

THE TANDEM PROJECT

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UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

*The Tandem Project is a UN NGO in Special Consultative Status with the
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

Separation of Religion or Belief and State

INAUGURAL FOCUS GROUP

By Invitation Only

THE PRICE OF PEACE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

Wednesday 29 February 2012

Place To be Announced

2-4:30 pm.

Minneapolis, MN USA

INTRODUCTION

The Tandem Project has started an International Focus Group program to support United Nations Human Rights Resolutions adopted by consensus in Geneva and New York, a *Culture of Tolerance and Peace*, and the Plan of Action for the second phase (2010-2014) of the *World Programme for Human Rights Education*, and call for their implementation at international, national and local levels.

The Inaugural Focus Group theme, *The Price of Peace: Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief* honors the Nobel Peace Prize Forum and five Norwegian-American Colleges in the United States for hosting the annual Forum. The 1986 Tandem Project International Conference *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief* was the original catalyst. The Nobel Peace Prize Forum, Augsburg College and the University of Minnesota are not affiliated with The Tandem Project International Focus Group program.

THE PRICE OF PEACE – 23RD ANNUAL NOBEL PEACE PRIZE FORUM

<http://www.peaceprizeforum.org/>

The Price of Peace Forum 1-3 March 2012 in Minneapolis will be held on the campus of Augsburg College and the University of Minnesota. The Nobel Peace Prize Forum is a premier international event designed to inspire peacemaking, broadly defined. As the Norwegian Nobel Institute's only affiliation outside Norway, the Forum has probed the deep questions of peace and conflict for more than 23 years.

The Augsburg College 1990 Forum, "Human Rights in the Global Village," featured Nobel Peace Prize Laureates U.S. President Jimmy Carter and Amnesty International. The University of Minnesota after 1986 launched the Human Rights Center in the University of Minnesota Law School.

<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/center/>

In 1986 The Tandem Project hosted the first international conference *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief* to implement Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Twenty-seven community strategies were discussed on ways to implement the 1981 human rights UN Declaration, among them a strategy on Multidisciplinary Analysis by the University of Minnesota, United Theological Seminary and St. Olaf College.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee was invited to give a presentation on how the criteria is selected for awarding the Nobel Peace Prize. Professor Francis Sejersted, Chair, Nobel Peace Prize Committee gave an address.

<http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf>

Francis Sejersted
Nobel Peace Prize Committee
Oslo, Norway

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS GROUP ISSUE I

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND PEACE BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF A/RES/66/167 - DECEMBER 19, 2011

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/66/L.47/Rev.1

Recognizes that the open public debate of ideas, as well as interfaith and intercultural dialogue at the local, national and international levels can be among the best protections against religious intolerance, and can play a positive role in strengthening democracy and combating religious hatred, and convinced that a continuing dialogue on these issues can help overcome existing misperceptions.

Calls for strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs, and decides to convene a panel discussion on this issue at its seventeenth session within existing resources.

Introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote. - Resolution A/HRC/16/18/L.38, Geneva, March 24 2011

Pakistan (on behalf of the OIC) Mr. Zamir Akram [\[English\]](#) 10 minutes **Saudi Arabia** Mr. Ahmed Suleiman Ibrahim Alaquil [\[English\]](#) [\[Arabic\]](#) 1 minute **Norway** Ms. Beate Stirø [\[English\]](#) 2 minutes **United States of America** Mr. Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe [\[English\]](#) 5 minutes **Hungary (on behalf of the European Union)** Mr. András Dékány [\[English\]](#) 3 minutes

The Human Rights Council this afternoon held a panel discussion which focused on strengthened international efforts to foster a global dialogue for the promotion of a culture of tolerance and peace at all levels, based on respect for human rights and diversity of religions and beliefs.

[UN Human Rights Council Panel Statements, Resolution A-HRC-16-18, 2010 General Assembly Third Committee Actions](#)

ISSUE: Anders Behring Breivik is the ethnic Norwegian perpetrator of the most horrific acts of terrorism in Norway since WW II. In an opinion page article in the New York Times, 31 July 2011, by Thomas Hegghammer, Senior Research Fellow of the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, Breivik is quoted as saying he is “extremely proud of his Odinistic/Norse heritage and while he is Christian admits ‘I’m not a very religious person.’ “While Breivik’s violent acts are exceptional, his anti-Islamic views are not. His goal is to reverse what he views as the Islamization of Western Europe.”

[Assimilation’s Failure, Terrorism’s Rise
Discussion at Augsburg with Kjell-Magne Bondevik](#)

Introduced by United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted by consensus without a vote – Resolution A/C.3/66/L.47, New York, 15 November 2011

[UN Third Committee Press Release - Resolution L.47 Adopted by Consensus](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS FOCUS GROUP ISSUE II

DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION FOR SECOND PHASE (2010-2014) WORLD PROGRAMME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING – HIGHER EDUCATION

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/151/48/PDF/G1015148.pdf?OpenElement>

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRAINING DECEMBER 19, 2011

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/66/L.65

MULTIDISCIPLINARY & INTERDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES

*Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief for Study,
Research and Engagement from Multidisciplinary Perspectives*

Dedicated to the memory of Fred Lukermann, former Dean - College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota and Barbara Lukermann, former Senior Fellow and a pioneer in Urban Planning at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, and Howard Mills, former President of United Theological Seminary and former President of the United Church of Canada.

STRATEGY FOR ANALYSIS

1986 International Conference: *Tolerance for Diversity of Religion or Belief*

<http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf>

Fred Lukermann, Dean - College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota, Howard Mills, President - United Theological Seminary, David Booth, Professor - Saint Olaf College

SYNOPSIS

To establish a program of special studies that would draw scholars and students from a small consortium of universities, colleges and seminaries in Minnesota to explore the nature of pluralism in connection with religion or belief, and to foster broader awareness of the issue of tolerance.

STRATEGY STATEMENT

I. Problem

Participants in a 1984 Geneva Seminar on the encouragement of understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief called on "academic and research institutions...to undertake a programme of special studies to combat and to eliminate intolerance" Sec 102m. This Geneva Seminar was organized by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in response to a call by the U.N. Secretariat for assistance to implement the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. To our knowledge as of 1986, no academic or research institution has established such a program.

II. Goal

We propose the formation of a small consortium of universities, colleges and seminaries in Minnesota to undertake and encourage theoretical and applied research into the use of the 1981 U.N. Declaration for adjudication and mediation of conflicts of religion or belief. One necessary step in pursuit of this goal must be a program of special studies of the type recommended by the 1984 Geneva Seminar. If diverse systems of religion or belief are to join together in accepting the value of mediating conflicts of belief in a forum like the U.N., they must each in principle acknowledge the relative legitimacy of traditions. Many systems of belief, however, (e.g. religious fundamentalisms) in principle oppose the ideal of mediating conflicts of belief; for these, conflicts of belief only reinforce their own claims to be exclusively in the right.

In order to overcome such opposition, a variety of theoretical and practical approaches will be required. In accord with the recommendations of the 1984 Geneva Seminar, the consortium's program of special studies will direct institutional and scholarly attention to the theoretical premises of the very idea of tolerance for diversity of belief. Work in philosophy, theology, and the social sciences will focus the attention of scholars on the general problems of pluralism, relativism, diversity of belief, etc., and foster a broader awareness of these issues on the part of institutions and students. In this way the program will help to overcome resistance to the ideal of mediating conflicts of belief.

Specific goals of the program will be determined through discussion with participants from other academic and research institutions at the 1986 Minnesota Conference and by recommendations for concrete action strategies in the fields of law, education and development. In general the program will:

1. Direct the attention of scholars to problems and opportunities of relativism and religious pluralism insofar as these provide the theoretical grounds of tolerance for diversity of belief;
2. Explore the nature of pluralism itself, using the tools of social, scientific, philosophical, and theological inquiry;
3. Identify and explore the theoretical premises of specific instance of religious or belief intolerance;
4. Identify and explore in a comparative way the possibility of theological formulations which would produce tolerance for diversity of belief; and
5. Attract the attention of the broader community of scholars and students (both religious and non-religious) to the contemporary implications of pluralism and diversity of belief.

III. Objectives

The short-term objectives for 1987 are:

1. To conduct a year-long traveling seminar at universities, colleges and seminaries in Minnesota drawing inspiration from the 1986 Conference to explore the nature of pluralism of belief and its consequences for the problem of tolerance for diversity;
2. To meet with representatives of United Nations agencies most appropriate to this program of special studies (e.g. U.N. Centre for Human Rights, UNESCO, UNITAR, United Nations University, etc.) To discuss in these meetings what might be most helpful to the United Nations if a small consortium of universities, colleges and seminaries in Minnesota decide to establish a program on a long-term basis; and
3. Through the experience gained in the implementation of these two objectives, to decide if the consortium should establish a long-term structure for a program of special studies after 1987.

IV. Program Approach

The program of special studies in 1987 will be conducted by faculty members belonging to the institutions represented in the ad hoc consortium. At any given time, the program will include at least one member of the faculty from each of these institutions.

A traveling year-long seminar will be conducted by the consortium. At least one meeting of the seminar will be held at each of the supporting institutions. The subject of these academic seminars will be based on the analytical goals of this strategy statement. The host institution will be responsible for the presentation before the group. The regular members of the consortium will constitute a core for the seminar, to ensure continuity of discussion. But the regular member from the host institution for each meeting of the seminar will secure the participation of other interested colleagues, to ensure that the matter of the seminar's discussion be accessible also to a wider audience. Efforts will be made to include fundamentalist points of view as well as participation from the community at large.

In the Summer of 1987 a trip to Geneva, Switzerland, will be arranged for members of the consortium to interview representatives of U.N. agencies, missions to the U.N and

nongovernmental organizations. The results of these meetings will become part of the deliberation by the consortium on whether to establish a program of special studies on a long term basis.

The proposed supporting institutions are:

The University of Minnesota
St. John's University and Seminary
Macalester College
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities,
Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary
Carleton College
Saint Olaf College
College of Saint Catherine
School of Divinity, Saint Thomas College * Bethel Seminary *

V. Outcomes

Possible results of the program are directly tied to its goals. If successful, the work of the consortium will:

1. Help establish the theoretical preconditions for mediating disputes based on diversity of belief.
2. Help establish links between various groups concerned with tolerance.
3. Help formulate theological and philosophical positions which promote tolerance.

WORLD PROGRAMME FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/programme.htm>
http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/15session/A.HRC.15.28_en.pdf

Draft plan of action for the second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education

Note by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has the honour to transmit to the members of the Human Rights Council the draft plan of action for the second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, focusing on human rights education for higher education and on human rights training for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel, prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner in accordance with Council resolution 12/4.

(v) Develop multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary human rights academic programmes.²⁰

(b) Teaching and learning processes and tools

Introducing or improving human rights education in the higher education system requires adopting a holistic approach to teaching and learning, by integrating programme objectives and content, resources, methodologies, assessment and evaluation; by looking beyond the classroom and the higher-education institution to society; and by building partnerships between different members of the academic community and beyond.

²⁰ Multidisciplinary programmes would include the study, research and engagement with human rights from different disciplinary perspectives, such as philosophy, sociology, languages, international and domestic law, etc. Interdisciplinary programmes would entail the crossing of boundaries between disciplines and the pooling of approaches and methodologies to study, research and engage with human rights with a new integrated perspective.

HISTORY

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive.

<http://www.tandemproject.com/program/history.htm>

Instead, in 1981 they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/FreedomReligionIndex.aspx>

In 1986 The Tandem Project organized the first International Conference on the 1981 UN Declaration, and as a catalyst and co-coordinator for the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in 1998, recommended a change of title from Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance to Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief

<http://www.tandemproject.com/tolerance.pdf> [1998 UN Conference Report](#)

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief is adopted international human rights law will be incomplete.

SEPARATION OF RELIGION OR BELIEF AND STATE

Separation of Religion or Belief and State is a term used to express core principles of international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief. It mandates UN Member States to ensure their constitutional

and legal systems provide effective guarantees of freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief to all without distinction at international, national and local levels.

OBJECTIVES

The right of persons to manifest their own values, cultural identity and core principles based on religion or belief, together with human rights law, principles and values on freedom of religion or belief.

Build awareness, understanding and support at international, national and local levels for a UN Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief as a legally-binding international human rights treaty.

UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

International human rights law on freedom of religion or belief protects *theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief*, - General Comment 22 on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not favor one religion or belief over another. Human Rights Law protects all individuals from discrimination based on religion or belief. It values the equal rights of majority and minority religions or beliefs, indigenous, traditional and new religious movements. It is a universal moral principle.

REFLECTIONS

The Tandem Project

The First Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Surely one of the best hopes for humankind is to embrace a culture in which religions and other beliefs accept one another, in which wars and violence are not tolerated in the name of an exclusive right to truth, in which children are raised to solve conflicts with mediation, compassion and understanding.

There is an increase in dialogue today between religions and other beliefs to embrace diversity, but few persons, less than one percent of any population, ever participate. This is a challenge. The value of such dialogues is proportionate to the level of participation. For civil society increased participation would create opportunities for education on inclusive and genuine approaches to human rights and freedom of religion or belief.

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. Instead, they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

Religions and other beliefs historically have been used to justify wars and settle disputes. This is more dangerous today as the possible use of nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction increases.

Governments need to consider whether religions and other beliefs trump human rights or human rights trump religions and other beliefs or neither trumps the other. Can international human rights law help to stop the advance and use of such weapons in the face of this historic truth?

- **QUESTION:** Weapons of mass destruction as history teaches are often legitimized for national security and justified by cultural, ethnic, religious or political ideology. The U.N. Review Conference on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and studies on biological and cyber weapons demonstrate advances in science and technology is being used to increase their potential for mass destruction. The question is whether an International Convention on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief, elevated and supported equally by the U.N. Human Rights Council and U.N. Security Council, would help offset the risk of weapons of mass destruction. Recognition of the need for synergy to balance rights and security is a foundation for solving this issue.

“I am become death, the destroyer of worlds”

- Robert Oppenheimer, quote from the Bhagavad Gita after exploding the first atomic bomb, Trinity 1945.

The Tandem Project believes until a core legally-binding human rights Convention on Freedom of Religion or Belief is adopted international human rights law will be incomplete. It may be time to begin to consider reinstating the 1968 Working Group to bring all matters relating to freedom of religion or belief under one banner, a core international human rights legally-binding treaty.

The Tandem Project a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 to build understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity of religion or belief, and to prevent discrimination in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief. The Tandem Project has sponsored multiple conferences, curricula, reference material and programs on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.