



**Union Mondiale des Organisations Féminines Catholiques  
World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations  
Unión Mundial de las Organizaciones Femeninas Católicas  
Weltunion der Katholischen Frauenverbände**

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**Interreligious Network of Women Fostering Encounter  
Online Event to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week  
Final Report**  
*[Link to Recording of the Event](#)*

***Summary***

The Interreligious Network of Women Fostering Encounter organized a global online event to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week. The title of the event was, “An Intergenerational Dialogue to Build Harmony,” and it offered a space for women to dialogue about how their lived religious and leadership experiences offer ways of harmony and peacebuilding in diverse contexts that are often marred by conflict. The format of the event was 3 successive dialogues. Each dialogue pair included one younger and one older woman, from two different religions.

The online event was held on Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 13.00-14.30 CET, and it attracted 164 attendees from 51 countries and 5 continents. An additional 187 registrants received the recording of the event. The language was English, with simultaneous translation provided in French and Spanish. The recording was made in all 3 languages, ensuring wider access.

The event succeeded in promoting the objectives of World Interfaith Harmony Week, especially to promote “the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions in enhancing mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people...” (UN Resolution A/65/PV.34) in a manner that emphasized the unique gifts that women bring to peacebuilding work.

This event was the most extensive in a series of dialogues held since 2023 by the Interreligious Network of Women Fostering Encounter, which was formed out of a collaborative effort by the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations and the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue of the Vatican.

***Program of the Online Event***

A member of the Interreligious Network of Women, Dr. Christie Chang, President of Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women, based in Taiwan, opened the event with a summary of the history and objectives of the Network, which are consonant with those of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. She stated, “Our Interreligious Network of Women is dedicated to fostering encounters and inviting others to join us in creating cultures of encounter all around the world.” She explained that the Network, comprised of women of 12 religious traditions from dozens of countries, “seeks to be a network of example, demonstrating through our actions that true encounter, rather than division, is the key to facing our common challenges with hope.”

Dr. Chang then introduced Argentinian member Mrs. Maria Crespo of United Religions Initiative to serve as the moderator of the 3 dialogues. In her introduction, she explained, “On-the-



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ground bridge-building work needs committed actors that value social interaction, a dialogue of life that encourages positive interaction and impactful collaboration contributing to harmony in the community. When allowed, women of different ages are pillars to this dialogue of life.”

Mrs. Crespo introduced the first dialogue pair, Jewish rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, based in Jerusalem, and Juanita Coronel, a Christian university student in the United States.

Ms. Coronel was interested in Rabbi Appelbaum’s call to become a leader in her community, and the rabbi responded with explaining her unexpected path to the vocation of rabbi and seminary professor. She spoke of the work of peacebuilding in the anguished situation of Israel and Palestine, and also asked Ms. Coronel about her dreams of the future.

The second dialogue pair included Arshna Sanghrajka, member of the Jain Community and a volunteer with the Institute of Jainology and One Jain Organizations, who has extensive experience with interreligious cooperations, especially in the area of healthcare; and Diya Thobani, offering a Hindu perspective, a 17-year-old student born into a Hindu family in London who is at school with a multi-faith, culturally diverse student population.

The pair discussed the gift of diversity in Great Britain, being open to learn from the faith experiences of others, and the role of women as equal to men and also called to offer different perspectives and solutions, especially coming from their roles as mothers and bearers of compassion.

The last dialogue pair included Ruth Mkwaira, a professional hospitality expert from Malawi, now serving in that country as Secretary and Treasurer for an African Traditional Religion Women’s Group; and Dewi Praswida, a Muslim from Indonesia, who, since 2017, she has been actively involved in the GUSDURian Network and the Interfaith Brotherhood of Semarang.

Both Ms. Mkwaira and Ms. Praswida offered perspectives on unity in diversity, and how peoples of various backgrounds are working together in their respective contexts, supported by governments that recognize the power of religious traditions to bring people together.

After the dialogues, Mrs. Monica Santamarina, President of the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations, offered a thoughtful summary of the insights of the dialoguers, thanking all who worked together to make this event possible, and especially thanking the women who shared their experiences of dialogue for peacebuilding.

### ***Participants’ Feedback***

During the dialogue, participants were invited to offer contributions for a word web that captured the essence of the dialogues in words and phrases.





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**Christie Chang,  
Buddhist,  
from Taiwan,  
will introduce the  
Webinar on behalf  
of our Interreligious  
Network of Women  
Fostering Encounter.**





**The third dialogue will be shared by Ruth Mkwaira, from African Traditional Religion in Malawi, and Dewi Praswida, a Young Muslim scholar from Indonesia.**



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**Rabbi Tamar Elad-Appelbaum,**  
**from Jerusalem, will open the**  
**first dialogue with Juanita**  
**Coronel, a second-year student**  
**attending Benedictine University**  
**(USA), majoring in Health**  
**Science and minoring in**  
**Theology**



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**Maria Eugenia Crespo, a Catholic woman from Argentina, will moderate the presentation of the panelists.**

