

Paris, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015

## **EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS, JOURNALISTS MEET IN PARIS MEDIA FORUM ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

In Paris, France on 15 and 16 June 2015, the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), based in Vienna, held the European Media Forum on the universal human rights of freedom of religion and freedom of expression, which gathered European religious leaders, journalists, as well as civil society organisations. This forum is part of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration “United against Violence in the Name of Religion”, which was adopted in November 2014 and was followed up by the May 2015 conferences Beirut on preserving religious and cultural diversity in Syria and Iraq.

“This meeting denounces violence in the name of religion. Religious leaders and journalists need to work closely together since we have similar missions as mediators to promote coexistence. We also recognize that freedom of religion and freedom of expression complement each other. It is very important that we affirm this shared commitment here in Paris, a city that suffered attacks on journalists and freedom of expression, anti-Semitic attacks, attacks on freedom of religion, and on our security,” said His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel.”

The participants agreed that closer relations between journalists and religious communities increase the media’s religious awareness and the religious leader’s media awareness. Cooperative working relationships and shared understandings of the mindful exercise of universal rights will help both media and religious leaders proactively counteract hate speech and discrimination by fostering empathy for people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

“The participants from religious communities and the journalists identified common goals and areas of cooperation. The European Media Forum will help the participating religious leaders, media experts, and journalists promote a constructive public discourse on these essential human rights,” said KAICIID Secretary General bin Muaammar.

Recommendations (Please click [here](#) for a full list)

When religion is used to justify violence, religious people need to raise their voices in the media to denounce and reject such violence.

Religious leaders need to speak out whenever any religious community is the victim of hate speech to assertively reject discrimination.

A continuing dialogue between religious communities and journalists fosters greater knowledge and understanding.

Mainstream religious communities gain a representative share of media attention when they utilize media literacy training, build constructive working relations with the media, and proactively provide journalists relevant, authoritative information.

Journalists need access to more resources and tools to support their coverage, as well as training on religious literacy.

Stronger mechanisms for media self-regulation can better address cases of offensive speech. The existing international legal framework and norms are sufficient; additional legal measures are not needed to counter hate speech.

An interreligious rapid response mechanism is needed to speak out against hate speech as it occurs.

### Background

Organised with the support of KAICIID Board member and Metropolitan of France, His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel, and attended by KAICIID Board members Swami Agnivesh, Father Miguel Ayuso, Dr. Seyyed Ata'ollah Mohajerani, Reverend Kosho Niwano, Chief Rabbi David Rosen and Dr. Mohammed Sammak, the meeting brought together religious leaders from European Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim communities, as well as leading civil society organisations such as Article 19, and the International Press Institute, and media organisations such the BBC, European Broadcasting Union, El País, Reuters, Religion News Service, and others.

The following organizations supported the European Media Forum: the World Council of Churches; the Conference of European Rabbis; the Hindu Forum of Europe, the European Buddhist Union; the Islamic Cultural Centre of the United Kingdom; a Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe; the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture; the Ethical Journalism Network; and the Religion Newswriters Foundation.