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Interreligious Dialogue between Serbian and Indonesia



A State-Religious Delegation of the Republic of Serbia is making an official visit to Indonesia from 21 to 26 October 2019 in order to participate in the Fourth Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia.

The conference is being held in Yogyakarta, a city in southwestern Indonesia. The State-Delegation of the Republic of Serbia arrived in Yogyakarta on October 22, 2019.

The official meetings of the representatives of the two countries began on Wednesday, October 23, in the conference room of the “Meriot” Hotel in Yogyakarta. The conference was opened and greeted by Mr. Cecep Heravan, Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition to the warm welcome and introduction to the history of the city, a city where culture and religion are in

perfect harmony, Mr. Heravan recalled the importance of the inter-religious dialogue between Indonesia and Serbia. Among other things, he reminded those present of the first bilateral dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia, held in 2011, which was evaluated as the best ever held dialogue with another country. Indonesia has held interfaith dialogue with over thirty countries for many years.

Mr. Mirko Cikiriz, secretary of state at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia and head of the delegation, said, among other things, that Serbia considers Indonesia a great and traditional friend and important partner for cooperation. This year marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic and friendly bilateral relations, and we sincerely hope that our overall relations will develop even faster in the future. For more than two decades, the Republic of Indonesia has held interfaith dialogues with partner countries around the world, and since 2011 with the Republic of Serbia,. Therefore, it is a great honor for us to become partners in this field as well, as the Fourth Interfaith Dialogue of our countries' delegations begins today . I expect from the Fourth Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue the same results that all previous dialogues have given – sharing knowledge, new arrangements and fostering harmony of diversity, which will contribute to the more solid, friendly relations of our countries.

**The first plenary session was hold on the topic:
“Empowering women and youth towards an inclusive society”**

After a break, the first plenary session on “Empowering women and youth towards an inclusive society” was held. The welcome address was delivered by the session moderator, Dr. Marko Nikolic, Assistant Director at the Directorate for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities, Deputy Head of Delegation and Coordinator of the Fourth Inter-Religious Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia. Mr. Nikolic said, among other things, that from the religious perspective in today's world, mostly but unwaveringly, the affirmation of the category of “value neutrality” as a framework and response to the challenge of the growing crisis of identity of peoples and states, and consequently, the now existential need for their transformation , survival and development. It is evident that the soul of the individual is increasingly experiencing a “crucifixion” between the prevailing secularist materialist and the anthropocentric, on the one hand, and the theocentric spirit, on the other. Most countries in the world base their strategies of survival and development on the “unity of diversity” syntagm, the first stage of which comes down to economic and political integration. In this context, it must be emphasized that the notions of human rights, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the rule of law, to a greater or lesser extent, are a symbiosis of the secularized

surrogates of Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Judaist and other religious values and principles, which best affirms content analysis of their Holy Books. That is why, first and foremost, it should be borne in mind that the “fuel for development” of the world, regardless of the passage time category, represents “value-critical”, “value-integrative”, peacemaking, social security and individual-psychological the potential of his religious communities.

Therefore, the Republic of Serbia is committed to affirming and promoting inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue at all levels, as a strategic framework and precondition for the vital reaffirmation and application of universal ethical and moral principles in the world, consciously and actively contributing to this process. In the context of the definitive title of the Fourth Inter-Religious Bilateral Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia - Sustainable Peace and Harmony: Engaging Women, Youth and the Media - I would just like to emphasize that “external peace and harmony” does not exist and cannot be independent of the existence of “internal peace” in individuals, which, again, is in the original and most of all a consequence of their relationship with the “vertical”, which is then projected “horizontally” through a partial relationship with the whole world and the environment. For all that said, the Republic of Serbia, among other things, through various activities of the Directorate for Relations with Churches and Religious Communities within the Ministry of Justice, will continue to provide unequivocal and active support for the affirmation of religious freedoms and the promotion of the position of their Churches and religious communities in society, irreplaceable and organic entities in “value integration” processes in the Balkans, Europe, and around the world. In this regard, it will continue to support the affirmation of the position and role of women and young people in society, inter alia, through the media of their religious communities.

His Grace Serbian Orthodox Bishop Isihije of Mochacs had the first presentation. The Bishop conveyed greetings of His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej, and after the opening address and greetings to the host and guests, he gave a presentation on the theme: “Living together: The role of religion in bringing people together.” The Bishop’s presentation was entirely in English. His Grace emphasized that family is one of the most frequently attacked elements of society. The natural and God-given hierarchy and harmony of this basic unit and the building block have been challenged. Our understanding of family comes from marriage, which is holy and sanctified. Marriage is a permanent, free, willing community of love between a man and a woman: “... a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will be one body” (Eph 5:31). This mystical union of man and woman represents the Kingdom of the Coming Age; at the same time, it is a task

given to him by God - a community in which man and woman strive for the perfection of life and reach it in the ever-increasing degree of present life ... Respect for traditional values in the family and in the whole society is the only reliable and fruitful way for the world. It provides a stable foundation, even if it comes down to only a "small flock" of believers, and even if the secularized world rejects them, moreover, and persecutes them. We firmly believe that believers will prevail to the end, living and functioning truly in families. We pray to God that this esteemed gathering serves to deepen our awareness of these values and to further strengthen and promote them in our societies ... "

The next speaker was the representative of the Republic of Indonesia, Ms Dvi Rubianti Kolifa, Secretary General of the Asian Muslim Action Network. She spoke on the topic: "Danger of dialogue or bold talk." The presentation, aided by a video presentation, vividly evoked the position of women in the society of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the challenges of internal religious dialogue.

After the discussion, Dr. Inai Rohmani, Vice Dean for Student Affairs, and Sunah Kalijaga, an associate at the Islamic State University, addressed the audience. The presentation began with an attempt to understand radical groups and religious exclusivity. Strong collective and media visibility are crucial in promoting peace.

The next speaker was Prof. Dr. Abdullah Numan, a Serbian Mufti, who spoke on the theme: "Developing the Human Environment". Among other things, he said that we often forget about the role of women in society and that it is time to start creating a more positive atmosphere. In Islamic tradition and religious collections, everything written about women has been written by men. The fundamental rights of women have been violated. When a society loses faith, then it relies on culture. The first people did not have any political system. It was just the two of them who lived by the law of God.

Shortly afterwards, Monsignor MA Aleksandar Konacevic, Vicar General of the Belgrade Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church in Serbia, held a speech. He spoke on the topic: "Empowering women and young people to actively engage in social activities". Among other things, he said that the demand for "liberation" of women from the "power" of men gave birth to an attack by feminism on the Christian faith.

**Second plenary session was held on the topic:
"Improving the role of the media and journalists in maintaining peace
and harmony"**

The second plenary session began at 2 pm local time. The welcome address was delivered by the moderator of the session, Eko Riyadi, Head of the Center for Human Rights at the Islamic University of Indonesia. Among other things, he said that the subject and purpose of this session was to analyze the impact of social media on society and promote peace, as well as to enhance the role of the media and journalists in maintaining harmony. Social media, because of its great influence and importance for the daily life of man, are a very important factor in modern society, and can be seen as an initiator of social change and creators of social trends.

The first presentation of the second session belonged to the proto-deacon Dr. Damjan Bozic, the editor-in-chief of "Orthodoxy", a newspaper of the Serbian Patriarchate. He spoke on the topic: "Peace without truth: meaningless vitality". The presentation was entirely in English, and was divided into several sections. The term media is defined so that after the given thesis the exhibitor tries to answer the questions asked: Can we have peace without the truth? What is the process of facing the truth for us ... For us people of faith we might even call it repentance. The role of the media is to tell the truth whatever it is, because that is the only way we can face a society that will give the answer, good or bad, and on that basis will advance and strive for peace or unrest. Finally, the influence and importance of the media, as well as the shaping of a new and different social reality, are clarified.

Following a lengthy discussion, the following presentation on "Bridging Diversity – The Trilogy of Interreligious and Ethnic Dialogue" was delivered by Dr. Ustadi Hamza, Lecturer at Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University. The presentation was aided by video projection. Dr. Hamza clearly and precisely outlined the problems the media is facing in the Republic of Indonesia as well as the Muslim world in general.

Shortly afterwards, the next speaker was Fahd Pahdei, an adviser in the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Indonesia and the CEO of Digi-Trope Indonesia. The presentation, also aided by video projection, addressed the topic of the importance of the media as helping to train and bring delinquents back on track.

After the discussion, Mr. Bela Halas, Bishop of the Reformed Christian Church in Serbia spoke on the topic: "The role of journalists in maintaining peace and harmony". He said, among other things, that there were religious and secular media in practice. The role of religious media should be manifested in spreading peace, love and understanding among people. They should also take care of the

content so as not to intensify extreme messages and not to cause intolerance among people. On the other hand, the role of the world media is to report objectively on Churches and religious communities as the media has a strong influence on the public.

After answering questions and discussions on the topic, a brief recapitulation of the three interfaith dialogues held by Serbia and Indonesia so far was presented by Jovana Rakovic, Advisor for Interfaith Dialogue in the Directorate for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities of the Republic of Serbia. Also presented was book with a collection of papers from all previous meetings entitled "Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia".

His Excellency Mohamad Chandra Vidya Juda, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Belgrade, presented a joint statement by the two delegations as a result of today's discussions and further development of the dialogue, and the closing address on behalf of the Republic of Indonesia went to His Excellency Diar Nurbintor.

The closing remarks on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia were given by Dr. Ferid Bulić, Assistant Director in the Interfaith Dialogue Sector at the Directorate for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities of the Republic of Serbia. Dr. Bulic, among other things, said that the previous three interfaith dialogues of the two countries show and prove that the dialogues have great potential. We are separated by thousands of miles, history, culture, branches of art, but faith brings us closer and points to each other. We believe that we are in a healthy and harmonious society based on universal values, the rule of law in which all social actors carry out their mission. We hope and deeply believe that we will be able to further improve the social potentials of our two countries.

The State-Religious Mission of the Republic of Serbia, besides the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, the Directorate for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities, as well as representatives of traditional Churches and religious communities, includes His Grace Bishop Isihije of Mohacs and protodeacon Damjan Bozic, Editor-in-chief of "Orthodoxy", the newspaper of the Serbian Patriarchate.

The members of the Mission are: Mirko Cikiriz, State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, head of delegation; Dr. Marko Nikolic, Assistant Director in the sector for cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities,

deputy head of the delegation and coordinator of the Fourth Bilateral Interreligious Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia; Dr. Ferid Budic, assistant director in the Sector for interreligious dialogue, Directorate for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities; Tatjana Conic, Ambassador and Assistant Minister for Bilateral Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia; Slobodan Marinkovic, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Republic of Indonesia; Isihije Rogić, Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Mohacs; prof. Dr. Abdullah ef. Numan, Deputy Reisu-l-ulema of the Islamic Community of Riyaset of the Islamic Community of Serbia and Mufti of Serbia; Monsignor Aleksandar Kovacevic, MSc, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Belgrade; Mustafa ef. Jusufspahić, Mufti of Belgrade and of the Army of Serbia; Bela Halas, Bishop of the Reformed Christian Church; protodeacon Dr. Damjan Bozic, Editor-in-chief of *Orthodoxy*, newspaper of the Serbian Patriarchate; Viktor Cvetkovic, Caritas employee; Jovana Rakovic, Counselor for Interfaith Dialogue, Directorate for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities.

- Source: spc.rs