

For Immediate Release:

The UofMosaic @ UofT Presents “Religion and Peacebuilding: A Multi-Faith Perspective”

Toronto – March 17, 2010. Last evening, UofMosaic @ UofT brought together a panel of accomplished community peacebuilders to participate in a provocative and engaging discussion about the relationship between faith and the promotion of peace in areas of conflict around the world. The event was held at the University of Toronto’s Multi-Faith Centre.

The discussion was moderated by John Monahan, Executive Director of the Mosaic Institute. He was joined on stage by expert panelists from three different faith backgrounds, each one with a strong personal commitment to advancing a global peace and development agenda.

The panelists leading the evening’s discussion and responding to questions were:

- Dr. Karen A. Hamilton, who has been the General Secretary for the Canadian Council of Churches since 2002. Dr. Hamilton has been the chair for the United Church of Canada’s “Bearing Faithful Witness” national steering group, and President of the Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada. She is currently serving as Chair of the 2010 World Religions Summit, which takes place in Winnipeg, MB in June 2010, and which will focus the attention of the world’s faith communities on issues related to peace, global poverty, and environmental degradation (www.faithchallengeg8.com).
- Avrum Rosensweig is the President and founding director of Ve’ahavta: The Canadian Jewish Humanitarian & Relief Committee (www.veahavta.org). Ve’ahavta is Canada’s only organization of its kind. It is motivated by the Jewish value of Tzedakah (Justice), that assists the needy at home and abroad, through volunteerism, education, and acts of kindness, while building bridges between Jews and other peoples. Internationally, it delivers programming and/or assistance in Argentina, Guyana, Israel, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe, among other countries. Avrum is also a weekly contributor to the Canadian Jewish News and has hosted radio and television shows since the mid-nineties.
- Winston Kassim is the Vice-Chair for the International Development and Relief Foundation (www.idrf.com). IDRF is a Canadian organization dedicated to empowering the disadvantaged people of the world through emergency relief and participatory development programs based on the Islamic principles of human dignity, self-reliance, and social justice. He has an extensive array of experience in community economic development, volunteer community involvement, advocacy for groups and individuals, as well as international project development and implementation. A banker with the Royal Bank of Canada, Mr. Kassim was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2009 for his “contributions as a community volunteer who played a key role in establishing several community and religious centres that provide outreach services to refugees and immigrants.”

The panelists discussed the role of the major faith groups (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) in contributing to global peacebuilding efforts and the importance of faith organizations in working towards conflict resolution and development. There was a consensus among the group that faith

can be a positive tool in encouraging peace, and they all encouraged audience members to expand their understanding of faith communities other than their own in order to better work together towards a universal goal of peace.

Audience members were challenged to consider how faith communities in Canada might work more effectively in partnership with government in order to identify and further shared peacebuilding objectives and also to encourage development in areas of conflict around the world. Dr. Hamilton described how the upcoming World Religions Summit 2010, to be held in Winnipeg in June, sought to encourage individuals from all major faith traditions in Canada to make a personal commitment to hastening the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations, including those related to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women; and the provision of universal, accessible primary education.

Approximately 30 individuals from across the university and local community participated in the evening's discussion, which was organized by the UofMosaic @ UofT in collaboration with the University of Toronto's Multi-Faith Centre.

The UofMosaic @ UofT is the student-led chapter of the Mosaic Institute (www.mosaicinstitute.ca) on the University of Toronto's St. George campus.

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