

PRESS RELEASE - ASIAN RELIGIOUS YOUTH LEADERS REJECT ABUSE OF RELIGIONS, FORGE CONSENSUS AT REGIONAL SUMMIT

(SINGAPORE, August 30, 2007)—Asian youth leaders will forge an alternative to religious extremism and the violent abuse of religion in support of violence at the Summit of Asian Religious Youth Leaders, 4–7 September 2007 in Singapore. The event will bring together youth representatives of major pan-Asian religious organizations and religious youth leaders from 18 countries.

The summit will be held at the Raffles Town Club, 1 Plymouth Avenue, Singapore 297753. The Summit will be co-sponsored by *Religions for Peace*, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), the Inter-religious Organization in Singapore (IRO), and Majelis Ugama Islam Singapore (MUIS). The event is open to the press.

Violent threats to peace are manifested in conflict, war, terrorism, arms proliferation, extreme poverty, environmental degradation and human rights abuses in many parts of Asia. Religions are often misused by extremists, unscrupulous politicians and sensationalist media to incite violence and hatred. Youth are often exploited as a consequence of such abuse of religions.

The alternative is the world's religious communities cooperating effectively for peace. Action-oriented examples of inter-religious cooperation will be shared by youth leaders from 18 countries in Asia. In Indonesia, the *Religions for Peace* affiliated inter-religious organization engages women and youth in preventing and transforming conflicts. In Cambodia, young Buddhist monks, in partnership with religious leaders from other faiths, provide rural villagers with non-violent conflict resolution skills. In Mindanao, the Philippines, Muslim and Christian youth leaders are at the forefront of inter-religious mediation. China, South and North Korea, and Japan have been consolidating their sub-regional inter-religious network to discern their common values and address their common concerns. Muslim, Hindu and Christian communities in India are working together to address the plight of HIV/AIDS.

Asian youth leaders' creative undertakings will be further strengthened by the solidarity of the *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network. Dr. Hayder Abdul Karim, an Iraqi Muslim, 32-year-old medical doctor and *Religions for Peace* coordinator in Iraq, will

share his own experience in advancing Sunni, Shia, Kurdish and Christian inter-religious cooperation in Iraq. Ms. Avigail Moshe, an Israeli Jew, a member of *Religions for Peace* International Youth Committee, will present her work on the building of Jerusalem Inter-religious Youth Council as an instrument for peace in the troubled region.

RELIGIONS FOR PEACE GLOBAL YOUTH NETWORK

Religions for Peace Global Youth Network harnesses the energy and commitment of religious youth leaders all over the world to advance the mission of multi-religious cooperation for peace. The Global Youth Network gained full momentum in 2006 when the six regional inter-religious youth networks were launched in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean. Concrete success in mounting action programs among six regions has inspired donors to award funding to carry out similar projects around the globe. Today, the Global Youth Network is developing pilot programs to confront some of our most urgent challenges—building peace, addressing environmental issues, and coping with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Concurrently, the youth are working to mainstream youth and youth issues into *Religions for Peace* programming activities at the local, regional, and global levels. This important work is led by the International Youth Committee (IYC), comprised of fifteen members representing the world's faith traditions from six continents. The IYC was first established at the Sixth World Assembly in Riva del Garda, Italy, in 1994, and the current members were elected at the *Religions for Peace* VIII World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan in August 2006. Currently, the *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Network is led by its newly elected Youth Coordinator, Ms. Stellamaris Mulaeh, who also serves as Pax Romana's national coordinator for peacebuilding in Kenya.

The Global Youth Network seeks to advance its work of mobilizing power of religious youth, building strategic partnerships with the United Nations, inter-governmental institutions, and civil society organization, and implementing action programs through national and regional inter-religious youth networks.