

The Council for Dignity, Forgiveness, Justice and Reconciliation

Recognizing that...

- the world today is plagued by a number of seemingly intractable, identity-based conflicts that have locked their peoples in a vicious cycle of violence and vengeance,
- traditional forms of peace negotiations and diplomacy are seldom sufficient for solving these conflicts, because they address chiefly political and economic concerns,
- violations of dignity and fear of losing one's group identity are significant components of such conflicts and must be ascertained and resolved if peace is truly to take root,
- healing physical and mental trauma, relieving the torment of excruciating memories, and allowing legitimate venting of anguish and mourning are essential for the restoration of dignity and forgiveness,
- dignity, forgiveness, and restorative justice, in their various religious and cultural meanings, are moral, spiritual processes for creating the social space and political conditions for lasting reconciliation,
- communities must, therefore, be involved in processes of reconciliation through various stabilizing agents—such as truth and reconciliation commissions, rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, and cultural and educational programs. Criminal justice systems and special tribunals designed to prosecute individuals rarely address the underlying sources of such conflicts.

And aware that...

- religious actors, although sometimes significantly fanning the flames of conflict, are often skilled healers of society, advanced peacemakers and intrepid justice seekers,
- indigenous approaches to reconciliation have a unique potential among peoples that is often overlooked,
- media, music, verbal and visual arts, although capable of stirring hatred, are effective for establishing constructive people to people engagement and reconciliation,
- honest businesses focused on prosperity for all have often been a key to positive and stabilizing social change,
- the fabric of this whole globalized world community is torn by local and regional conflicts, thus rendering necessary common international peace efforts and the growth of a shared moral consciousness,
- complex conflicts require the creative or combined application of approaches that have proved effective in different contexts elsewhere.

It is therefore decided...

- to establish a not-for-profit entity entitled Ara Pacis Initiative to address the human dimensions of peace before, during and after conflict. The Initiative will assist governments, institutions and communities through ethical, moral, cultural and pedagogical contributions to ensure that respect, understanding and dialogue are integral to all peace processes.

A permanent body of the Ara Pacis Initiative will be the Council for Dignity, Forgiveness Justice and Reconciliation, an international body of men and women, including those who, having suffered personal and collective tragedy, have used the power of empathy and forgiveness to imagine and build a just future. The Council's concrete projects will seek to bring conflicting communities into restored, more just human relationships.

The distinctive contribution of this global body will be to harness tested insights, shared experiences, financial resources, and wise leadership from around the world to benefit localities and regions in the world's conflict zones, by sending small teams of experienced persons to promote approaches not widely used, but sorely needed– most particularly forgiveness with justice, restoration of dignity, and the healing of trauma.

To pursue its mission, the Ara Pacis Initiative and the Council for Dignity, Forgiveness, Justice and Reconciliation may undertake initiatives on all levels and in all fields in order to promote:

1. the acknowledgment and the honoring of personal and collective dignity;
2. forgiveness, defined broadly to include acknowledgement of past wrongs, repentance, forbearance from revenge, apology, penance, rituals of reconciliation and symbolic compensation;
3. the development, implementation and dissemination of different forms of restorative justice which best address the human and societal dimensions;
4. conflict transformation by bringing to light and healing the personal, historical and collective traumas of peoples and nations;
5. emotional and cultural development to prevent conflict;
6. health and well-being, including trauma healing, as a means for peacebuilding;
7. justice-centered conflict resolution and education, with a focus on equality and the fostering of pluralistic societies, also through indigenous approaches;
8. the utilization of the arts, popular culture and media to strengthen peace;
9. people to people citizen diplomacy, including the identification, empowerment and support of individuals and grassroots organizations working for reconciliation;
10. the mobilization of religious/spiritual leaders, approaches and values to bridge divides, including with the secular world;
11. strategic engagement with political, economic, cultural and religious leaders to advance reconciliation and address the root problems of conflict including poverty and inequalities.

In order to fulfil its mission, the Ara Pacis Initiative and the Council for Dignity, Forgiveness, Justice and Reconciliation may:

1. develop and implement projects, including artistic, psycho-political, judicial, media, medical, spiritual, awareness-raising, and educational initiatives, to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation;
2. connect change makers in order for them to network, support and learn from each other, thereby generating new and integrated strategies of change;
3. undertake and commission studies, research, analysis and the creation of data tools on conflict, justice, reconciliation and peace;
4. establish national and international funds for reconciliation;
5. award grants, prizes and scholarships;
6. create and disseminate a Universal Declaration on Dignity, Forgiveness and Reconciliation;
7. establish local and regional hubs for reconciliation;
8. organize and produce publications, exhibitions, conventions;
9. undertake any other initiative aimed at achieving the objectives stipulated in its statute.