

Term of Reference
Parliamentary event on Interfaith Dialogue
“The Parliamentary Role in Promoting Interfaith
and Intercultural cooperation”
21 - 24 November 2012

Background

On 20 October 2010, a UN General Assembly Resolution on World Interfaith Harmony Week was adopted and it pointed out on the importance of mutual understanding and interreligious as the dimension of the culture of peace. The essence of interreligious dialogue of understanding is that we are live in the same world and share a common challenge of life, regardless of our faith.

Under this resolution, the global community has confirmed their understanding about the importance of this dialogue to spread the message that every religion carries out a message of peace and goodwill to the people. Yet, the big picture of such message, some, may not fall comprehensively to our people.

Almost daily, media around the world spread news and information on violence and suppression to certain religion and/or to the minority in terms of faith due to the act of majority in the region. Such actions happened not only in less-developed, developing, developed countries, or in the region where majority rules but also in countries where they proclaim themselves as a modern and democratic community.

All forms of intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief are haunting our people’s way of life.

At the same time, many religions teach and spread the words of peace and cooperation among people. They teach the essence of tolerance, respect and cooperation among people through their lofty precepts. The question today still persists on why such lofty precepts carried out by different faiths remain poor in its implementation.

We need to do more to strengthen our understanding and benefit the most from cooperation among people of different faiths and cultures. Climate change, hunger, poverty, conflicts and protection of human rights are today challenges of human being regardless of their faith. These challenges are large enough and require a common attention from all religions and cultures.

Due to the consideration that the parliament represent the people, they are also become the stakeholder to promote such interfaith dialogue. Parliament and more individually, parliamentarians, represent their ideological views that can differ one to another, yet, it provides space to build an understanding among their different views.

It is also commonly known, that through their role, parliament could provide enough policy to promote the lofty precepts of tolerance and understanding between faiths. Parliamentarians

indeed could also play in a big campaign of tolerance, understanding and cooperation due to their role of public figure.

In line with that the Parliamentary Union of OIC Member States (PUIC) as one of the inter-parliamentary organization attached its great importance to this issue. It is also in line with the spirit of PUIC resolution on Supporting the Efforts to Establish Sustainable Dialogue Between Muslim and Western Parliaments in Order to Eliminate All Forms of Intolerance, Negative Stereotyping, and Stigmatization of, and Discrimination, Incitement to Violence and Violence Against Persons Based on Religion or Belief which was adopted at the 7th PUIC Conference in Palembang, Indonesia, January 2012. To follow up such resolution, the PUIC takes the initiative to hold this Parliamentary Event of Interfaith Dialogue.

The purpose of the event is to bring together parliaments and parliamentarians into a big campaign of the promotion of interfaith dialogue and cooperation in order to respect human rights and tackle common challenges of diversity in the globalized world. This event will explore the role of parliament under its constitutional basis in promoting inter-faith and inter-cultural cooperation and to view the state and religion relation especially on the human rights protection.

General Information¹

The Parliamentary event on interfaith dialogue is the forum where parliamentarians among countries of different regions and faiths address both policy and perspectives on how to promote interfaith cooperation and protect human rights. The forum will last for two days starting at 9 a.m. on Thursday, 22 November 2012 and ending in the afternoon of Friday, 23 November 2012.

At the forum, parliamentarians, representatives of the international, national and religious organizations, dignitaries who work and deal with the issue will have the opportunity to express and exchange their views on the issue and to share their good practices of each other's experiences. It is expected that the outcome of this forum will be more practical in defining ways and measures dedicated to strengthen and enhanced the cooperation among people of different faiths.

Topics of Interfaith Dialogue

The forum will discuss the general theme of "*The Parliamentary Role in Promoting Interfaith and Inter-cultural cooperation*". There will be three major topics where participants could express their view:

1. Religion and Social Problems;

The importance of religion as medium for defining and responding to social problems is well known, and most of students and scholars of social issue have acknowledged it.

Thorough examination of the relation between the two issues: religion and social

¹ Draft Program is attached

problems have emerged. This topic will provide participants on an insight about the nexus between religion and social problems, thus, parliament and parliamentarians could take the essence of the study and could provide adequate policy to address the root cause of social problems stemming from misunderstanding amongst the different religion. It is expected with this topic, participant could have foundation to promote a better way in interfaith cooperation to tackle today's common social challenges.

There will be two panelists in this session. They are Prof. Dr. Azyumardi Azra, CBE a prominent figure of Muslim Intellectual in Indonesia and Prof. Dr. Franz Magnis Suseno, SJ a prominent figure of Catholic Intellectual who is known as a humanist.

Each of participants would have an opportunity to gain view and perspectives from the panelist and there will be session where participants could express their parliamentary view and perspectives on the related issue.

2. *Parliament and Universal Ethics of Interfaith Cooperation;*

As a moral philosophy, ethics provide people with *ground norm* which could direct a positive outcome on the human-relation development. While under the term of interfaith cooperation, each religion teaches and provides common ethics that could support the establishment of such cooperation. With this issue, many of our common challenge could be tackled by building understanding and cooperation based on those common ethics.

This topic will discuss on how parliament could enhance their participation in building the interfaith cooperation in this heterogeneous world and the relation of parliament and its policies with their role in democracy by building understanding among people of different faith.

There will be two parliamentarians from the House of Representatives (Indonesia) and Germany who will provide an introduction of the topic above, prior to the general discussion on related topic.

3. *State and Religion: Learning the Best Practices in Building the Trust and Cooperation among Religions.*

As one of the state institution, parliament and their parliamentarians represent people and their ideological view on the country's politics. While there are views that religion plays in different area which most likely to be more personal. Religion is about personal faith between human and his/her God.

However, in daily activities we can find that many of state's policies are affected directly and/or indirectly by the religion's doctrine. Some of these policies provide positive outcomes on the democracy with their respect on human rights where majority and minority could co-exist in peace.

This section will give participants an opportunity to deliver and address their views and perspectives on the relation of state and religion. The delegates will also have the

opportunity to share their best practices on the matter of building the trust and cooperation among religions in their country and how to provide an equal protection and respect to the people of different faith.

Participants

It is expected that parliamentarians from 34 countries and 14 representatives from the international, national and religious organizations. The forum will also include dignitaries and expert on related issues.

Language

The working language of the parliamentary event on interfaith dialogue will be English, Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia.