

Zoeterwoude, January 15, 2019

Dear Dr. William Vendley and Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**,**

First of all, I want to wish you, on behalf of Religions for Peace Netherlands, a fruitful and blessed 2019.

I hope this letter finds you in good health. It will be a special year for Religions for Peace.

Thank you very much for the invitation for our 10th World Assembly, with the beautiful title **Caring for Our Common Future**.

When we take this Care for Our Common Future in mind and we look at which concerns people share around the world, we see among others:

* The lack of economic and political acting which is based on values, instead of on profit and power and conducted to the benefit of the communities;
* Loss of human dignity, loss of values in general, and lack of spiritual deepening and meaningful life;
* Exploiting of the earth and destroying nature for the sake of profit;
* Unhealthy and unsafe food production as a cheap industry;
* Growing deeply felt fear about the increasing threat of war with the increase of (different types of) nuclear weapons and drones as killing machines from long distance.

We cannot of course offer a simple solution for these concerns and problems, but we see, especially among youngsters all over the world, a new spirit arising: ‘let our values and love be visible in our actions.’

This spirit is and asks for a new way of thinking, which is needed to tackle these serious problems and concerns. That’s why we urgently request to put the following 3 points on the agenda of our Assembly this August.

1. We’re at a point that we need to develop a **new way of thinking** about what it means to be human, what it means to be a social being, what purpose we have in life. How to transform our economy into an economy for the good of society. How to transform politics into politics where people matter. We have to develop a new attitude towards nature, from rainforests to small insects, on which we depend for a balanced life on earth and for food that is safe.
2. We need a new way of thinking in order to find an answer to the question: how to reach peace and safety for all? We need to understand that safety for all is a precondition to peace. If we want peace we have to act peaceful. We have to learn how to create peace in ourselves in order to be peaceful towards others. **We need new education that teaches values in action**. We have to think of the welfare of others, the welfare of nature and all living creatures. We have to realize that we are all interdependent. Whatever and whoever we treat badly or misuse will one day confront us.
3. Over € 1,5 billion (1.570.338.000.000 euro) is used for global military expenditures. There are already more than 15.000 nuclear weapons whereas we only need 100 of them to destroy our planet completely, including all forms of life, while nations continue to expand this capacity. We’re presently preparing for destruction. Therefore, we need a new thinking: **if we want peace, we actively have to prepare for peace.** We should, as already declared by the Global Youth Network of Religions for Peace in 2009, 1**. Abolish Nuclear Weapons 2. Stop the proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons 3. Reallocate 10% of military spending to support urgently needed development.\*** We have to resist resumption of further armament, we have to take a stand. *As WORLDconference of RfP* *we need to present the world a statement to call on our governments to undertake action to change their present policy and to approach others peacefully.*

It’s not the enemy that we created that we have to combat, it’s the enemy within ourselves that we have to fight and let go. It is the love which all religions and philosophies of life help us to find in ourselves, in our hearts and that we need to let grow again. **Love the other as ourselves**, the Golden Rule, a saying which is more valuable and more needed than ever before.

**The greatest conquest we can win is the conquest of ourselves.**



Renewing of our thinking is the red thread in our strategy:

- How can we rediscover the fullest and deepest meaning of being human?

- How can we revitalize our values in our acting?

- How can we prepare for friendship, cooperation and peace?

In our Dutch Chapter of Religions for Peace we are deeply concerned about developments that we have seen the last 30-40 year (growing consumerism; people being seen, above all, as economical factor; greed and misuse of power). In our present days, these developments continue even in a much faster way.

We have to divert these developments. It will be a very carefully planned process, with care for people, employment and quality of life on earth in general.

As RfP friends in Europe we all are planning, where possible, national meetings to prepare for our World Assembly. So, later in spring the results of these meetings will be combined.

From our friends in Germany I understood that you received already the important question of Professor Johannes Lähnemann a.o. about putting Peace Education on the Agenda. Of course we fully support this and, where possible, we will support Professor Lähnemann, since we are actively involved in the AISA-ngo’s initiative to create Schools of Peace in The Netherlands.

I’m looking forward to your reaction on our suggestions.

In name of our Board, I send you warm regards from the Netherlands and we wish you inspiration for the preparation of this very important worldwide meeting,

Mirjam Ateş-Snijdewind

President RfP Netherlands

Zoeterwoude

**\*** For further information see [www.rfp.org](http://www.rfp.org) especially: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOE_5B5QGws> <https://rfp.org/act/stop-war/> <https://rfp.org/act/stop-war/disarmament/>