

Overview

Conceived as the title for an international symposium in 1996, Agenda for Reconciliation (AfR) has grown into a global network active in conflict prevention and reconciliation.

Its annual conferences at Caux, in Switzerland, offer participants coming from situations of tension and conflict a safe space and the opportunity to learn from one another.

AfR's work and its conferences are based on the assertion that:

- Healing the past must become the common practice of the 21st Century.
 - Forgiveness and reconciliation, along with a search for more just solutions, form the basis of sustainable peace.
 - The causes of conflict such as corruption, poverty, disease and oppression need to be addressed in a comprehensive human security approach.

AGENDA FOR RECONCILIATION (AfR)

FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

In a world where 50% of countries that have experienced conflict relapse into war, reconciliation – a concept that was until recently suspect in international policy circles – may prove to be the missing link in United Nations commitments to building peace. With a 70 year track record for reconciliation 'on the ground', increasingly Initiatives of Change (IofC) has sought to cross-pollinate these efforts internationally.

1991 saw the first of an annual series of conferences in Caux, Switzerland on the theme *Regions in crisis, regions in recovery – learning from one another*.

In 1996 (Caux's 50th anniversary), an international symposium on the theme Agenda for Reconciliation took place in Caux, co-hosted by the National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) in Tokyo and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC. Many speakers of international repute referred to the need for preventative diplomacy – the work of reconciling parties before a conflict breaks out. Others stressed the increasing recognition of NGOs both in the process of 'Track II Diplomacy', as it is frequently called, and in providing insights not always available to diplomats or officials.

At a meeting in Strasbourg in March 1998, representatives of twelve countries decided to launch Agenda for Reconciliation (AfR) as a means to coordinate work of this kind and to serve as a link with – and make this experience available to – diplomats, governments, the UN, the European Union and other regional organizations.

AIMS

The high-level aims of Agenda for Reconciliation are that healing the past becomes common practice in the 21st Century, and that global security considerations prioritize human security from want and oppression.

AfR is supporting local people in their efforts for nation-building, peace and reconciliation in many parts of the world.

The annual AfR conferences in Caux, Switzerland, have drawn people from over 60 countries in recent years. Many come from situations of tension or open conflict; others are struggling to rebuild their countries and communities after a period of conflict. Caux conferences contributed to the resolution of a number of significant conflicts over the years, including the independence struggles of Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria, Kenya, Cyprus and Rhodesia / Zimbabwe. Since 2002, these conferences also deal with issues of good governance, human security and development, as the preventative approaches to conflict transformation.

Steering Group

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AfR International Advisory Council

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HOW

The AfR global network works for reconciliation at every level of society. In developing the concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness as a basis for sustainable peace, establishing regional workshop groups committed to peace, and enabling people to benefit from the experience and encouragement of those involved in other conflict areas of the world.

In all aspects of its work, AfR creates an environment where individuals can find liberation from hatred, greed and indifference. People who have found this inner freedom bring a particular dynamism to the process of peacemaking and social change, and often develop new practical solutions.

The IofC International office in Geneva (established in 2004) facilitates interactions with the UN community and related institutions in Geneva and New York, especially in the fields of conflict prevention and reconciliation.

CURRENT AREAS OF FOCUS

Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Region, Cambodia, the Great Lakes Region of Africa (Rwanda and neighbouring countries), the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia), Sierra Leone, and the Middle East.

FINANCES

AfR is a program within the framework of Initiatives of Change. It therefore benefits in many countries from charitable or equivalent status as defined by respective national legislations.

Costs are kept to a minimum. Many activities are carried out on a volunteer basis. Programs thus far have attracted some funds from governments and corporate sources but principally from individual contributions. As its program expands, AfR is seeking to broaden its funding to include foundations, governments, international organisations and corporations as well as more individuals.

ADMINISTRATION

AfR is administrated by a Steering Group who consult and work with the AfR Forum which is composed of about 24 people active with AfR around the world. They are advised by the AfR International Advisory Council.



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