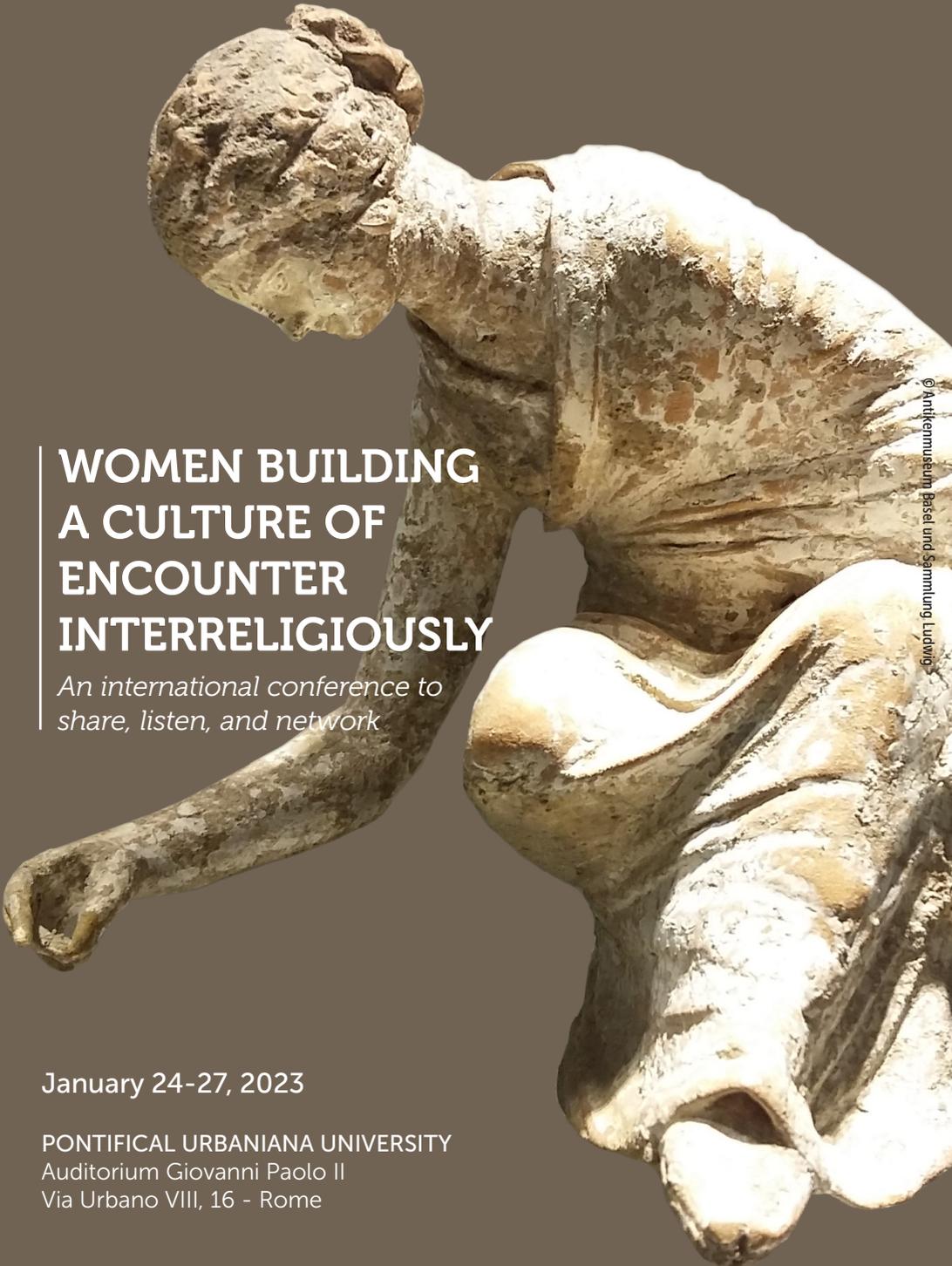


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WOMEN BUILDING A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER INTERRELIGIOUSLY

*An international conference to
share, listen, and network*

January 24-27, 2023

PONTIFICAL URBANIANA UNIVERSITY
Auditorium Giovanni Paolo II
Via Urbano VIII, 16 - Rome



Pontificia Università Urbaniana
Roma
Pontifical Urbaniana University
Rome



World Union of
Catholic Women's
Organisations

| PROGRAM

| JANUARY 25TH - Day 1

9.00-9.30 | Opening Session

MODERATOR: Msgr. Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K., Secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

9.00-9.05 | Prayer in silence with music

9.05-9.30 | Welcome Addresses

Rev. Prof. Leonardo Sileo, OFM, Rector of the Pontifical Urban University
His Eminence Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, Prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue
Dr. María Lía Zervino, *Servidora*, President of World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations

9.30-10.45 | Session I

Women in Scripture and Religious Teachings for a Culture of Encounter

MODERATOR: Ms. Lavinia Rocchi Carrera, Secretary General, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations

Hinduism - Dr. Lakshmi Vyas

Judaism - Rabbi Tamar Appelbaum

Music (Hindu)/Silence

Taoism - Master Lee Keng Neo

Buddhist Perspective - Dr. Samya Charika Marasinghe

Discussion

10.45-11.15 | Coffee/tea break

11.15-12.45 | Session II

Women in Scripture and Religious Teachings for a Culture of Encounter

MODERATOR: Dr. Isabelle Mathian, Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

Jain Perspective - Dr. Priyadarshana Jain

Christian Perspective - Dr. Stephanie Wong

Music (Christian)/Silence

Muslim Perspective - Mrs. Rudina Collaku

Sikh Perspective - Bibi Kiranjot Kaur

Music (Muslim)/Silence

Discussion

15.00-16.30 | Session III

Panel Discussion 1: Narratives of Building a Culture of Encounter

MODERATOR: Dr. Alessandro Gisotti, Deputy Editorial Director, Dicastery for Communication

Christian-Lebanon - Mrs. Viviane Sebrini

Christian-World Council of Churches - Ms. Carla Khijoyan

Muslim-Indonesia - Ms. Alissa Wahid

African Traditional Religion-Malawi - Mrs. Ruth Kamuna

Hindu-Kenya - Ms. Vaishali Shah

Muslim-Philippines - Ms. Sarah Handang

16.30-17.00 | Coffee/tea break

17.00 – 18.30 | Session IV

Panel Discussion 2: Narratives of Building a Culture of Encounter

MODERATOR: Rev. Fr. Paul Samasumo, Director of English Programming of Africa – Vatican Radio

Christian-Uganda - Ms. Rose Busingye

Christian-Congo - Sr. Virginie Bitshanda

Hindu-Italy - Svamini Shuddhananda

Muslim-Germany - Ms. Dunya Elemenler

Sikh-Italy - Ravijit Kaur

| JANUARY 26TH - Day 2

14.00-15:15 | Session V

Women Saints and Sages Building a Culture of Encounter

MODERATOR: Fr. Paulin Kubuya, sx, Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

Prayer in silence with music

Jewish speaker - Rabbi Allyson Zacharoff

Christian speaker - Sr. Theresa Seow, FDCC

Muslim speaker - Mrs. Khadija Mounla Hasan

Music (Jewish)/Silence

Discussion

Short break

15.30-17.00 | Session VI

MODERATOR: Sr. Grace Marie Horan, FSE, Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

Confucian speaker - Miss Chau Wan Leung

Shinto (Oomoto) speaker - Ms. Mineko Morishita

Zoroastrian speaker - Mrs. Awat Taieb

Music (Buddhist)/Silence

Discussion

| JANUARY 27TH - Day 3

9.00-10.30 | Session VII

Panel Discussion 3: Narratives of Building a Culture of Encounter

MODERATOR: Cindy Wooden, Catholic New Service Rome Bureau Chief

Jain-UK - Mrs. Arshna Sanghrajka

Taoist-Hong Kong - Ms. Christina Man Kei Hau

Buddhist-Taiwan - Dr. Christie Yu-ling Chang

Buddhist-Japan - Ms. Chihiro Kase

Christian-Argentina - Mrs. Maria Crespo

10.30-11.00 | Coffee/tea break

11.00-12.00 | Open Discussion

Where do we go from here?

MODERATOR: Dr. Rita George-Tvrtkovic, Member United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Muslim-Catholic Dialogue, Consultor Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

Vote of Thanks

Msgr. Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K., Secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue

BIOGRAPHIES



RABBI TAMAR ELAD-APPELBAUM is the founder of ZION: An Eretz Israeli Congregation in Jerusalem; and the co-founder of the Beit Midrash for Israeli Rabbis at the Hartman Institute and Ha Midrasha at Oranim. She is a board member of Tag Meir, Yanshuf, IJCIC, and more.

Her work spans and links tradition and innovation, working toward Jewish spiritual-ethical renaissance through the renewal of community life in Israel and the struggle for human dignity. She is co-editor of the Mashiv Haruach Jerusalem poem anthology and co-author of the Lev Shalem commentary for Pirkei Avot.

SR. VIRGINIE BITSHANDA, FDLS. Over the past ten years, Sr. Virginie Bitshanda has helped women through the 'Mama Hekima' project, by which the Daughters of Wisdom enable women in the Democratic Republic of Congo break out of the "unseemly conditions that society imposes" and gain their dignity.



MS. ROSE BUSINGYE is a medical assistant and Memor Domini who has been journeying with HIV/AIDS patients and war survivors in Kampala, Uganda since 1992. As a teenager, she experienced the horrors of war first-hand when she witnessed many wounded people die from lack of assistance. From that experience, Meeting

Point International was born—a place where suffering people find community.

DR. CHRISTIE YU-LING CHANG received her Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. In August 2001, Dr. Chang returned to Taiwan when the Council on International Education Exchange employed her skills to rejuvenate its study abroad program at National Chengchi University. In the midst of



a career of administration and teaching, Christie has been active in volunteering for international Buddhist communities. Currently, among other commitments in Buddhist groups, she is Chair of the Steering Committee for the International Lay Buddhist Forum (ILBF).



MRS. RUDINA ÇOLLAKU is a human resource manager working for academic growth and promoting Peace and Security Agenda in Albania. Since 2010, she is Founder and Executive Director of Woman Center for Development and Culture Albania (WCDCA) and President of Albanian Centre of People with Special Needs (ACIPSN) (2015-Present), and the Director of Women Department in Interreligious Collaboration Center in Elbasan (2016-Present). She is a Candidate for a PhD at the University of Bari Aldo Moro.

MRS. MARÍA EUGENIA CRESPO is an active member of the Roman Catholic Church in Argentina. She is a lay collaborator of the Episcopal Commission on Ecumenism, Relations with Judaism, Islam and Other Religions in Argentina. María is Director of Member Support at the United Religions Initiative, an organization that fosters interfaith cooperation to prevent religiously motivated violence and create cultures of Peace, Justice and Reconciliation.



MS. DUNYA ELEMENLER is a political scientist who has been active in the field of interfaith dialogue for about 18 years. As a child of a Muslim father and a Christian mother, interfaith and intercultural dialogue has always been part of her life and she uses personal experiences to build bridges between different groups of people. She is the chairperson of a German organization called the Christian-Muslim Society and is also working on her PhD concerning migrant women in the women's movement in Germany.



SVAMINI SHUDDHANANDA GHIRI obtained a classical-linguistic diploma and a degree in Oriental Languages and Civilizations at "La Sapienza" University of Rome. She is a Hindu nun, samnyasini, and a member of the Italian Hindu Union - Sanatana Dharma Samgha - and referent, for the same, of the Commission for Education and Culture and for interreligious dialogue. She holds regular lessons on Hinduism and Indian art, collaborates with Laksmi Publishing House, and is the author of articles for specialist publications.



MRS. SARAH HANDANG is active in the public school system in the Philippines, having served as a classroom teacher, school head, and education program specialist. Her many initiatives in schools are oriented towards peacebuilding and understanding between diverse groups. Her involvement in Scouting and interreligious groups has been manifold; she is currently a member of Silsilah Dialogue Movement, Muslimah (Muslim Women in Dialogue for Peace), among other groups. In 2017 she studied in Rome as part of the Nostra Aetate Foundation.

MRS. KHADIJA MOUNLA HASAN, born in Latakia, Syria was educated in a Catholic Carmelite school. She studied French literature at the University of Aleppo, later teaching French there, and raised a family with her husband, a professor on the Faculty of Medicine at the same university.



MS. CHRISTINA MAN KEI HAU, Taoist, is the Youth Advisory supervisor of the Hong Kong Taoist Association. She is the CEO of a company with presence in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Foshan. Christina went to Canada to complete her high school and undergraduate degree and holds a Master of Business Administration from the University of Northern Iowa. Raised in Taoist family, Christina applies her academic learning and family pursuits to work for harmony

among multiple religions and cultures. She is an active participant in the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders of Hong Kong and various charities.

DR. PRIYADARSHANA JAIN is professor and head of the Department of Jainology, University of Madras, Chennai, India. She holds M.A, M.Phil and Ph.D degrees in Jain Studies, Diploma in Prakrit Studies and Master Diploma in Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences. She has taught for 30 years at the University level, has travelled extensively in India and abroad and served as a resource person for many national and international forums. She has published and presented many papers at national and international seminars.



MS. RUTH MKWAIRA KAMUNA is professional hospitality expert, business lady and motivational speaker. Born in a Christian family in the city of Blantyre, Ruth has spent her life in most of Malawi's major cities. She was called by ancestors to African Traditional Religion (ATR) in 2019 and has since been an advocate of this belief system seen through African cultural contexts. She serves as Secretary for ATR women's group as well treasurer for ATR Women's chapter in Malawi and has attended several cultural festivals.



MS. CHIHIRO KASE graduated from Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist seminary (Tokyo) in 2013. After graduation, she worked for inter-religious cooperation through the External Relations Department at RK Headquarters. She completed her M.A. in Leadership Studies with a focus on Lay Community Ministry at Meadville Lombard Theological School (Chicago). She also sustained a position with the Religions for Peace Asia Secretariat in 2016-2021. She returned to RK headquarters at the end of 2021 to serve as Executive Officer of Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation.





BIBI KIRANJOT KAUR is involved in the religious, social and political fields. She is an elected Trustee (since 1996) of SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee), a statutory Religious Body that manages Historical Sikh Gurdwaras in India and has worked as its first woman General Secretary. She has co-organised Sikh Women's Conferences on important Sikh centenaries and been on panels to deliberate on Sikh religious issues. She uses her position to recommend Sikh women to religious leadership positions. She represents her organisation in international interfaith dialogue.

RAVIJIT KAUR is a Sikh anthropologist and kundalini yoga teacher and a member of Sikhi Sewa Society. In her study of religions she focused on the transmission of oriental philosophies in the contemporary western society. During the last ten years she has been studying Gurmukhi and Gurbani; she translated Japji Sahib into Italian and she is working on the translation of other sacred compositions of the Sikh literature.



MS. CARLA KHIJOYAN, born in Lebanon, is of Armenian origin with roots in the Armenian Orthodox Church. She holds a Master's degree in Humanities and Social Sciences from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, as well as a Diploma of Advanced Studies in Religions and Global Governance from the University of Geneva. She is a former member of the Middle East Regional Ecumenical Committee and was a Rescue Volunteer with the Lebanese Red Cross. She now serves as the World Council of Churches' programme manager for Peace Building in the Middle East, with special focus on Iraq and Palestine/Israel.

MS. CHAU-WAN LEUNG is the Executive Vice President and Secretary General of the Confucian Academy of Hong Kong, which was founded in 1930 to promote Confucianism in Hong Kong and throughout the world.



She has been serving in the education sector for 38 years and has just retired from the post of principal of a secondary school. Majoring in Chinese language and literature, Ms. Leung is also a keen advocate of Chinese culture and art.



DR. MRS. SAMYA CHARIKA MARASINGHE is an attorney from Sri Lanka specialising in child rights. She was the co-recipient of the Women and Engaged Buddhism Award of the Buddhist Council of the Midwest (USA), for conceiving a psycho-spiritual healing programme for Tsunami survivors, and the recipient of the Outstanding Women in Buddhism Award (Thailand), for exceptional development of wisdom and compassion in the protection of child rights. Dr. Marasinghe is a Trustee of Sarvodaya Vishva Niketan International Peace Centre.

MS. MINEKO MORISHITA studied English literature at Northeastern Illinois University and Western Michigan University graduate school. She later graduated from Hiroshima Jogakuin University Graduate School of Language and Culture, majoring in British and American Languages and Cultures. She is the chaplain at Kifunebara Girls' Garden and Part-time lecturer at Hiroshima Prefectural Miyoshi School of Nursing, among other duties. In 2008, her book *Girls of the Atomic Bomb* was published, co-authored with Motohisa Imaishi.



MASTER LEE KENG NEO was ordained at San Qing Gong (Singapore) into Taoism's Quan Zhen Long Men Sect in 2011; at that time she was given the name Chong Hui. She is currently in charge of the volunteer group in Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong Temple and is a member of the temple's scripture and chanting group. She had travelled overseas with the group to perform rituals under the lead of her teacher Master Huang Xin Cheng. She also represents Taoism at Inter-Religious Organisation Singapore's prayers and conferences.

MRS. ARSHNA MEHOOL SANGHRAJKA AMRELI is a partner in a medical General Practice specialising in diabetes. She is Jain by birth and has been involved in numerous Jain projects over the years, including establishing and teaching in a 'Sunday school', lecturing at the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Library and Bodleian Library, Oxford on Jain architecture and philosophy. She has also had the privilege of showing HM King Charles III around the beautiful Jain temple in the UK.



MRS. VIVIAN SEBRINI, from Lebanon, is the coordinator of the Pastoral Committee for Women of the Maronite Patriarchal Archdiocese of Jounieh and a member of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations. She is married to a Maronite priest, Fr. Bechara Sebrini, and mother to three. She holds diplomas in Listening and Family Accompaniment and in the Professional Practice of Mediation.



SR. THERESA SEOW, FDCC, is a Canossian sister from Singapore. She serves on the Archdiocesan Catholic Council for Interreligious Dialogue as the Vice-Chairperson and is a member of the Inter-Religious Organisation Singapore. She serves at the Canossaville Children and Community Services as Executive Director and is the supervisor of the Canossian School for children with hearing loss.



DR VAISHALI K. SHAH is a post-graduate in International Business and Diploma holder in Internet Technologies. She is the founder-owner of www.hinduscriptures.com and Shrivédant Foundation, catering to seekers of Hindu Vedic content worldwide. Her website has more than 45,000 pages covering topics like Indian culture, history, heritage, rituals, temples, festivals etc. It has received an appreciation letter from Shri Narendra Modiji and many other eminent people have shared their appreciation.



MS. AWAT TAIEB graduated in 1986 from the Teachers Institute in Sulaymaniyah and worked in education until 1992. In 2015, she became a founding member of the Yesna Organization for the Development of Zoroastrian Philosophy and was chosen as a volunteer representative of the Zoroastrians in the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government. She is a founding member of more than three civil society organizations to defend the rights of minorities in the Kurdistan region.



DR. LAKSHMI VYAS serves as President at the Hindu Forum of Europe – one of the largest leadership platforms in Europe. She was also elected Faith Leader in Europe by Religion for Peace. Dr. Vyas is the former Principal of Elphinstone College and is currently a visiting Professor at the American University of Sovereign Nations. She has worked in many different roles, in the UK and Europe, including both intergovernmental and NGOs.



MS. ALISSA WAHID, a trained psychologist, is well-known for her active work in democracy, diversity and interfaith cooperation. She specializes in strategic planning and transformation program designs, working with civil society organizations and Indonesia's State institutions, including Nahdlatul Ulama, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development. Alissa is also co-founder of Gusdurian Network Indonesia, a network of grass roots level actors to promote democracy, human rights, and interfaith dialogue.



DR. STEPHANIE WONG (Huang Xinhui) is a Catholic theologian at Villanova University, an Augustinian Catholic university in the USA. As a Christian comparative theologian who studies Catholicism in China, she focuses especially on the intellectual and practical encounters of Christian faith and East Asian

religious and philosophical traditions. She is especially interested in questions of moral anthropology and ritual.

RABBI ALLYSON ZACHAROFF lives a life devoted to interreligious dialogue. She has a deep background in the field, having studied at the Angelicum and the Gregorian in Rome, Pardes in Jerusalem, and Hartford International University in Connecticut. Rabbi Zacharoff regularly undertakes multifaith grant projects, serves on national U.S. dialogues, presents at international gatherings, and maintains a blog, *Of Christmas and Kreplach*. She graduated from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and is the Special Advisor on Spiritual Life Programming and Religious Discrimination at New York University.



