

Joint Statement following the Inaugural Meeting on September 15, 2021 between the Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue of I.R. Iran and the National Council of Churches in Australia and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

It is quite evident that healthier relations between members of the one human family are now more crucial than ever. Unfortunately, due to the lack of moderation in the use of divine gifts in the world, cruel and irresponsible acts, violence in various forms, and negligence towards the high values of forgiveness and kindness means that conflictual relations between nations and cultures are on the increase.

It goes without saying that the continuation of this situation will lead to the destruction of the planet causing immense tragic suffering for humankind. However, people of faith have a unique opportunity and special responsibility to help humankind cultivate a planetary life that is more loving, more understanding, and more forgiving.

These were the common views of all participants at the first meeting of the leaders of both the Iranian Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (CID) and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C), with the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA).

Based on these views, the participants in the virtual meeting that took place on Wednesday, September 15, stressed the need for the establishment of economic and social justice that promotes lasting and sustainable peace and prevents migration and asylum.

The issues discussed and the agreements arrived at in this meeting were as follows:

Both sides expressed their satisfaction with the first virtual meeting that took place on Wednesday, September 15, 2021. While both parties have established Dialogues and Partnerships with other international Centres, for each of us this is a new venture, linking Iran and Australia.

This new relationship was established with the coordination and full support of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Canberra.

We shared our delight that this link has become possible and expressed our mutual sense of responsibility to make the best of our connection.

Our common concern was expressed as a question: “How can we cooperate to serve humanity together?”

Looking ahead to future meetings, we asked what can people of faith in Iran and in Australia do together regarding climate change caused by human negligence and the plight of people displaced as refugees?

Despite the geographical distance between Iran and Australia, there are numerous personal experiences shared by both sides that could strengthen sincere cooperation in the future. These included our family backgrounds in rural and regional areas; the impact of war’s trauma on our respective families and our many years of adult life in multifaith and multicultural environments.

Agreeing to focus the next round of dialogue between the two sides on climate change and on the plight of refugees, the “Joint Message for the Protection of Creation” issued by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Pope Francis, and the Archbishop of Canterbury in September 2021 was taken into consideration and supported by both sides.

We are aware of equivalent Statements made by Islamic leaders and hope that the outcomes of the crucial upcoming climate change conference, UNCOP 26, which begins on October 31, 2021 in Glasgow will be of benefit to the human world. We, therefore, agreed to - along with people of other faiths - offer our prayers from the beginning until the end of the conference through cyberspace platforms and at the international level.

Our initial meeting was very cordial and warm. In the end, it was decided that until conditions are suitable for face-to-face dialogues, a joint webinar will be held on the role of religions in preserving the environment and curbing climate change caused by human negligence and its consequences, including migration and asylum, in 2022. In this webinar, two experts from both sides will present their views on this issue in the form of scholarly papers.

We pray for each other and for our future works with the understanding that the earth is our common home and that we share a responsibility to look after each child of the planet.

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