

A Re-Commitment to Spirituality for Building Mutual Understanding & Peace

**A Middle East-Asia Dialogue
Beirut, Lebanon, November 12th-14th, 2006**

Purpose and Goals

This gathering is meant to initiate dialogue between religious leaders from the Middle East and Asia for the purpose of building understanding of and respect for each other's traditions and inherent spirituality, so there can be greater collaboration in the effort to build a more peaceful, just and sustainable world community.

Existential dialogue is an essential part of life in communities on continents where different religions were born and have expanded. While living together has not always been easy, there has been the desire to stay together despite difficulties. Over time with the movement of people, religions have expanded to different continents. This continues today. While this pluralism can create tensions between communities, organized dialogue has been one way in which new communities can learn to live together in peace and harmony. Quite often these dialogues have happened by bringing together representatives from different religions and regions. Interregional and intra-regional dialogue between religions so far has been limited. The purpose of this initiative is to bring together Spiritual Leaders from two regions, Asia and the Middle East, to listen to one another, and to learn from each other's long experience of living together in community. As economic and political exchange between the Middle East and Asia grows, so there must also be a correlating spiritual exchange. The religious leaders of these two regions need to develop deeper understanding, communication and collaboration.

Thus, the goals of this dialogue are:

1. To meet one another
2. To share and understand each other's faith
3. Identify issues of common concern
4. Explore together models of peace-building

5. Explore the role of religious leaders in easing some of the regional tensions

The Middle East is home to the three great Abrahamic religions and for centuries has been a place of dialogue, as well as conflict. Asia is a rapidly rising political and economic power and has also given birth to some of the world's great religious traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikkism and Shintoism. These two critical regions would each benefit from deeper exchange.

It is hoped that this dialogue can be the beginning of a long-term effort to build goodwill and exchange between the religious communities of the Middle East and Asia, as political and economic ties strengthen.

Participants

Representatives of major religious traditions in Asia and the Middle East (Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others).

Date and Place

The dialogue will take place at the headquarters of the Catholicate in Antelias (outside Beirut), Lebanon on November 12-15th.