Launch of the R20 Website

R20 establishes multifaceted online presence "to help ensure that religion functions as a genuine and dynamic source of solutions, rather than problems"

"A unique and significant initiative… to assist G-20 governments in building a united, pluralist and peaceful world"

JAKARTA, Indonesia, 19 January 2023 — The G20 Religion Forum (R20) has launched an extensive website to provide religious leaders, government officials, journalists, scholars, and other interested parties with ready access to authoritative information about the R20, including its vision, mission, goals, and agenda.

The world's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), established the R20 in conjunction with Indonesia's Presidency of the G20 group of the world's largest economies, in 2022, and appointed the Center for Shared Civilizational Values to serve as the R20's permanent secretariat.

A number of R20 events are planned for 2023 in the U.S., the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia, following the rotation of the G20 Presidency from Indonesia to India.

"We look forward to building on the achievements of the first R20 Summit, which was held last November in Bali, and to working closely with our friends from India and throughout the world to implement the agenda discussed at the R20 Summit and a subsequent planning conference in Java," said R20 Founder and Chairman KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, who is also General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board.

The Muslim 500, an annual publication that tracks power and influence within the Islamic world, identified Mr. Staquf as among the world's 20 most influential Muslims in its 2023 edition. At number 19, Mr. Staquf is ranked just nine places below Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia.

The newly launched R20 website documents the substantive discussions that occurred in Bali on 2 – 3 November, 2022, and on the island of Java from 4 – 6 November. Participants included nearly 500 religious, academic, and political leaders from eighteen G20 Member States and other nations throughout the world.

The government of President Joko Widodo of Indonesia recognized the R20 as a G20 main event and official engagement group (image above) during its first year of existence. The unanimous consent of all G20 Member States will be required, however, before the R20 becomes a permanent engagement group.

From 2022 – 2024 the G20 Presidency will rotate from Indonesia, to India, to Brazil. These three nations have the world's largest Muslim, Hindu, and Catholic populations, respectively. Each is heir to a rich and highly diverse civilizational tradition. They have rapidly growing economies, possess immense socio-cultural capital, and are blessed with enormous potential to

project religious soft power globally. In 2025 another highly religious country, South Africa, will host the G20.

At present, there are ten permanent engagement groups within the G20: the B20 (business), C20 (civil society; for NGOs); L20 (labor unions); P20 (parliament); S20 (scientists); SAI 20 (supreme audit institutions); T20 (think tanks); U20 (urban); W20 (women), and Y20 (youth).

Religious believers — the R20's core constituency — represent the largest demographic of any G20 engagement group, at approximately 85 percent of the entire world population. As former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican and Harvard Law Professor Dr. Mary Ann Glendon said of her participation in the first R20 Summit in Bali: "Even before I came to this meeting I was anticipating that it was going to be a landmark event for one reason: it represented an acknowledgement on the part of the G20 that religion is a factor that can't be ignored in geopolitical policy and planning."

The R20 has identified six priority areas for engagement and established eight corresponding working groups, each of which has a dedicated webpage.

- Working Group 1 on the integral relationship between religion and human flourishing ("WG-1 on Religion and Human Flourishing");
- Working Group 2 on the need to identify shared values and establish reciprocity among the world's diverse peoples, cultures and religions, by treating one another in accordance with the highest moral standards embraced by our respective traditions ("WG-2 on Shared Values and Reciprocity");
- Working Group 3 on historical grievances, truth-telling, compassion, reconciliation, and forgiveness ("WG-3 on Truth and Reconciliation");
- Working Group 4 on the recontextualization of obsolete and problematic tenets of religious orthodoxy ("WG-4 on Recontextualization");
- Working Group 5 on the ethics of technology and business, including artificial intelligence ("WG-5 on Technology and Business");
- Working Group 6 on restoring balance to nature and society through the understanding and practice of spiritual ecology ("WG-6 on Spiritual Ecology");
- Working Group 7 on reviving the traditional role of art and culture as "windows to the transcendent" that serve to elevate the human spirit and inculcate ethical and spiritual values within society ("WG-7 on Art and Culture"); and
- Working Group 8 on giving voice to religion in the public square through political engagement ("WG-8 on Religion in the Public Square").

"A remarkable transformation has been taking place in the Muslim world, a years-long shift towards pluralism and tolerance belying common assumptions about Islam. Maybe we missed this earlier: a lot has been going on, after all. But last week in Bali, at the G20's ground-breaking Religion Forum, the R20, that transformation took center stage. Not only is it an epochal moment in modern Islam, but this moment also helped create the world's most important interfaith conversation."

~ *The Hill*