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PRESS RELEASE OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (R.I.I.F.S.) and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Vatican Office responsible for Interreligious Dialogue) (P.C.I.D.) held their first Colloquium.

The Colloquium took place in Amman from 18 to 20 May 2009, at the Royal Scientific Society (*al-Jam'iyya al-'Ilmiyya al-Malakiyya*).

The topic devoted to "Religion and Civil Society" has been examined focusing on three areas: 1) Religion and Civil Society in History and the Philosophico-juridical thought; 2) Religion and Civil Society in Modern Societies; 3) Religion and Civil Society in the Religious Tradition.

The Delegation of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies was headed by H.E. Ambassador Hasan Abu Nimah, Director, R.I.I.F.S. and included the following dignitaries and scholars: Seyed Mohammed Ali Abtahi, President, Institute for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Iran; Prof. Mohamed al-Sharkawi, Cairo University; Prof. Mahmoud al-Sartawi, Member of the R.I.I.F.S. Board of Trustees, University of Jordan; Prof. Abdul Nasser Abul-Basal, President, The World Islamic Science and Education University, Member of the R.I.I.F.S. Board of Trustees; Mr. Mohamad Mahfoodh; Dr. Edieh Metlaq; Professor Saoud el Mawla, Lebanese University, Beirut; Mr. Khaled Nusseibeh; Dr. Mohammad Rayyan, University of Jordan; Dr. Hanan Ibrahim.

His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

(P.C.I.D.) led the delegation of the Holy See, which had as its members his Excellency Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata, Secretary of the P.C.I.D., and the Rev. Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, Bureau Chief for Islam at the P.C.I.D., as well as these other members: His Excellency Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt, Apostolic Nuncio to Jordan and Iraq; His Excellency Msgr. Yasser Ayyach, Greek-Catholic Metropolitan of Jordan; His Excellency Msgr. Salim Sayegh, Auxiliary Bishop & Vicar General for Jordan; Rev. Prof. Andrea Pacini, Professor of Dogmatic Theology and of Theology of Religions; Rev. Prof. Joseph Ellul, O.P., Professor of Ecumenical Theology and Islamic Studies; Rev. Prof. Dr. Christian W. Troll, S.J., Honorary Professor for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations; Prof. Silvio Ferrari, Professor of Canon Law; Ms. Dima Al Baqain, Researcher; Dr. Asem Khalil, Associate Professor of Law.

A public session has been held at the Founders Theater, El-Hassan Science City at the end of the Colloquium. On that occasion HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal and His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran addressed the participants and the guests, thanking them respectively for their contribution during the Colloquium, and their presence at the concluding session.

The following points have been agreed upon:

- 1) The notion of civil society has been discussed and the participants underlined its character as a medium for an open exchange of experiences and visions aimed at pursuing the common good. The participants agreed on the importance of civil society for a sound and integral development of individuals and communities, recognizing the particular and indispensable contribution that civil society can provide as a valuable forum for dialogue in the context of the responsible exercise of freedom.
- 2) The participants stressed the importance of educating youth in the values of mutual respect and in the culture of dialogue, rejecting violence, so as to promote peaceful coexistence on the basis of full citizenship.
- 3) They highlighted the relevance of democracy and the rule of law in a State that respects ethnic, cultural and religious diversities and implements equality among citizens, on the basis of the respect of human dignity and the ensuing fundamental human rights, particularly freedom and justice.
- 4) Religions have a specific role to play in civil society, offering motivations for the citizens' contributions to the common good that are based on faith in God and which transcend political expediency and search for power.
- 5) The participants stressed the role that religions can play in strengthening social participation and cohesion, thereby giving their specific support to the building of a stable and prosperous State, based on the principle of subsidiarity.

It has been decided that the next Colloquium will be held in Rome within two years, preceded by a preparatory meeting where the theme and the modalities will be defined.

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