The Human Rights Centre of the University of Essex, in conjunction with The Tandem Project, and sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts, has completed a world survey of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. This study has looked at how far international human rights standards on freedom of religion or belief are interpreted and implemented in representative countries from all regions of the world. This conference, a contribution to the 1995 United Nations Year for Tolerance, will both report on the work of the World Report, and seek to draw conclusions and recommendations for inclusion in the study, to be published in 1996.

Purpose
At this conference, we intend to consult organizations at all levels, from local initiatives to inter-governmental programmes. The challenge faced by these individuals, groups, governments and international organizations is to eliminate the sources of intolerance based on religion or belief, and to create social and political conditions in which diversity can flourish.

Drawing on the 60 country studies which will be completed for the World Report, this meeting will look both backwards to the work that has been done, and forwards to the work that remains to be done as the millennium approaches. It will consider problems of intolerance based on religion or belief alongside other problems that challenge democratic life. And it will seek to provide a forum not only for well-publicized initiatives, but also for the quiet voices of those whose everyday work shows by examples and by teaching that recognition of the ‘other’ may be a cause for celebration, rather than conflict.

International human rights standards seek to protect the human being’s unique capacity to believe. The World Report has looked at key indicators of how far these standards are met, and in doing so has revealed the current status of religion or belief around the world, and shown the potential for future conflict. The challenge now is to build respect and to secure space for the fundamental human right to freedom of conscience, religion or belief, and to convince individuals and governments that respect for diversity of belief does not and should not end with this Year for Tolerance.

Day One-Monday

OPENING PROGRAMME

4:00 Registration

5:00
Opening Address Marking 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Foreign and Commonwealth Office United Kingdom

5:30
Tolerance, Peace and the United Nations Charter
The Honorable Jose Ayala Lasso United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

6:30 Reception

Day Two-Tuesday

FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Plenary Addresses

9:00
Introductory Issues: Freedom of Religion and Belief-A World Report
Professor Kevin Boyle, Director University of Essex Human Rights Centre

9:30
Implementing the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief
The Honorable AbdeIffatté Amor United Nations Special Rapporteur

10:00 Refreshments

10:30
Country and Regional Reports—Monitoring the Freedom
Concurrent discussion groups with World Report examples from:
Africa; Americas;
Asia/Pacific; Europe;
Middle East

12:30 Lunch

2:00
Global Issues—Indicators of Intolerance
Plenary addresses

Indivisibility of Tolerance
Human Rights and Peace
David Little, Senior Fellow United States Institute of Peace USA

Revealing Tolerance: Peace in Judaism, Christianity and Islam
Karen Armstrong, Author United Kingdom

2:45 Questions from the audience

3:00 Refreshments

3:30
Global Issues—Indicators of Intolerance
Concurrent discussion groups

Women; New Religious Movements; Minorities and Religion; Education, Children and the State; Conflict; Secularism; Religion and Human Rights

5:00 Close day two
Day Three-Wednesday

THE UN YEAR FOR TOLERANCE
PRESENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS
AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

9:00

Introduction
Michael Cassidy, Head
Policy and Resources Committee
Corporation of London

Beyond the 1995 Year for Tolerance
United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

9:45 Questions from the audience

10:00

Working for Tolerance--
The Global Challenge

Plenary Panel Reports on Programs from
Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)

UNESCO; Council of Europe; Organization of
American States; Organization of African States;
Asian Organization; Middle Eastern
Organization

10:30 Questions from the audience

11:00 Refreshments

11:30

Working for Tolerance--
The Global Challenge

Plenary Panel Reports from Nongovernmental
Organizations (NGOs) and the Media

Inter-Faith Network; Ministry of Religion;
Amnesty National Section; BBC World Service
NY Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief
Humanist & Ethical Union

12:30 Lunch

2:00

Local Initiatives--
Indicators of Tolerance

Concurrent speakers on local projects
to eliminate intolerance
(projects to be named)

Africa; Americas;
Asia/Pacific; Europe;
Middle East

3:00 Refreshments

3:30

Religion or Belief--
Beyond the Year for Tolerance

Plenary addresses

Strengthening Legal Standards: The
Need for a Convention?
(speaker to be named)

The Educational Challenge: A Universal
Curriculum on Religion or Belief
(speaker to be named)

4:15 Questions from the audience

4:45

A Call to Action
Conference Report and Recommendations
Bertie Ramcharan
Commissioner,
International Commission of Jurists

5:30 Conference adjourns

Speakers identified in this program are confirmed. Concurrent speakers and discussion group leaders are in the process of being named. All speakers will be identified by July.

The Human Rights Centre,
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park, England
and
The Tandum Project
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

FREEDOM OF RELIGION
AND BELIEF
and
THE YEAR FOR TOLERANCE

Marking the 50th Anniversary
of the United Nations

The Barbican Centre
London, England
18-20 September, 1995

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