Strategy

for The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

2020 - 2025

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers

Strategy for The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers 2020 - 2025

Assembled by the Strategic Steering Committee in consultation with Network members and supporters

Content

Our Vision and Mission

1.1 The need for enhancing religious and traditional actors' peace efforts

A growing number of conflicts around the globe are caused or made worse by differences in religious or ideological beliefs or worldviews.[1] If these conflicts are to be resolved, the disagreements that led to them must be understood and addressed. Often, they are not. The result is a missed opportunity.

In recent years, roughly two-thirds of all conflicts have or have had a religious dimension.[2] Understanding the relationship between unresolved conflicts that are linked to religion or other fundamental worldviews plays a significant factor in understanding how to mitigate conflict and develop approaches for sustainable peace. Approaches to conflict management, resolution, and transformation often fail to recognize the diverse influences that religious and traditional actors[3] as well as differing worldviews can have on conflict and peace.

Considering that 84% of the world's population claims to have a religious affiliation,[4] the role of religious and traditional actors in advancing conflict transformation[5] is essential. This can be accomplished through processes that include intra- and interfaith dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, and engagement in joint projects, such as for human rights and inclusivity. However, such actors can also be resistant to the kind of transformation that peacemaking and broader peacebuilding efforts strive for. Whether religious and traditional actors are inclined to be helpful or harmful, they cannot be ignored. They are in an ideal position to understand the root causes of conflict and so, too, the values, beliefs and cultural norms that motivate local populations. It is crucial, therefore, that they be encouraged to play a positive role in peacebuilding, and that the various positive   roles they are playing are recognized and supported by the larger international community.

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (referred to as the Network)[6] was founded in 2013 as a concrete response to this reality.

Its potential value was reflected in the 2012 UNGA report on Strengthening the Role of Mediation:

> **Religious leaders and faith-based organisations play an important mediating role in many conflict situations.** These leaders have unique connections to local communities and frequently enjoy the trust of the conflicting parties, and yet are often not fully acknowledged, and their potential contribution remains underutilized.[7]

The Network aims to bridge the gap between the secular approach typically adopted by international policy makers and the fact that achieving sustainable peace often requires the involvement and contributions of religious and traditional actors.[8] Since its inception, the Network has grown into a coalition of over 50 organisations striving to enhance the effectiveness of conflict transformation initiatives through greater collaboration among global leaders and grassroots level peacemakers, including those who stress traditional and faith-based perspectives. The Network understands that collaboration does not happen automatically or by accident. It requires a concrete and sustained effort by leaders and groups with complementary goals. They must combine their strengths, share knowledge, coordinate plans, minimize harmful friction, practice transparency, and make the most of available resources. The Network seeks to contribute to this collaborative process, and to do so in a way that increases the visibility and positive impact of religious and traditional peacemakers.

Since its inception in 2013, the Network has joined forces with the UN and many others operating in the field of mediation[9] and conflict transformation to uphold global norms and best practices aimed at creating inclusive and just societies. Throughout this period, the Network has taken pride in its efforts to promote the role of religious and traditional actors in peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes, to generate and make good use of expertise in the field, to foster trust between diverse groups, and to cooperate with other international and local participants.

Looking ahead, the Network finds that the moment is right to formulate for the first time a comprehensive strategy that will clarify (and, as necessary, modify) its structure, mission, approach, priorities, areas of concentration, and guiding principles. This strategy is the product of widespread consultation,[10] and is designed to address, among other issues, the following questions:

The role of Network stakeholders
What are the right criteria for membership in the Network and for engaging with it as a partner? What are the associated duties and prerogatives? What is the most effective governance structure?

Focus
How can the specific focus of the Network best be described in relation to its mission?

Collaboration
How can the Network and its members and supporters best collaborate with others who are striving for complementary goals?

Balance
What is the right balance among the various functions of the Network? These include direct support for peace-making efforts, on the ground capacity building, advocacy.

1.2 Vision and Mission

A revised Network Vision:

A world where religious and traditional actors play a positive role in preventing violence and contributing to sustainable peace.

A revised Network Mission Statement:

To enhance the effectiveness of efforts towards peaceful and inclusive societies by increasing the active collaboration between religious and traditional actors and other key stakeholders in conflict transformation.

1.3 Strategic Objectives

Central to the Network's mission is its support for religious and traditional actors in their engagement at all levels with other stakeholders in conflict mediation and broader peacebuilding efforts. To realize its vision and fulfill its mission, the Network will pursue the following strategic objectives:

Strengthen coordination and cooperation among its members and between them and others working for comparable goals. This includes religious and traditional peacemakers, UN agencies and other international bodies, governments, civil society organisations, and academic actors. For this purpose, the Network will provide technical and financial resources, foster partnerships, enhance learning opportunities, and take other steps to nourish inclusive and locally led peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes.[11]

Advocate for the engagement of religious and traditional peacemakers and their values in peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes, including by identifying and promoting policy and action-oriented recommendations at the local, regional, and international levels.

Advocate for inclusivity, gender equality, and human rights among religious and traditional actors engaged in peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes, including by identifying and promoting action-oriented recommendations and policies at the local, regional, and international levels.

In pursuing these objectives, the Network will emphasize, as core values, respect for diversity, inclusivity, human rights, and human dignity. More specifically, the Network is fully committed to advancing the world community's 2030 Agenda, including its 17-Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 5, 16, and 17 in particular)[12]; the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (embodied in UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions); the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda (UNSCR 2250 and 2419); and all aspects of international human rights law.
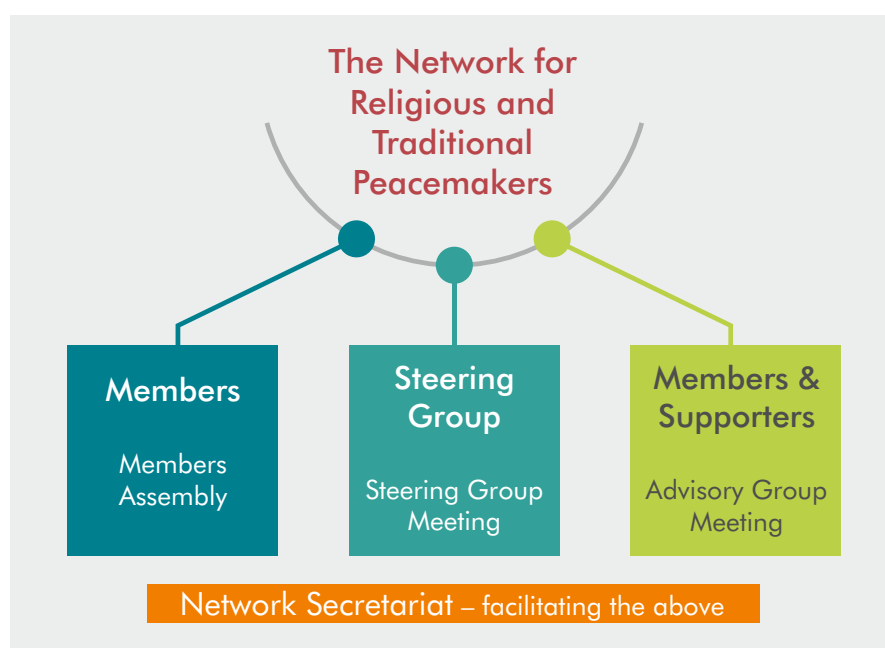
Different Capacities, a Coordinated Effort

Since the Network's inception, it has been guided by three formal structures: (1) the Secretariat, (2) the Core Group, and (3) the Advisory Group. The responsibilities of each were laid out in a Memorandum of Understanding.[13] The Network has always sought to maintain the flexibility required for engagement with diverse stakeholders, ranging from local religious leaders to UN entities. However, feedback from Network members and partners has highlighted the need for greater clarity. To improve prospects for effective collaboration both within the Network and between it and other stakeholders, this Strategy for 2020-2025 seeks to provide that clarity. At the same time, it maintains the flexibility and agility appreciated by members.

2.1 Structure and Modalities for Involvement

The mission and strategic objectives of the Network can be supported by actors with different capacities and commitments. Under the new organisational structure, current members and partners are welcome to apply for the roles best suited to each. The transition process is outlined in the discussion of Priority 4.1, and is expected to be in place by the end of 2020. The new structures are designed to assist religious and traditional peacemakers, to support collaboration between Network members and supporters, to ensure the effective marshalling of resources, and to advance the goals of inclusivity, gender equality, and human rights. The revised Network Structure is summarized in the image below:

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

Members	Steering Group	Members & Supporters
Members Assembly	Steering Group Meeting	Advisory Group Meeting

Network Secretariat – facilitating the above

Members and Members Assembly

For the first time, the Network will introduce membership criteria. Members have the right to vote, are eligible to serve on governing bodies, and can become priority candidates for project partnerships. Organisations[14] or religious and traditional peacemakers from any part of the world may become members provided they:

    I.   endorse the Network's Vision and Mission;

    II.   have experience engaging with tradition- or faith-based actors or in tradition- or faith-based peace and development activities, and the ability to assist the Network through their own expertise and contacts;

    III.   commit to the values of inclusivity, respect for diversity, human rights, and human dignity;

    IV.   commit to attend meetings of the Members Assembly and the Advisory Group;[15]

    V.   nominate in writing a focal point for Network-related decisions and activities; and

    VI.   agree to serve on at least one Network Working Group (see below) and to contribute to Network activities in-kind[16] and/or financially.

Prospective members can obtain an application from the Network Secretariat attesting to the criteria listed above. The Secretariat will assess the information provided and procure other data, as needed, to allow the Steering Group to make a fair decision on the application.

Members will meet at least once a year in a **Members Assembly**. This is the main body providing programmatic direction to the Network. The Assembly will focus on governance and operational issues and will (1) elect the Steering Group's rotating members, (2) review the Network's annual implementation plans, and (3) decide on priorities.

The Secretariat will keep a public list of members on its website and will assess, from time to time, if members are upholding the Network's vision, mission, and strategic objectives.

Peace prayers in Somalia, leading to the inception of the Network

Supporters and Advisory Group

Organisations and individuals that have the capacity and the desire to advance the Network's mission but that are unable to commit to membership can still be Network supporters. While supporters do not have the right to vote, they are encouraged to contribute, based on their interests and capabilities, to specific activities and working groups.

Supporters may be nominated by the Network Secretariat or by any member. Once approved, they may contact the Secretariat to express interest in being invited to participate in specific Network activities (including working groups). The Secretariat will regularly report to the Steering Group regarding the supporters' identity and contributions.

A joint **Advisory Group Meeting (AGM) of members and selected supporters** will convene once or twice a year, coinciding (when possible) with the Members Assembly. The Advisory Group meetings are intended to serve as informal and open spaces for reflection, dialogue, networking and the planning of joint initiatives. They will also enable attendees to share their knowledge on good practices and lessons learned on issues related to the Network's mission and to the implementation of its strategy. Of the selected AGM participants, at least 30 percent will be religious and traditional peacemakers, including women and youth of faith. Overall, at least 30 per cent of AGM participants will be women, and efforts will be made to steadily increase participation by youth. The Steering Group will approve the list of participants.

Steering Group

The Network was launched under the stewardship of a Core Group. That panel will be replaced by a new Steering Group (SG) that will include Core Group members who wish to continue their service as well as other members elected on a rotating basis by the Members Assembly. The responsibilities of the SG will include: (1) providing strategic guidance and overseeing the Secretariat's work; (2) contributing to high-level advocacy on behalf of the Network's mission; (3) reviewing and approving or disapproving applications for Network membership; (4) choosing the list of participants in the AGM; and (5) selecting a host organisation for the Secretariat.

Members interested in joining the new SG may apply for election during the first 2020 Members Assembly. The Group will include appropriate representation of religious and traditional peacemakers and at least 30 percent of its participants shall be women. The terms of reference for the SG will be developed based on prior discussions within the Core Group.

Network Secretariat

The **Network Secretariat** will lead in implementing this strategy through its support for all Network activities. This includes (but is not limited to) meeting preparation, ensuring effective communication, coordinating joint projects, and facilitating the development of mechanisms to assist religious and traditional peacemakers. The Secretariat will be accountable to the Steering Group and Members Assembly. Concerning the legal and financial dimensions of its endeavors, it will also be accountable to the organisation hosting it. The Secretariat's mandate is for three years, with the current term concluding at the end of 2020.

Network Members gather at the 2019 Advisory Group Meeting in London

The Network's Approaches and Methods

3.1 Primary Approaches and Methods

Central to the Network's identity is its role as a **connector**. Each day, in activities across the planet, the Network fosters **collaboration** among various actors who have diverse abilities, yet shared goals, and it does so across multiple tracks[17] from the local level to the global.

Collaboration is essential to effective peacemaking and broader peacebuilding. It enables individuals and organisations to work together to achieve a defined common purpose. Members have identified four priority approaches that can contribute to successful collaboration. They are: (1) networking, (2) advocacy, (3) training /capacity building, and (4) research and analysis.

The means used to implement these approaches will chiefly be:

Consortiums
The Network creates consortiums that include both international organisations and local actors. The combination allows it to maximize the resources available and thereby increase the impact of mission-relevant initiatives related to specific themes or regions. To ensure the sustainability of results, consortiums include or act in close consultation with religious and traditional peacemakers. In determining participation, priority will be given to members and, when space is available, to supporters who are best qualified to contribute to the objective at hand.

Working Groups
Working groups, which may be thematic or geographic, are led by the Secretariat or by a chair or co-chairs drawn from the list of members. Members and qualified supporters may participate. Working groups provide vehicles for communication, planning, and knowledge exchange and can serve as the catalyst for joint activities and the financing of effective consortiums. Each working group should undertake at least one joint initiative per year and report thereon to other members.

Platforms
The Network supports local, regional, and thematic peer-support platforms relevant to religious and traditional peacemakers. Examples include the ongoing process of developing a faith mediator platform and the inter-faith fellowship program in Asia.

The Network also seeks to collaborate with other bodies in its areas of expertise. The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, the Joint Learning Initiative, and groups led by Network members and supporters are among those with whom cooperative initiatives are likely.

In specific cases, when local demands or opportunities to advance the Network's mission cannot be met swiftly by members, the Secretariat can lead on initiatives that could benefit the overall Network. This should be done in consultation with the Steering Group and in a transparent manner.

As requested by members, the Network will give priority to the approaches and methods for achieving collaboration that are described in the following table:

Approach	Methods
Networking Enhancing connections between Network members and supporters, with emphasis on collaboration among local, regional, and international level actors	Communication and knowledge sharing between Network members and supporters, consortia and coalition-building, collaboration through working groups, providing technical support in funding calls, facilitating communication and other links between grassroots religious actors and Network members
Advocacy Influencing relevant global norms and policies and contributing to their implementation by amplifying the voices of religious and traditional peacemakers and Network members	Representation of the Network and its members in international and regional fora, channeling recommendations and linking local level peacemakers to regional/international level, creating key advocacy material and messages
Training/Capacity Building Context-sensitive and needs-based capacity building of policymakers, practitioners, and peacemakers (including Network members and supporters)	Strategic learning exchanges; targeted training and capacity building to policymakers, peace practitioners, and religious and traditional peacemakers; peer-learning
Research and Analysis Analysis and research informing the actions of the Network and creation of an evidence base to promote the role of religious and traditional peacemakers and approaches to address conflicts with religious dimensions	Strengthening evidence-base, creation of knowledge hub, distribution of information and dissemination of research, research to increasing local context knowledge of the role of religious and traditional peacemakers as tools for more efficient advocacy

These approaches and methods are interrelated and fully relevant to helping Network members, supporters, and allies to advance peace. The synergy between them constitutes the Network's programmatic approach. It also embodies the organisation's effort to facilitate learning among its members and stakeholders.

All Network approaches are guided by the principles of local ownership, context and conflict sensitivity, human rights, and inclusivity. By fostering collaboration among its members and supporters, the Network strives to avoid duplication and to make the most of available knowledge and resources.

3.2 Cross-cutting Issues

Human Rights-based approach
The Human Rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework that is the basis for the Network's involvement in peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes. The Network adheres to HRBA goals and strives to help realize principles embodied within it such as universality, interrelatedness, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, participation, inclusion, accountability, and transparency.

The Network attempts to empower rights holders to demand and ensure that their rights are respected, and to encourage dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers at different levels of governance. This is particularly crucial in fragile or volatile environments where temporary duty bearers, such as the UN or international non-governmental organisations, may have a major role in the provision of goods and services. In these cases, the Network will strive to ensure that duty bearers meet their obligations while simultaneously helping to increase their capacity to do so. In the absence of legitimate and accountable state structures, other local entities (religious or tribal, for example) may possess the necessary legitimacy and accountability to help ensure that human rights are honored.

Inclusivity
Inclusivity is sometimes referred to as a "whole of society approach." In conflict transformation, it is based on the idea that a sustainable and just peace can best be achieved by including a broad range of actors and by taking into account the needs, aspirations, traditions, and beliefs of all segments of society. Inclusivity is relevant to all stages of conflict transformation and ranges across tracks and structures. When successful, it can generate transformative change by addressing such underlying causes of conflict as discrimination, repressive/unequal power relations, and historic grievances.

Using this approach, the Network pays special attention to the promotion of gender equality and youth participation, and to the needs of vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities. The Network's understanding of inclusivity is encapsulated in the UN's 2030 Agenda pledge, Leave No One Behind.

Gender Equality and Youth Participation
Promotion of gender equality is a cross-cutting principle for the Network and part of its human-rights based approach. It also a practical aid in building just and sustainable peace. Gender-responsive approaches ensure that conflict transformation does not reinforce the kind of harmful structures and attitudes that perpetuate bias and have been proven to fuel conflict.

Female Somali media producer creates videos to spread correct information on COVID-19, to counter the disinformation and to give guidance on how to practice social distancing and other precautionary measures while abiding by one's religion

While the Network acknowledges the positive role of religion and religious and traditional actors in fostering peace, it recognizes the need to pay attention to power dynamics and hierarchies that might limit inclusive participation. In religious and traditional settings, formal leadership tends to be dominated by males who are often among the elders in their societies. Many of the efforts to support religious and traditional actors tend to focus almost solely on these men. Such a narrow focus can be harmful.

The Network is committed to supporting the participation of women and youth[18] of faith in peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes by ensuring that their talents, commitment, and energy are recognised and supported.[19] One way to facilitate this is by engaging with male leaders and encouraging them to be partners in ensuring that women and youth are accorded full and equal rights. For its part, the Network's policy is to mainstream gender equality and youth participation across all its functions. It also engages in targeted actions to support women and youth of faith and to help increase understanding of their diverse contributions to peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes.

Modalities to Ensure Inclusivity within the Network

Ensuring inclusivity is a collective responsibility of all Network members and supporters. The modalities for meeting this obligation will chiefly be as follows:

Inclusivity working group: The Inclusivity Working Group brings together individuals and organisations interested in the intersection of women, youth, faith, tradition, conflict and peace, and strives to advance collaboration around shared objectives. The Group is open to Network members and supporters, with the Secretariat coordinating and providing other assistance as needed. The Group can serve as a depository of tools, knowledge, and expertise from which members, supporters, religious and traditional actors, and other stakeholders can benefit. Its technical and thematic initiatives are intended to ensure that the Network collectively upholds its inclusivity commitments. This entails developing an inclusivity guidance note and tools for Network functions and operations.

The Members Assembly and Advisory Group will provide advice and recommendations on needs and priorities pertaining to inclusivity.

The Steering Group, through its oversight of the Secretariat and the Network as a whole, shall also ensure that inclusivity commitments and responsibilities are fulfilled.

The Secretariat shall dedicate enough staff and other resources to support the Inclusivity Working Group and to enable inclusivity mainstreaming and necessary technical assistance for that purpose across the Network. It shall also reinforce the principle that mainstreaming is both a collective responsibility and the duty of each staff member.

Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity

Even the best-intentioned efforts to mitigate conflicts and build peace entail the risk of inadvertently causing harm to the societies involved. Over time, the world has developed approaches designed to minimize that risk, including the Do No Harm principle and an awareness of Conflict Sensitivity. For the Network, these too are cross-cutting issues. To address them, members emphasize careful planning and analysis to ensure that peacemaking and broader peacebuilding efforts have the desired impact: to reduce causes of division and enhance sources of

2019 Idove Intercontinental Youth Forum in Southeast Asia

unity and local capacities for building peace. A conflict-sensitive approach is an essential tool in achieving the Network's strategic objectives because it helps to accomplish goals more quickly and contributes to peace outcomes that are sustainable, inclusive and just.

Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity are also key considerations when planning Network visibility and advocacy efforts. With guidance from the Steering Group (and, as necessary, the Members Assembly, Advisory Group, and relevant working groups) the Secretariat is responsible for ensuring that these principles are taken into account.

Priorities for 2020–2025

The priorities for 2020 and the five years following will be shaped by the revised Network mission and vision set forth in this strategy, and will be implemented through the approaches and methods it specifies. The priorities have been developed following broad and transparent consultation with stakeholders. Action plans to advance the priorities will be reviewed and refined by the Members Assembly on an annual basis.

Among the criteria and considerations that guided the development of the Network's priorities are the following:

The Network strives to increase the **joint work of members and supporters having different profiles** (i.e. UN agencies and other official international bodies, governments, international NGOs, academic actors, civil society organisations, and religious and traditional peacemakers).

The Network is committed to **advancing Sustainable Development Goals, especially numbers 5, 16, and 17.** Other guiding normative frameworks include the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. The Network is also committed to a human rights based approach with the goal of building just, sustainable and inclusive peace.

The Network advocates for **greater recognition and support for religious and traditional peacemakers and strives to sensitize international practitioners and policymakers to the intersection of religion, tradition, conflict, and peace.** Supported by research, analysis, and lessons learned, the Network aims to contribute to the development and implementation of key international normative and policy frameworks. As part of its advocacy and capacity-development functions, the Network will strive to leverage the expertise of religious and traditional peacemakers in providing training to international practitioners.

The Network **supports locally-led and locally–owned peace.** It does this by assisting religious and traditional peacemakers in their efforts (including their advocacy efforts) to transform conflicts. It also serves as a connector among stakeholders and as a depository of locally rooted methodologies that contribute to shared goals. These include faith and tradition-oriented mediation, dialogue, and reconciliation processes.

The Network strives to **enhance peacebuilding through collaboration** among all types of process participants and across geographic and thematic lines.

The Network provides opportunities for **members and supporters to learn from one another through joint projects and by sharing knowledge about** good practices, gaps in capabilities, and ongoing challenges. The Secretariat should strongly support collaboration within the Network and accord special attention to advocacy, capacity building, training, and improved approaches to research and analysis.

The Network should ensure that all activities are conducted in a manner that is **financially sound and sustainable.** Under the overall guidance of the Steering Group and Members Assembly, the Secretariat is responsible for ensuring the efficient and appropriate use of financial resources and also for seeking to broaden the funding base in collaboration with members. This effort will be guided by a resource mobilisation strategy.

4.1 Ensuring that the clarified Network structure enables the Network to fulfil its mission and serve its members and supporters.

For the Network to execute its mission and provide added value to members and supporters, its structure, modalities for engagement, and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of its participants should be clarified. To implement **this priority, Network must have structures in place that can effectively translate its strategy into action.** The main steps under this priority include:

- Implement, by the end of 2020, a revised process for selecting members and supporters.
- Also by the end of 2020, establish a new Steering Group and Members Assembly (with respective terms of reference) and revisit the Advisory Group.
- Draft generic terms of reference for working groups that accord with the Network's strategic priorities. The Steering Group will lead this effort, with support from the Secretariat.
- Ensure that the Secretariat has sufficient leadership, staff, and resources to implement the changes envisioned by this strategy and to adequately serve members and supporters.

4.2 Empowering local peacemakers and their respective communities; bridging international, regional, and local mediation and broader peacebuilding processes

Local religious and traditional peacemakers need support in their efforts to transform conflicts and build peace. Greater recognition and more resources will help them to influence other actors and policy makers and thereby ensure that conflict prevention processes are inclusive and locally-driven rather than exclusive and externally driven. **The work under this priority identifies and provides concrete support to religious and traditional actors to contribute to mediation and broader peacebuilding processes through collaborative efforts between Network members and supporters.** Particular attention

Religion and Mediation Workshop

will be paid to support in priority regions as identified by the Members Assembly (in consultation with Advisory Group) on an annual basis. The main actions under this priority include:

- Encouraging Network members and supporters to collaborate, share expertise, and form consortia or other specific groups to assist religious and traditional peacemakers in gaining the recognition and resources they need to be effective.
- Providing targeted support to policy makers to increase their knowledge and enhance their engagement with religious and traditional peacemakers.
- Providing targeted support to religious and traditional peacemakers so that they might work together more effectively both regionally and globally. This step emphasizes peer-to-peer cooperation, the exchange of knowledge, mentoring, and advocacy training. It also envisions the progressive establishment of a global platform of faith mediators by 2025.
- Contributing to a holistic understanding of human rights, including but not limited to gender equality, minority rights, and freedom of religion or belief through mainstreaming a Human-Rights based approach to conflict transformation activities.

4.3 Strengthening the leadership of women and youth in religious and traditional peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes

Consistent with its mission and values, the Network fully supports **the leadership role of women and youth in peacebuilding processes that involve religious and traditional peacemakers**. The work under this priority ensures that faith and tradition oriented efforts at conflict transformation contribute to and advance the Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security Agendas. The Network's primary mechanism to advance this goal is its Inclusivity Working Group (IWG) that will also lead mainstreaming efforts. Actions under this priority include:

- Encouraging Network members and supporters to collaborate, share expertise, and form consortia or other specific groups to advance the full participation and leadership of women and youth in faith-related peacebuilding processes. The IWG will lead in this area, especially in identifying specific needs and goals.
- Promoting the participation and leadership of women and youth in peacebuilding through targeted actions and comprehensive mainstreaming. To ensure this, the Secretariat will coordinate the development of inclusivity guidance notes and tools.
- Including, among the targeted actions developed annually, at least two aimed at the capacity development and sensitization of religious and traditional leaders on gender equality, women and youth rights.
- Advocating for the recognition and support of women and youth of faith – and for the sensitization and capacity enhancement of practitioners and policymakers.
- Gathering evidence and increasing understanding through research and analysis, strategic learning exchanges, and discussions aimed at improving policy development and implementation. Actions in this area should be in line with the IWG's annual plans.

4.4 Supporting the positive role of religious and traditional actors in preventing violence at the local, regional, and international levels

The Network emphasises in its work the importance of preventative action. **The Network desires to help religious and traditional actors play a positive role in preventing violence**, including that which is gender-based, characterized by incitement that leads to mass atrocities, or the product of violent extremism. The primary actions under this priority include:

- Encouraging Network members and supporters to collaborate, share expertise, and form consortia or other specific groups to advance the conflict prevention efforts of religious and traditional peacemakers, especially by responding effectively and collectively to identified needs and priorities.
- Gathering evidence and increasing understanding through research and analysis to better inform policymakers about ways to prevent violence – with the goal of having at least two targeted learning exchanges or products annually.
- Collectively exploring and identifying innovative ways to prevent conflicts by addressing community support and capacity needs, and by developing mechanisms for early warning and action. These ideas might be designed, for example, to enhance local, national, or regional capacities through inter- and intra-faith dialogue or by other appropriate means. The aim under this priority is to have at least one targeted activity annually.
- Supporting inter- and intra-faith messages that will effectively counter narratives that have the potential to incite violence, including violent extremism, especially in fragile or volatile situations. In this category, there should be at least one targeted activity annually.

4.5 Creating opportunities and space for religious and traditional peacemakers to contribute to, and help shape, international policy frameworks that are relevant to conflict prevention and peace

The voices of religious and traditional peacemakers are needed to influence global norms, policies, and frameworks to respond to challenges to peace and security. The Network is well positioned to amplify these voices, including those of women and youth, and to advocate for their inclusion in the development and implementation of relevant policies on the international level. **The work under this priority is designed to enhance recognition of the contributions made by religious and traditional actors to peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes.** This will be done through the joint efforts of Network members and supporters, will reflect agreed upon priorities, and will seek to convene and reach actors and groups that individual members or supporters may be unable to reach on their own. The main actions under this priority include:

- Encouraging Network members and supporters to collaborate and share expertise through overall communication and knowledge sharing for the purpose of identifying and agreeing on measures to further improve the synergies between religious and traditional actors and international agencies.
- Encouraging Network members and supporters to participate in UN and other relevant international fora, and, in so doing, to amplify the voices of religious and traditional actors. Examples might include support for the SDGs and other human rights-based agendas; contributing to the implementation of key policies, resolutions, UN-endorsed Action Plans and frameworks; and providing evidence-based messages in support of the positive role that religious and traditional actors can play on peacemaking and broader peacebuilding.
- Ensuring that religious and traditional peacemakers have an opportunity to have their voices heard in these fora and to share their perceptions, ideas and recommendations, with at least one high-level engagement annually.

References

1 - The root causes can include human rights violations, inequalities, grievances within a marginalized population, lack of democracy and rule of law, corruption, competing geopolitical interests of States, resource competition, food insecurity in relation to climate and economic vulnerabilities, etc.

2 - In 1975 (earliest available data) there were 11 religious-identity conflicts, and 1 religious-issue conflict, while in 2015, there were 4 religious-identity conflicts, and 33 religious-issue conflicts. Svensson, I. and Nilsson, D. (2017) 'Disputes over the Divine: Introducing the Religion and Armed Conflict (RELAC) Data, 1975 to 2015', Journal of Conflict Resolution.

3 - Religious actors refer to both religious leaders as well as members of religious communities such as women and youth of faith. Traditional actors refers similarly to traditional local leaders and actors such as indigenous, ethnic, tribal or clan elders or community members, including women and youth.

4 - Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, The Changing Global Religious Landscape, 2017, available on https://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/

5 - Transforming protracted socio-political conflicts, with or without religious dimensions, requires the active participation of all stakeholders, including religious and traditional actors. Conflict transformation seeks to change the way of dealing with conflicts by empowering parties and enhancing mutual recognition so as to minimize the use of violence and enable them to manage differences in a non-violent way. It involves dealing with direct and indirect/structural causes and aspects of conflict with an aim to bring about behavioural, relational, and structural change. Source: Lederach 1996 and the Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation.

6 - The Network has brought together partners, including the UN Mediation Support Unit within the Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA/MSU) that spearheaded the effort, along with other UN agencies and offices (including UNDP, the UN Alliance of Civilizations, UN Women, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect, and UN Population Fund) Faith-inspired Organisations, including Finn Church Aid, Religions for Peace, and other international actors KAICIID Dialogue Center and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Together, these partners formed the Core Group of the Network. To date, the Core Group of the Network has guided the strategic direction of the Network. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in its capacity as the main donor since inception of the Network, has been invited to participate in the meetings of the Core Group. The coordination of the overall work is led by the Network Secretariat, which has been to date hosted by Finn Church Aid who has also been the core contributor to the budget of the Network.

7 - UNGA report "Strengthening the Role of Mediation in the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, Conflict Prevention and Resolution" A/66/811, 2012.

8 - While religious and traditional entities and international organisations might have different approaches, they can share common goals in promoting peace and human rights.

9 - Mediation is understood to take place at any stage of the peace continuum, from prevention

10 - Particularly the comprehensive evaluation of the Network since its inception, as commissioned by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, a Briefing Book for Strategic Planning and feedback collected from the Network members and partners, particularly in the May 2019 Advisory Group Meeting. Feedback collected to the strategy draft by Network members and supporters during autumn 2019 and November 2019 Advisory Group Meeting. The entire strategy process was led by Strategy Steering Committee consisting of Network members and supporters.

11 - Peacebuilding processes refers to all aspects of short and long-term conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution.

12 - SDG 5 refers to gender equality, SDG 16 to peace justice and strong institutions, and SDG 17 to partnership for the goals. Please see more on Agenda 2030 and SDGs at https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/.

13 - Please see further details in Annex.

14 - Organisation refers to any legal entity, such as an international organisation, a non-governmental organisation, a faith-based actor, an academic institution/think tank, etc.

15 - With an intent to organise these meetings back to back with one another.

16 - The Network highly values the in-kind contributions of its members, which may take a form of hosting Network staff at the offices, providing meeting venues, taking an active lead role in facilitating a Working Group, providing expertise/time to certain activities of the Network, co-organising with the Network some event, and the like. Hence, in-kind support does not require the organisation or religious or traditional peacemaker to provide any financial contribution, but the time and support can be also demonstrated in other very valuable ways.

17 - Track 1 refers to processes in which the top leadership of the conflicting parties are engaged with each other, i.e. representatives of the government and the leadership of armed non-state actors. In track 1.5 processes, the top leadership of one or both conflict parties are engaged in the peace process but in an informal setting and/or in their personal capacity. In track 2 activities, elites and decision-makers (e.g. civil society representatives, religious leaders, business leaders, etc.) are involved but not the top leadership of the conflict parties. In track 3 activities, grassroots actors are involved. In multi-track activities, multiple actors from at least two tracks participate in peace efforts.

18 - There is no globally agreed definition of what age group is covered by youth and young people. The United Nations defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years, but it is important to acknowledge the various socio-cultural understandings, as age alone does not define youth.

19 - As such, the Network is committed to ensuring that faith and tradition-oriented peacemaking and broader peacebuilding processes contribute to and advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (encapsulated in the UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent resolutions) and Youth, Peace and Security Agenda (UNSCR 2250 and 2419).

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers