

Preliminary Report
On
Interfaith Harmony Breakfast in Skopje
Macedonia, February 26th, 2013
Library in Old Bazaar

Youth Organization “Shpresa” is pleased to report the successful completion of our programme to mark UN World Interfaith Harmony Week in Skopje for the first time. The planned event was held on the 26th of February, 2013, in accordance with the published agenda.

At 11.00 on February, 2013, Ms Enisa M.Gjokaj opened proceedings for the first Skopje UN World Interfaith Harmony Week on behalf of Youth Organization “Shpresa” in the Library in Old Bazaar with a short presentation of the history and purpose of the initiative by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and its adoption by the UN General Assembly. Ms.Gjokaj stressed the essentially plural nature of all societies and that the preservation and cherishing of religious plurality in open societies is amongst the most important and pressing tasks of the contemporary world.

The Interfaith Harmony Breakfast in Skopje, Macedonia was organized to promote the World Interfaith Harmony Week, facilitate dynamic activities and create a space for exchange of thought, reflections, insights, dialogue on the theme. There were present 34 representatives of different sectors, starting from foreign diplomats, NGO and IO sector, representatives of religious institutions, with aims to initiate voluntarily programs and activities promoting peace and harmony; and to strengthen partnership and mutual support in promoting Interfaith Harmony.

Ms Gjokaj stated that as president of Youth Organization she believe that Youth is the strongest power in the world. Young people should promote respect and the sense of friendship among faiths and present is the requisites for building peace and harmony in Macedonia. Referring to the different faiths and cultures in Macedonia unity in diversity has not only to be maintained but to be strengthened as respect for other faiths is of global importance.

This was followed by the presentation of Mr.Arben Sulejmani-Head of a Bektashi community in Macedonia where he spoke about the nature of interfaith relations both in the world generally and in Macedonia in particular, with a particular stress on reasons behind the UN General Assembly’s initiative for the World Interfaith Harmony Week, the reasons for relative neglect of this area in the past and the reason why it has now moved up on the world agenda as an issue of ever increasing importance under conditions of globalization and the gathering crises related to various forms of sustainability of world systems.

Participants' addressed the question of religious plurality in the contemporary world from a variety of different intellectual and religious perspectives. These presentations served as the basis for a discussion, which was open to the public, which included leading members of civil society organizations active in the field of interfaith relations and the promotion of social, cultural and religious plurality in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Given the inherent importance of the theme, the success with which the event went forward, and the interest shown on the part of the public, it was proposed by participants that a commitment be made to hold a similar event next year, with a greater level of involvement by civil and religious leaders.

Ambassador Erwan Fouéré wrote a letter to Youth Organization "Shpresa":

Dear Friends, Thank you for your kind invitation to attend the interfaith event in Skopje. I am unable to attend, but would like to reiterate my best wishes, and to underline the importance of such initiative time when basic democratic values and efforts at reconciliation between the political leaders of the country are badly needed. Those in power have a crucial responsibility to stretch out a hand of genuine compromise and reconciliation to their political opponents. This is not a time for revenge or vindictive behavior.- Erwan Fouéré

Photographs of the newspapers publications are attached. A number of media were present at the event and participants gave a large number of interviews to print and online media.

Ms. Enisa M.Gjokaj

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