



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Two Decades of Peacebuilding:

World's Largest Grassroots Interfaith Peacebuilding Network Turns Twenty

June 26, 2020 – As tensions rise between groups of people based on differences in culture, faith, ethnicity, and politics, there is one organization steadily cutting through the daily reports of hate speech and violence with a simple message: **we are all in this together.**

URI (United Religions Initiative) is the world's largest grassroots interfaith peacebuilding network, working in 108 countries and headquartered in San Francisco. It cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities. This work has become more important than ever in the current climate. URI groups are working side-by-side with their neighbors, regardless of differences in faith belief, through the crisis of the current COVID-19 pandemic to help vulnerable populations.

Since its Charter signing in 2000, URI has grown rapidly to include more than 1,000 member groups and organizations, called Cooperation Circles, working in over 100 countries today. Each Cooperation Circle includes at least seven members from at least three religions, spiritual expressions, or Indigenous traditions—including atheists and agnostics. Cooperation Circles work on two levels: by giving people of different backgrounds a chance to work together, and by tackling important humanitarian issues within and beyond their communities.

The URI network builds the capacity of these grassroots groups to engage in global initiatives and local action such as conflict resolution and reconciliation, environmental sustainability, education, women's and youth programs, and advocacy for human rights—all aimed at preventing future fear, hatred, and violence.

"Our hearts ache as we witness our beautiful world struggling with disease, death, and injustice," says the Rev. Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr., Executive Director of URI. "But in URI we know that our work continues to deepen in times of both sorrow and joy. As we celebrate URI at 20, we dream of a healed world where love and justice reign supreme, and where humanity embraces the interconnectedness of all people to each other, to our plant and animal siblings, and to the Earth."

H.E. Adama Dieng, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, shared these words in his keynote at URI's Accelerate Peace Conference, held June 2019 at Stanford University:

"We are seeing a disturbing groundswell of xenophobia, racism, and intolerance, including anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and persecution of Christians. This is a time when we need to get together to build peace. It is a time for acceleration, not a time for fueling tension. Thank you to URI for what you are doing."



On June 25 and 26, for URI's 20th birthday, the peacebuilding organization will be hosting a two-hour social media broadcast with partners Unify, Unity Earth, and the SINE Network as part of World UNITY Week. The broadcast will feature music, inspiring ceremonies from around the world, reflections from prominent URI members and leadership, messages from international youth leaders, interviews about the history of URI and its journey into the present, and a special peek at the upcoming Visionaries documentary featuring URI on PBS television stations this summer.

URI welcomes you to join the 20th anniversary broadcast on its [Facebook page](#). Although we may be physically isolated from each other during the pandemic, we can continue to connect soul-to-soul.

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URI 20th Anniversary Broadcast

Live on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/unitedreligionsinitiative>

Thursday, June 25th

5:30 PM Pacific Time USA (00:30 UTC/GMT)

(re-broadcasts) Friday, June 26th

4:00 AM Pacific Time USA (11:00 UTC/GMT)

10:00 AM Pacific Time USA (17:00 UTC/GMT)

URI's 20th Anniversary Kick-off Broadcast will be part of World UNITY Week.

You can also watch the Broadcast any time after June 25th at <https://uri.org/celebrate20>

or <https://www.youtube.com/user/uriglobal>

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ABOUT URI

URI (United Religions Initiative) is the largest grassroots interfaith peacebuilding network in the world. It cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities. We implement our mission in 108 countries through local and global initiatives that build the capacity of over 1,000 member groups and organizations, called [Cooperation Circles](#), to engage in community action such as conflict resolution and reconciliation, environmental sustainability, education, women's and youth programs, and advocacy for human rights.

URI holds the prestigious distinction of being a non-governmental organization (NGO) with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and has long-standing partnerships with several other UN agencies.

Learn more at URI.org.

CONTACT:

Isabelle Ortega-Lockwood | Email isabelle@uri.org