



## G20 Religion Forum (R20) Opening Session

**President Joko Widodo of Indonesia addresses R20 participants:**

**“[R]eligious leaders of different faiths and nations must work together to strengthen religion’s contribution to solving the world’s problems, reduce rivalry, end conflict, and achieve a peaceful, united world.”**

BALI, Indonesia, 2 November 2022 — Over 400 religious leaders and scholars from around the world gathered for the first annual R20 Summit, which the Government of Indonesia welcomed as an official “main event” during its Presidency of the G20. Reflecting the profound spirituality characteristic of *Nusantara* (“East Indies,” or Indonesian) civilization, the R20 was carefully designed to infuse the world’s political and economic power structures with moral and spiritual (i.e., religious) values, rather than instrumentalize religion to serve a purely secular agenda.

Frankly acknowledging that religion has often contributed to identity-based conflict, both throughout history and in the present day, Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama founded the G20 Religion Forum (R20) in order to “help ensure that religion functions as a genuine and dynamic source of solutions, rather than problems, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

This communiqué provides extensive excerpts from addresses delivered on the morning of Wednesday, 2 November 2022, during the R20’s opening session. These excerpts are intended to allow readers — including religious leaders, policy makers, scholars, journalists, and other interested parties — to readily access and understand the substantive nature of the R20’s agenda and of the presentations delivered by prominent religious leaders at the R20 Summit in Bali.

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President Joko Widodo of Indonesia addressed the Summit’s opening session, which was attended by prominent religious leaders from six continents and 18 of the G20’s Member States.

President Widodo concluded his welcome address by saying:

*Ladies and gentlemen, your presence at this R20 Forum makes us extraordinarily proud. Indonesia wants to learn from all of you, who have come to Bali from across the world. We, the people of Indonesia, are ready to share our observations and experiences. This is very important, as religious leaders of different faiths and nations must work together to strengthen religion’s contribution to solving the world’s problems; to reduce rivalry; end conflict; and achieve a peaceful, united world in which people of every faith work together to bequeath a better legacy to future generations.*

*Once again, thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for coming to Indonesia. I wish you every success in the R20 and hope that it will result in building understanding and agreement towards the concrete steps necessary for religions to make a greater contribution to civilization and humanity, in order to create a happier world for all. Thank you.*

*Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. [May the peace and blessings of God be upon you]*

*Om shanti, shanti, shanti om. [Om peace, peace, peace om]*

*Namo Budaya. [Praiseworthy is the Great Buddha]*

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Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, established the G20 Religion Forum, in conjunction with the Indonesian Presidency of the G20, in order to foster a rules-based international order founded upon shared moral and spiritual values. Nahdlatul Ulama invited the Muslim World League, an Islamic non-governmental organization headquartered in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, to co-host this year's R20.

An excerpt of Nahdlatul Ulama Chairman KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf's brief welcome address, edited for publication, appears below.

*Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished speakers and participants: on behalf of your Indonesian friends, Nahdlatul Ulama and the Center for Shared Civilizational Values, I welcome you to Bali, Indonesia.*

*Welcome to Bali, the land of Hinduism in the world's largest Muslim-majority country.*

*Welcome to Bali, the land of Hinduism, whose inhabitants permit the most iconic dance tradition from Aceh, of the most visibly Islamic culture within our nation, to be performed upon this honorable stage.*

*Welcome to Bali, the land of Hinduism, whose inhabitants allow Nahdlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim organization, and the Muslim World League, the most important organization in the Islamic world, to convene the R20 here in this land, attended by religious leaders from throughout the world.*

*Welcome to Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, which allows Bali to preserve its own unique Hindu culture. The world's largest Muslim-majority nation, which allows a unique Hindu culture to flourish, cheered and applauded by all the people of Indonesia.*

*This G20 Religion Forum, or R20, is an initiative that comes from a sincere, good, and spiritual will of people of religion — from a sincere concern, on the part of all religious believers, about the future of humanity. We surely hope that this initiative*

*will assume an honorable and significant place within the global dynamics of humanity's struggle to find solutions to its current, and perennial, problems.*

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A brief excerpt of the keynote address delivered by H.E. Shaykh Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League and Co-chair of the R20 Summit in Bali, translated from the original Arabic and edited for publication, appears below.

*We are delighted with today's historic and vital gathering, which brings together prominent religious leaders from across the world to launch a global initiative within the framework of the G20 Summit — the R20 platform, which has been adopted by the G20 Presidency this year to become the first Engagement Group for religions in the history of the G20.*

*We express our deep appreciation to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, for supporting and adopting this initiative. The R20 will place a great burden of responsibility upon religious leaders, and especially upon the Muslim World League and Nahdlatul Ulama — as Co-chairs of the R20 — to ensure the R20's success....*

*Islam invites us to deal with everyone wisely, and encourages this trait of wise dealing and balance to perfect one's character. For God Almighty says: “[He] grant[s] wisdom unto whom He wills: and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted wealth abundant. But none bears this in mind save those who are endowed with insight” (2:269).*

*“Wisdom” is a word brimming with meaning. Wisdom is the ability to move beyond dreams and ideas into concrete acts and initiatives. Thus, we are glad to launch the “Forum for Building Bridges Between East and West” at this international platform, to bring about a more understanding and peaceful world, as well as more stable and harmonious societies.*

*In today's world we are in dire need of something practical, such as building bridges through active and influential initiatives and programs that go beyond the “conventional” and “repetitive.” We must go beyond a pattern of traditional dialogue, which has not changed, and which has brought little progress in promoting friendship, understanding, and cooperation among nations and peoples. Instead, we must move towards the convening of a civilized alliance among all. This alliance is based upon a firm and strong foundation: namely, shared religious and human values, some of which are capable of promoting peace in our world.*

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In his keynote address, KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, Founder of the R20, articulated the vision that inspired its creation. Mr. Staquf discussed the urgent need for religious, cultural, and political leaders to wisely manage the inevitable struggle between competing values triggered

by globalization, which is bringing highly diverse peoples, cultures, and traditions into ever closer contact.

Specifically, Mr. Staquf described the need to identify and embrace those universal values that a majority of the world's inhabitants already acknowledge, such as the virtues of honesty, compassion, and justice. He then spoke about the importance of developing a global consensus regarding shared values that the world's diverse cultures will need to develop and embrace, if they are to co-exist peacefully.

In this context, Mr. Staquf pointed out, it is also necessary to acknowledge that many religious communities continue to embrace certain values that may prevent peaceful coexistence with others. He praised the Roman Catholic Church for the reforms introduced at the Second Vatican Council and described how:

*in 2016 a community of Jews — the Masorti, or Conservative stream of Judaism — convened a forum of rabbinical scholars and issued a 29-page statement that may serve as an inspiration for all of us [“The Status of Non-Jews in Jewish Law and Lore Today”]. Their purpose was to ensure that a better and more harmonious relationship may exist between Jewish and non-Jewish communities. This document, called a teshuvah [a responsa], honestly and courageously examined Jewish law (halacha) and urged Jews throughout the world to embrace an understanding of their religion which acknowledges the fundamental equality of all human beings in order to foster harmonious relations with others.*

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His Holiness, Pope Francis, conveyed his personal greetings and substantive reflections about the G20 Religion Forum to participants in the inaugural R20 Summit in Bali. His Excellency, Archbishop Piero Pioppo, Apostolic Nuncio to Indonesia, read the Pope's four-page letter, excerpts of which appear below.

*I offer my cordial greetings to all taking part in the G20 Religious Forum and I express my gratitude to those who have organized this event.*

*Your meeting in Bali, which precedes the G20 Summit, provides a fitting opportunity to reflect together, as religious leaders and representatives, on certain pressing issues and needs of our time. Prominent among these is the question of the role religions can play in finding solutions to the crises that nowadays affect not only individuals, but also entire peoples, countries, and the international community. For amid a globalized society, “the great religious and wisdom traditions are called to testify to the existence of a shared spiritual and moral patrimony, based on two principles: transcendence and fraternity” (Reading of the Final Declaration and Conclusion of the Congress, Nur-Sultan, 15 September 2022)....*

*[T]he highest human aspirations cannot be excluded from public life and relegated merely to the private sphere. Men and women everywhere, though belonging to different cultures, languages and religious traditions, ask the same fundamental questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why is there injustice, evil and death in the world? What is there after this life? Faced with these questions, the world's*

*religions call us to look beyond the illusion of our own self-sufficiency and raise our vision to what is above, to the God who created us to be one human family and who offers life and hope to all.*

*Sadly, the world is increasingly marked by the neglect of God and by abuses committed in his name. We must affirm that extremism, radicalism, terrorism and all other incentives to hatred, hostility, violence and war, whatever their motivations or goals, have nothing to do with the authentic spirit of religion and must be rejected in the most decisive terms possible. Instead, it is our responsibility, as individual believers and as leaders of our respective communities, to foster the paths of mutual dialogue, love and reconciliation that lead to peace and conformity with the plan of the Almighty. In this regard, religion, far from being a cause of the various crises we face today, is instead part of their solution.*

*I trust, therefore, that your deliberations during this Religious Forum will, in a spirit of mutual dialogue, benefit the common good by recalling to men and women everywhere God's providential care for all that he has made and the need to enhance the bonds of fraternal solidarity. In this way, your work can contribute to resolving the various crises that confront the human family and thus truly serve the good of our brothers and sisters.*

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His Holiness, Swami Govinda Dev Giri Maharaj, addressed the opening session of the R20 on behalf of the Shankaracharya tradition of India. This tradition preserves the *Advaita* teachings of the revered Indian Vedic scholar and teacher (*acharya*), Adi Shankara, whose systematic commentaries on the ten principal *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Brahma Sutras* are regarded as foundational to the development of modern Hindu thought. An edited and abridged version of Swami Govinda Dev Giri's remarks appears below.

*Dear Respected Messengers of Immortal Faith!*

*I come from the land of Adi Shankaracharya, of Advaita, that provides philosophical justification for the essential unity not just of mankind but of the entire universe. Personally, I am delighted to visit this part of planet Earth, where the Hindus of yore have left their spiritual and cultural imprint.*

*It is indeed strange but true that the institution of religion, which was originally conceived to ensure human well-being, has itself become a source of many of our problems. But must it be so? In spite of their differences — cultural, historical, or ritualistic — the core of all religions should be the same: conscience, compassion, temperance, and the well-being of the world, since for all of us God is One. They all speak in nearly the same tongue: abstention from vices, purification through fasting, chanting of the holy name, charity and, last but not least, belief in one God. In fact, this underlying unity of religions is what has brought us here together, and I, on behalf of Hindu Dharma, congratulate the organizers.*

*With this in mind, let us join our hearts and hands and restore "religion" to its original and intrinsic glorious role — "religion" as the way to a just, peaceful and*

*happy world. Not by “waging a war” against evil, but rather by following the path of introspection, of open-minded confession, of enlightenment, with love and compassion at heart.*

*All of the world’s faiths have ancient scriptures. All should be honored and respected because they brought light into the darkness and made human life more enlightened and more happy in those ancient times. While preserving faith and following religious teachings for the sake of spiritual growth, new global circumstances require that we develop appropriate interpretations of our faith, consistent with our modern social and cultural environment and the laws of different states.*

*New generations all over the world are waiting for this to occur and looking to us with hope. Hinduism has always been a progressive cultural flow, adapting in a manner that is consistent with ever-changing times. Mahatma Gandhiji has aptly described Hinduism as a continuous pursuit of Truth. How we can best proceed in this direction should not only be the subject of discussion in meetings such as this, but also realized in our own day-to-day behavior.*

*Dear Divine Souls, let us therefore join hands, pool together the best of our spiritual resources, and set out on a mission of developing a new world order, whose features were visualized by the great Rishis of Bharat:*

*May all beings be happy  
May all be healthy  
May all see only good days ahead  
May no one suffer at all.*

*This Hindu view of life is neither a dream nor simply a prayer. I believe it is a mission for all of us to take upon our shoulders, as we are the chosen children of God to shape a better future for humanity.*

*I conclude with a cosmic prayer in the words of Sant Dnyaneshwar, a medieval Philosopher-Saint-Poet of India.*

*Please bless us, O Lord, with a World —  
A world in which villains, shorn of their vices, are lost in noble deeds.  
A world whose elements are all in harmony.  
A world basking in enlightenment and mutual love.  
A world in which every noble wish is fulfilled.  
In short, a world where all beings are in eternal bliss and in unison with the Almighty.*

*Om Shanti Shanti Shanti!!!*

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H.E. Shaykh Dr. Shawki Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Alam, Grand Mufti of Egypt, the most populous nation in the Arab world, delivered remarks, excerpts of which appear below in English translation.

*We are gathered here with one voice and a common agenda that contains good for believers and nations. I respect and appreciate the vision of the R20 for strengthening world peace and advancing dialogue between civilizations. This Forum has brought illumination. Because of these efforts, the R20 is a prominent model for raising the level of cooperation between religious believers in the interests of all humanity....*

*We need our modern education to train students, young and old, to cooperate and complement one another in both their areas of agreement and differences, and to serve as a point of departure for those who promote human rights to express their concern and support for humanity without regard to gender, race, or religion. We need to take into consideration, on the one hand, our common humanity, and, on the other, respect for our unique characteristics and diversity. Our institutions need to spread peace, love, and dialogue in both word and deed.*

*In this context, Islamic scholars have taken it upon themselves to broadcast the correct image of Islam, which we hope will give the world at large a better understanding of the principles of this religion and its divine moral values. This R20 Summit is part of that effort.*

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The Rt. Rev. Yoshinobu Miyake, President of the International Shinto Studies Association, addressed the opening session of the R20 on behalf of his ancient religious tradition. An abridged version of his remarks appears below.

*Shinto is the original, indigenous religion of Japan. It is closely connected to the traditional Japanese value system, and to the world-view and behavior of most Japanese. Some might refer to Shinto as a “nature religion,” because it is intimately linked to respect for every aspect of our natural environment. Those who have visited Japan will know that our culture places a great emphasis upon respecting and preserving the natural environment, and maintaining harmony between man and nature, as may be seen in more than 100,000 Shinto shrines and 80,000 Buddhist temples scattered throughout the Japanese archipelago.*

*Personally, I am the descendant of a long line of Shinto priests going back many generations. My grandfather, the late Most Rev. Toshio Miyake, was a pioneer of interfaith dialogue, which he initiated during World War II. In 1970, he established the organization Religions for Peace. I am sure he would be pleased were he to witness the global initiative we are launching today under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama, the Government of Indonesia, and the Muslim World League.*

*One-fourth of all mankind is Muslim. Of all the world’s Muslim-majority nations, Indonesia is the largest. I have high expectations for Indonesia’s leadership in the Muslim world. For Indonesia, despite its Muslim majority, is not self-righteous. Rather, it is tolerant of Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous religions — as can be seen here in Bali — and provides a model case for human society in the 21st century. I know this from personal experience, having been a friend of Nahdlatul Ulama’s*

*former chairman, and Indonesia's late president, Abdurrahman Wahid, who was a living example of the remarkable depth and wisdom of Indonesian Islam.*

*For several years, I served as General Secretary of the G8 Religious Leaders Summit. Hence, I have thought long and hard about the challenges facing humanity, and the role of organizations such as the G20, which represents 60% of the world's population and 90% of the world's GDP. To date, however, intergovernmental bodies such as the G20 have proven incapable of preventing economic crises and resolving the deep-seated conflicts between East and West — and between North and South, i.e. between developing and developed countries — that have persisted for many centuries. Now is the time for the world's religious leaders to step forward, address these issues, and resolve these conflicts.*

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Archbishop Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba addressed the opening session of the R20 on behalf of the world's largest Anglican community, the Anglican Church of Nigeria, which he serves as Primate. In July 2022, Archbishop Ndukuba made headlines when he declined to participate in the Lambeth Conference, the decennial world-wide assembly of Anglican bishops convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, due to profound concerns about the direction of Anglicanism in the West.

As readers may see from the edited and abridged version of his remarks (below), the platform of the R20 provided Archbishop Ndukuba a unique opportunity to express the profound anguish felt by Christians throughout West Africa at the ongoing persecution inflicted upon their communities by Islamist extremists, which Western governments often attribute to the effects of climate change rather than acknowledge its roots in religious ideology and identity-based conflict.

*May the Grace and Peace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be upon us and our World.*

*I am delighted to address this very important gathering on the occasion of the G20 Religion Forum (R20) International Summit of Religious Leaders. It is such a great privilege this morning, in the company of other world religious leaders, to consider the place of the religious community in the future growth and welfare of the people. I speak for the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), the largest Anglican Church in the world, with 25 million regular worshippers. I also speak from the Global South, the present Centre of Gravity of Global Christianity, that is, the Global South is where Christianity is experiencing rapid growth, people are becoming Christians daily and finding in Jesus Christ hope for living and eternity. They have found the Word of God and the Holy Spirit their source of strength and hope in the face of great challenges. There are now over 52 million Anglicans in the Global South out of 85 million worldwide.*

*Africans are reported to be spiritually oriented and religious, and we are. Across the religions in our continent we share a deep awareness that we live our lives in a world we did not create, and with spiritual realities we must take account of. So it is most encouraging to us that Indonesia has taken the lead for those of us from the Global*

*South to bring religion to this global platform of discussion and seeking solutions to the challenges that face our nations. It is my hope that the leaders of nations that have, for the moment, the privilege of political and economic power will be humble enough to learn that from our religious traditions we have great riches, values, and resources to bring to international deliberations and decision-making.*

*Jesus Christ said that He “came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10: 45). As the Archbishop of Canterbury said at the funeral of the late Queen Elizabeth, “People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer. But in all cases, those who serve will be loved and remembered when those who cling to power and privileges are long forgotten.” And loving and selfless service is at the core of who we are as Christians which is also common ground in our religious traditions. The constraints of the love of God in service have not only sustained us in the face of much hardship, persecution, marginalization, and suffering but motivates us to extend love even to our oppressors and enemies.*

*You are not unaware of the challenges all of us face in our communities from religious extremism, both now, and as a result of such extremism in the past. We will be hearing at this conference about those faced by our Christian community in Nigeria from religious extremism and terrorism. These attacks in Northern and Central and other parts of Nigeria are a clear attempt to terrorize and displace local populations of Christians so that they flee and leave their land and property.*

*What has been of great concern, in the last decade or more, is the increasing totalized violence against Christians and their communities since 2000 by Boko Haram, radical Islamic sects, and Al-Qaida and ISIL affiliates since 2009, and subsequently Fulani herdsmen militias.*

*Nigeria is now one of the most dangerous countries to be a Christian. Thousands of people have been killed by these well-organized, well-equipped, and well-funded extremist groups and over 150 villages have been sacked. There are over 2 million internally displaced people, and thousands more have been kidnapped for sex and ransom. Churches are now forced to pay millions of Naira for ransom for kidnapped church members, and over a dozen Anglican pastors have been martyred by these extremists. This is of course in addition to the hundreds of churches that have been attacked, bombed, and destroyed. We live daily in great trepidation.*

*What is most problematic in the current situation is that very few are willing to listen to the victims. Even when the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on religious freedom reported that Nigerian Christians are facing genocide in slow motion, the West insists that this is just a matter of tribal clashes between pastoralists and farmers, both fighting for scarce economic resources caused by climate change. Politically correct disinformation seems to be strategically pushed forward by Nigerian politicians and other groups who benefit from these undeclared massacres through various corrupt monetary and security budgets and the perpetuation of a radical ideology.*

*Islamist groups have carried out targeted killings in areas that have nothing to do with climate change factors. A case in point is the shooting at Te’egbe in Plateau State, Nigeria, where a newly posted pastor of the Evangelical Church Winning All*

*was murdered. The group went straight to his house, shot him dead, and left. He was neither a farmer nor his village in a grazing reserve. This is the story of many pastors killed by extremists. Their widows and orphans are still asking why and seeking the justice that may never come because the narrative has been twisted.*

*Christians in Nigeria simply want the killings to stop and for victims to get justice. We have been working on rebuilding communities, developing educational institutions destroyed by the extremists, and providing food and medical assistance to victims.*

*We need you to join hands with us to rebuild our nation. We need you to help tell our stories. We have testimonies and truth of the persecution. We want to rebuild our communities, and as a global Christian family we simply need your prayers and for you to also tell our stories. As a result of religious extremism, an ever-increasing number of orphans, widows, and homeless people have been driven out of their homes and farms and have lost everything. One of our bishops and his wife look after over 50 homeless orphans in their home.*

*Such attacks are also aimed at moderate Muslims, to prevent them from being moderate in their approach to policy, legislation, and law and order. This damages the whole of Nigeria....*

*One of the key aims of our gathering is to address, and where possible stop, such outrages. We in Nigeria need the help of people of goodwill from all religious communities to stop the flow of arms and resources to these extremists.*

*Here in Indonesia you are committed to and practice religious pluralism and tolerance. Such an approach would be beneficial to the global communities, especially where religious extremism abounds.*

*God bless Nigeria.  
God bless Indonesia.  
God bless the R20.*

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Dr. Valeria Martano, an Italian historian and advisor to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, addressed the opening session of the R20 on behalf of the Sant'Egidio Community, whose work in Asia she oversees. Founded in 1968 and now active in more than 70 countries, Sant'Egidio has a particular focus on promoting peace and serving the poor. An edited and abridged version of Dr. Martano's remarks appears below.

*Mr. President of the Republic of Indonesia, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends. It is an honor to take the floor at this Summit, which gathers — on the eve of the G20 — representatives of world religions, scholars, and activists to give voice to the concerns and hopes of many, each one of us according to our own religious traditions.*

*It's particularly meaningful that this Summit is hosted by Indonesia, a nation that has placed unity in diversity of faiths and cultures at the core of its identity, and is a model of the civilization of coexistence.*

*We stand in a dramatic historical passage, in the midst of what has been defined as a polycrisis, synthesized with three Cs: Conflicts, Covid, Climate.*

*We are facing great challenges: the multiplication of conflicts, in various regions of the world and recently in the heart of Europe, with the threat of a nuclear escalation; the disruption of ecosystems, a result of the reckless exploitation of the resources of mother Earth, which generates not only poverty, but also migrations, human trafficking, the onset of diseases, and pandemics.*

*What can religions say and do in the face of this polymorphic crisis? We are aware that religions do not have any political or economic strength, yet they have enormous potential for pacification. Actually, to borrow the words of an Anglican theologian, Miroslav Volf, they are "the original globalizers" as they profess universal values and believe in a single human family.*

*Actually religions are not separate worlds, from each other and from reality, but living organisms, deeply connected with the pains, expectations and anxieties of humanity. This makes us, as a great Catholic Pope — Paul VI — said, speaking for the first time at the United Nations Assembly in 1965, "experts in humanity".*

*Yes, men and women of faith are experts in humanity. Compassion and mercy, that are in the earth of every believer — whatever religion he or she may profess — make us challenged by poverty, by the suffering of the victims of wars, migrants, prisoners. In 1986 Pope John Paul II, in the first meeting among religious representatives gathered by a Catholic pope, in Assisi, spoke of peace as a building site open to all, inviting not only specialists, but all men and women to take part in it. The Community of Sant'Egidio — which I represent here — has, since that moment, multiplied its commitment at the global level to promote the so called "Spirit of Assisi". Our spiritual pillars, which can be summarized as "prayer, poor, peace," constitute an inclusive platform for its implementation.*

*On this path, since 1990, Sant'Egidio has established a privileged link with Indonesia. The late Abdurrahman Wahid, or Gus Dur, whom I consider my mentor and guide — who defined himself as a Gandhian Muslim, a man of peace and dialogue — embodied in those years the hope of a democratic and pluralist Indonesia, inclusive of its diversity.*

*In the wake of Gus Dur, Indonesia has taken up the challenge of building itself as a pluralist society.*

*And St. Egidio, thanks to the deep bond established with Gus Dur, has developed over the years an intense collaboration with the great Muslim organizations that represent the backbone of Indonesian Islam — Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah — with whom we have made agreements that have produced concrete collaborations at a national and international level. It is not possible in this context to recall all the stages of this cooperation.*

*I will dwell only briefly on the latest: last June, in Rome, Pak Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Chairman of NU and Prof. Impagliazzo, President of Sant'Egidio, have renewed an MoU that formalizes the long-standing collaboration of the two institutions on issues of interreligious dialogue, humanitarian actions, and the promotion of peace.*

*The MoU states a common commitment, I quote, "to cooperate both at the basic level and at the macro level to develop and implement strategies to facilitate conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace, particularly in regions where religious teachings and identity are being weaponized to foster communal hatred, supremacy, and violence." The MoU anticipates collaborative actions, particularly in the Middle East and in Africa.*

*In conclusion, today religions are much closer than they used to be. Barriers of mistrust rooted in history have been broken down, and cooperation between believers of different faiths is perhaps the greatest novelty of this century. A clear example is The Document on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Al Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi in 2019.*

*If the path taken so far has led us to understand the importance of shared values for the de-weaponization of identities and for the progress of our civilizations, I believe that today it is the time for a further step, for a commitment to strengthen multilateral cooperation platforms, at both a regional and global level, to imagine and implement concrete ways of cooperation, in the field of peacekeeping, the struggle against poverty, and other activities for the sake of the planet.*

*May our shared values develop into a shared commitment, expressed through shared actions, and lead to widespread cooperation to foster world peace. Thank you.*

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Archbishop Thomas Schirrmacher (Germany), Secretary General and CEO of the World Evangelical Alliance, concluded the R20's opening session with a speech titled "The Protestant Faith and Shared Civilizational Values." An edited and abridged version of his remarks appears below.

*It is a great privilege to bring warm greetings from the World Evangelical Alliance and the 600 million Christians in 143 nations whom we represent and connect! May God bless you and give you the wisdom needed for your responsibilities. Three years ago, our team from the WEA met in Jakarta with Nahdlatul Ulama leaders and developed a plan to jointly promote shared civilizational values, as Christians and Muslims working together. We are people of good will, who do not want to use violence against each other, but who instead want to engage in rational discourse with each other, and promote a free and just society in which we all can live.*

*At the inaugural conference of the WEA, in London in 1846, with over 800 delegates representing 52 Protestant denominations from the UK, Europe, the US, and Canada, one of our first hot topics was how to stop the horrendous evil of slavery.*

*Many of our first leaders were also leaders in the anti-slavery movement; some were colleagues of William Wilberforce, the British member of Parliament who had led the abolitionist efforts. Perhaps the most surprising speaker at that event was Rev. Mollison Maddison Clark, black pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, DC, a church that was mostly made up of slaves. That's right — a black pastor from a church of slaves was a keynote speaker at a mostly white conference of Christian leaders in London in 1846. I see this as a precedent that invites imitation....*

*In our WEA history, we can identify three values or principles that particularly merit a place in a global platform of shared civilizational values. These are the need to:*

*I. Acknowledge that humans have a unique God-given greatness, which includes dignity and creativity. That is why we seek to help and respect people, regardless of race, age, or gender.*

*II. Acknowledge that humans possess a unique fallibility. Nature can trigger hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes. However, it requires human beings to produce a Holocaust, senseless wars, genocide, sexual abuse, slavery, revenge, and betrayal. The first account of murder in the Bible is that of Cain slaying his brother Abel before a sacrificial altar, illustrating how our most human activity, religion, can become dysfunctional and unleash the destruction that may arise from our vast fallibility.*

*III. Acknowledge that helpless people need very practical love from others.*

*In the preamble to the Federal Republic of Germany's Constitution of 1949, our post-war founders wrote that they were "[c]onscious of their responsibility before God and man." This is not an atheist constitution, though some prominent Germans have been atheists. It is a constitution for people of multiple religions or no defined religion. It assumes there are civilizational moral values which we can identify and implement together. That is our task in the R20.*

[View Plenary Session 1, Part 1](#)

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