



Phnom Penh Dialogue 2008 on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony 3 - 6 April 2008

We, the participants in the Phnom Penh Dialogue 2008 on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony - from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam, gathered in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 3-6 April 2008.

This Dialogue builds on the commitments from previous Dialogues in Yogyakarta in 2004, Cebu in 2006 and Waitangi in 2007.

We thank the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia for hosting the fourth Regional Interfaith Dialogue, and for providing the opportunity to appreciate the richness of Khmer cultural traditions. We also express our appreciation to the Governments of Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand and the Philippines as co-sponsors of the Dialogue process.

We were very much encouraged by the comments made by His Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, as well as senior representatives from the host and co-sponsoring countries at the opening ceremony, "endorsing the principle of a culture of peace and calling for its spread to all the corners of the world".

In reflecting on our progress since Jogjakarta in 2004, two realities have encouraged us. First, many countries have already demonstrated significant progress in promoting stable and cohesive communities. Second, it is now clear that there are many practical initiatives at all levels of society that have been implemented and have reduced religious disharmony and engender cooperation towards the common good. In this light we have agreed to commit ourselves to work towards the following in conjunction with governments and other sectors of society:

- a. multifaith dialogue and cooperation;
- b. peace as a sacred priority;
- c. increased participation by women and youth in interfaith dialogue;
- d. sharing with our communities successful examples of multifaith dialogue and cooperation and encouraging others to participate; and
- e. interfaith cooperation that addresses issues of critical community concerns in our region such as poverty, HIV, human rights, environmental issues and natural disasters.

ACTION PLAN

RELATIONSHIPS

1. We encourage governments to investigate possible mechanisms for maintaining regional interfaith activity between Dialogues.

2. We recommend further cooperation on the development of bilateral (country-to-country) programs and projects, encouraging interreligious cooperation and understanding.
3. We encourage a stronger focus on dialogue within religions, including through intrafaith dialogue at national and regional levels.

EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

4. We recommend bringing educationalists together to develop curricula to promote interfaith understanding and human rights from religious perspectives.
5. We acknowledge the value of contemplative spiritual practices as an aid to promoting peace and resolving conflict.
6. We recommend the improvement of the religious education curriculum in order to help promote moderate religious views among youth.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION and PEACE BUILDING

7. We recommend utilising religious and spiritual leaders of standing to assist in resolving intercommunal conflicts and tensions within the region.
8. We recommend strengthening collaborative religious structures and networks for developing conflict resolution skills, practices and attitudes in areas of intercommunal conflict.
9. We recommend exploring the possibility of joint projects and activities, engaging people across faith traditions in areas of communal tension.
10. We recommend the sharing of case studies of effective examples of responding to violence.

GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

11. We recommend helping communities learn more about each other through informal settings such as community gatherings, festivals, sporting events or projects.
12. We recommend broadening of the dialogue process to include more of those not currently involved.
13. We recommend the development of mechanisms by which the role of women in interfaith activity can be further recognised, including through the establishment of women's interfaith forums and by providing training and support.
14. We recommend strengthening multi-religious youth networks across the region, encouraging cooperation, including through exchange programs, camps and training programs.

MEDIA AND PROMOTING INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING

15. We encourage the media to balance freedom of speech with responsibility.
16. We will work to ensure a positive contribution by the media in building understanding between religions and faiths with particular regard to how biased and inflammatory reporting may foment division.
17. We recommend further training to assist faith leaders to communicate effectively with and through the modern media.

We recommend that this Dialogue process continue and that options for hosting the next meeting be explored.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 4 April 2008