



National Consultation in preparation of 10th World Assembly Religions for Peace
Utrecht, May 11, 2019

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

The national consultation was held on the 11th of May 2019 in Utrecht to provide input for the upcoming World Assembly in Lindau. RfP Netherlands invited experts on the chosen subjects and young people of various backgrounds, since we have positive experiences with the concept of frank interchange of ideas in intergenerational meetings.

1. Opening session Plenary

Part 1. Welcome speech of the President of Religies voor Vrede, Mirjam Ates-Snijdewind

Good Afternoon! On behalf of the board of Religions for Peace Netherlands, I wish you a warm welcome. Especially to our guest of honour Stein Villumstad, who flew in from Norway to be with us today. It is a great joy to us that you are here to take part in this day of discussing the Care for our Common Future. My personal emphasis would be the word “Common”.

Common means including everybody. We wish every person a meaningful life, lived in harmony and solidarity.

There are great challenges ahead for humanity as a whole... Challenges that will change our way of life. We didn't choose the present systems that shape our society and they no longer meet the demands of a durable, harmonious future for all.

The world we live in today asks for conscience driven choices on how and in which way we want to shape our society and future. That calls for a paradigm shift.

We believe time has come to depart from the idea of “self-interest first” and drop “what is in it for me?” question, each time we are asked to contribute to the society. Now is the time to ask ourselves: “How can I contribute to truly global peace?” “How can I improve the care for our planet and her well-being?”

This not a private endeavour, this needs to be done communally. Together we're strong. It's time to reach out for our fellow human beings; to listen to what moves the other. To look inward for what lies hidden in our heart. Because there we find the treasure that gives us power, courage, trust and happiness. Let's open our hearts again.

We asked you to bring your wisest thoughts, your most pressing questions or treasured experience to the table today. Let's share those in the sessions when we split for the various sub-themes of the day. We are using a circle method for this to safeguard each other's equality. Everyone who speaks, does this to the centre of the circle not to an individual. We listen to *understand* not to prepare an answer. We also try, with what is being said, to reach closer to the wisdom in ourselves.

In this manner we try to develop sincere recommendations for the World Assembly in Lindau.

In closing I would like to share one of my most treasured experiences. There was once an instance I felt aggrieved, rightfully wronged.

Luckily, I had time to reflect, so I asked myself: “Why am I aggrieved?” “On what grounds?” “Was it due to my expectations?” “Or due to my self-worth?” On this train of thoughts, I wondered: “What if I don’t get angry?” And from somewhere deep inside I felt a choice coming up, a real choice. A chance to outgrow myself. At least that is how it felt. It became an experience for which I’m still grateful. A feeling of real freedom. A liberation from the thoughts that regularly put restrictions on our way of thinking.

Take time to think in ways that differ from yesterday. Examine your thoughts and your motives. It might just be your most fascinating road to freedom and the most wonderful pathway to peace.

And now it is my pleasure to give the floor to Stein Villumstad. He is on the organising committee for the World Assembly in Lindau and will explain the key issues of the Assembly in his presentation.

1. Opening session Plenary

Part 2. Presentation of Stein Villumstad, the guest of honour.

Stein shared key points from his presentation of the World Conference on Religions for Peace in Lindau explaining the finer points and important elements. *This is the first World Assembly to have input from local consultations by the various national chapters.* He applauds the fact we are using that possibility to take part in the global process on a local scale.

The first World Conference on Religions and Peace was held in Kyoto in 1970 where 300 delegates tried to answer questions of Peace in the light of the nuclear threat. Since then 8 more assemblies have been held on various themes of Peace and justice. The last, 9th, was held in Vienna and dealt with the question “How to encounter the other and safeguard his well-being?”. There were 800 delegates meeting in various constellations.

A pattern repeated in this Conference. There are special interest sessions, for example one by MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Women Peacemakers, and commissions dedicated to the 5 sub-themes.

These commissions work in a 2-session pattern. The first establishes the definition of the problem. The second explores possible outcomes and solutions.

Alongside the main program there will be a number of inter-religious and regional meetings and pre-assemblies specifically for women and youth. 900 delegates will be present. A number of them will have observatory status.

One of the core themes is “Promoting Positive Peace”, advancing the common good. Nice words that ask for profound questions. It calls for attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies (*Institute for Economics and Peace*).

It’s about solidarity: all are to be concerned about all -also for future generations and subsidiarity: all persons and institutions -on all levels in society- are to be agents of peace. The *Institute for Economics and Peace* describes 8 pillars of Positive Peace. (see page 3)

Stein closes his presentation with requirements for the regional meetings and reports.

Harry Overmeijer
RfP Board Member

Institute of Economics and Peace: Eight pillars of Positive Peace

Isolating factors contributing to peace, based on statistical analysis:

- Well-functioning government
- Sound business environment
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Acceptance of the rights of others

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Eight pillars of Positive Peace

- Good relations with neighbours (countries)
- Free flow of information
- High levels of human capital
- Low levels of corruption

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