

**FINAL STATEMENT BY THE CO-CHAIRS SECOND MEETING OF THE
WORLD FAITHS DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE
NOVEMBER 11, 1999**

WASHINGTON, November 15, 1999 On November 11, 1999 World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, hosted the second World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) conference at the World Bank in Washington. The conference was attended by leaders from the Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths and the World Council for Religion and Peace and senior executives from the World Bank. The WFDD was launched last year at a similar conference in London, jointly chaired by Mr. Wolfensohn and the Archbishop. Its aim is to try to bridge the gap between the faith communities and the World Bank in order to enable them to work together more effectively to overcome world poverty.

Mr. Wolfensohn started by giving a picture of the stark realities facing the world in terms of increasing levels of poverty and inequity. His message was that, since no single institution could hope to solve the problems alone, coalitions were the only realistic way forward. The call for the faith-based organizations to make a serious contribution to development policy thinking and practice comes not only from the World Bank but also from the IMF.

The Managing Director of the IMF, Michel Camdessus, who was also present at the meeting, urged the religions to build on the momentum gained by the Jubilee 2000 campaign for the reduction of the debt burden of the poorest countries to start a broader world-wide movement for poverty reduction. They should direct their energy in a constructive manner by holding the governments of both industrialized and developing countries accountable for their pledges to meet specifically defined targets of development. Mr. Camdessus mentioned in particular in this respect the areas of arms trade and the fight against corruption.

It was emphasized that the spirit of the Dialogue and its approach are rooted in the universal values of love, truth, justice, non-violence, compassion, tolerance and human solidarity. The religious leaders expressed the urgency to provide help to the poor and give them the opportunity to live a life of dignity. The religious leaders expressed particular concern about the effect of corruption on the most vulnerable people, the importance of nurturing diverse cultures in the face of globalization.

There were several reports from people involved in the WFDD work, which highlighted the enthusiasm that the Dialogue has engendered in countries such as India, Ethiopia and Tanzania and pointed to expected results in areas such as health and food security. The conference then turned to specific proposals for ways ahead.

Having ascertained that there was unanimous agreement about the continued need for the Dialogue and its potential as an effective way of bringing about changes in favor of the poor, the two Chairs summarized the subsequent discussion in the following points:

1. The commitment to improving the lives of the poor found among those at the conference enables the bridging of huge cultural and theological divides. It is crucial to try to replicate this in many practical country settings, and the signs are that is already beginning to happen.
2. The Dialogue remains as timely and important as ever. There is consensus that the work needs to be planned within a longer time frame of about five years, with a commitment to a thorough mid-term review to assess results.
3. There is a need to formulate an overarching set of development ethics on which the faith communities are in broad agreement. It is also necessary to articulate continually the values and ethics inherent in development programs for examination and reflection, not just by donors but by the people affected by such efforts.
4. While acknowledging the particular link of the WFDD to the World Bank and the IMF, every effort should be made to draw out the best mutual advantage from close relations with existing inter-faith groups.
5. The four core thematic areas agreed when the Dialogue was started were endorsed as continuing priorities. These are: Hunger and Food Security, Conflict Prevention and Resolution, the Delivery of Social Services and Culture as an Element of Development. It was recognized that more could be developed in due course from field experience but it was considered important to start by focusing on a few areas for the time being, to ensure results.
6. Both sides recognize that the process of mutual understanding still has to be deepened. There is a need for cultural change not only in the World Bank but also on the part of the faith communities, who need to become more aware of the true nature of the operations of the international institutions and of the context in which they are working.
7. There was a vigorous call to the representatives of the faith communities to mobilize volunteers for the dialogue. These should be people who are rooted in work with the poor and thus understand both the nature of poverty and the kinds of changes needed.
8. Readiness was expressed on all sides to explore how to use the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) as an instrument in the Dialogue. This is a process through which representatives of all sectors of society, different government departments, the private sector and the donor agencies sit together round the table to discuss development policies for particular countries. The CDF provides an ideal opening for the religions to participate in vital decision-making processes. The same is true of the inclusive poverty reduction framework approach, which is now being implemented by both the World Bank and the IMF in low income countries.
9. The two Chairs will designate a small group of participants assisted by independent advisers to review the objectives, work programme and structures of the WFDD and report back to them and those present within six months.

