



**THE GLOBAL PEACE INITIATIVE OF WOMEN
RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS**

Launched at the Palais des Nations, October 7, 2002
Geneva, Switzerland

An outcome of the MILLENNIUM WORLD PEACE SUMMIT

The Geneva Declaration of Women for Global Harmony, Peace and Justice

We, the participants gathered here in Geneva at the Global Peace Initiative of Women Spiritual and Religious Leaders, October 7-9, 2002, recognize the responsibility of women and men to collaborate as equal partners to bring about harmony, peace and justice in the world. As spiritual leaders, we believe that the religious and faith communities must together establish a mutually respectful spiritual framework so that peace in all its dimensions may be achieved.

We acknowledge the significant contributions of women as leaders, teachers, intellectuals, healers, nurturers and bearers of spiritual and cultural values, and recognize that women can play a significant role in finding viable alternatives to violence and conflict. We call upon the international community to engage the special resources of women, particularly those committed to finding a common language that expresses our respective spiritual values, to aid in the prevention, resolution and healing of conflict around the world and the elimination of violence and injustice. We further affirm that:

Whereas, the United Nations plays a major role in promoting the dignity of every human being and in improving the social and economic status of women worldwide;

Whereas, efforts to resolve conflict focus on political and economic even military activities, with little global attention to the spiritual resources of prayer and reflection, and the results thereof;

Whereas, religions have often been the basis and the "legitimizing" source of intolerance, discrimination and violence leading to communal conflict, mass migrations and ethnic cleansing much of which impacting women and children adversely;

Whereas, governments have denied the visibly active participation of religious and spiritual leaders and particularly that of women;

Whereas, women sponsored initiatives, especially in the fields of religion and spirituality are unsupported by resources and are often marginalized;

Whereas, education is key to fostering mutual respect and understanding that is essential for any lasting peace, and whereas life-long peace education has not been utilized as a tool for the prevention of conflicts;

Whereas, due to a variety of factors, women around the world do not recognize their own self-worth, are not given the opportunity to develop their self esteem and do not acknowledge their own potential as teachers, healers, leaders and as agents of change;

Whereas, the sense of well-being of women is essential to the fulfillment of their potential and whereas, the role of women in the preservation and transmission of culture and value-systems is crucial to all of civilization;

Whereas, the interpretation of the theologies and the practices in many religious and cultural traditions are not conducive to fostering the human rights and dignity of women;

Whereas, women are often subject to discrimination, repression and violence in the name of religion, which are the result of unfair and unjust interpretations of religious teachings;

In response to these conditions, the Global Peace Initiative hereby declares its resolve to;

1. Urge all people and governments to be mindful of their duty to value, preserve and protect all life as a precious gift;
2. Call on the United Nations and national governments to include an equitable representation of women in peace

negotiations, in conflict resolution and in post conflict peace and reconciliation efforts;

3. Promote life-long peace education as a mandatory component of peace negotiations and economic assistance in peace building;
4. Condemn all forms of violence committed against women whether in the name of religion, custom or tradition and to call upon the world community to outlaw all inhuman and barbaric forms of punishment deployed against women, as these practices are not in keeping with the universal values of love, peace, and compassion propagated by all religious traditions in the world;
5. Promote the understanding that the essence of religion and spirituality fosters the partnership of women and men in all aspects of life including equal opportunities for leadership roles in their religious traditions;
6. Call upon spiritual and faith traditions to engage in collaborative global efforts to abolish all weapons of mass destruction, recognizing that their use intricately linked with the alarming depletion and destruction of social, economic, environmental, and human resources, endangers all life;
7. Undertake specific steps to encourage the teaching of spiritual values such as mutual respect, love and compassion for all people and life forms;
8. Strategize for collective actions on behalf of the future generations, securing their interests for a just, peaceful and sustainable world;
9. Defend and protect against environmental exploitation and degradation and to preserve the environment as the legacy for our future generations;
10. Urge governments, national and international agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF to promote universal and balanced education for children and adults that provide positive life skills and train them for the challenging professions of the contemporary technological age;
11. To call upon faith communities around the world to join together each year to pray for world peace on September 21, the day proclaimed by the United Nation as the International Day of Peace, and to join together in collective prayer in times of world crises.

Adopted, October 9, 2002

Conscious of our role as nurturers and protectors of life, we pledge our commitment to foster the inner and outer conditions that will build a harmonious, peaceful and just world community, and we further pledge to support the advancement and dignity of women, the mothers of the human family.

