

# FINAL REPORT

## Stockholm Meeting on Interreligious and Cultural Dialogue: “Walk Together”

October 29<sup>th</sup> 2019

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## Final report

### Stockholm Meeting on Interreligious and Cultural Dialogue

#### *“Walk Together”*

#### ***Sigtunastiftelsen, October 29<sup>th</sup> 2019.***

On October 29<sup>th</sup> 2019 the Chair of International Relations and Diplomacy of the European Institute of International Studies (EIS) organized the ***Stockholm Meeting on Interreligious and Cultural Dialogue: “Walk together”*** in Sigtunastiftelsen (Sweden). The international meeting took place at the initiative of the Cardinal of Sweden Anders Arborelius ocd, R.C. Bishop of Stockholm in collaboration with KAICIID, with the support of Sigtuna Stiftelsen (Sweden), Bonifatius Werk (Germany), Ansgar-Werk Switzerland, Ansgar-Werk Osnabrück (Germany) and Argentine Embassy in Sweden.

The aim of the meeting was to gather religious leaders, policy makers, members of the academia as well as youth representatives to provide theoretical and practical input to discussions on interreligious dialogue.

The primary geographical focus for good practices in interreligious dialogue was Sweden, but as the meeting gathered many international participants we could compare existing global practices and success stories from all over the world.

The program of the meeting consisted of four panels of discussion, in which the participants presented their expertise and ideas on the topic. Below follows the list of the panels and the participants in each panel:

#### Inaugural Session:

- Cardinal Anders Arborelius ocd, cardinal of Sweden and bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm
- Patrice Brodeur, professor, senior advisor at KAICIID Centre.
- Amb. Antonio Nuñez y García-Saúco, president, European Institute of International Studies
- Mario Torres Jarrín, PhD, director, European Institute of International Studies

#### Panel I: Religious Leaders & Interreligious Dialogue: Framing the Conversation

- Rabbi Abraham Skorka, rector Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires. Currently visiting professor at the Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia (United States)
- Mohamed Abu-Nimer, professor and director, Peacebuilding and Development Institute at the American University (United States). Video presentation.
- Peter Weiderud, Special Envoy for Religion in Conflict and Peace Building, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Sweden)
- Lourdes de Miguel Saez, PhD, professor and dean of the College of Law at the Catholic University of Ávila (Spain)

- Tomáš Doležal, PhD, The School of International Relations and Diplomacy at Anglo-American University in Prague (Czech Republic)
- José Antonio Calvo Gómez, PhD, academic director, European Institute of International Studies

#### Panel II: Religious Leaders & Interreligious Dialogue: Challenges and Opportunities Globally

- Hassanain Govani, representative of the Shia Muslim Community in Sweden.
- Imam Salahuddin Barakat, representative of the Sunni Muslim Community in Sweden.
- Rabbi Ute Steyer, rabbi of the Jewish Community of Stockholm
- Bishop Eva Brunne, bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Stockholm in the Church of Sweden
- Cardinal Anders Arborelius ocd, cardinal of Sweden and bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm

#### Panel III: Religious Leaders & Interreligious Dialogue: Intergovernmental Cooperation. Case studies.

- The Centre for Inter Faith Dialogue in the Diocese of Stockholm, represented by Sofia Nordin (Sweden)
- Inter-American Institute of Interreligious Dialogue, represented by Rabbi Daniel Goldman (Argentina). Video presentation.
- KAICIID (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue), Vienna (Austria) represented by Professor Patrice Brodeur
- Scholas Occurrentes Foundation, represented by Marta Simoncelli, deputy secretary (Spain)
- Guds Hus (House of God) represented by Carl Dahlbäck, vicar of the parish of Nacka (Church of Sweden)

#### Panel IV: Youth & Interreligious Dialogue in Europe

- Jakob Schwarz, president of the Church of Sweden Youth (Svenska kyrkans Unga)
- Lovisa Jaruta, representative of the young Catholics in Sweden (Sveriges Unga Katoliker)
- Yasri Khan, president of the Swedish Muslims for Peace and Justice (Svenska Muslimer för Fred och Rättvisa)
- Alexander Eisen, representative of young Jews in Sweden

#### Conclusions & Closing

- Amb. Antonio Nuñez y García-Saúco, president, European Institute of International Studies
- Cardinal Anders Arborelius ocd, cardinal of Sweden and bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm

The exchanges, almost exclusively revolving around Sweden, were very straightforward and revealed the many challenges that especially smaller religious communities are confronted with, such as the very secular at often anti-religious dominant Swedish cultural norms. The rising anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents and public expressions in mainstream fora of discussion (both media and official political spaces at times, in addition to social media) was denounced by many participants throughout the day, although the scale of this emerging problem was not one on which all participants agreed.

There is still a great need of clarifying what is a 'healthy democratic space' when it comes to minority-majority relations, especially when it comes to respecting various religious minority identities and practices.

Based on the ideas presented during the meeting, the following conclusions are drawn:

- 1.- The conflict is part of human nature, but so is the need to live in harmony with the created natural order and the rest of human beings.
- 2.- Religion, as an identity factor, can be a cause of conflict and, in fact, has been throughout history and in our time.
- 3.- Religious identity cannot be an exclusive identity, because the three monotheistic religions have God as Creator and Father. This makes all its believers not only equal, but children and brothers in the faith of one God.
- 4.- Therefore, to avoid conflicts and achieve peace and coexistence among all believers, it is necessary to respect the other as an equal, to love him as a brother, to dialogue and to act as believers in one God.
- 5.- Dialogue and interaction between believers is not possible if religion is relegated to the exclusive sphere of internal consciousness, to the deepest corner of the soul. That's where it rests and grows like the root of a plant, which needs to expand outside to offer its fruits to others.
- 6.- Religion is not only an intimate individual experience, but a total human fact, with clear and strong social, cultural, legal and political implications. If religion were only a spiritual and intimate experience, it would not be involved in multiple tensions and conflicts of different nature that different societies and governments should prevent and avoid. If there is no religious conflict without a political dimension, the inverse formulation is equally valid: not all political or social conflicts lack religious reference.
- 7.- In fact, recent events in our time, related to mass migration, identity claims, extremisms and fundamentalisms have caused the decline of the most extreme political movements of secularism and have contributed to rethinking the role of religion in the public sphere.
- 8.- The individualistic conception of religion as the exclusive value of conscience, the excessive zeal in the purity of one's faith, the political structure of societies and the organization of confessions or certain social issues are factors that constantly generate evidence of the difficulties of interaction and dialogue between religions.

9.- At the national level, minority religions feel relegated by the official or socially majority religions. These religions have not developed a sufficiently effective strategy or informal practice of dialogue and interaction among them. In this sense, the creation of interfaith platforms would be highly recommended, such as the one established at this Stockholm Seminar, which could be given a permanent character.

10.- On an international scale, it seems increasingly advisable to create an international organization that deals with the global dimension for world peace and represents the dialogue between civilizations and religions, which would also promote international security. Within this framework it would be possible to respect and take advantage of the very valuable, although limited, experience of existing organizations.

Finally, the European Institute of International Studies would like to thank all the people and institutions that have collaborated in some way to make this seminar possible. Specifically, we would like to thank the following donors:

- Sigtunastiftelsen, Sigtuna (Sweden)	29 000 SEK
- KAICIID	6 000 €
- Bonifatiuswerk	3 000 €
- Ansgarwerk Osnabruck	3 000 €
- Ansgar-werk Schweiz	30 000 SEK
- Embassy of Argentina in Sweden	6 318 SEK
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