

UNITED NATIONS SPIRITUAL FORUM FOR WORLD PEACE

A proposal by T.Y.S. Lama Gangchen

Inner peace is the most solid foundation for world peace.

All religions and spiritual movements promote the spiritual development of their members and look, in one way or another, for the building of inner peace. Religions have sometimes caused wars or at least have been used by social and political leaders to justify wars and different forms of violence and oppression.

At the same time nevertheless, religions and spiritual movements have significantly contributed towards the development of a culture of peace and have fostered world peace by promoting values such as mutual respect, solidarity, compassion and social justice.

The United Nations is the main political forum for world peace. Peace-making and peace keeping are its core functions. Nevertheless there is not appropriate room in that forum for the religions and spiritual movements to be represented and to be actively involved in building world peace.

Although some countries have an official religion, in general religions ignore national borders and co-exist within countries and local communities. *“Religions must not identify themselves with political, economic or social powers so as to remain free to work for justice and peace”*.*

The Governments of the United Nations Member States cannot represent religions and spiritual movements. It is time to give them official recognition within the United Nations and to create for them an appropriate forum within the United Nations environment to hear their voices and actively associate them in the noble task of building world peace.

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

To fulfill this need we propose the creation of a United Nations Spiritual Forum for World Peace under the General Assembly. The spiritual forum would be a permanent space for the leaders and representatives of all major and minor religions and spiritual movements for dialogue and concertation, as well as a bridge with the political forum. The spiritual forum concept assumes both diversity and commonalities among religions and spiritual movements. The forum will not entail the creation of a new multi religious philosophical doctrine or the ironing out of cultural religious diversity, but would be based on the holders of each religious tradition and identity, finding out in the dialogue common values, views and goals for concerted action in the search for inner and world peace, with full respect for the right of every group to cultivate, practise and teach its own doctrine.

In this spirit, the spiritual forum is expected to provide the space and channels for facilitating a better knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, ethical codes, organisation and practices of each other, a basic condition for mutual respect; to interchange ideas and work out common views from a spiritual perspective on the major problems and challenges faced by mankind, such as poverty eradication, population growth and protection of the environment; and identify specific areas for concerted action in the promotion of peace.

* From the Declaration of the UNESCO Conference on “the Contribution by Religions to the Culture of Peace”, Barcelona, Spain December 12-18 1994.

The spiritual forum will also offer an official channel to the spiritual leaders to speak with one single voice to the political leaders with regard to world peace and to relate to the specialised agencies and funding agencies of the UN system which are responsible for promoting social, economic and environmental development. In order to fulfill its mission, the spiritual forum at international level should be complemented by spiritual forums created at national and local levels which will promote inter-religious dialogue and concerted action for inner and social peace in the communities. Without the active involvement of local communities the spiritual forum would remain only as one more superstructure.

COMPLEMENTARY OUTCOMES

The effective operation of the spiritual forum at all levels can be expected to:

1. Re-energize all religions and spiritual movements by enabling their voices to remain relevant to the billions of citizens of this planet now and in the future.
2. Offer new ideas and re-package old ideas in the field of education for peace; and last, but not least.
3. Contribute to solve religious conflicts which are now hindering the development of world peace.

INNER PEACE AND WORLD PEACE NOW AND FOREVER BY ALL THE HOLY BEINGS' BLESSINGS

"I would like to be very clear, that although I am the initiator of this proposal, as it is gradually realized and the Spiritual Forum is created both locally, nationally and internationally, that is under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly, I personally have no wish to be in the forefront of this assembly. My wish is to stay in the background, serving the Spiritual Forum in whichever way I am able, but leaving the leadership to those better qualified to develop this Spiritual United Nations to its fullest potential for the benefit of all humanity.

There are four key points to consider about the Spiritual Forum:

The Spiritual Forum concept implies working for development of Spiritual Forums for World Peace in our local communities, in our countries and at international level.

Participants of the Spiritual Forum must respect the rights of every other spiritual group or religion to cultivate, practise and teach its own doctrine.

That we, the participants of the Spiritual Forum, will respectfully try to understand and be sympathetic to other beliefs, ethical codes, organizations and practices with the aim of sharing and exchanging ideas about how to solve global problems such as war, poverty and environmental degradation.

That we will work together harmoniously to identify specific areas for concerted action in the promotion of inner and world peace.

The Spiritual Forum does not entail the creation of a new religious or spiritual doctrine or the loss of cultural-religious diversity; it shall be based on the holders of each religious tradition presenting their own system and philosophy at its best, in an open spirit whilst collaborating with other traditions, to find new perspectives and solutions for the many urgent problems now facing humanity. It is important in the 21st century, both for the development and success of the global village and environment, that religions accept each other and come to some agreement on major issues such as population studies, economy, environment, peace making, and so on. Religions must work together because the harmony of the collective human spirit is the heart of all religions and is beyond any singular religion.

The proposal aims to create continuously functioning Spiritual Forums for World Peace at both the international (United Nations), national and local levels. I hope that you will now collectively accept the proposal as your own and present it to the United Nations, the main international organ in the creation of world peace. Religious and spiritual traditions can make an important contribution towards the development of world peace and so we should collectively request the United Nations to allow this forum to be realised as soon as possible,”

T.Y.S. Lama Gangchen

