

**Alexandria 19 - 21 January 2008**

**Workshop 3**  
**Religious Reality and Society**

**General Guidelines**

- a. To establish an ongoing mechanism for networking members of the three conferences in Paris, Seville and Alexandria to ensure continuous dialogue and reflection. Establishing a website accessible to all members can serve as a forum for such activities.
- b. To establish an entity responsible for follow up on the implementation of activities recommended in this document and in others produced in the other workshops.
- c. To pursue financing of activities listed here from public and private donors from North and South of the Mediterranean, and from the Gulf in order to avoid the image of dependency.
- d. It is strongly recommended that, to the extent possible, all activities include, in all stages of conceptualization, development and implementation, not only theologians, but also youth, members of civil society, governmental and non governmental organizations, and social scientists.

**Themes and Proposed Activities**

**1. Religion and Politics:**

- a. To create an advisory council of religious leaders for coordination and contact between representatives of the three monotheistic religions. Representatives would have full mandate from their religious authorities in order to consult on emerging matters and to install a mechanism for ongoing reflection and responsibilities, and the contribution of religion to contemporary issues. The Geneva Foundation could be a tool to provide support for the development of this advisory council.
- b. To develop a center for information about Christians in the South, Muslims in the North and Jews at large as minorities. The idea is to provide objective and substantial information about political, juridical, sociological and cultural realities of these minorities, and to provide pertinent support to the diversity of Mediterranean societies. The center aims at promoting full citizenship for all with respect for pluralism and diversity.

## **2. Theological Dialogue and Training**

To create a model of “Dar el Hikma” or a trans-Mediterranean theological Erasmus. In this programme, students of theology who are potential future religious leaders, at the graduate level, would spend one semester abroad in a different religious setting. During that time they would teach others about their own religion and get to develop personal and human relations with their fellows from other religions.

Examples of possible contributing institutions are Al-Azhar in Cairo, Saint Joseph University in Beirut, Bet Morasha in Jerusalem, Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Catholic Institute and Saint Sergius in Paris, Eastern Institute in Rome, and Marmara University in Istanbul. The project would be self-financed by participating institutions on a reciprocal basis.

## **3. Education-based Activities**

- a. To develop a curriculum for comparative studies of religion and religious dialogue. The curriculum would use homogenous criteria based on social science methodology to ensure objectivity of information and dialoguing.
- b. To develop a manual for the study of religions of the Mediterranean, which would include a teacher’s handbook and a student text. The manual would include a programme for training the teachers.
- c. To establish a review committee to study all presentations of religion in different textbooks, benefiting from the work that has been done by others such as the Casablanca Symposium of 2003 and the Avicenna University at Lille.
- d. To establish Summer Mobile Universities to gather students from different countries to study about religion and social sciences. Students would have the opportunity to exchange knowledge and learn about each other’s cultures.

## **4. Community-based Activities**

- a. To revive religious and cultural memories of different groups by rehabilitating and preserving pertinent monuments, and cultural symbols.
- b. To celebrate the lives and cultures of immigrant groups living in large Diaspora cities through exhibitions, festivals and sharing information about such groups.
- c. To create a network of information centers such as libraries and museums to promote the common values, artistic, spiritual and intellectual heritage shared among the three monotheistic religions.
- d. To create religious cultural centers to provide non-confessional information about specific religious heritages and communities in countries where such religions are not dominant.