

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
11 – 13 JUNE 2013 - International Conference Center Geneva**

SIDE EVENT

BACKGROUND PAPER

Faith and Protection

Wednesday 12 June 2013, 13h15 – 14h15 - Room 3

UNHCR traditionally engages with a wide range of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in discharging its core work of protection and search for durable solutions. It has come to appreciate more fully the importance that faith plays in the lives of conflict and disaster-affected communities, and the role and influence of local faith communities (LFCs) and FBOs in protection. A special session on Faith and Protection at the June 2011 Annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations explored the challenges faced by national FBOs, their unique strengths and protection potential, and how INGOs, UNHCR and national FBOs can maximize their collective field-level protection efforts.¹

Building upon that special session, UNHCR devoted its 2012 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges to the theme of Faith and Protection. The Dialogue explored how asylum and the protection of stateless persons and IDPs are reflected in religious values and traditions; recommended practical ways to better engage with FBOs to protect and assist refugees, IDPs and stateless persons, and improve protection space; and examined how to deepen cooperation between UNHCR and humanitarian partners with FBOs, including those whose primary activity is to support the religious life and holistic development of its adherents.²

The High Commissioner closed the 2012 Dialogue with a series of actionable suggestions,³ leading to the following initiatives: 1) Highlighting the good practices of FBOs in yielding protection outcomes, including in partnership with UNHCR; 2) Developing a Code of Conduct for faith leaders working with refugees, returnees, IDPs, and stateless people; 3) Identifying key research and learning topics related to faith and protection that deserve further exploration; and 4) Developing guidance for UNHCR staff

¹ See UNHCR, Report on the Annual Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations, 28 – 30 June 2011, <http://www.icva.ch/doc00004958.pdf>

² See UNHCR, Background Document, High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, 29 November 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/50aa5b879.html>

³ See UNHCR, Chairman's Summary, High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection, 13 December 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/50cb39dc9.html>

and partners on 'faith literacy'. To build on the momentum around this topic, participants of the 2012 Dialogue proposed a side event at the 2013 Annual Consultations.

This side event will be co-moderated by Ms Helen Stawski, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Deputy Secretary for International Development, and Mr James D. Thomson, Associate Director of Policy and Advocacy for Act for Peace. Panellists will include Mr Volker Türk, Director of International Protection, Bishop Munib A. Younan, President of the Lutheran World Federation, Mr Atallah Fitzgibbon of Islamic Relief Worldwide, and Ms Rachel Levitan of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

The side event will be an opportunity to address the following points specifically:

- Take note of the Affirmations for Faith Leaders developed as part of the follow up to the 2012 Dialogue ("Code of Conduct");
- Present and discuss the findings of the Call for Examples on Good Practices of FBOs/LFCs towards Protection Outcomes;
- Reflect on the examples to consider the depth, scope and character of protection roles and practices of FBOs and LFCs, identifying the roles FBOs and LFCs are best placed to play and why, and areas of untapped partnership potential; and
- Encourage reflection and feedback on what information, guidance and training are required to enhance collaboration and engagement with FBOs and LFCs. This feedback will be fed the fourth work stream noted above: developing guidance for UNHCR staff and partners on 'faith literacy'.

Given the short time available for the side event, a longer, informal dinner-time conversation will be organized on 12 June 2013 for those particularly interested in this topic, providing an opportunity for deeper engagement and fresh ideas and recommendations. (Participants in the informal dinner are invited to cover the cost of their own meal.)