of human life, along with our collective violation of the sacred trust we have as guardians of future generations, represent deeply troubling desecrations of the shared values that lie at the bedrock of all our faiths.

Even in supposedly "normal," stable, and peaceful settings, children confront a silent emergency of extreme poverty, inequality, abuse, and exploitation, some of it in the name of religion. Gender-based discrimination, especially affecting girls, or harmful traditional practices such as the continuing prevalence of child marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting are some of harmful practices that faith communities have a special role in preventing.

The GNRC was convened with the strongest conviction that even in the darkest of times, there is always hope. We live in a time of great innovation and advancement. By leveraging these advancements, fostering dialogue and cooperation between faiths and across generations, and joining hands to address the evils of our age, we not only *can* but *must* rebuild trust and repair broken pathways to forge a safe, secure, and sustainable world.

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-executive-director-catherine-russell-remarks-launch-unicefs-2024-humanitarian>

Objectives

The primary objective of the Forum was to bring together GNRC members, diverse religious leaders, children, youth, policymakers, academics, representatives from child-focused NGOs, and members of faith communities to deliberate, collaborate, exchange best practices, and forge new action commitments to address global issues concerning children.

Specifically, the Forum aimed to:

- a) Provide a space for authentic and effective collaboration between and among children and adults from diverse regions and religions.
- b) Put a spotlight on the critical situation of the world's children and reaffirm our commitment to addressing these present-day realities in the spirit of the GNRC.
- c) Demonstrate the unique contributions, as well as clear and tangible actions, that religious communities and their ethical values can make to address the challenges children face.
- d) Build upon the transformative agenda, initiatives, actions, and expertise of Forum participants to shape new collaborative action for, and with, children.
- e) Strengthen the GNRC and celebrate nearly 25 years of interfaith cooperation.
- f) Formulate and commit to concrete strategies and actions, build synergies, and develop new strategic partnerships that will support the scaling up of key programs for children.
- g) Launch the GNRC Strategy 2030.

Themes and Focus Areas

The overall theme, *The Child is Calling: Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children*, ensured that the Forum was relevant, addressed current issues, and that the focus was fixed on eliciting hope and authentic participation from children in building a better world. *The child is calling* conveyed the heart of what brought us together for the GNRC Sixth Forum and focused us on answering the call of the child with concrete actions.

To guide us in answering this call, the Sixth Forum was organized around three running themes. These were, building a **safe** world with children; building a **secure** world with children; and building a **sustainable** world with children.

Under *building a safe world*, the Forum addressed three focus areas. These included the dignity of the child in the digital world; the vital role of families and collaborative communities; and pathways to building resilience and strengthening mental health in the face of global shocks, emerging crises, and pandemics.

Under *building a secure world*, the Forum addressed four focus areas. These were the root causes of conflicts, wars, xenophobia, hate crimes, and extremism; stakeholder participation in building resilience to conflict; the impact of conflict and war on children; and building a peaceful and inclusive world for, and with, children.

Under *building a sustainable world*, the Forum addressed four focus areas. These were responsible lifestyles; hunger, child poverty, and inequality; ethical values and education for sustainable development; and climate-conscious stewardship.

The Forum program included plenary sessions, panel and group discussions for the different themes and focus areas, expert presentations, video presentations, reflections, and an interfaith prayer for peace. Children were equal participants throughout.

Recommendations and post-Forum actions from the GNRC Sixth Forum were adopted and issued through *The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children* and through the *GNRC Strategy 2030*, which was launched at the Forum.

Organization of the Forum

Arigatou International established the GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee (IOC) to advise and guide on the design, themes, sub-themes, and structure of the Forum, its convening, and follow-up to the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children.

A Forum Steering Committee guided the Forum Secretariat, which oversaw implementation. To ensure that the views of children were front and center in the Forum design, discussions, and proceedings, a Children's Advisory Group was created. The IOC was also guided by specially invited senior advisors from the world's major religious and faith traditions.

Outcomes

Significant outcomes of the Forum included:

- a) Adoption of *Answering the Call of the Child: The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children*.
- b) Launch of the *GNRC Strategy 2030*.
- c) Enhanced mutual understanding, shared values, and collaboration among GNRC members and other participants.
- d) Enhanced adaptive capacity to advocate for the rights and well-being of all children.
- e) Increased commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the grassroots level.
- f) New strategic partnerships developed to support the scaling up of key programs to address the needs of children.
- g) Enhanced appreciation of the achievements and impact of 25 years of grassroots interfaith cooperation, and
- h) Enhanced outreach and visibility of Arigatou International from global to grassroots levels.

SPECIAL MESSAGES

His Excellency, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, UAE



His Excellency, the Minister during his remarks emphasized the UAE's commitment to fostering interfaith cooperation and safeguarding the well-being of children globally. This dedication, he stated, is rooted in the vision of the nation's founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

While acknowledging the progress made since the adoption of the UNCRC, Sheikh Nahyan stressed the moral imperative on everyone to address the grave challenges facing children around the world. Noting that "it takes a village to raise a child," the Minister emphasized the position of the interfaith community as this village. He urged participants to commit to ensuring that all children everywhere have access to a better quality of life that includes access to health, education, and the opportunity to reach their full potential. He also encouraged the use of innovative solutions and collaborative efforts to address the plight of marginalized children worldwide.

The Minister pledged the UAE's continued support for initiatives promoting child welfare and interfaith cooperation.

His Excellency Sheikh Abdallah bin Mahfuz bin Bayyah, President, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace



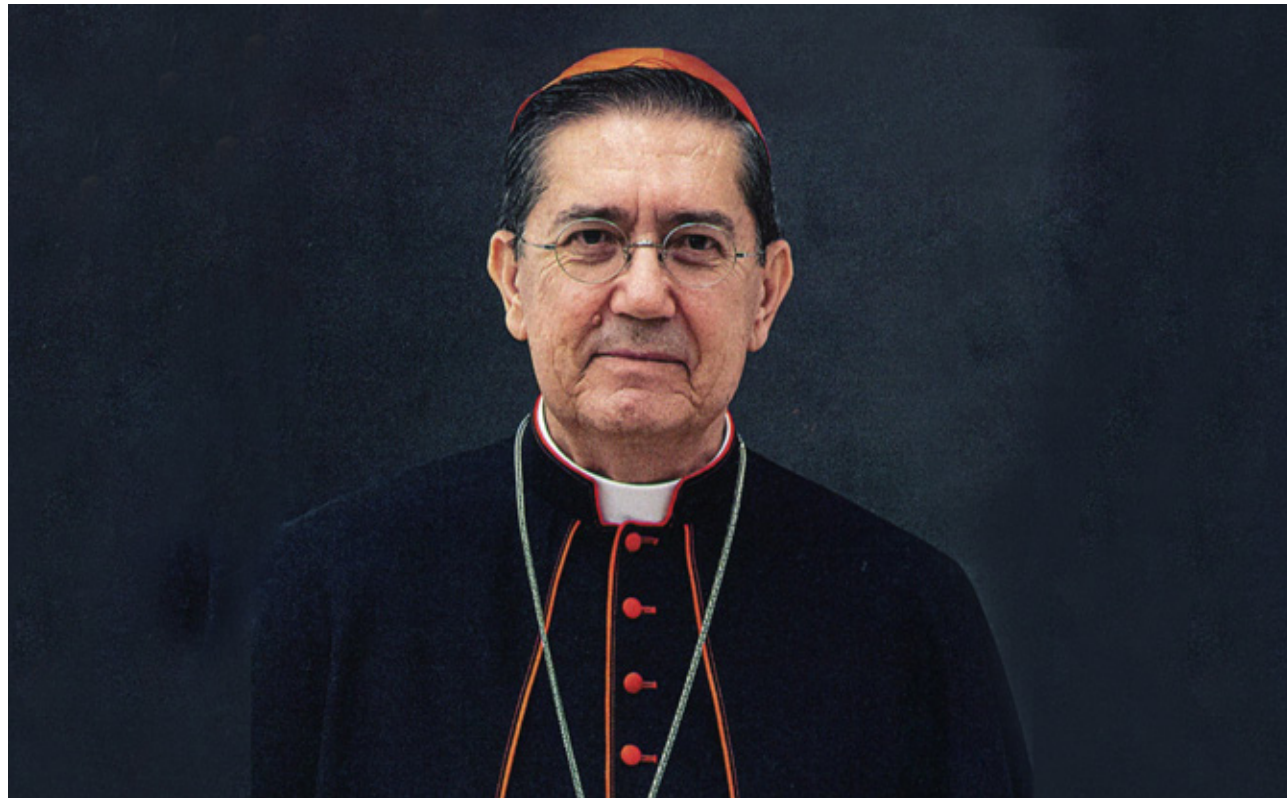
During the closing ceremony of the GNRC Sixth Forum, H.E. Sheikh Abdallah bin Mahfuz bin Bayyah underscored the critical importance of child protection as a continuous priority. He emphasized that safeguarding children is not only a deeply personal concern for individuals and families but also a fundamental issue for society and the state, as it directly impacts the future. He highlighted that the need for child protection initiatives becomes even more urgent in regions affected by armed conflicts and wars, where children face severe threats to their safety and well-being. He stressed that such areas should be prioritized in all child-focused projects.

Sheikh Bin Bayyah further noted that Islam places great emphasis on the well-being of children, advocating for their physical and intellectual development, nurturing their talents, and ensuring their overall welfare. He pointed out that prophetic teachings on child care have served as key references for scholars, guiding the classification of texts and the allocation of resources dedicated to children's well-being.

He also acknowledged the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for its commitment to supporting orphans and extending humanitarian aid to children, particularly in conflict-affected regions. He commended the UAE's alignment with religious values that promote tolerance and care for the vulnerable, noting that it was the first Arab nation to join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

Additionally, Sheikh Bin Bayyah recognized the significant contributions of H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Mother of the Emirates, Chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, in championing child welfare. He praised her unwavering efforts in ensuring the well-being of children, reinforcing the importance of dedicated leadership in advancing child protection initiatives.

His Eminence Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, Prefect, Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue



On behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis, His Eminence Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, Prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, conveyed a message of hope and solidarity to the participants of the GNRC Sixth Forum. In his message to the Forum, he recognized the Forum's role in fostering interfaith cooperation to build a hopeful world for children. The message underscored the significance of the Forum's theme, *The Child is Calling: Interfaith Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children*, which resonates with Pope Francis' commitment to children's well-being.

Acknowledging the complex global challenges of our time, Cardinal Ayuso Guixot highlighted the importance of dialogue and collaboration in addressing today's evolving challenges. He commended the GNRC's commitment to convening religious leaders, policymakers, youth, and other stakeholders to promote children's rights and welfare. Such efforts, he noted, create a network of solidarity and offer hope to a world grappling with uncertainties.

Cardinal Ayuso Guixot expressed his prayers and support for the Forum's success, urging participants to work towards impactful resolutions. He reaffirmed the Dicastery's commitment to standing in solidarity with the GNRC, applauding its efforts to create a hopeful world for children.

Rev. Michinari Kujo, Chief Priest, Meiji Jingu



Rev. Michinari Kujo, Chief Priest of Meiji Jingu emphasized the Shinto teaching of living in harmony with nature. He stressed that humanity's inherent connection with nature must be restored and upheld to achieve balance and sustainability, and voiced concern over environmental degradation caused by modern activities.

Rev. Kujo stressed that efforts to create a better world for future generations must prioritize children. He urged religious leaders to take an active role in promoting sustainable practices and mobilizing collective responsibility for environmental preservation. Meiji Jingu, founded in 1920, was established with the vision of contributing to a better environment for children. This mission, he said, has been upheld through the continued dedication of religious leaders and the broader community.

Rev. Kujo concluded with a call for renewed commitment to environmental stewardship guided by spiritual values in order to build a sustainable and harmonious world for all children.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, Secretary General, World Council of Churches (WCC)



Rev. Jerry Pillay, Secretary General, World Council of Churches (WCC), emphasized the Christian belief that children are created in the image of God and deserve special care and attention. He reinforced the theological understanding of children's dignity and the responsibility of families, churches, and society to nurture and protect them.

Addressing environmental concerns, Rev. Pillay cited scientific warnings that CO2 emissions must cease rising by 2025. He urged faith leaders to model technological stewardship by minimizing contributions to climate change. He called for eco-friendly practices, emphasizing the biblical responsibility to cherish and preserve the Earth, as described in Genesis.

Rev. Pillay stressed the role of faith leaders in creating a safe, secure, and sustainable world for children. He invited people of goodwill to join a movement of justice, reconciliation, and unity in preserving the world for future generations. He encouraged faith leaders to recognize their gifts and capacity for transformation, embracing renewal through God's grace.

Chief Rabbi David Rosen, Special Advisor, the Abrahamic Family House, Abu Dhabi



Rabbi Rosen's remarks focused on values of justice, compassion, and interdependence, emphasizing the need for young leaders to adopt these principles in their personal and communal lives. Drawing from the story of the Prophet Moses who is revered by Jews, Muslims and Christians, Rabbi Rosen illustrated how leadership entails standing against injustice, confronting internal wrongs, and extending compassion beyond one's own community.

Key recommendations from Rabbi Rosen:

- ❑ Advocate for justice not only when oppression comes from external forces but also when it is from within one's own community. "It can be dangerous to stand up against persecution from outside, but it is even more challenging to confront wrong within your own community."
- ❑ Extend compassion and support to those outside familiar circles, especially marginalized groups, such as women, children, and strangers.
- ❑ Show empathy symbolized by Moses rescuing the lamb. Small acts of care reflect broader responsibilities towards society.
- ❑ Recognize the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural world. Sustainable actions for the environment are essential to our survival.
- ❑ Lead with courage and determination. Protect human dignity and advocate for ecological sustainability. "The way we treat our environment ultimately determines our future."

Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director, UNICEF



Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director, UNICEF, underscored the critical need for global efforts to safeguard children's rights, particularly with an estimated 4.2 billion children expected to be born over the next three decades.

Ms. Russell highlighted the ongoing challenges posed by crises such as conflict and climate change, which continue to hinder children's access to their fundamental rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child—the most widely ratified human rights treaty. She emphasized the need for sustained awareness and collective action to uphold these rights and ensure the well-being of every child, everywhere.

Commending the GNRC's near quarter-century of interfaith collaboration and advocacy, Ms. Russell acknowledged the network's leadership in uniting diverse religious perspectives around shared values that prioritize children's survival and development. She reaffirmed UNICEF's commitment to partnering with organizations like the GNRC to amplify children's voices and strengthen global cooperation in promoting their rights.

Ms. Muzoon Almellehan, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador



In her remarks, Ms. Almellehan, a Syrian refugee and education activist, presented a shocking statistic – more than 70 million school-aged children worldwide are out of school due to conflict. She stressed the critical need for these children to have access to education, which is their fundamental right and a pathway to a brighter future.

Ms. Almellehan also underscored the important role of religious leaders in supporting the overall welfare of their communities. She urged them to work together and to mobilize collective action within their communities for the well-being of all children in need.



GNRC SIXTH FORUM KEYNOTE ADDRESS Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Laureate

The Vice Chair, GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee, Dr. Kezevino Aram introduced the GNRC Sixth Forum keynote speaker, Nobel Peace Laureate, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi.

In his speech, Mr. Satyarthi emphasized the urgency of interfaith cooperation to build a hopeful world for children. He addressed critical issues such as child labor, child trafficking, and the importance of compassion in both religious and societal contexts. He emphasized that all religions were born from a single spark—compassion.

Reflecting on a story from the Buddhist tradition, Mr. Satyarthi illustrated the importance of bringing peace and understanding into the world through words and action. He critiqued religious teachings that remain theoretical and do not address the lived reality of children facing violence and oppression. "Truth does not lie in words; truth lies in experience," he said.

Key recommendations from Mr. Satyarthi:

- ❑ Encourage youth to use their energy and passion to create a just and peaceful world. They should be seen as agents of change, with their voices prioritized in the fight for children's rights and justice.
- ❑ Religious leaders and institutions must integrate compassion, as a core value in their teachings and practices, demonstrating selflessness and mindfulness in addressing children's suffering.
- ❑ Faith leaders across traditions should collaborate to tackle challenges such as exploitation, violence, and neglect, ensuring a safer world for children.
- ❑ Policies on child rights and protection must address the lived experiences of children in distress, moving beyond theoretical frameworks.
- ❑ Institutions, governments, and individuals must appreciate their moral obligations and act together with sincerity and honesty to eliminate exploitation and violence against children worldwide.
- ❑ Efforts to uphold and protect children's rights must increase, especially for those affected by war, conflict, and exploitation.

In his conclusion, Mr. Satyarthi urged the participants to move beyond rhetoric and take sincere action to solve the problems facing children. He emphasized that is the moral responsibility of every individual to create a better future for children worldwide.



**DAY ONE: 19TH
NOVEMBER 2024**

Key Messages from Day One

- The GNRC Sixth Forum, convened amid major conflicts and challenges facing children globally, proving the power of interfaith cooperation for the well-being of children. The Network, built on decades of dedication, shared vision, and unwavering commitment from its members—continues to inspire collective action, bringing hope and a better future to children worldwide. The remarkable growth and impact of initiatives from the Panama Declaration and the efforts of GNRC members across the globe demonstrate the transformative power of interfaith cooperation and child-centered programs.
- To build a safe world with children, religious and non-religious leaders, families, communities, religious institutions, and governments must unite to condemn harmful practices done to children in the name of religion by creating awareness through campaigns and workshops. They must ensure local practices reflect the true principles of love, peace, and compassion inherent in all faiths while honoring global human rights and sustainable development commitments.
- Parents, educators, and community leaders must be trained on child protection, online safety, and recognizing signs of abuse to foster a protective and safe community for children.
- Governments must enforce strict laws against child abuse and ensure safety measures in public spaces by identifying clear legal frameworks, combined with community engagement and robust reporting mechanisms, to protect children.
- Ensuring children's safety requires a multi-dimensional approach that addresses digital security, poverty reduction, and harmful cultural practices. Collaboration among faith leaders, policymakers, educators, and families is essential to creating a supportive environment where children can thrive both in online and offline worlds. Forum participants pledged to implement Interfaith dialogue and evidence-based interventions to drive meaningful change for a hopeful and inclusive world for children.

FIRST PLENARY: OPENING CEREMONY

Ghaya, Child Representative, United Arab Emirates, GNRC Sixth Forum Children's Advisory Group

Ghaya highlighted the critical role that communities and nations have in protecting children and safeguarding the future of communities and nations. She reminded participants that children are the true wealth of any nation and that their health and education determine a country's strength.

She acknowledged the UAE's efforts in creating opportunities for children to dream big and thrive but also pointed out the pressing challenges children elsewhere face today, including climate change, violence, and unequal access to education and healthcare. Ghaya called for collective global action to address these issues, emphasizing that no country can tackle them alone.



Mr. Kul Gautam, Chair, GNRC Sixth Forum International Organizing Committee (IOC)

In his speech, Mr. Gautam touched on the Forum theme, *The Child is Calling*. He urged participants to respond to the call, noting that despite the deeply diverse backgrounds of the children at the Forum, including some from active conflict zones, they all shared common dreams.

Despite the similarities between the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and religious teachings emphasizing love, peace, and compassion, the harsh reality, Mr. Gautam noted, is that many injustices are justified in the name of religion. Highlighting the resources developed by Arigatou International, such as the Multi-Religious Study on the UNCRC and the Learning to Live Together manual, he called on religious leaders to work together to ensure that



local religious practices align with the true teachings of their faiths. "There is no cause more noble, more urgent, and more worthy of interfaith cooperation than building a hopeful world for children," he said.

WELCOME REMARKS

Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International, Convenor, GNRC

In his speech, Rev. Miyamoto thanked His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, for gracing the Forum despite his demanding schedule. He also thanked the IAFSC and the IOC for their efforts in bringing the Forum to fruition.

Rev. Miyamoto underscored the importance of interfaith collaboration, which led to the GNRC's inception. He concluded by acknowledging the contributions of volunteers, religious leaders, UNICEF, and other partners who have helped grow the GNRC.



H.E. Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, UAE

H.E. the Minister during his remarks emphasized the UAE's commitment to fostering interfaith cooperation and safeguarding the well-being of children globally. This dedication, he stated, is rooted in the vision of the nation's founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The Minister pledged the UAE's continued support for initiatives promoting child welfare and interfaith cooperation.



Mrs. Dana Humaid, President, IAFSC

Mrs. Humaid began by thanking the children present at the Forum for their participation in the Children's pre-forum. She praised the Emirati children for welcoming their peers from around the world. She also expressed admiration for the wisdom, independence, and sense of unity she had observed among all participants in the Children's pre-forum.

Mrs. Humaid encouraged the children present to share the insights they had gained and reminded them to embrace the Forum as a safe space for dialogue, support, and collaboration. She likewise urged adults at the Forum to foster an atmosphere of love, kindness, and mutual respect.



SECOND PLENARY: BUILDING A SAFE WORLD WITH CHILDREN



The second plenary consisted of keynote addresses and an intergenerational panel discussion. In her opening remarks, Plenary Chair **Ms. Bani Dugal**,

Principal Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations (UN) and Co-Chair of the IAFSC, emphasized the need for every child to experience safety and belonging. She underscored the importance of environments rooted in love, trust, stability, and protection, noting that children thrive when they have meaningful connections with caregivers and communities that foster friendship and inclusion.

Reflecting on the earlier plenary, Ms. Dugal emphasized the responsibilities of faith leaders and caregivers to safeguard all children. She then introduced a special video message by Ms. Catherine Russell, UNICEF Executive Director.

Presentation by Children on the Outcomes of the Children's Pre-Forum

In preparation for the GNRC Sixth Forum, 53 children (defined as under 18 years of age) from diverse cultures, religions, and backgrounds participated in a three-day Children's pre-forum. They engaged in various activities that fostered learning, collaboration, and the development of their key messages on how to build a safe, secure, and sustainable world for children.

The presentation on the outcomes of the pre-forum began with a skit on "Unity in Diversity" that underlined the importance of understanding and respecting each other's differences. In it, the children shared their experiences of meeting individuals from different cultures, religions, and backgrounds. An activity titled "Clouds of Hope," followed in which they presented their expectations for the Sixth Forum.

The children also briefly summarized their activities on each day of the pre-forum. A key message from day one of the pre-forum was the notion of one global human family represented as '1 + 1 equals 1'. The children spent the evening at the Al Khatim desert to experience the Emirati culture and celebrate cultural diversity.

On day two, the focus shifted to pressing issues of sustainability, safety, and security. They were introduced to three case studies featuring a child in different conflict situations. This activity placed the children in the shoes of various stakeholders, such as teachers and community leaders, to discuss how they would respond to these challenges. The exercise was designed to build empathy and understanding of the complex factors that contribute to conflict, and to emphasize the importance of collaboration in resolving these issues.

In the evening, the children visited Sea World in Abu Dhabi, a rehabilitation center for marine creatures. They expressed their desire for similar initiatives around the world to ensure that marine life, like children, are protected and can live and thrive safely, securely, and sustainably. On the final day of the pre-forum, a key activity was role-play involving a child named Aisha, who held up a bag representing various ingredients needed to build a hopeful world for children.

The final aspect of the children's presentation during the plenary was a "spider web" exercise in which each child pretended to be part of a web. The children came

to appreciate that if any one of them failed to hold the web together, the entire structure would collapse. This activity underscored the importance of **both** individual and collective responsibility in creating and maintaining a safe, secure, and sustainable world.

Recommendations from the children for the GNRC Sixth Forum

- Unity and interconnectedness must be central to all discussions at the Forum, emphasizing that we are all part of a global family.

- Focus on the tangible actions that children can take and the role they can play in contributing to sustainability, safety, and security.

- Foster a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders—families, communities, religious institutions, and governments—in ensuring the safety and security of children.

- Facilitate cultural exchanges and experiences that promote mutual respect and understanding, as exemplified by the activities in the Children's pre-forum on Day One.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES ON BUILDING A SAFE WORLD WITH CHILDREN

Children's Presentation



Children from diverse backgrounds shared their perspectives on building a safe world with children. Representing different countries and faiths, they articulated the challenges children face and offered practical recommendations, for ensuring the safety and well-being of children in both physical and virtual worlds. These were:

- Encourage children to support each other, follow safety rules, and foster teamwork to

avoid risks and promote collective well-being. — Yazan

- Children should report any abnormal or unpleasant experiences to trusted adults or authorities, emphasizing the importance of knowing emergency contacts. — Zade

- Educate children about setting personal boundaries, recognizing danger, and consulting trusted adults when they feel unsafe. — Jessica

- Establish specialized counsellors in schools and community centers to provide academic, mental health, and career guidance. — *Sanchit*
- Use trusted apps to track children's locations and activities online. Educate families on ethical usage of tracking apps and on online safety through workshops. — *M. Naan*
- Governments should implement strict laws against child abuse, enhance public awareness, mandate reporting, and establish dedicated support networks for victims. — *Abigail*
- Governments should enforce safety and security measures in places frequented by children, such as parks and schools. — *Child representative from Jordan*
- Promote open communication between children and adults to build trust, ensuring children are heard and supported. — *Child Representative from Asia*
- Organize seminars and workshops to educate parents and communities on children's rights and the impact of their behavior on children's well-being. — *Emmanuel*

Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children



Dr. M'jid emphasized the need for urgent collective action to protect children and create safe environments. Her speech highlighted the pressing challenges children face today, the interconnected nature of crises, and the pivotal roles families, communities, and digital actors play in safeguarding children's rights and well-being.

Dr. M'jid underlined the need to end the pervasive misuse of religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs to justify harmful practices. She said that 'by harnessing their [religious leaders and faith communities] moral and cultural leadership, religious and traditional leaders can strengthen protective social norms around children, raising awareness and mobilizing local communities, including the families.'

She concluded by stating that 'involving, listening and engaging children is crucial' and that intergenerational solidarity was essential, and all must urgently act now, with children, to make a difference.

INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A SAFE WORLD WITH CHILDREN



In his opening remarks, **H.E. Emmanuel Adamakis** acknowledged the challenges of hosting such a Forum amid regional conflicts. He emphasized the importance of interfaith cooperation in addressing the threats children face in the digital world.

The session focused on the complex impacts of digital threats such as online abuse, sextortion, cyberbullying, and exploitation. It highlighted holistic strategies involving families, religious institutions, and interfaith collaborations to protect and empower children. Panelists addressed the urgent need to create a safer world with children amidst rapidly evolving digital landscapes.

Amila, a child representative from Bosnia and Herzegovina, began the discussion. She acknowledged the complexities of living in the digital age and noted that while digital spaces can pose risks to children's mental health, they also offer opportunities to inspire change and foster inclusive communities. She called on leaders to focus on creating safe digital environments where children thrive, their hearts remain pure, and their mental well-being is protected.

H.E. Rym Al Falasi spoke on the UAE's progressive approach to child participation and highlighted key

initiatives promoted by the government to ensure children's voices are heard at the highest levels. One such initiative is the institutionalization of child participation in governance and policymaking. Her Excellency pointed to her own organization, the Supreme Council of Motherhood and Childhood Council, which under the directive of the UAE leadership, established a Children's Advisory Council in 2018. The Children's Advisory Council provides children with a platform to express their needs, challenges and vision for their future and the country's future.

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki noted that while digital safety is a real and pressing concern for children worldwide, children in Africa face even graver challenges at a foundational level, such as poverty and harmful traditional practices. He highlighted poverty as the most significant factor undermining the safety and security of children in Africa and called on stakeholders to prioritize poverty eradication. "Many African parents work tirelessly to provide the bare necessities, leaving them with little time to focus on their children's overall well-being. Economic strain also often forces children to drop out of school and engage in child labor," he said.

Dr. Mwombeki also specifically urged religious leaders to unite and actively challenge and combat harmful cultural norms, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) that threatens the safety and wellbeing of thousands of children.

Ms. Andrea Kaufmann stressed the importance of centering children's voices and outlined strategies to build a safer, more hopeful world for children through listening, collaborating, and sharing impactful stories across generations and across faiths. She encouraged the creation of collaborative spaces that facilitate the exchange of ideas and foster innovation, making it possible to design holistic solutions that address the complex challenges that children face. She also expressed the need for evidence-based practices to ensure that interventions are effective. She referenced World Vision's collaboration with Arigatou International on the Toolkit for Ending Violence Against Children, which exemplifies the power of partnerships and research-driven solutions.

Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne shared insights drawn from his extensive experience working at both grassroots and national levels in Sri Lanka. His remarks focused on the holistic well-being of children in an era shaped by technology. Dr. Ariyaratne reflected on

the generational shift in communication channels, from radio, to the widespread use of smartphones and the internet in the last few decades. He noted that today, the digital environment significantly impacts children's experiences and well-being, often exposing them to online abuse and exploitation.

He expressed concern about the prevalence of online violence in Sri Lanka, including cyberbullying, identity theft, and AI-generated abuse. Dr. Ariyaratne underlined the importance of equipping children with the skills to navigate digital spaces safely through programs that emphasize safe and ethical use of technology and incorporate lessons on privacy, online behavior, and digital literacy. He underscored the role of parents and families in guiding children, advocating for a collaborative approach to digital safety, as well as rehabilitation for victims of digital abuse.

Ms. Bani Dugal ended the plenary by noting that the conversation had only just begun. "We encourage you to continue engaging in these dialogues when you return home. Take the time to listen to children, involve them in identifying challenges, and collaborate with them to find meaningful solutions," she said.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Summary of Key Messages from the Concurrent Sessions

- Children must be at the center of policy discussions and decision-making processes. Institutions including schools and places of worship should establish platforms that facilitate intergenerational and interfaith engagement, ensuring that children are active participants in building a safer, more equitable world.
- Ensuring safe spaces for children extends beyond the family unit. Communities, educators, religious institutions, and governments must collaborate to create supportive environments where children can learn, grow, and thrive. They should implement collective actions through positive role models, early childhood education, mentorship, and addressing socioeconomic disparities to build resilient, value-driven, and inclusive societies.
- Interfaith dialogue is a powerful tool for addressing the root causes of challenges facing children globally. Faith leaders and community actors must work together to advocate for children's rights, amplify the voices of women and youth, and drive awareness campaigns that address the systemic issues impacting children's well-being.
- Women play a critical role in child protection, and empowering them through education, leadership, and digital literacy is essential to creating safer environments for children. Faith leaders, through spiritual guidance and advocacy, must support families and communities by promoting women's leadership in child protection efforts.
- Faith communities play a crucial role in fostering resilience and addressing mental health challenges among children, especially in the face of global crises. To build on this foundation, it is essential to implement projects that empower the next generation of faith leaders—leaders who share the same passion and commitment.



SUB-THEME ONE: The Dignity of the Child in the Digital World



This panel discussion, moderated by **Rabbi Diana Gerson**, addressed the challenges children face in the digital age. Panelists shared strategies and solutions for creating safe, supportive, and empowering digital environments, with a focus on the role of families, religious institutions, and other stakeholders.

The child representative noted that the digital space, while offering significant opportunities to young people for communication and self-expression, has also become a platform for exploitation and bullying due to infiltration of social media by scammers, hackers, and individuals with malicious intent. To address these challenges, he called for robust laws and policies to regulate social media platforms, focusing on child protection. This would include age-appropriate content filters, reporting mechanisms, and penalties for online abuse.

Mr. Abdullah AlHebsi shared some of the steps the UAE has taken to safeguard children from online harm and create a safer digital environment. The government leverages artificial intelligence (AI) technology to:

- ❑ Monitor and track online abusers in real time.
- ❑ Proactively blocking content from websites containing harmful content.
- ❑ Pinpoint and report harmful online activities, such as cyberbullying and exploitation, ensuring swift action against perpetrators.

Mr. AlHebsi shared that the UAE was working with the United Nations to replicate these AI tools in other countries, fostering global collaboration for child protection. The government also utilizes community engagement and has been convening workshops and trainings to equip parents, teachers, and important stakeholders with tools to understand and mitigate online risks.

While noting that AI had brought about many positive transformations to the digital landscape, **Professor Benyam Dawit Mezmur**, advised caution. He pointed out that digital advancements had frequently failed to adequately protect children and have instead led to adverse outcomes such as exposure to harmful content and exploitation of personal data.

Children's data is frequently collected without adequate safeguards, exposing them to privacy violations. The complexity and lack of transparency in privacy policies deter users, including parents and guardians, from understanding how such data is used. Current age verification mechanisms, he noted, are insufficient to protect young users effectively and children as young as nine years old are accessing platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, exposing them to unrestricted and often harmful material.

Professor Mezmur stressed the need for policymakers and tech developers to collaborate to create effective age verification tools that prevent unauthorized access by minors while maintaining user privacy. Social media companies must allocate sufficient resources and personnel to ensure child protection, while governments and international bodies should enforce regulations that mandate adherence to child safety standards. Specifically, social media platforms need to develop and integrate the following child protection measures at the design stage:

Robust age-appropriate content moderation systems.

- ❑ In-built protections against harmful content and data exploitation.

Mr. Marcelo Neira underscored the equally important role that religious communities have in safeguarding children. He called on these communities to leverage their extensive resources and moral influence on design and implement initiatives that address the diverse challenges children face today, especially in the digital space. He urged faith communities to invest in training and outreach programs on child protection, digital safety and digital literacy to educate and empower children and their families.

Ms. Ismeta Salihspahic shared her firsthand experience of working with teens who have

experienced cyberbullying. She noted that addressing emotional violence and impaired mental health resulting from uncontrolled online interactions is a priority for GNRC Bosnia and Herzegovina as it has become an issue requiring urgent intervention. The responsibility for ensuring children's safety online extends beyond children themselves, she stressed. It demands collaboration among **all** stakeholders, including parents, governments, religious leaders, schools, and communities. In this shared responsibility, each stakeholder has a particular role to fulfill:

- ❑ Parents - Guiding children in responsible online behavior and monitoring internet use.
- ❑ Governments - Enforcing policies and regulations that promote safety on the internet.
- ❑ Religious leaders - Advocating for moral and ethical use of digital spaces.
- ❑ Schools - Integrating internet safety education into their curricula.
- ❑ Community leaders - Raising awareness about the risks and solutions associated with digital interactions.

Ms. Salihspahic emphasized that protecting children in the digital world enables them to access its benefits safely and confidently.

Mr. Nicholas Dike likewise highlighted the critical role of parental involvement. He noted that parental neglect—usually to lack of knowledge—exposes children to harmful content and situations. To address this gap, GNRC Nigeria has implemented programs and workshops to equip parents with tools to monitor and regulate responsible use of the internet by their children. These initiatives focus on fostering a safe online environment and ensuring children understand the dangers lurking in the digital space.

SUB-THEME TWO: The Role of Families in Ensuring Safe Spaces for Children



As he opened the session, **Bishop Method Kilaini** noted that the concept of family extends beyond parents and children, highlighting the profound influence of external environments on child nurturing. He added that peers often have a stronger impact on children than their families do. He underscored the role of dialogue within families, urging parents to create spaces where children feel free to express themselves openly. In this he urged parents to empower their children to speak by gradually “upgrading” their freedom as they grow.

Tudor emphasized the importance of listening to children’s voices and facilitating their inclusion and participation especially on issues concerning them.

Archbishop Emeritus Felix Machado spoke on fostering healthy, balanced, and value-driven environments for children. He too stressed the role of family, education, and society in guiding children towards a future rooted in freedom, integrity, and personal growth. The Archbishop Emeritus acknowledged that children are often exposed to

external pressures, including societal expectations and peer influence. While these factors can impact their choices and actions, they must be managed carefully to prevent negative consequences.

The Archbishop Emeritus stressed that when children embrace family values like love, care, discipline, and respect, they experience a deeper sense of purpose, leading to healthier, more harmonious lives. He warned against allowing children to live a “unrooted life” explaining that every child is born not only into the present but also into a long chain of generations. “It is essential that we teach children about their roots—their culture and historical heritage,” he said. Equally important is creating spaces where children feel free to explore, learn, and grow at their own pace, fostering a sense of autonomy and well-being.

Families are the cornerstone of a child’s emotional, psychological, social, and physical development. **Mama Shamsa Abubakar** noted that families play a pivotal role in the development of children, shaping their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Verbal and non-verbal communication skills

are acquired by children from their families. The absence of role models therefore jeopardizes the holistic development of children. “Children learn by observing how their family members interact with others, handle stress, and make decisions,” she noted. “If you’re a smoker and your child starts smoking, who is to blame?”

Mama Shamsa underscored the importance of the family as the foundational environment for the physical and psychological well-being of a child. However, poverty, lack of access to education, health, and other basic services, are increasingly contributing to dysfunctional family structures and generational trauma in the African context, she said. To address these challenges holistically, she offered the following recommendations to support families emotionally, socially, financially, and spiritually to create an environment where children can thrive and reach their full potential:

- ❑ Equip parents, especially young ones, with knowledge and skills to raise children effectively.
- ❑ Support economic empowerment of families and youth. With her prize money from the Zayed Award, Mama Shamsa has helped 6,850 youth and families to start small businesses.
- ❑ Engage in friendly, yet authoritative parenting to foster respect and instill values.

- ❑ Encourage communities to offer safe spaces, counselling, and after-school activities.
- ❑ Prioritize early childhood education to ensure foundational learning.
- ❑ Provide mental health resources to parents and children to break generational trauma.
- ❑ Establish family counselling programs to address stress and conflict.

Last but not least, governments and relevant organizations should address socioeconomic disparities and create systems to support family well-being emotionally, socially, and financially.

Ms. Lubna Tarawneh, drawing from her personal experience as a mother and educator, shared insights into how societal structures shape children’s emotional, social, and moral growth. She pointed out that families alone cannot provide all the support children need. Teachers, influencers, governments, and communities must work together to create a nurturing environment where children feel safe enough to express themselves and grow. Influencers and educators should act as role models and reinforce positive behaviors. She added that, teaching children to respect others’ boundaries—while establishing clear boundaries for themselves—instils tolerance and mutual respect which are crucial to building inclusive communities.

SUB-THEME THREE: Collaborative Communities: Interfaith and Intra-Faith Dialogue and Action in Promoting a Safe World



Rev. Kojitsu Kobori and H.E. Emmanuel Adamakis, emphasized the urgent need to address the root causes of challenges facing children today through collaborative action. Rev. Kobori noted that in an increasingly interconnected world, the future of children relies on the strength of communities and the contributions of diverse actors. He underscored the importance of transformative tools such as interfaith dialogue in protecting and promoting children’s rights.

Ms. Delali Morty highlighted the risks artificial intelligence (AI) poses to child safety, including exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and data exploitation. She emphasized the role of faith-based organizations in fostering interfaith dialogue to advocate for ethical AI use, educate communities, and raise awareness.

Anthony expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to speak, noting it was his first time speaking in such an arena. He said he hoped other youth and children might be given similar opportunities to share their

views. He urged leaders to provide similar platforms for more children to share their experiences and insights, emphasizing that children understand their challenges better than anyone else.

Ms. Kholoud Mabrouk emphasized the media’s role in amplifying faith-based advocacy for child protection policies. “The media is likewise able to promote justice and children’s rights, shape public opinion, raise awareness of policy gaps, and hold authorities to account,” she said. Ms. Mabrouk concluded by stressing that strategic partnerships between the media and faith-based organizations can result in culturally sensitive content, fostering inclusive advocacy.

Ms. Asmaa Kftarou highlighted the challenges women face in child protection advocacy, including cultural barriers, underrepresentation, resource constraints, and social stigma. She encouraged collaboration between religious leaders and policymakers to amplify women’s efforts and to advocate more strongly for child protection.

Educational programs focusing on women’s empowerment, she continued, can enhance knowledge, leadership, and economic stability, enabling safer environments for children.

She called for digital literacy training, parental guidance tools, and advocacy for AI regulations.

In her remarks, **Pastor Tania Barrios** highlighted the critical role of religious leaders in supporting families through spiritual guidance, parenting workshops, and advocacy for essential services like education and healthcare. She emphasized interfaith dialogue as

a powerful tool to combat child abuse by fostering collaboration, mutual understanding, and innovative solutions across faith communities. She likewise stressed the importance of women’s empowerment initiatives, noting that empowered women often lead child protection efforts and address systemic issues affecting children’s safety. She urged faith leaders to amplify women’s voices as enabling their leadership in family and community development will only strengthen collective efforts to ensure children’s well-being.



SUB-THEME FOUR: Pathways to Building Resilience and Strengthening Mental Health in the Face of Global Shocks, Emerging Crises, and Pandemics



With the rise of global crises, violent conflicts, and pandemics, the resilience and mental health of children has become of critical concern. Children typically bear the brunt of such traumatic events as they impact both their short and long-term development, as well as their future well-being and prospects. In her opening remarks, **Ms. Anna Rita Ronzoni** pointed out the magnitude of the mental health challenges facing the world's children. According to the WHO, one in seven children globally are affected by mental health conditions, including anxiety and behavioral and mental disorders. Ms. Ronzoni emphasized the importance of strengthening community-based support systems, particularly within faith communities, and implementing effective measures to address mental health challenges facing children.

Frida emphasized the need for a holistic approach to providing mental health support to children. At school bullying, academic pressure, and peer conflicts create mental and emotional stress for children. At home, domestic instability and lack of emotional support exacerbate these issues. Together, these challenges

contribute to a hostile world that undermines children's emotional well-being and leaves them vulnerable to long-term psychological difficulties.

Frida urged faith communities to take a proactive role in fostering resilience and eliminating stigma around mental health, adding that faith leaders and organizations are uniquely positioned to influence attitudes and encourage acceptance, as they often hold a significant place in the lives of families and communities. Teaching children mental resilience from an early age equips them with coping mechanisms and emotional tools so they can navigate life's challenges more effectively, even in the face of adversity.

Following on the points made by **Frida**, **Dr. Mohammad Abo-Hilal** highlighted the critical role that faith plays in helping children affected by displacement and conflict to navigate traumatic events while retaining a sense of hope and purpose. He emphasized that faith offers a solid framework for children to develop problem-solving skills and a moral compass that will enable them to navigate complex life challenges even in the face of adversity.

Dr. Abo-Hilal stressed the importance of using approaches grounded in cultural understanding, especially in conflict-affected contexts. Approaches that are already familiar to children are more likely to be effective, as they resonate with the values and lived experiences of their families and communities. These interventions can include storytelling and community-based support systems and safe spaces that incorporate local customs and religious practices.

Drawing insights from UNICEF's 2021 report on rising abuse within families, **Ms. Sandra Cazares** emphasized the role of faith communities in educating and nurturing families where children are safe. She shared how the PREVENIR project of the Alliance to Protect Children (APN) that is being implemented across El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico is delivering parent and caregiver training programs focused on positive parenting, strengthening emotional intelligence, and creating safe spaces for children. Over 1,000 children and 500 families have benefited from these efforts. Ms. Cazares also stressed the importance of forming alliances with public institutions and schools to protect children's physical, emotional, and psychological health.

Dr. Fatima Al Mansouri called for a transformative approach in how societies view and engage with children and teenagers, advocating for a paradigm shift from fear-based narratives to fostering environments of learning.

She emphasized that fear hinders growth, while learning promotes resilience and empowerment,

enabling young individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

She highlighted the role of children and teenagers as active contributors to building a better world, stressing the importance of recognizing their agency and potential in the present, rather than viewing them solely as future leaders. Actively involving children in decision-making and community-building allows societies to harness their creativity, energy, and innovative perspectives to address global challenges.

Speaking virtually, **Dr. Luis Torres-Hostos** highlighted the challenges faced by unaccompanied children in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. He discussed the complex issues surrounding child displacement, emphasizing the need for innovative and sensitive approaches to address the plight of those fleeing difficult circumstances in their home countries. These children, he noted, endure significant challenges, including trauma, uncertainty, and limited access to basic services.

To address these issues and support refugee and migrant populations, the Human Mobility Institute was created by **Dr. Torres-Hostos'** School of Social Work at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. A key element of the institute's approach is its strategic use of language. **Dr. Luis** emphasized the importance of using inclusive terms like "human mobility" instead of politically charged labels like "immigrants" to foster understanding and reduce polarization.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS: GNRC REGIONAL MEETINGS

Five GNRC Regional Meetings were convened during the GNRC Sixth Forum. The regional meetings brought together members and partners from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Europe and North America, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The sessions aimed to provide context-specific recommendations to shape the Abu Dhabi Declaration and Plan of Action, focusing on the GNRC Sixth Forum's theme: Building a Safe, Secure, and Sustainable World for and with Children.

Africa

The Africa regional meeting was facilitated by **Sheikh Ramadhan Aula**, Coordinator, GNRC Kenya, **Ms. Joyce Mdachi**, Coordinator, GNRC Tanzania and **Mr. Jonas Habimana**, Coordinator, GNRC Democratic Republic of Congo. GNRC members from Cameroon, Comoros, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe provided their inputs to the Abu Dhabi Plan of Action.



Asia

The Asia regional meeting was facilitated by **Mr. Gopal Vijayaragavan**, Coordinator, GNRC India. Present were GNRC members from Bhutan, Pakistan, Philippines, Japan, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Thailand. Members discussed and provided recommendations on challenges faced by children in their respective countries.



Europe and North America

This regional meeting was facilitated by **Ms. Laura Molnar**, Coordinator, GNRC Romania, **Ms. Ismeta Salihspahic**, Coordinator, GNRC Bosnia and Herzegovina and **Ms. Donna Bollinger**, Contact Person, GNRC USA. The meeting was attended by GNRC members and partners from Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, Germany, USA.



Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Meeting

This regional meeting was facilitated by Ms. Maria Jose Ananias, the GNRC LAC Network and Programs Coordinator. The meeting was attended by GNRC members from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, and Panama.



Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The MENA regional meeting was facilitated by volunteers from Egypt and Sudan. The meeting brought together GNRC members and partners from Sudan, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Algeria.







DAY TWO: **20TH**
NOVEMBER 2024

Key Messages from Day Two

- Over 70 million children are out of school due to conflict. Religious leaders, government and institutions should collaborate to empower grassroots actors and educators to support these children and ensure that their fundamental rights to education are met.
- Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi stressed the urgent need for action from all the adults to combat child labor, violence, and exploitation, highlighting that despite advancements in technology and knowledge, children continue to suffer. He emphasized that words and wealth are not enough; real action is required to address these pressing issues and fulfill global commitments like SDG 8.7 on child labor and trafficking. He called on youth to channel their energy and passion toward creating a just and peaceful world, urging religious leaders to integrate compassion into their teachings and work together across faiths to address the challenges faced by children.
- To support child protection, particularly in conflict areas, continuous investment in capacity-building programs for religious leaders must be done. Developing innovative communication tools, sharing lessons learned, and strengthening partnerships with local actors and civil society organizations will ensure that efforts are sustainable and impactful in protecting children's rights.
- Children must be engaged in conversations about their security, giving them the platform to express their needs and desires for a world free of fear and injustice. This collaborative approach will ensure that children's voices are heard, and their concerns are addressed in a meaningful way.
- Efforts will be put on supporting and strengthening family structures, ensuring that children are nurtured in environments where they can grow without fear of violence, neglect, or instability. Religious leaders, drawing on their teachings and values, must guide the communities toward a secure world for children.
- Creating a secure world for children also means ensuring a sustainable future. Climate change poses a significant threat to children's safety and well-being, exacerbating poverty, displacement, and conflict. Faith leaders and communities must act as stewards of the earth, modeling eco-friendly practices, supporting renewable energy, and advocating for policies that protect the planet for future generations.

THIRD PLENARY: THE CHILD IS CALLING: INTERFAITH COOPERATION TO BUILD A HOPEFUL WORLD FOR CHILDREN

OPENING REMARKS



Day 2 of the GNRC Sixth Forum coincided with the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children and the 35th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. In reference to these commemorations, **Dr. Kezevino Aram**, began the session with a reflection on interfaith cooperation and the collective responsibility to build a hopeful world for children.

Dr. Aram emphasized the rights of children, including their rights to survival, protection, development, and participation in decision making. She asserted that these rights are now embedded in global ethics, shaping accountability and investment in children's welfare. Referencing Reverend Miyamoto's 2002 call for a "silent revolution" at the UN General Assembly,

Dr. Aram reminded participants of the moral obligation to uphold children's dignity and urged renewed commitment to translating interfaith values into tangible action.

Dr. Aram noted that 2024 has seen unprecedented levels of conflict, violence, poverty, malnutrition, and mental health crises—conditions comparable to those of the post-World War II era. She urged participants to recognize this unacceptable reality and act decisively.

Concluding her reflections, Dr. Aram introduced the Forum keynote speaker, Nobel Peace Laureate, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi.

FOURTH PLENARY: BUILDING A SECURE WORLD WITH CHILDREN

OPENING REMARKS



Dr. Mohammad Sammak, Secretary General, Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue, the session chair, opened the session with a commentary on the terrible consequences of war. Referencing the war in his home country of Lebanon, he pointed out that over 1 million people had been displaced from their homes and were living in classrooms. Humanity, he noted sadly, continues to mark its progress by

the sophistication of its weapons and their ability to eliminate whole populations.

Dr. Sammak proposed that what the world needs is more trees, not more bombs. As a symbolic yet impactful solution, he suggested that a tree be planted for every child born in the world. This would not only help to restore the environment but also promote hope for the future.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES ON BUILDING A SECURE WORLD WITH CHILDREN

Children's Presentation

A group of child participants presented their thoughts on "Building a Secure World with Children". Their presentation emphasized the interconnectedness of education, human rights, and safe environments in fostering a secure society. Using the metaphor of a three-legged stool, they showed how removing one of these components creates instability and compromises the security of the society as a whole.

The children offered the following recommendations:

- ❑ Education, rights, and safe environments are a prerequisite for children to thrive and must be present simultaneously.
- ❑ Addressing discrimination and gender equality is central to upholding children's rights.
- ❑ Adequate facilities and a supportive learning environment are crucial for educational success.
- ❑ Poverty alleviation strategies should ensure that every child is able to attend school without financial difficulty.

Mr. Eltayeb Adam, UNICEF Area Representative for the Gulf Region

Cooperation to Build a Hopeful World for Children



Mr. Adam highlighted the vital role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations in fostering a safer, more nurturing world for children. He emphasized UNICEF's commitment to the equitable survival, development, protection, and agency of children globally.

He underscored the ability of religious leaders to influence social norms and behaviors and stressed the importance of interfaith collaboration

to foster a kinder, more respectful and inclusive world. He called for capacity-building programs, innovative communication tools, and stronger partnerships with civil society organizations.

Mr. Adam concluded by reaffirming UNICEF's dedication to partnering with religious leaders to create a secure, inclusive, and hopeful world for children: "The role of religious leaders in protecting and promoting the rights of children cannot be overstated... Together, we can make a lasting difference and positive impact in the lives of children."

INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A SECURE WORLD WITH CHILDREN



Dr. Sammak introduced the panel by emphasizing the importance of focusing on building a secure world **with** children, rather than for them. He also pointed out that the actions of grown-ups have not always contributed to a secure world, and in many cases, have done the opposite.

This panel discussion emphasized the urgent need to address global crises of war, violence, and displacement affecting millions of children. It highlighted the importance of collective action by governments, religious institutions, NGOs, and communities to address both the symptoms and root causes of violence. The panel assessed progress towards the Panama Commitments 4, 5, and 10 – raising awareness about violence, building global partnerships, and driving policy change to protect children – and proposed concrete actions to ensure a safer world for all children.

Varisha shared her perspective as a child representative on the meaning of security for children. She emphasized that security is more than physical safety and poignantly described security as "a hand

to hold when the world feels uncertain, a voice to reassure us when the shadows feel too big, and a shelter where love outweighs fear."

Citing Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, she questioned why so many children still live in dangerous and unstable conditions, unable to access basic rights or opportunities. Varisha identified violence, neglect, poverty, and lack of compassion as the root causes of insecurity and called for global effort driven by compassion, awareness, and action to secure a better future for children.

H.E. Cardinal John O. Onaiyekan shared his appreciation of the Forum's theme, particularly highlighting the phrase "with children" in "Building a Secure World with Children". He commended the approach of including children as active participants but stressed that adults must take the lead in ensuring security. He highlighted the foundational role of families, warning that children without families face a "double tragedy" of vulnerability and dependence on strangers.

The Cardinal called for increased interfaith collaboration, sharing his optimism about growing dialogue and understanding among religious leaders from various faiths. He also called for concerted efforts to ensure global security and expressed hope for future discussions and deeper engagement on the role of religious institutions in fostering peace and promoting children's well-being.

Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome underscored the role of faith and collective action in creating a secure world for children. He urged everyone to take action – even if it seems small – trusting that God will amplify their efforts. Reflecting on the teachings of Islam, he emphasized the duty of religious leaders to “enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil” and stressed the urgency of ending harmful practices like FGM.

Sh. Lethome also called for collaboration with children, noting that the theme very deliberately

stated: “‘with’ children and not ‘without’ children.” He urged the audience to think of the world as a family, where, when problems arise, the children are not left out of the conversation.

Mr. Somboon Chungprampree addressed insecurity from a Buddhist perspective, attributing it to human attachment and societal imbalance. He noted that insecurity arises from desire for wealth, power, and recognition that are concentrated in the hands of a few. This, he noted, creates instability for everyone, and especially for vulnerable groups like children.

He emphasized the importance of cross-generational and interfaith collaboration to address the systemic causes of insecurity. According to Mr. Chungprampree, we must work together with children and across all sectors—religious, social, and political—to challenge the forces that prevent society from achieving balance and harmony.



CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSION

Summary of Key Messages from the Concurrent Sessions

- To address the root causes of conflicts, we must implement solutions that go beyond addressing immediate triggers and focus on healing societal divides. This should be done through community engagement, and inclusive dialogue to break the cycle of prejudice and violence.
- Children are often the most vulnerable victims in conflicts, facing displacement, violence, exploitation, and trauma. To safeguard their future, we must ensure that global action focuses on early intervention, protection, and empowerment. Initiatives such as Greece's National Emergency Response Mechanism that identifies and helps unaccompanied children and such similar efforts should be replicated.
- A secure world for children starts with fostering resilience within communities by addressing the root causes of conflict, including economic exclusion, violence, and marginalization. Sustainable solutions must come from within, integrating spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. Communities and other grassroots actors should be empowered through education, economic opportunities, and intergenerational dialogue to create environments where children thrive, free from violence and fear. In this process, the active participation of diverse stakeholders—such as youth, women, faith leaders, and community representatives—is essential to ensuring shared responsibility and mutual accountability for children's well-being.
- A secure world for children requires empowering them as active participants in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Initiatives like the UAE children's parliament that provides children with a platform to voice their concerns and advocate for their rights should be replicated in other countries.
- Building a secure world for children requires the proactive use of education and dialogue to combat xenophobia, hate crimes, and extremism. Curricula that foster inclusivity, empathy, and respect for diversity are essential in shaping the minds of the next generation to challenge harmful stereotypes and build peaceful societies. Additionally, engaging youth, faith groups, and community leaders in open dialogue and conflict resolution programs is vital to help break down barriers of intolerance, prevent violence, and promote global peace.
- To secure a safe future for children, we must address the root causes of xenophobia and extremism by empowering marginalized populations, particularly refugees, through education and economic opportunities. Vocational training and mentorship programs should be implemented to overcome economic exclusion and break the cycle of poverty that fuels conflict.

SUB-THEME ONE: Addressing the Root Causes of Conflicts and Wars

Interactive Panel Discussion



The panel discussion focused on addressing conflicts and wars which are often viewed through the lens of immediate triggers, such as political disagreements or territorial disputes.

Ms. Safak Pavey opened by highlighting the alarming scale of global displacement. At least 122 million people are currently displaced, with 40 percent of them (nearly 49 million) being children. She warned that these numbers could rise to a record-breaking 138 million next year, driven by 26 major emergencies this year. Ms. Pavey emphasized the need to address the underlying causes of wars and conflicts to prevent further displacement, citing ongoing crises in Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine, and Palestine.

Michelle encouraged participants to prioritize compassion over power, saying, “When the power of love overcomes the love of power, we’ll see peace in the world.” She illustrated her point with a story of three villages: one driven by greed, another by desperation, and a third caught in the grips of pride – each representing a root cause of conflict which she defined as follows:

- **Greed:** The insatiable desire for more land, wealth, resources, and power.
- **Desperation:** The urge to fight and take forcefully when left with nothing.
- **Pride:** The need for leaders to display power at the expense of peace.

Concluding, she urged leaders to choose compassion, kindness, and love over power and dominance, reminding them that the world is watching — and most importantly, children are watching.

Ms. Marian Iskander shared her experience of growing up amid war in Sudan where tribal and ethnic conflicts have led to the loss of life and displacement of tens of thousands of people. Ms. Iskander shared that she and her family were also forced to flee to Egypt. She reflected on how children are drawn into these ethno-racial and religious divisions and highlighted how segregation in schools’ fosters misunderstanding and prejudice from a young age. She spoke on how it had affected her young daughter’s perception of other religious communities. For example, after being separated from Muslim classmates during a religious

studies class, her daughter assumed that Muslims were meant to be excluded altogether and had to be reeducated. Ms. Iskander called for inclusive education and community engagement to eliminate such deep-rooted biases and to foster coexistence and mutual respect.

Ms. Opor Srisuwan shared insights from children living along the Thailand-Myanmar border, including a poignant question by one of them: “Teacher, why are they fighting? Why can’t adults just talk if they don’t understand each other?” Children are perceptive, she said. They understand that hurt people often hurt others and see how lack of love and compassion from caregivers can perpetuate violence. They therefore understand the need to break destructive patterns for the well-being of future generations.

Ms. Srisuwan highlighted Myanmar’s long-running civil war worsened by the 2021 military coup and forced conscription, sharing the harrowing story of a 12-year-old boy who fled recruitment. She concluded with a call for early intervention, nurturing, and collective responsibility for children in conflict-affected communities to prevent future generations from perpetuating cycles of war and violence.

Mr. Rojer Salameh, discussed the impact of conflict and occupation on Palestinian society, particularly on children who are innocent victims of ongoing conflict. He emphasized that the conflict transcends race, religion, and cultural backgrounds, affecting all Palestinians indiscriminately.

Mr. Salameh described the daily hardships Palestinians face due to occupation, including restricted movement due to military checkpoints, and

how these exacerbate societal tension. He noted how the occupation and religious misunderstandings and the misuse of religious ideologies have contributed to conflict. He called for urgent global action to end the suffering of Palestinians, particularly children who are bearing the brunt of the war and emphasized the need for dialogue and practical solutions.

Dr. Angeliki Aroni, a former teacher with 21 years of experience working with refugees, minors, and migrants, highlighted innovative strategies, such as the National Emergency Mechanism (NER) that is being implemented nationally in Greece to safeguard homeless children and unaccompanied minors from exploitation and human trafficking. She described the program as a model for immediate and long-term protection of vulnerable children from human trafficking – the third most profitable illegal industry globally. Calling herself a “professional dreamer,” Dr. Aroni reaffirmed her commitment to creating a safer world for all children.

Ms. Katherine Marshall, reflected on the growing complexities of global conflicts and the breakdown of humanitarian and peace systems. Drawing from her experience, including her tenure at the World Bank, she noted the rise in complex and protracted crises that have left the humanitarian system overwhelmed and peace-building efforts struggling to deliver sustainable outcomes. Pointing to the principle that “there can be no peace without freedom, and no peace without peace among religions,” she called for revitalized global efforts through development, interfaith dialogue, and educational reform, stressing that sustainable peace requires addressing underlying inequalities and foster mutual understanding.

SUB-THEME TWO: Stakeholder Participation in Building Resilience to Conflict



This panel moderated by **Amb. Saleh Habimana**, focused on practical solutions to foster children's mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

Mr. Marco Villela addressed the severe impact of gang violence in Central America where territorial control by gangs creates "invisible boundaries" restricting residents' movement and their access to education, employment, and essential services. Children face forced recruitment, extortion, and displacement. He outlined three levels of violence – direct, cultural, and structural – affecting communities here.

Mr. Villela went on to explain the support provided by the Alliance for Children Protection (APN) which was established after the Fifth GNRC Forum in 2017. The APN works with faith-based organizations and local communities to build local capacities through ethical education, moral development, and sports programs. He emphasized that sustainable solutions must come from within communities, integrating spiritual, mental, and physical dimensions of well-being, with community stakeholders playing a central role in fostering safer environments for children.

Ms. Maria Clara Osula described resilience as the ability to absorb, adapt, and transform in response to violence and conflict. She illustrated:

- ❑ Absorption – Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo enduring violence while continuing to provide for their families.
- ❑ Adaptation – Internally displaced South Sudanese communities establishing schools, hospitals, and places of worship in UN-protected camps.
- ❑ Transformation – A complex and time-consuming process of changing systems and attitudes.

Ms. Osula also highlighted resilience in relatively stable contexts, citing Kenya's survival of its 2007 political crisis due to the strength of the social relationships among its citizens. She identified economic exclusion as a key driver of conflict and shared her organization's efforts in Tanzania to support income-generating projects for youth and promote intergenerational dialogue. Concluding, she pointed out that sustainable security can only be

achieved by addressing the root causes of conflict and unrest, enhancing economic opportunities, and fostering inclusive social structures.

Janin, a child representative, expanded on resilience as not merely "bouncing back", but transforming potential violence into peaceful dialogue. She emphasized the importance of having diverse stakeholders—interfaith leaders, women, youth networks, religious representatives, and community leaders—actively participate in this dialogue as agents of sustainable peace and security. True resilience, she argued, is not about creating isolated pockets of peace but weaving a global fabric of shared responsibility. This requires mutual accountability, where leaders work in partnership with those they represent, ensuring inclusivity and open communication.

Janin called for safe spaces where children can express themselves without fear. She cited the Children's pre-forum as an example of meaningful dialogue guided—rather than directed—by adults. She urged all stakeholders to be proactive and accountable in creating a peaceful world where all voices, especially those of children, are heard and valued.

Rabbi Joseph Potasnik highlighted the importance of interfaith collaboration, sharing examples from New York of instances when diverse religious communities have united in times of crisis. He described how, when a mosque, church, or synagogue is attacked, members of all faiths come together to form a protective perimeter sending a powerful message of solidarity and mutual respect.

Rabbi Potasnik emphasized that such relationships should not be crisis driven. Instead, they must be

built on consistent respect and understanding. He suggested establishing an International Day of Preaching, on which faith leaders worldwide would use their platforms to promote children's rights. Stressing the importance of listening to youth, he reflected on how challenges in police-community relations in New York had been addressed by building trust through open dialogue and active listening. He urged all communities to likewise work together continuously through respectful, proactive partnerships to create a safer, inclusive for children.

Mr. Jonathan Ammons focused on individual resilience as vital to peaceful and inclusive societies, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 16. Referencing Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, Mr. Ammons emphasizing the power of choosing one's attitude even in difficult circumstances. He quoted from the book: "everything can be taken from a person except the last of human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances."

Drawing from Christian teachings, Mr. Ammons encouraged everyone to take on forgiveness and reconciliation as essential acts of personal resilience. He stressed the importance of ending conflicts within oneself, family, and community through humility, courage, and the strength to forgive and seek forgiveness. Sharing insights from his work on international religious freedom, he noted that areas plagued by conflict often suppress freedom of belief. He emphasized the need to teach children respect and tolerance for different beliefs, as well as forgiveness, in order to create a more inclusive and peaceful world.

SUB-THEME THREE: Building a Peaceful and Inclusive World for and with Children



The panel discussion, moderated by **Dr. Chintamani Yogi** emphasized the need to protect children from the effects of war and conflict and empower them as active participants in shaping a peaceful future.

Danita pointed out the role adults play in perpetuating discrimination and stressed the importance of shielding children from divisive influences. She called for equal opportunities for all children and education on their rights to enable self-advocacy. Danita commended initiatives like the UAE's Children's Parliament, which exemplifies how platforms can be developed for children to voice their concerns.

Fr. Abdo Raad, urged religious leaders to ensure their practices and sermons promote truth, peace, and solidarity. "It is our role as religious leaders to teach children about peace in schools, places of worship and communities," he said. He challenged all religious leaders to build communities that foster peace, free of discrimination.

Rabbi Gabriel Negrin underscored the necessity of a holistic approach to education, which not only imparts knowledge but also nurtures children's moral and emotional development. He urged faith leaders to be in truthful in their teachings adding that it is the only way to achieve harmony. He added that "If your words as faith leaders were fire, we would all burn, if your words were loud sounds, we would all be deaf, and if your words were burning light, we would all be blind."

Ms. Donna Gail Bollinger, emphasized the vulnerability of children without a voice or access to their rights, stressing the importance of communal and societal support systems. She highlighted how children raised in peaceful environments are more likely to become peace-builders themselves. By nurturing their resilience and equipping them with the necessary tools, children can actively shape their futures, contributing to a more equitable and harmonious world.

Ms. Nageeba Tegulwa, underscored the family's role as the foundation of love, protection, and care. She shared insights from her efforts, through her organization, to create safe environments through a whole-community approach that involves children, youth, parents, teachers, religious leaders and other community members. Everyone works hand in hand to achieve peaceful and respectful coexistence. Ms. Tegulwa urged parents to take full responsibility for raising their children rather than relying solely on the community.

Key recommendations from the panelists:

- Governments and organizations must adopt policies to address marginalization, ensuring all

children have access to education, healthcare, and safe spaces.

- Support for families to provide nurturing environments for children must be prioritized.
- Peace education and intercultural understanding should be integrated in school curricula to prepare children to embrace diversity and resolve conflicts constructively.
- Platforms like children's parliaments should be made available globally to ensure that children's voices are heard in decisions affecting their lives.
- Religious institutions should collaborate to promote peace and unity, leveraging their influence to foster inclusive communities.

SUB –THEME FOUR: Addressing Xenophobia, Hate Crimes and Extremism

Interactive Panel Discussion



This panel discussed the root causes of xenophobia, hate crime, and extremism, emphasizing the threats they pose to global peace and security, especially for vulnerable populations like children.

Mark noted how xenophobia can escalate from subtle discrimination to extreme actions, including mass violence and online hate campaigns, ultimately leading to civil unrest and societal collapse. He urged participants and all stakeholders to join hands in nipping xenophobia in the bud by fostering understanding and inclusivity in their communities and in the world in general.

Ms. Anjum Malik discussed her organization's efforts to empower marginalized populations through education and vocational training. She noted COVID-19's exacerbation of inequalities and shared her efforts to support refugees through:

1. Academic support and mentorship for refugee children, many of whom have had limited access to formal education and faced bullying in their new communities.

2. Vocational training, skill development and community engagement to help refugee women gain sustainable employment.

Sr. Agatha Chikelue addressed extremism's impact on societal progress and described her Fellowship Program in Nigeria which engages youth, women, and community leaders in dialogue and conflict resolution. Its core modules include:

- Dialogue and mediation for conflict management.
- Theological approaches to peace-building.
- Conflict transformation through non-violent means.

She emphasized proactive engagement, education and mediation in resolving conflicts peacefully.

Sheikh Ramadhan Aula, shared insights from Kenya's efforts to combat radicalization and violent extremism. In response to a tragic attack on a university in Kenya, Muslim professionals united to create an organization

that amplifies the voices of religious leaders and fosters interfaith collaboration through:

- Awareness raising of the tactics of violent extremists.
- Interfaith dialogue to reduce religious tensions and foster mutual understanding.
- Developing strong community relations to counter extremist narratives.

He highlighted the vital role of religious leaders in guiding communities towards peace and urged collaboration to mitigate hate and radicalization.

Ms. Maria Julia Yegros highlighted her organization's 97-year legacy of advocating for children's rights. She outlined key programs, including Safe Internet Use, training families and communities to guide children in technology use; supporting education and protection for migrant children; and promoting child participation through networks that foster values like fraternity and solidarity. Ms. Yegros emphasized reconnecting with nature and community life, advocating for

collaboration with faith-based communities to influence public policies that prioritize humanity's shared essence and values.

Key recommendations from the panelists:

- Education: Introduce curricula that promote empathy, understanding, inclusion, and respect for diversity while countering harmful stereotypes
- Youth and community engagement: Involve youth, faith groups, and community leaders in dialogue and awareness campaigns to challenge intolerance.
- Faith-based peace-building: Leverage the powerful influence of religious and faith leaders to challenge intolerance.
- Economic empowerment: Provide vocational training and economic opportunities for marginalized populations, particularly refugees, to break the cycles of poverty and exclusion that fuel xenophobia and extremism.

PLENARY READING OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION

The GNRC Sixth Forum IOC Chair, **Mr. Gautam**, introduced the draft text of the Abu Dhabi Declaration—a key output of the Forum—to participants. He emphasized the Forum's commitment to actionable commitments beyond the illuminating inter-generational discussions that were taking place.

Mr. Gautam explained that the Forum Declaration was drafted through extensive consultations with IOC members, GNRC members and key partners, including various UN agencies, and representatives from over 60 countries. Children's contributions were integral to the draft, as were diverse perspectives from across all major religions and faith traditions. The two-page declaration outlining key action points, supported by a detailed action plan, would be presented at the Forum's closing session.

Mr. Gautam urged participants to go through the draft and share their feedback, assuring them that the final document would be goal-oriented, implementable, and aligned with the Forum's mission.

FIFTH PLENARY: ALL FOR CHILDREN – PROGRESS MADE ON THE PANAMA COMMITMENTS



The fifth plenary, titled “All for Children” was an opportunity for the Directors of Arigatou International to share the achievements of the Arigatou International initiatives since the GNRC Fifth Forum held in Panama in 2017.

Rev. Julio Murray remarked on how the Panama Declaration has been a guiding framework for action over the past seven years. He emphasized the need for urgent and collaborative action – involving religious communities, UN agencies, governments, civil society, the private sector, and the media— to

address the grave challenges being faced by children around the world.

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali noted the significant growth of GNRC grassroots membership, expanding from 41 countries at the time of the Fifth Forum to over 80 countries today. This growth has facilitated global implementation of the Panama Commitments. Through GNRC members’ efforts, over 40 million individuals and children have been positively impacted by various projects and programs. To illustrate this impact, Dr Ali invited several GNRC Coordinators to share their successes.

TESTIMONIALS FROM GNRC COORDINATORS

Ms. Joyce Mdachi, Coordinator, GNRC Tanzania



Since 2017, GNRC Tanzania has focused on peace-building, education, and conflict resolution. A key initiative is the Peace Building along the Coastal Regions of East Africa program. Over 60 peace clubs across eight regions provide peace education, reaching more than 10,000 youth and children who now serve as peace ambassadors.

Mr. Gopal Vijayaragavan, Coordinator, GNRC India



GNRC India has engaged 50,000 children across 10 states in violence prevention programs built around inter-gender and intergenerational dialogue and ethics education. To support the expansion of these programs into another 10 states, the Network is focusing on strengthening nationwide partnerships and on training additional facilitators and trainers through the Ethics Education for Children and Youth framework.

Ms. Ismeta Salihpahic, Coordinator, GNRC Bosnia and Herzegovina



GNRC Bosnia and Herzegovina member, the Women’s Association Mosaic from Visoko, has promoted the Panama Commitments through interfaith cooperation and child-centered initiatives focused on protecting children’s dignity and safety online, reducing poverty, and preventing violence and abuse against children. Children along with youth, religious leaders, educators, and the media have been actively involved in the design and planning of these activities.

Ms. Sandra Lorena Cazarez, Coordinator, GNRC Mexico



The Alliance for the Protection of Children (APN), established following the Fifth Forum, has supported over 2000 children and 600 families through parenting workshops and the creation of safe spaces for children and youth. Bringing together faith-based organizations from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, the Alliance's mission is to ensure that children and adolescents are restored, empowered, and live in safe environments where their voices are heard, and their participation is valued.

Dr. Ali wrapped up his presentation on the GNRC's achievements by recognizing the Network's efforts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He announced the launch of the '**Cedar and Olive Path for Peace with Children**', a joint project by various MENA country networks that is aimed at fostering peace and collaboration for the well-being of children in the region.

He thanked all GNRC coordinators and contact persons across the world for being the "veins and arteries" that sustain the work of the Network and advance its important mission.



Ms. Maria Lucia expounded on how of Ethics Education for Children is equipping children, families, and communities with ethical and moral grounding amid global challenges like conflict, inequality, and the climate crisis. The Learning to Live Together program has impacted over 44,000 children while the International Consortium on Early Childhood has benefitted 6,000 children and 2,500 parents globally.

Collaboration with UNESCO and governments around the world has greatly supported the integration of ethics education into school curricula to foster inclusive learning environments. Quoting Nelson Mandela, "People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love," Ms. Uribe called for sustained partnership and shared action to build a peaceful, empathetic world for all children.

Ms. Rebeca Rios-Kohn highlighted the commitment of Arigatou International in promoting child rights through interfaith collaboration, emphasizing the significance of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (WDPAC). Commemorated annually on November 20th, the day celebrates the adoption



of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. While the convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty, she acknowledged its frequent violations, underscoring the need for continued advocacy.

During the pandemic, she continued, Arigatou International Prayer and Action initiative adapted its work, partnering with global organizations like World Vision and the Baha'i community to continue supporting children in challenging situations. Recent WDPAC commemorations held in Dubai, Rome, and Mumbai have drawn thousands of participants, underscoring the popularity of Arigatou International's unique interfaith and intergenerational approach that combines human rights advocacy



with meaningful child participation. This method, she noted, has consistently mobilized communities to act beyond prayer, fostering global partnerships dedicated to protecting children's rights and ensuring their well-being. Ms. Rios-Kohn called for continued collaboration to build a hopeful world for children.

Rev. Fred Nyabera stressed the moral imperative to address child poverty through interfaith collaboration and community-driven action. He painted a stark picture of global inequalities, emphasizing that half of the world's population faces hunger, lacks quality education, and suffers from climate change vulnerability. Tragically, half of the world's poor are children.

Since the Panama Forum, Arigatou International's End Child Poverty initiative has partnered with 120 organizations in 59 countries to transform hearts and systems, directly reaching over one million children and indirectly impacting two million. Key innovations in this faith-inspired, rights-based, child-centered approach include local child-led poverty reduction initiatives, advocacy for sustainable development, and research-driven efforts such as the End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre in Sri Lanka. Flagship initiatives include the Children's Solutions Lab, SDG Academy for Children, and the Right to Peace Program, which foster leadership and social cohesion among children.

Despite these achievements, over 300 million children live in extreme poverty. To meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, collective efforts must be scaled significantly. Rev. Nyabera urged participants to partner with Arigatou International, share expertise, contribute resources, and advocate for children's rights. He concluded by inviting participants to explore the SDGs for Children exhibition and emphasized that the child's call to end poverty is urgent.

SIXTH PLENARY: CELEBRATION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE 16TH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN (WDPAC)



The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children plenary was chaired by **Ms. Rebeca Rios-Kohn**, Director of Arigatou International's Prayer and Action for Children initiative. The session entailed keynote addresses by several speakers.

WELCOME REMARKS

Mr. Kul Gautam, Chair of the GNRC Sixth Forum IOC, highlighted the significance of November 20th, International Children's Day and noted that this year marked the 35th anniversary of the UNCRC. Mr. Gautam went on to reflect on how various sectors observe this day—pediatricians focus on child health, educators on child education—prompting the question: what should faith-based organizations do?

This thought, he noted, is what inspired the creation of WDPAC during the 2008 GNRC Forum in Hiroshima, Japan. Recognizing that prayer must be combined with action, Arigatou International introduced the

concept of pairing prayer with advocacy for children's rights and well-being through WDPAC. Mr. Gautam lauded the annual observance for uniting diverse faith-based organizations, human rights advocates, and like-minded communities, and thanked GNRC members for their commemorations of it over the last 16 years.

Following Mr. Gautam's remarks, **Rev. Fred Nyabera** introduced the candle-lighting ceremony, inviting participants to meditate in silence on various intentions for children's well-being, including peace, compassion, healing, and justice. He urged prayers for

children suffering from violence, poverty, and neglect, while also encouraging participants to seek strength and courage to be agents of justice. The ceremony symbolized a collective commitment to building a hopeful world for children through reflection and action.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Following the candle-lighting ceremony, Ms. Rios-Kohn introduced a video showcasing highlights from 16 years of WDPAC commemorations. The video celebrated the collective efforts of faith-based organizations, communities, and partners globally in advocating for children's rights, promoting peace, and fostering compassionate action worldwide.

SPECIAL REMARKS by Nadia Cherrouk, Chief Administrative Officer, Pan American Development Foundation (PADF)



Ms. Nadia Cherrouk reaffirmed PADF's dedication to children's rights. Founded in 1962, PADF fosters partnerships across the Americas to address human rights, justice, sustainability, and humanitarian aid. Through collaboration with faith-based organizations, civil society, and the private sector, PADF creates safe spaces for vulnerable children.

Highlighting a number of success stories, she shared how mentorship and educational support transform children's lives. Over the past year, PADF has invested over USD \$130 million, assisting nearly one million people, emphasizing trust, resilience, and collective action for a brighter future.

HONOURING CHAMPIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Ms. Rios-Kohn introduced **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto**, President of Arigatou International and Convenor of the GNRC to honor champions of children's rights in commemoration of WDPAC.

This was followed by an intergenerational panel discussion moderated by **Ms. Ornella Barros**, Program Officer, Arigatou International-Prayer and Action for Children. The **Right Rev. Julio Murray**, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Central America highlighted the critical need for resilience and preparedness in addressing climate change. He cited the work of the Anglican Alliance in supporting communities, particularly in island nations like Fiji, where young people are leading efforts to prepare for climate-related challenges. Rev. Murray emphasized the importance of safeguarding the most vulnerable, including the elderly and children, through community and faith-based collaboration. He called for broader participation to enhance resilience and disaster preparedness in the face of climate change.

Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children emphasized the importance of meaningful intergenerational dialogue and accountability in addressing global challenges. She stressed that commitments made worldwide must translate into actionable outcomes, urging faith-based organizations and leaders to involve children actively and transparently in their efforts. Dr. Najat highlighted the pressing issues of poverty, inequality, and the absence of peace, while celebrating the actions of young human rights and environmental defenders. She called for concrete, inclusive actions to build a world of love, peace, and opportunity for all children.

Mario highlighted the need for greater youth representation in government commissions and public Forums, stressing that young people should have a role in decision-making, especially since their well-being is directly impacted.

Maria, reflecting on the knowledge she had gained in attending the Sixth Forum, acknowledged the incredible efforts being made for children's development and well-being. She pledged to share her experiences and insights with others when she returned home.

Maria Julia similarly emphasized the importance of intergenerational dialogue, underlining the need to include children and adolescents directly in decision-making spaces, rather than having adults represent their voices. She promised to continue working with Dr. M'jid's office to follow up on commitments made at the recent Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children (Nov. 7-8, 2024, Bogotá, Colombia). The discussion emphasized collaborative efforts across generations to promote children's well-being, tackling issues like violence, education, and safety. The panel dialogue underscored the power of listening to young voices and fostering partnerships among faith leaders, policymakers, and international organizations.

The session concluded with a presentation of the "Stand Together – All for Children" peer on peer campaign to build awareness of forced displacement and its impacts on over 50 million children worldwide. American Idol Music Director **Mr. Michael Orland**, and singer **Ms. Anandita Arunachalam** performed the theme song from the campaign as the video played in the background. Proceeds from downloads of the song and video produced by University of Texas Rio Grande Valley students and film producer, **Mr. Jeff Oppenheim**, will support charitable organizations and relief agencies assisting children facing forced displacement.

The session concluded with renewed commitments to create a safer, more equitable world for children through dialogue, action, and collaboration.

Day two of the GNRC Sixth Forum ended with a visit to Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, a national and cultural landmark, and largest mosque in the UAE.







DAY THREE: **21ST**
NOVEMBER 2024

Key Messages from Day Three

- ❑ Religious leaders, communities, and organizations must unite to address global challenges such as poverty, climate change, and inequality by fostering collective responsibility and shared action.
- ❑ Guided by spiritual and ethical values, individuals and communities must adopt responsible environmental practices, including conservation, waste management, and ecological restoration, for a sustainable future.
- ❑ Equitable access to quality education is essential for fostering environmental consciousness and social responsibility. Education should instill values of sustainability, empower children with knowledge and skills, and inspire them to become proactive leaders dedicated to creating a just, equitable, and sustainable world.
- ❑ Addressing the plight of displaced children requires equity-driven solutions that consider their unique vulnerabilities. Religious leaders and global stakeholders must move beyond advocacy, to decisive, action-oriented leadership that fosters peace and uplifts affected communities.
- ❑ On the third day, the *GNRC Strategy 2030* was launched. Rooted in interfaith cooperation, the Strategy is geared to answering the call of the child. It provides a roadmap for GNRC members and partners to work towards building a safe, secure, and sustainable world where all children can grow, thrive, and realize their full potential.
- ❑ During the closing ceremony, the *Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children* was unanimously endorsed by all participants. An accompanying Abu Dhabi Plan of Action outlines how GNRC members and partners will work to implement projects, programs and initiatives to achieve the commitments outlined in the Declaration. The *Abu Dhabi Declaration* was developed through a consultative process involving diverse stakeholders from across the globe, including children.

SEVENTH PLENARY: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD WITH CHILDREN



OPENING REMARKS

In his opening remarks, **Rev. Nyabera** noted that the most pressing global challenges facing humanity—poverty, inequality, climate change—are interconnected, with far-reaching impacts. Addressing them therefore requires a holistic approach at individual and community levels. Rev. Nyabera stressed that building a sustainable world for children is not an aspiration but an urgent necessity requiring collective action. He called on all stakeholders to engage actively in addressing these challenges.

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES ON BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD WITH CHILDREN

Children's Presentation

In a panel discussion moderated by **Humaid**, President of the UAE Children's Parliament, young representatives from different countries shared their perspectives on achieving a sustainable world. **Malak** from Lebanon emphasized the importance of collective action for sustainability, while **Shariaz** from Mauritius outlined major environmental challenges such as climate change, global warming, pollution, deforestation, and waste management. Panelists discussed the impacts of rising sea levels, marine life

degradation, and hazardous gases on human survival, stressing the need for responsible waste management practices and conservation of resources. The panel urged governments, organizations, and individuals to collaborate, emphasizing that even minor efforts can lead to significant change. They pointed out that despite their diverse backgrounds and beliefs they shared the same desire for peace, safety, and sustainability.



Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General, Religions for Peace



Ms. Singh acknowledged the severe challenges children face, such as conflict, poverty, inequality, and climate change, which continue to threaten their well-being and future. She emphasized the need to

address these issues urgently, as millions of children suffer from poverty, hunger, displacement, and exploitation. She stressed that each one of us bears profound moral responsibility for not only hearing, echoing, and amplifying the "sacred call" from the children, but also for taking decisive action **with** them to fulfill their hopes and concerns.

In conclusion, she reiterated the importance of building a sustainable world by committing to concrete actions that prioritize children's agency, voices, safety, dignity, and future. Ms. Singh urged participants to work together with compassion and resolve to ensure that every child can reach his or her fullest potential.

YOUTH-LED INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD WITH CHILDREN



The moderators noted that children have the potential to change the world if adults work collaboratively with them, fostering mutual understanding and action. The panelists highlighted the power of youth leadership and agency in creating a hopeful future and called for adults to support young people through mentorship, education, and advocacy.

Ms. Sam Schulman emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change and environmental degradation, linking it to global instability. She underscored the importance of climate-conscious education, advocating for integrating climate change awareness into school curricula globally. She noted that equipping young people with the knowledge and tools for environmental stewardship is critical for a sustainable and resilient world.

As a young adult, **Mr. Brian King** said he sees his role as a bridge between adults and children. He described his work as being that of forging meaningful connections with children through

play and deep dialogue. He urged faith leaders to engage with children authentically and emphasized the importance of shared experiences that transcend age. Mr. King invited all adults to embrace childlike curiosity and compassion to nurture intergenerational understanding and collaboration for a more inclusive and hopeful world.

Mr. Abdul Muqet emphasized the importance of embedding environmental awareness into school curricula. He highlighted his COP 28 experience and noted the growing recognition of youth voices in global discussions. He praised platforms like the GNRC Sixth Forum for enabling youth and children to share their concerns and ideas. Mr. Muqet urged schools, households, and communities to empower children to take sustainable actions, voice their opinions, and spread awareness. By nurturing grassroots efforts, he believes small steps can create significant impacts, ultimately influencing policymaking and driving environmental change at scale.

Ms. Marlene Pilatasig urged leaders to take youth seriously, reminding them that today's actions shape the future of young people, who will become tomorrow's business leaders, CEOs, and presidents. The state of the planet directly impacts their future roles and lives. Ms. Pilatasig emphasized the importance of creating spaces for youth to voice their opinions, advocate for change, and contribute to solutions. Recognizing youth agency, she argued, is essential to building a sustainable and equitable future.

Ms. Maria Francisca Yax highlighted the need for a climate-conscious mindset, advocating for solutions

developed collaboratively with communities most affected by climate challenges. Solutions should not be imposed but developed through inclusive dialogue. Ms. Yax advocated for reframing of perceptions of the environment by considering the impact of climate change on everyday spaces – where people live, learn, play, and pray. This holistic approach fosters a deeper understanding of health, well-being, and environmental stewardship, ensuring that efforts to support children and communities are meaningful and sustainable.

SPECIAL MESSAGE by Dr. Khaled Khalifa, UNHCR Senior Advisor and Representative to the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries



Dr. Khaled Khalifa highlighted four critical points on the plight of displaced children, emphasizing the need for urgent global action.

- ❑ **The scope of the crisis:** He underscored the gravity of forced displacement, noting that 123 million people are currently forcibly displaced, with 40 percent being children. Over the past five years, two million refugee children have been born, and nearly half remain out of school.
- ❑ **Equity over equality:** Dr. Khalifa called for equity-based solutions, noting that displaced children need tailored support addressing their unique vulnerabilities, which differ from those of other underprivileged children.
- ❑ **Active leadership:** He urged religious leaders to move beyond passive advocacy, such as issuing declarations, to demonstrating tangible actions that uplift communities. Leadership, he emphasized, must extend beyond places of worship.
- ❑ **Call to action:** His closing message was clear: "Speak less about problems, more about solutions, and act decisively for peace."



CONCURRENT SESSIONS: THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSION

Summary of Key Messages from the Concurrent Sessions

- ❑ A sustainable world requires a collective, inclusive approach that balances progress with preservation through compassionate partnerships and responsible choices. Individuals, communities, and nations must collaborate, recognizing that every action has a ripple effect on future generations and ecosystems.
- ❑ Faith-based principles and cultural wisdom emphasize stewardship of the earth and responsible living. Addressing environmental challenges requires integrating sustainable practices into daily life, fostering global cooperation, and promoting policies that prioritize ecological responsibility and social equity.
- ❑ Ending child poverty, hunger, and inequality requires collective action through partnerships, grassroots engagement, and sustainable initiatives. No single organization or community can tackle these challenges alone; unified efforts driven by empathy, shared responsibility, and collaborative solutions are essential for creating a just and equitable future for all children.
- ❑ Education rooted in universal values, ethics, and inclusivity fosters a sustainable and secure future for children. By providing equitable learning opportunities and integrating human values promoting tolerance and mutual respect, schools can nurture compassionate, resilient, and socially responsible individuals prepared to transform their communities and the world.
- ❑ Addressing climate change requires collective responsibility with individuals, communities, and institutions working together to manage natural resources, reduce negative environmental impacts, and build climate resilience. Empowering children, youth, and faith-based networks through education, advocacy, and collaborative action will drive sustainable environmental stewardship while mitigating the interconnected challenges of climate-induced conflict, poverty, and displacement.

SUB-THEME ONE: Responsible Lifestyles



The panel discussion on responsible lifestyles focused on the pressing need for sustainable practices in the face of environmental degradation and social inequities.

Marelia framed sustainability as involving more than environmental actions like reducing carbon emissions or planting trees. She described true sustainability as being about creating a balance between progress and preservation while acknowledging the interconnectedness of present and future needs. For Marelia, sustainability is deeply rooted in compassion, caring, and partnership. She urged the faith leaders and advocates to recognize that every individual choice has ripple effects on others, future generations, and ecosystems.

“Sustainability thrives on inclusivity, bringing together diverse ideas, perspectives, and solutions for a better shared future,” she stated, calling for collective action and collaboration in line with SDG 17. She urged a shift in mindset: problems as shared responsibilities, opportunities as chances to make a difference, and small acts as steps towards a sustainable future.

Ms. Natalia Seriakova shared her work in Germany training youth workers, teachers, and educators across Europe on best practices in sustainability, plastic reduction, water conservation, and managing other environmental issues affecting the continent. Ms. Seriakova’s organization works to develop practical and interactive teaching methods and educational materials to help educators impart sustainability education in schools, particularly vocational schools, where teachers often lack the necessary resources.

Rabbi David Rosen drew on Jewish tradition to stress responsible resource use, citing a commandment in the Torah that prohibits cutting down fruit trees. He highlighted the great environmental cost of the meat industry, which is one of the biggest polluters worldwide and generates the highest greenhouse emissions. Noting the youth-led shift towards vegetarianism and veganism, he emphasized that nearly half of the world’s arable land is used for livestock production, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable consumption.

Rev. Nicta Lubaale shared an African proverb emphasizing the role of all human beings in every generation as stewards of the Earth. Sustainability is not only about preserving resources for our children but also recognizing that the Earth has been lent to us for only a short time. Rev. Lubaale highlighted the pivotal role of African smallholder farmers who produce 70 percent of the continent’s food, while lamenting the climate change burden on African children – 32 percent of whom suffer from stunting. He criticized unfair global power dynamics, noting 87 percent of adaptation resources for Africa, including for agriculture, come as loans, creating ecological debt. Faith, he argued, must promote justice to address these inequalities.

Mr. Hamad Khatir showcased the UAE’s commitment to environmental sustainability, citing its Net Zero 2050 strategy and the Green Agenda 2030. The UAE’s policies incentivize green energy use and eco-friendly transportation. Environmental awareness is also integrated into the education system and students are encouraged to actively engage with sustainability issues. He noted how perseverance and innovation had transformed the country’s desert landscape, underscoring individual responsibility in combating climate change. He encouraged everyone to educate themselves, advocate for change, and take responsibility for their actions for a sustainable future.

SUB – THEME TWO: Addressing Hunger, Childhood Poverty, and Inequality



Panelists presented the issues they have identified in their communities, the partnerships they have built, and the solutions they see to eradicate childhood hunger and poverty. **Fransiscah** highlighted the devastating impact of child poverty, noting that over 300 million children around the world are living in extreme poverty, while over 1 billion are unable to access their rights to education, healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation, according to UNICEF. She stressed collective responsibility, urging that “other people’s problems are our problem.”

Fransiscah also acknowledged children who participated in the Children’s pre-forum virtually. Quoting Lianna from the Dominican Republic, she stressed the importance of empathy: “It’s essential to understand others and feel hurt by what happens to them.” Fransiscah concluded with a message of unity, saying, “One plus one equals one because we are family.”

Youth representative from Niger, **Ms. Nadia Younsa Tahirou**, shared how she and her colleagues utilized prize money from Arigatou International–Prayer and Action’s ‘Wear My Shoes’ campaign to construct

toilets in her community. Access to proper sanitation has benefitted children greatly, especially girls. It has improved school attendance and personal hygiene, creating a safer and healthier learning environment. Ms. Tahirou emphasized that small, community-led projects can drive meaningful change.

Ms. Hesha Perera discussed Sri Lanka’s efforts to combat child poverty through the Child Poverty Knowledge Centre, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. In collaboration with Sarvodaya, one of Sri Lanka’s largest and oldest community organizations, programs have been implemented in 25 districts, reaching over 15,000 villages. During COVID-19, volunteer-driven programs like Shramadana provided critical support to communities through community kitchens, food banks, and home gardening programs. These initiatives provided essential resources while fostering compassion and resilience among affected communities. Efforts also focused on enhancing children’s education and empowering them through life-skills training.

Ms. Perera highlighted the establishment of the SDGs Academy for Children in Sri Lanka – like the

ones launched in Kenya, Serbia and Thailand – by the End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre in 2022. At the academy, children learn about the SDGs and actively contribute to achieving them. In her closing, Ms. Perera emphasized that collective action, partnerships, and volunteer-driven efforts are crucial to addressing disparities and building a sustainable future.

Dr. Jeremy K. Everett, from the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger, spoke about food insecurity in rural communities in the United States. He noted the reliance of many children on school meal programs as access to fresh food and grocery stores is limited in these communities. To support families during summer breaks, his organization provides weekly food boxes with meals and snacks to 4,000 children across 20 school districts. Dr Everett credited the program’s success to collaboration across government agencies, universities, researchers, and private-sector partners.

Ms. Solrun Engilbertsdottir stressed the importance of partnerships in addressing child poverty globally.

Reflecting on the formation of the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, she noted that collective action has been key to its success, noting that no single entity, including UNICEF, could tackle the issue of child poverty alone.

Following the panel discussion, participants joined breakout sessions for a deeper dive into the themes of hunger, poverty and inequality. Discussions focused on the root causes of hunger, poverty, and inequality, and strategies for fostering sustainable development. Actionable recommendations shared by participants included: enhancing grassroots engagement, strengthening policy frameworks, and promoting educational opportunities.

The interactive format encouraged knowledge exchange and the development of practical solutions. The session concluded with a shared commitment to advance collaborative efforts to combat these critical man-made challenges.



SUB-THEME THREE: Ethical Values and Education for Sustainable Development



The panel discussion emphasized the interconnectedness of sustainability, safety, and security for children, and explored the role of education in achieving these goals.

T. Arunachalam, a child representative, highlighted the importance of sustainability and the role of education in shaping a balanced life. He shared how his school integrates academic excellence and human values—personal, family, professional, social, national, and global—essential for stability and personal growth.

Rev. Oscar Espinoza shared his insights into how faith gives his students the strength and resilience to face life's challenges and work towards societal change. He noted that faith when lived within the community, fosters collaboration, justice and common good. Rev. Espinoza emphasized that no faith is superior to another and called for schools to promote coexistence and respect for diversity without imposing singular views.

Dr. Brinder Singh Mahon addressed exclusivity within faith communities and how this can result

in discrimination against other faith groups. He highlighted the historical role of the Church in the UK in promoting equality and justice and called for teachers to incorporate lessons on human values across subjects. This approach, he noted, fosters critical thinking and helps students recognize and overcome biases, creating a more inclusive educational environment.

Ms. Laura Molnar shared the success of the Learning to Live Together (LTLT), an Arigatou International Ethics Education Program, which was launched in 2009. Over 2,000 teachers have so far been trained in the LTLT methodology, and more than 10,000 students have participated in context-specific programs addressing diversity, child rights, poverty eradication, and other pressing issues. End-of-project evaluations have revealed significant improvements in student behavior, including reduced violence, discrimination, and exclusion, as well as stronger group cohesion, empathy, respect, and mutual understanding. Students have also demonstrated greater self-confidence and motivation to transform their schools and communities.

Dr. Khaled Khalifa highlighted the severe and prolonged challenges faced by displaced Syrian children and youth born and raised following the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011. Dr. Khalifa described them as a “lost generation”, especially those who were now entering adulthood having been deprived of education. Dr. Khalifa also spoke about the plight of displaced children elsewhere, noting that 75 percent of the world's refugee population live in least-developed countries, further emphasizing the extreme vulnerability of displaced children in countries like Yemen, where they are four times more at risk than local under-privileged children. In such contexts, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seem unrealistic, he said. Dr. Khalifa urged a focus on sustainable education solutions for refugees,

particularly in resource-limited countries like Chad, South Sudan, and Yemen.

Mr. Joseph E. Flynn stressed the importance of aligning core values with the operations and culture of educational organizations, observing that institutions with such alignment significantly outperform others. Drawing on Aristotle's philosophy, he highlighted universal virtues like prudence, wisdom, and honesty as being foundational to navigating the complexities of religion and ethics. He recommended embedding core values into every aspect of the school culture, ensuring alignment between values and actions, fostering mutual respect and understanding among diverse cultures and religions, and enhancing collaborative learning and personal growth.



SUB – THEME FOUR: Climate Conscious Stewardship



The panel highlighted the urgency of collaborative action, practical solutions, and the pivotal role of youth and faith networks in managing natural resources and combating climate change and its cascading impacts on vulnerable populations.

Sanchit emphasized climate-conscious stewardship as the responsibility to care for the environment through sustainable practices to preserve resources for future generations. Sharing his own personal experiences, he listed three ways children could promote positive change for the environment. First, through an organization he co-founded, Sanchit has planted 500 trees across several villages and plans to plant more. By engaging with traditional and social media and through storytelling, he has been able to effectively raise awareness about environmental issues in his community. Third, by collaborating with local schools through environmental clubs/societies, he has helped to organize beach cleanups and tree planting activities, enabling other students to contribute to environmental protection.

Mr. Alexander Gwanvalla emphasized the long-standing impacts of climate change on health, poverty and the environment. He noted that poverty likewise often exacerbates environmental challenges and suggested a more interactive approach to finding practical solutions. Sharing an example from Cameroon, he described his organization's Climate Artists project which won a Wear My Shoes Award. The project encouraged children to express their views on the environment through art.

Mr. Gwanvalla stressed the importance of hands-on learning, such as gardening and regenerative practices, and recommended integrating initiatives that address both ecological and economic needs, like planting food or medicinal trees.

Ms. Deepika Singh underscored the role of interreligious councils and networks of women and youth of faith in addressing climate change. She emphasized that peace extends beyond the absence of conflict, encompassing health, environment,

and child rights. Highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, particularly children, she shared alarming statistics: over a billion children live in areas at risk of extreme climate events, which often lead to food insecurity, infrastructure loss, poverty, violence, exploitation, and increased health risks. Women and girls face heightened vulnerabilities, deepening gender disparities. Ms. Singh called on religious leaders and institutions to leverage their influence and networks to champion climate action.

Ms. Catherine Wong explored the intersection of climate change and conflict, noting that over

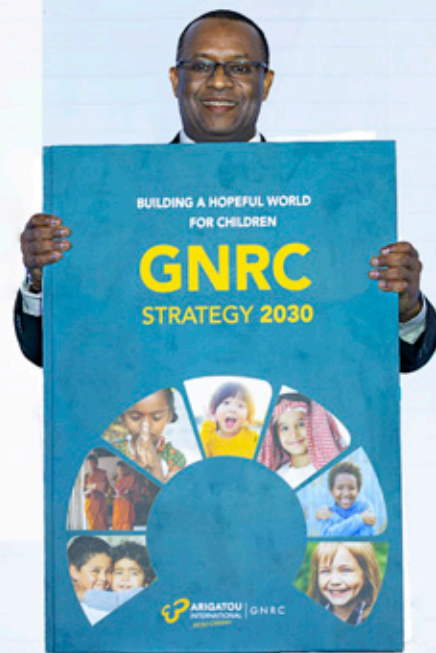
a billion children are at risk from environmental disasters, while 800 million young people live in conflict zones. This overlap of climate and conflict exacerbates poverty, disrupts livelihoods, and strains coping mechanisms. While conflict has displaced ten times more people than climate change, the climate crisis is now outpacing conflict as the leading cause of displacement. Moreover, fragile states receive disproportionately low climate finance, exacerbating their vulnerability. Ms. Wong underscored the critical role of youth as climate and peace activists, mediating resource-based conflicts and advocating for stronger climate policies.

EIGHTH PLENARY: LAUNCH OF THE GNRC STRATEGY 2030



The eighth plenary began with the launch of the GNRC Strategy 2030 which will provide the operational roadmap for the implementation of the Abu Dhabi Declaration and Plan of Action.

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali reaffirmed the network's steadfast commitment to building a better world for children. Reflecting on past achievements, he emphasized the focus on the future as the Network unveiled the *GNRC Strategy 2030*. The strategy responds to pressing global challenges, including increased violence against children, widening inequality, climate disasters, food insecurity, and digital threats. Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali then invited the President of Arigatou International and Convenor of the GNRC, Reverend Miyamoto, to deliver his address and formally launch the *GNRC Strategy 2030*.



LAUNCH OF THE GNRC STRATEGY 2030 by Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International and GNRC Convenor



As he formally launched the *GNRC Strategy 2030*, Rev. Miyamoto emphasized the need for urgent action to address the challenges children face in today's world. He highlighted the increasing number of children displaced by wars, suffering due to domestic violence, and vulnerable to online exploitation. Rev. Miyamoto stressed the critical role of religious

communities and interfaith cooperation in tackling division and discrimination. Reflecting on GNRC's growth to 80 countries, he called for accelerated efforts and innovative change to ensure no child is left behind. He expressed hope that the Strategy would guide GNRC in creating a world where all children can thrive.

VOTE OF THANKS



After the launch, Arigatou International Advisory Group Member and Secretary-General of the Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution, **Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome**, thanked all those who contributed to the convening

of the GNRC Sixth Forum. Members of the GNRC Sixth Forum IOC, the Steering Committee, Special Advisors to the IOC, Forum taskforce members, and GNRC and IAFSC staff were called on stage in appreciation for their efforts.

INTERFAITH PRAYER FOR PEACE



The interfaith prayer for peace has been a longstanding tradition at GNRC Forums, symbolizing a collective commitment to ensuring children's well-being and world peace. Opening the session, End Child Poverty Director **Rev. Fred Nyabera**, pointed out that the interfaith prayer has been a main feature

of every GNRC Forum, from the first to the fifth and now the sixth. He announced that the focus of the ceremony at the Sixth Forum was: "Answering the Call of the Child" and called upon the following faith leaders and child participants to lead the prayer.

Children representatives: Shreya and Luna

Bahá'í Faith: Mrs. Roeia Thabet

Buddhism: Rev. Kojitsu Kobori

Christianity (Catholic): John Cardinal Onaiyekan

Christianity (Anglican): Archbishop Julio Murray

Hinduism: Swami Atmapriyananda

Islam: Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome

Judaism: Rabbi David Rosen

Sikhism: Bhai Sahib Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia

Shintoism: Rev. Mitsuo Miyake



NINTH PLENARY: CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony of the GNRC Sixth Forum was held at Wahat Al Karama and culminated in the adoption of the *Abu Dhabi Declaration on Answering the Call of the Child*.

The Declaration was read out by IOC Chair **Mr. Kul Gautam**, alongside three child participants, IAFSC President **Mrs. Dana Humaid**, GNRC Secretary-General **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, and IOC Vice Chair **Dr. Kezevino Aram**.

Nobel Peace Laureate, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, who was present at the ceremony, shared his reflections on the Declaration. "Despite all the darkness in the world, I feel light is about to come," he said. He urged everyone to continue acting with compassion and encouraged the children at the Forum to return to their homes with even greater resolve to make a better world, armed with the knowledge that they are not alone.

The GNRC Sixth Forum was officially closed by renown Muslim scholar and President of the Forum for Peace in Muslim Societies, **H.E. Sheikh Abdallah bin Mahfuz bin Bayyah**. In his closing remarks, he reminded participants that challenges bring opportunities. He urged them to always be mindful of the crucial role faith communities have in protecting and caring for all children as they are dearest to God.



GNRC SIXTH FORUM SENIOR ADVISORS

Buddhism

1. Rev. Kojitsu Kobori, Sanzenin Temple, Japan Tendai Sect

Christianity

2. Cardinal Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, President, Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue
3. Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary, World Council of Churches (WCC)
4. His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, and Ecumenical Patriarch

Hinduism

5. Swami Atmapriyananda, Pro-Chancellor and Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute

Indigenous Spiritual Tradition

6. Priestess Beatriz Schulthess, President, Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council

Islam

7. His Eminence Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed El-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar
8. His Excellency Sheikh Abdallah bin Mahfuz ibn Bayyah, President, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace
9. Ms. Diyah Puspitarini, Central Board of Muhammadiyah Women's Organization – AISYIYAH

Judaism

10. Chief Rabbi David Rosen, Special Advisor to the Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi

Sikhism

11. Bhai Sahib Professor Mohinder Singh Ahluwalia, OBE, KSG, Spiritual Leader and Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, Co-President and Trustee, Religions for Peace

Shintoism

12. Rev. Michinari Kujo, Chief Priest, Meiji Jingu, Japan

Interfaith Initiative

13. Dr. Mohammad Sammak, Secretary General, Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue

CHILDREN'S ADVISORY GROUP

Buddhism

1. Sanchit, Child Representative, SDG Model Classroom, Sri Lanka

Christianity

2. Tudor, Child Representative, GNRC Romania
3. Frida, GNRC Children's Committee, Panama
4. Yara, Child Representative, GNRC Lebanon
5. Immaculate, Child Representative, World Vision International, Uganda

Hinduism

6. Arunachalam, Child Representative, GNRC India

Islam

7. Shariq, Child Representative, GNRC Mauritius
8. Ghaya, Child Representative, United Arab Emirates

Sikhism

9. Jaskiran, Child Representative, GNRC Kenya

Bahá'í

10. Fereshte, Child Representative, GNRC Chile

GNRC SIXTH FORUM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A. Convenor

1. Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International, and Leader of Myochikai

B. Chair, Co-Chair and Vice-Chair of the IOC

2. Chair: Mr. Kul Gautam, Former Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, and Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations, Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group
3. Co-Chair: Mrs. Dana Humaid, President and Chief Executive, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities, Co-Chair, International Organizing Committee
4. Vice-Chair: Dr. Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram, Vice-Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group

C. Religious Leaders and Representatives of Faith-Based Organizations

Bahá'í

5. Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative, Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations

Buddhism

6. Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, President, Sarvodaya Movement, Sri Lanka

Christianity

7. Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis, Ecumenical Patriarchate, Elder Metropolitan of Chalcedon
8. The Right Rvd. Julio Murray, Archbishop and Primate, Anglican Church of Central America

Islam

9. Sheikh Ibrahim Asmani Lethome, Secretary General, Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution
10. H.E. Ambassador Sheikh Al Mahfoudh bin Bayyah, Secretary General, Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace

Judaism

11. Rabbi Diana Gerson, Associate Executive Vice President, New York Board of Rabbis

D. GNRC Representatives

12. Fr. Abdo Raad, Coordinator, GNRC Lebanon
13. Ms. Maria Jose Ananias, GNRC Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean
14. Ms. Laura Molnar, Coordinator, GNRC Romania
15. Mr. Khaled Batarseh, Coordinator, GNRC Jordan
16. Ms. Samah Salaime, Contact Person, GNRC Israel
17. Sheikh Ramadhan Aula, Coordinator, GNRC Kenya
18. Mr. Iftikhar Mubarik, Coordinator, GNRC Pakistan

E. Representatives from the United Nations and its Agencies

19. Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children
20. Ms. Safak Pavey, Special Adviser, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
21. Ms. Siobhan Devine, Head of Stakeholder Engagement & Partnerships, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
22. Ms. Sabine Rakotomalala, Technical Officer, Violence Prevention Unit, World Health Organization (WHO)
23. Ms. Nika Saeedi, Team Lead, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and UNDP's Engagement with Faith-Based Organisations and Religious Actors, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

F. Representatives from Regional and International Organizations

24. Ms. Fahmida Faiza, Head, Human Development and Social Empowerment Division, Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO)
25. Dr. Reham Salamah, Executive Director, Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism
26. Ms. Andrea Kaufmann, Director, Faith and External Engagement, World Vision International
27. Ms. Frederique Seidel, Lead, Children and Climate Programme and Senior Advisor for WCC-UNICEF Partnership, World Council of Churches (WCC)

G. Representatives from Interfaith Organizations

28. Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General and Director of Programmes, Religions for Peace
29. Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Executive Director, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

H. Arigatou International and Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities

30. Mr. Abdulrahman Tamimi, Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC)
31. Mr. Hamad Khatir, Vice President, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC)
32. Mr. Faraz Hashmi, Treasurer, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC)
33. Mr. Hironari Miyamoto, Secretary General, Myochikai
34. Mr. Atsushi Iwasaki, Acting Secretary General, Arigatou International
35. Dr. Mustafa Y Ali, Director, Arigatou International-Nairobi and Secretary General, Global Network of Religions for Children
36. Ms. Rebeca Rios-Kohn J.D., Executive Director, Prayer and Action for Children
37. Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe, Director, Ethics Education for Children
38. Rev. Fred Nyabera, Director, Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty
39. Ms. Eleonora Mura, Head of Partnerships and Organizational Development, Arigatou International

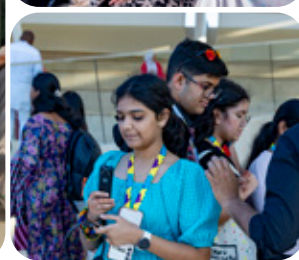
GNRC SIXTH FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE

1. Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary-General, Global Network of Religions for Children & Director, Arigatou International Kenya
2. Mr. Kul Gautam, Former Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, and Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations & Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group
3. Mrs. Dana Humaid, President and Chief Executive, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
4. Dr. Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram & Vice-Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group
5. Mr. Atsushi Iwasaki, Secretary-General, Arigatou International
6. Mr. Abdulrahman Tamimi, Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities

Sixth Forum Coordinator: Mr. Faraz Hashmi, Treasurer, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities

GNRC SIXTH FORUM DRAFTING DECLARATION COMMITTEE

1. Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary-General, Global Network of Religions for Children & Director, Arigatou International Kenya
2. Mr. Kul Gautam, Former Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, and Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations & Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group
3. Mrs. Dana Humaid, President and Chief Executive, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
4. Dr. Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram & Vice-Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group
5. Mr. Atsushi Iwasaki, Secretary-General, Arigatou International
6. Mr. Abdulrahman Tamimi, Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
7. Chief Rabbi David Rosen, Special Advisor to the Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi





Hopeful World for Children



International Organizing Committee



HOPE

SAFE

SECURE

SUSTAINABLE



Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

Arigatou International | Nairobi

Crawford Business Park, State House Road, Suite 2, Nairobi, Kenya

T: +254 20 2573920/1 M: +254 733 945 971 / +254 705 320 970

arigatouinternational.org | gnrc.net