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**The 4th World Interfaith Harmony Week at the United Nations**

***Faith leaders and UN Ambassadors Address Building Bridges Across Boundaries to achieve sustainable development goals, global health and peaceful societies***

**New York, New York, February 2, 2016** – The United African Congress and Give Them a Hand Foundation present an event during the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week on February 4th, on the topic of *“Building Bridges Across Boundaries,”* featuring presentations by faith leaders of diverse religions and UN Ambassadors.

The theme was selected given our world currently beset by internecine wars, terrorism, disaffected and troubled youth, poverty, an alarming rate of climate change, and record number of refugees and internally displaced peoples, highlighting the need for collaborative understanding and cooperation in seeking peaceful solutions to common problems.

The event is held in conjunction with United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/65/5, adopted on 5 October 2010, that proclaimed the first week of February each year as World Interfaith Harmony Week, to be observed by governments, NGOs, youth groups and civil society, with a variety of programmes promoting interfaith harmony and understanding. The purpose was expressed by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

"World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrates the principles of tolerance and respect for the other that are deeply rooted in the world’s major religions. The observance is also a summons to solidarity in the face of those who spread misunderstanding and mistrust."

The February 4th event – consistent with the partners’ mission -- is based on the interconnectedness of three pillars: (1) the promotion of a lasting interfaith harmony and understanding; (2) achievement of the new UN 2030 Agenda of sustainable development, specifically Goal #16 about peaceful societies; and (3) continued vigilance about world health and specifically the Ebola epidemic, that has re-appeared in West Africa after the region being declared disease-free.

The two-hour program will be held at the United Nationsin the ECOSOC chamber at UN headquarters in New York City from 3pm-5pm.

The opening plenary address will be given by UN Assistant Secretary-General Thomas Gass, UN Policy Coordination and Inter Agency Affairs. UN Ambassadors representing the UN Missions that are co-sponsors of the event will make statements. These are Ethiopia Permanent Representative H.E. Tekeda Alemu; Jamaica Permanent Representative H.E. Courtenay Rattray; and Indonesia Deputy Permanent Representative Muhammad Anshor.

"This event about interfaith harmony is a critical prerequisite to help us attain peaceful societies, equity, emphasis on “we the people,” and “the future we want,” that is the essence of the new 2030 UN agenda,” said co-organizer and founder of Give Them A Hand Foundation Gordon Tapper.

Prominent leaders from Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and Buddhist faiths will make presentations, and participate in a panel discussion with audience questions. These include Imam Shamsi Ali, Nusantara Foundation; Rabbi Dr. Alvin Kass, Chief Chaplain, New York Police Department; Reverend Dionne P. Boisierre, Chaplain, Church Center to the United Nations; Dr. Uma Mysorekar, Hindu Temple of New York; Abbess Venerable Yu Rang, Buddha’s Light International Association; Ceremonial Ritualist Ka’nahsohon Kevin Deer of the Mohawk Nation (Iroquois); and Rabbi Jill Hausman of the Actors’ Temple. Children from the Buddha’s Light International Association Children’s Choir will also perform.

"In these times of global uncertainties that continue to challenge mankind with all types of issues and problems, our problems could no longer be effectively resolved along tribal, religious or ethnic lines but by working honestly across boundaries to help the helpless majority " said organizing partner Sidique Wai, President of the United African Congress.

The event offers members of the UN community and the public – including UN staff, ambassadors and diplomats, NGO representatives, members of the private and public sectors, students, invited experts, guests, media and other stakeholders -- the opportunity to exchange ideas about achieving the new global Goal #16 of the UN 2030 Agenda about peaceful societies, through acceptance of diverse faith approaches, continued focus on peaceful approaches to the refugee crisis, and promoting global health, that pose threats worldwide.

“Peace, Ebola and the 2030 Agenda are integrally tied, as Ebola recovery is an important example of the implementation of the sustainable development goals, especially #4 about health and well-being, and #16 about peaceful societies,” said co-organizer psychologist Dr. Judy Kuriansky, main UN representative of the International Association of Applied Psychology. A disaster expert on the ground in West Africa during the outbreak, Kuriansky will show a video of the psychosocial struggles in the region, and adds, “It is essential to keep awareness alive about Ebola, and to continue assisting the vast numbers of survivors still suffering in West Africa.”

“Health crises worldwide, such as the Ebola epidemic, underscore the necessity of access to resources by all individuals, families, and communities for the well-being of affected populations and all others,” said Dr. Mohammed Nurhussein, Associate Professor Emeritus of the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center and National Chairman of the United African Congress.

Co-sponsoring organizations include the Nusantara Foundation, Buddha’s Light International Association and the International Association of Applied Psychology.

Admission to the event is free, but pre-registration is required. A press conference with the organizers, Ambassadors and faith leaders is planned at the UN just prior to the meeting. *For more information, contact* Ahmed Kargbo. At WIHW4UN@gmail.com or Mobile: (347) 245-9367.

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**The United African Congress (UAC)** is a Pan African organization headquartered in New York City, representing the interest of Continental Africans in the United States, advocating unity, democracy and good governance in the continent of Africa.

**Give Them a Hand Foundation (GTAH**) is a partnership initiative bringing together members of the UN diplomatic community, departments and agencies, Non-governmental-organizations, the private sector and corporations, to assist less privileged communities worldwide to escape extreme poverty, poor health and lack of education.

The **UAC** and **GTAH** have partnered on numerous worthy initiatives, including: raising awareness about the plights of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia to the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights; giving support to Africans in the Ukraine subjected to xenophobia and violence; hosting Ebola-awareness events for the UN and world community; mobilizing interfaith groups to assist post-Hurricane Sandy clean-up efforts; and bringing together together of different faiths beliefs and cultures.