

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

Global Peace Leadership Conference Belfast, Northern Ireland September 10-13, 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Global Peace Foundation (GPF) in partnership with Co-Operation Ireland convened a four-day Global Peace Leadership Conference at Queen’s University in Belfast, Northern Ireland from September 10-13, 2016. The conference, **Ethical Leadership Amid Global Crisis**, brought together government, civil society, academic, youth and business leaders and practitioners to examine the tension between promoting a shared identity and embracing diversity; to explore relevant values-based approaches to addressing identity-based conflicts and building a shared future; and to discuss a framework for advancing peace and social cohesion.

Participants from South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, Belgium, Uganda, Israel, Malaysia, United States, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, UAE, and Korea convened to discuss the essential role of ethical leadership in addressing the urgent challenges facing the international community.

The conference specifically brought into focus values-based approaches to addressing identity-based conflicts and the moral dimension of peacebuilding, including efforts toward a global ethical framework that has practical application in resolving conflict and building sustainable peace. Belfast was an ideal location for participants to immerse in the landscape of a complex, post-conflict community, where neighborhoods still separated by “peace walls” also are home to dedicated peace-builders promoting cross-community engagement. This document provides an overview of the highlights of the conference within our three primary conference objectives.



“The world’s conflicts present different narratives, but underneath are the same kinds of challenges”

—James Flynn, *International President, Global Peace Foundation*

OBJECTIVE 1

Promote relevant “solutions-based” peacebuilding models by highlighting best practices, sharing insights and feedback, and developing ongoing collaborations to ensure further development of these models.

Share solutions-based models for peacebuilding

- The program began with a tour of key Belfast neighborhoods that were at the epicenter of “the Troubles” in order to provide conference delegates a framework for understanding the conflict. Subsequent visits to the Skainos Centre, Houben Centre for Peace and Reconciliation and 174 Trust offered participants insight into significant local peacebuilding models.
- The powerful voice of women leading peacebuilding initiatives was highlighted in a session titled “*Women as Leaders in Post-Conflict Reconciliation*,” in which global women leaders shared strategies that seek to acknowledge and heal past trauma, strengthen the identity of marginalized groups, and empower women through creative investment and advances in technology and education.
- The Youth Peace Ambassadors Track featured an interactive session, “*A Shared Future: Real Lessons in Building Peace and Social Cohesion*,” which explored youth engagement and prospects for building the common ground of global identity and social consciousness, and advanced effective models of youth leadership and advocacy.
- Co-operation Ireland facilitated an Open Space Session to offer opportunities for more in-depth and engaged conversations within smaller groups. The small meetings allowed participants to question and challenge existing peacebuilding models and collaborate and exchange ideas for new ones.
- Best practices were highlighted on the final day of the conference, including local community building programs and international field work demonstrations to promote collaborative action among participants. Northern Ireland Executive Office Junior Ministers Alastair Ross and Megan Fearon addressed the Global Peace Leadership Conference Belfast 2016 detailing the progress of the ‘Together Building a United Community’ (TBUC) strategy, a plan developed by the Executive Office of Northern Ireland in 2013 that seeks to improve community relations and work towards a more cohesive shared society in Northern Ireland.



“Go beyond being moved...be truly engaged in others’ suffering and wanting to change it.”

—Dr. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela,
Research Chair for Historical Trauma and Transformation at Stellenbosch University

OBJECTIVE 2:

Bring focus to values-based approaches to addressing identity-based conflicts that can reconcile the tension between promoting a shared identity and embracing diversity.

Focus on shared values and embrace diversity

- The aspiration for “unity in diversity” was discussed in the stream “*From Identity-Based Conflicts to a Shared Future.*” Speakers examined how to prevent conflicts from arising as diverse communities come together. Dr. Duncan Morrow, Director of Community Engagement at the University of Ulster, discussed the inevitability of a shared future and the necessity of creating relationships across diverse identities in order to create lasting peace.



**“Countering violent extremism
is a generational project.”**

— Kawa Hassan, *Director of the
Middle East and North Africa Program
at EastWest Institute*

- Practitioners discussed the role of interfaith leadership in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Speakers, including Rev. Dr. Gary Mason, Director of Rethinking Conflict, underscored the importance of shared values in interfaith collaboration and cross-community engagement.
- A special 09/11 Commemoration Banquet featured a touching interfaith reflection and invocation, as well as special peace poems read by students from the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at Queen’s University. The program was woven together and concluded with uplifting, intercultural music by Beyond Skin, an organisation which uses music, arts and media to assist in the building and development of cultural relations in Northern Ireland and globally, with the overall aim of addressing issues of racism and sectarianism.
- A panel discussion, “*Dialogue and Trust, Real Lessons in Countering Violent Extremism,*” explored the root causes of extremism and the importance of building trust within communities. Nigerian clerics Sheik Halliru Maraya and Reverend John Hayab of Kaduna State presented their experience facilitating interfaith cooperation and community development through the Global Peace Foundation Nigeria’s *One Family under God* campaign.
- A special session in the Youth Peace Ambassadors Track, “*Barriers and Opportunities—Local and Global*” explored the concepts of identity and diversity. Participants engaged in dialogue and learned the skills needed to grow as moral and innovative leaders in their communities.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Advance efforts toward a global ethical framework that embraces human spirituality and has practical application in resolving conflict and building sustainable peace.

**Advance a global ethical
framework with practical
application**

- Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madizikela, Research Chair for Historical Trauma and Transformation at Stellenbosch University, shared an impressive plenary talk on forgiveness titled “What Does it Mean to Be Human After Historical Trauma.” Her talk explored conditions that make encounters between victims and perpetrators possible.
- The long-term impacts of global migration and large-scale refugee crises were explored in the Stream “*Refugees, Migration, and the Role of Civil Society in Building Peace and Social Cohesion.*” This session stimulated discussions on assimilation, youth radicalization, increasing tensions amongst ethnically and religiously diverse groups, and the challenge of building trust and social cohesion among diverse and often marginalized communities.
- Mr. Kawa Hassan, Director of Middle East and North Africa Programs at the East West Institute in Brussels, addressed the threat posed by ISIS and the appeal of violent extremism among youth. He spoke on the necessity of and strategies for de-glorifying and discrediting ISIS.



**“When we come together to
respect and appreciate
our differences ...
then we will be better
situated to advance peace.”**

—Imam Talib M. Shareef, *President and Imam of the
Historic Nation’s Mosque, Masjid Muhammad*

CONCLUSION

This Global Peace Leadership Conference served as a catalyst for new insights, partnerships and applications, and connected local and global efforts to build social cohesion in diverse and pluralistic societies across the world. The interactions throughout the program were rich and meaningful – stimulating new insights, opening new engagements and friendships, and inspiring participants.

As one important instance of connecting the GPLC to concrete action going forward, the conference also highlighted the youth-led program “Amazing the Space.” With Co-operation Ireland as the lead sponsor, “Amazing the Space” gathered thousands of young people from schools across Northern Ireland on September 21st to mark the UN International Day of Peace at the contested space of Maze Long Kesh. Youth participants brought their peace pledges crafted in their school groups, and celebrated their role in peacebuilding with performances from local talent, as well as international contributions from across the globe. Co-operation Ireland was joined by international partners including Generation Global and the Global Peace Foundation, which linked the main program to Day of Peace youth engagements in countries around the world.

Among the GPLC Belfast participants was an important delegation from Dubai. During the conference, the Global Peace Foundation was honored to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for World Peace (MRAWP), marking a significant partnership between the organizations and a pledge to work jointly to promote peaceful co-existence and harmony among different religions, cultures and ethnicity groups, jointly counter violent extremism, and safe guard young people from radicalization via peacebuilding training.

“I want to praise the two partner organisations in securing an array of world class experts in this field who I found to be very inspiring. It was wonderful to hear about the innovative and successful initiatives from across the globe, as well as a fantastic networking opportunity to meet with esteemed colleagues and leaders in their respective field.”

—Karen Douglas, *Councillor, Bangor Central, Ards and North Down Borough Council*

