

## **2012 Religious Leaders' Statement for the G8 and G20 Summits**

We, religious leaders from G8 and G20 Nations, have come together preceding the 2012 G8 and G20 Summits. We come together in a spirit of pluralism, proclaiming peace and equality. In a tumultuous time of violence and economic instability, we come together to proclaim the best of each of our traditions, offering reflections and recommendations to the G8 and G20 leaders.

As the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draws critically nearer, the G8 and G20 meetings are of vital importance for hundreds of millions of lives across the world. They offer the chance to look beyond the current MDGs, to the next generation of inspirational global goals. We are at a juncture where the political, humanitarian, military, and economic decisions of the G8 and G20 countries hold powerful influence over the lives and well-being of an untold multitude.

We have come together in Washington D.C., on the eve of the 38th G8 Summit set to meet in Camp David, Maryland, USA. Members of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities have joined here to continue the work that has been done by religious leaders for previous "G" summits. Religious leaders have, over the past seven years, met to reflect on the global agendas before leaders of the world's most powerful nations and to offer their insights and hopes for the encounters. Our religious traditions are informed by deeply held and widely shared values to work for freedom, justice, and human rights.

As religious leaders from various traditions across the world, we affirm:

- A need for the G8 and G20 to radically transform the economic systems and assumptions that have brought us alarming levels of economic inequality and instability.
- An essential need to shift priorities of the G8 and G20 nations to comprehensively advance human security, health, and the common good.
- The role the G8 and G20 have to play in re-evaluating the broader structures that have brought us vast inequality between the rich and the poor; a focus on economic injustice and the consequent political instability that arises from the gap between the two in many places in the world.

### **Economic Justice**

In light of the current economic crises across the globe, we come together to call for careful management and regulation of the global financial systems for which the leaders

of the G8 and G20 are largely responsible. Moreover, in the face of the Arab Spring and political turmoil tearing much of our world apart, we proclaim a shared humanity and the equality of all people.

In the face of political turmoil, we turn to the importance within each of our own traditions to listen to the most vulnerable and to uplift the downtrodden. Last year, at the 37<sup>th</sup> G8 Summit in Deauville, France, the leaders of the G8 established the Deauville Partnership. As a collection of financial and political institutions that provide support to the people and governments of the Middle East and North Africa, the Deauville Partnership largely represents the G8's economic and political response to the current events in these areas.

Therefore:

- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to continue to work with the people of the Middle East and North Africa to establish further equality and a peaceful establishment of the common good.

Corruption and manipulation of populations, the earth, and politics are all too common. In such volatile environments, it is important that the leaders of the G8 and G20 manage their economic, political, and military power responsibly. The voices of the people in the Middle East and North Africa are calling for freedom of expression and religion, as well as basic human rights..

The recent economic crises have brought forward the stark inequalities and excesses that exist within our current global economic systems. Simultaneously, these inequalities are especially present in unsustainable market capitalism. The humanitarian risks that are implicated in our public economic and private financial systems have become ever more apparent and exaggerated.

Therefore:

- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to continue to work for economic regulation, reform, and stabilization through trade reforms and fiscal regulation. While maintaining a focus on those whom this crisis has ravaged most: the marginalized, the poor, women, and children.

## **Food, Health, and Human Security**

Economic and fiscal issues cannot be divorced from their human impacts, both realized and potential. Hunger is an urgent issue for one out of every seven people on the globe today. Nearly 1 billion people are food insecure and hungry. A recent United Nations report noted the frightening rate in which hunger is on the rise.<sup>1</sup> This global tragedy

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations World Food Program Report *Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Report* accessed 02 May 2012 <http://www.wfp.org/food-security>

requires immediate and effective action from the leaders of the G8 and G20 nations and renewed commitments from communities of faith.

In 2009, the L'Aquila Joint Statement was the G8's first action to address food security. We feel a special connection to the importance of food security and its links to poverty. It is of the utmost importance for the well being of the common good that alleviation of hunger and poverty are a priority for the G8 and G20.

Advances in technology, increased global connectivity, and scientific advances in agriculture have improved our capacity to alleviate poverty and hunger. Nonetheless, there continues to be a lack of adequate political will and economic oversight: Attention to the poor and hungry is still inadequate. Our religious sensibilities tell us there is still a long way to go.

This year's G8 and G20 meetings will be an important moment for food security. 2012 marks the three-year anniversary of the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, as well as the hoped for dawn of a new initiative. It is important that the G8 and G20 continue to evaluate, and build upon its successes. The MDGs become especially important in this focus. As 2015 draws near, it becomes more vital for the leaders of the G8 and G20 – the leaders of the world's largest economies – to support the successful completion of these goals.

Therefore, we urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to look toward the issue of food security with a critically evaluative lens and implement appropriate strategies:

- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to continue to focus on the root causes of global hunger and poverty. That is to say, not simply focus on macro-level solutions, but rather create and continue to support local initiatives such as featured in the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative.
- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to reform trade policies to create just economic and fiscal systems. Increasing the participation of farmers in the agricultural economic systems will be critical.
- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to evaluate economic, political, and social systems that breed corruption and violence, making for the degradation of the earth, production of conflicts, and food insecurity.

Environmental and global economic crises and political conflict, inhibit food and human security, and have stymied the progress toward addressing poverty and hunger.

Women and children suffer most in crises. We have recently witnessed the global pain and suffering that is wrought upon too many women and children. Women should play more active leadership roles in our communities. We call upon our collective strength as communities of peacebuilders to stand against injustice and violence, especially against women and children.

We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to continue to support effective and sustainable health and nutrition initiatives that lie at the heart of human security, with a cooperative and critically evaluative approach:

- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to invest in initiatives that support local farmers, encourage plant-based nutrition, and provide all peoples with their own access to clean water and supply of nutritious food.
- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to continue support of initiatives that place dignity and justice at the heart of development of the common good.
- We ask the leaders of the G8 and G20 to continue documenting and publishing reports that hold their initiatives accountable to these goals.

## **Poverty**

Global poverty reduction leads to economic stability and to food, health and human security. Since the start of the worldwide economic crises, more workers find themselves and their families living in extreme poverty. A recent report estimated that in 2009 between 1.5 billion to 1.6 billion people are working as unpaid family workers worldwide.<sup>2</sup> :

- We urge G8 and G20 leaders to support a wide array of local initiatives that alleviate the crippling poverty our world experiences.
- We urge the leaders of the G8 and G20 to fulfill the current objectives of the MDG's to end global poverty and to thoroughly evaluate their impact.
- We challenge all communities to envision future initiatives to advance the well-being and shared security of all.

## **Our Commitment**

This statement reflects the core values of charity, cooperation, honesty, respect, and self-discipline, which deeply resonate with our religious traditions. We need to promote through education, policy, and practice these values, while simultaneously promoting respect between and of religions and other minorities.

This statement is neither comprehensive nor absolute. It speaks for our communities that are experiencing these crises. Our communities also feel the need to point attention to the grievances named by the youth movements in response to high rates of unemployment, along with the issues of climate change, and global human rights. We affirm our

---

<sup>2</sup> United Nations *The Millennium Development Goals Report (United Nations: New York 2010)* 10.

commitment to enact, support and live out these values, while uplifting the cry of the marginalized, the poor, and the most vulnerable.

Submitted by the Joint Religious Coordination for the G8 and G20 Summits  
May 17, 2012