

Vienna, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014

## **KAICIID LAUNCHES INITIATIVES TO PRESERVE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN IRAQ AND SYRIA**

The KAICIID Special Conference “United against Violence in the Name of Religion” gathered in Vienna on 18 and 19 November 2014 high-level religious leaders from Christian, Druze, Mandeian, Muslim, and Yazidi communities across the Middle East.

These religious leaders represent communities whose followers are currently suffering persecution or were driven out of their homelands. The violence committed in the name of religion in Iraq and Syria threatens the survival of religious minorities, the social and religious fabric of relations between religious communities, as well as Muslim and Christian religious institutions and communities in Syria and Iraq.

To preserve the religious and cultural and religious diversity that has developed over the past thousand years in this region, the religious leaders issued a unified condemnation of any violence in the name of religion, and agreed upon a set of recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations prioritize social cohesion, communicating positive messages and countering extremist discourse through traditional and social media, promoting curricula that provide education in dialogue and world faiths, strengthen the ability of religious leaders and youth to support pluralism and diversity, and to establish a regional infrastructure to ensure these measures sustainability.

### **KAICIID Initiatives**

Based upon these recommendations, a number of KAICIID initiatives have been approved by the KAICIID Board of Directors for implementation in 2015. KAICIID’s initiatives engage UN agencies, such as the UNDP, the Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, the UN’s Special Envoy on Youth, and UNESCO, as well as international, religious and civil society organizations. In partnership, KAICIID will be collaborating to support religious leader’s involvement in preventing atrocities, to empower religious leaders and youth to reach broader audiences via traditional and social media and advocate pluralism, support educators to support pluralism through interreligious education, and create an Arabic religious institutions network to support social cohesion.

The KAICIID Board of Directors consists of representatives of five major world religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. The KAICIID Dialogue Centre (King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural



Dialogue) was founded to empower and encourage dialogue among followers of different religions and cultures around the world. Located in Vienna, the Centre is an international organization founded by Austria, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and the Holy See as Founding Observer, comprising the “Council of Parties” responsible for overseeing the work of the Centre.