

**International Conference on Humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons,**

**Oslo 4 – 5 March 2013.**

**Statement by European Council of Religious Leaders/ Religions for Peace  
delegation.**

Our delegation of Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Buddhist leaders represents Religions for Peace, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition. Religions for Peace brings together representatives of world's religions globally, regionally and nationally. "Different faiths – common action!" is our mission, and we believe that peace is more than absence of war and threat of annihilation.

We congratulate the Norwegian government for convening this timely and crucially important conference on humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons!

The nuclear threat has been prominent on Religions for Peace's agenda since its first World Assembly in Kyoto in 1970. More than 400 religious leaders from around the world stated:

*"Man's continued existence on this planet is threatened with nuclear extinction. Never has there been such despair among men. Our deep conviction that the religions of the world have a real and important service to render to the cause of peace has brought us to Kyoto from the four corners of the earth."*

Nuclear weapons kill indiscriminately. They destroy innocent human life, even as they destroy other forms of life such as animals and vegetation, cause irrevocable damage to the environment for many generations to come and cause human suffering and disease. A member in our delegation is a living witness of the devastating impact of the Hiroshima bomb. His message is clear: Nuclear weapons have been unleashed twice, two times too many!

As religious leaders of different traditions we firmly believe that these weapons are contrary to our religious and ethical principles.

With humility we admit that religions through history have been misused by those in power, and that religious institutions have supported political actions that grossly violate human dignity. This is in contrast to the spiritual values being taught by our religions and that are shared by other worldviews and philosophies. Those values include sanctity of life, human dignity, respect and solidarity. We therefore call on all people of faith and all other people of good will to honour and live by these values. We believe that the threat and use of nuclear weapons are completely contrary to these values.

We realize that two generations have lived without the post-World War II ideological divide that seemed to justify the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. The nuclear weapons are, however still around as a real threat, and they may be unleashed by accident or by will. Future generations should be relieved from this threat!

We agree with the General Secretary of World Council of Churches when he says that *“We strongly affirm the responsibility of all governments to examine the impact of nuclear weapons on human health, the biosphere and the means of life. People everywhere have been denied rigorous, public, evidence-based scrutiny of weapons which are too terrible for any use.”*

Religions for Peace will continue working for the abolition of all nuclear weapons, and our delegation calls upon governments of this conference immediately to set in motion a process that will result in a global treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

Thank you for your attention!