

Religions and the Human Future

Expert Hearing

March 8, 2010 in Berlin, Germany

Program

Introduction

The Bertelsmann Stiftung and the World Future Council Foundation invite you to participate in an Expert Hearing to reflect the relationship of religions and social change.

The world is at crossroads. Both, the social and the environmental global systems, are out of balance and call into question humanity's long term survival. The underlying causes of the degradation and destabilization processes are to a large extent rooted in the values that determine how we behave and live and what concepts and strategies for economic growth we apply in a moment of choice. The values and behavior on which the present path of world development is based must change if we want to devise possible futures within the tightening human and environmental limits. What is needed is a mental shift in order to redirect human development towards long term inclusive and sustainable progress.

The great religions are of vital importance in this field for their teachings not only influence value systems and attitudes towards co-operation of almost 4/5 of the world's population but are also lit by a vision of tomorrow. Based on the research by Judge C.G. Weeramantry the Expert Hearing will explore what the resources (teachings, traditions, principles, concepts, institutions, rituals, practices etc) of the great world's religions are in regards to the following questions:

- a) How do they look at human development?
- b) What is their say on intragenerational justice?
- c) What is their concern for the welfare of future generations?
- d) What are their notions of men-nature relationships and trusteeship of earth resources?
- e) What kind of life-styles do they envisage?
- f) To what extent do the great religions make room for non-believers and different faiths?

Towards this end the organizers are going to convene a select group of representatives and experts of the great world religions (confined to Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam) for an open ended and future oriented discussion. Based on the deliberations the organizers are planning to highlight the shared responsibility of the worlds religions to engage more actively in the public discourse on what real progress implies for our societies and in what way religious values contribute to profound social change.

Agenda

Sunday, March 7	
Arrival and Check In at Hotel	
7:30 p.m. Rest. Tucher am Tor	Opening Dinner Dinner Speaker: Jakob von Uexküll, Founder World Future Council and Founder Right Livelihood Award, Germany
Monday, March 8, Bertelsmann Unter den Linden	
09:00 a.m.	Welcome by the Bertelsmann Stiftung Malte Boecker, Senior Expert, Program Cultural Orientations Welcome by the World Future Council Foundation Alexandra Wandel, Member, Management Board
09:15 a.m.	Introduction & Findings from the Religion Monitor Dr. Stefan Huber, Center for Religious Studies, University Bochum Keynote: Tread lightly on the Earth - Religion, the Environment and the Human Future Judge C.G. Weeramantry Director, The Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Education and Research, Sri Lanka; Former Vice President, International Court of Justice, The Hague; Member, World Future Council, Hamburg
10:30 a.m.	Coffee Break
11:00 p.m.	Session I Human Future in the Prism of Monotheistic Religions Chair: Former Austrian Chancellor Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel Perspectives from Judaism Rabbi Jackie Tabick, North West Surrey Synagogue, Weybridge, UK Perspectives from Christianity Prof. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, chair of systematic theology and contemporary theological issues, University of Bamberg, Germany Perspectives from Islam Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Founding Director, JUST International, Malaysia
1:00 p.m.	Lunch
2:00 p.m.	Session II Human Future in the light of Asian Religions Chair: Former Austrian Chancellor Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel Perspectives from Hinduism Dr. Surendra Munshi, fellow, Bertelsmann Stiftung, India Perspectives from Buddhism Sulak Sivaraksa, Co-founder, International Network of Engaged Buddhists; Member, World Future Council; Thailand
4:00 p.m.	Coffee Break
4:30 p.m.	Session III Way Forward
7:30 p.m. Rest. Brasserie am Gendarmenmarkt	Dinner Co-hosted by Taellberg Foundation Dinner Speaker: Gary Gardner, Senior Researcher, Worldwatch Institute, Washington

General Information

- Venue:** Bertelsmann Representation
Unter den Linden 1, Berlin / Germany
- Hotel:** Arcotel John F
Werderscher Markt 11, 10117 Berlin / Germany
Accommodation Costs will be covered.
- Conference Language:** English
- Documentation:** The organizers reserve the right to photograph, film, and record the sessions for publicity and to publish an illustrated report or online documentation summarizing the deliberations.
- Travel:** The organizers are happy to assist travel arrangements to and from Berlin. Limited funds are available to reimburse travel costs.
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