



INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA  
PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD BILATERAL  
INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA

Edited by  
Aleksandar Raković and Jovana Raković





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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA**

**Adiministration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious  
Communities of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia**

**Belgrade 2019.**





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## FOREWORD

The book of proceedings from the Second and Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia, entitled *Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia*, consists of: introductory texts describing the flow of all the three interfaith dialogues between the two countries, the papers of the members of the Serbian delegation at the conference held within the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue (22<sup>nd</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> October 2013, Jakarta), papers from members of the Serbian and Indonesian delegation and from the guests at the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue (8<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> November 2015, Belgrade) and photos from all the three interfaith dialogues.

The papers of the members of the Serbian and Indonesian delegation at the conference within the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia (April 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Belgrade) were published in Serbian language in the book of proceedings *Law, Religion, Culture* (edited by Aleksandar Raković and Vladimir Đurić, Belgrade: Faculty of Orthodox Theology – University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law – University of Belgrade, Ministry of Religion and Diaspora of the Republic of Serbia, 2012) and in English, with photographs, in the book of proceedings *1st Indonesia–Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue* (edited by Samuel Samson, Belgrade: Embassy of The Republic of Indonesia, 2011).

A. R. & J. R.



# Dr Aleksandar Raković

Coordinator of the First and Second Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia

## RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE FIRST BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA (2011)\*

### Introduction

Diplomatic relations and wide bilateral cooperation between Yugoslavia and Indonesia, established and promoted during the fifties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were starting point of fruitful connections in the fields of politics, military and economics, as well as science and culture in several decades. Yugoslav and Indonesian foreign policy coincided in support of decolonization, pacifism, anti-hegemonism and neutral position towards ideological blocs. It was clear then why Yugoslavia and Indonesia were among founders of the Non-Aligned Movement (1961) and presidents Josip Broz Tito and Sukarno in close friendship.<sup>1</sup> Nature of Yugoslav communist system didn't enable two countries to establish interfaith connections.

Civil war in western parts of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1991-1995) led to creation of usual media stereotypes against Serbs even in friendly Indonesia. While Indonesian public had memory on Yugoslavia as ally and friend, picture of Serbia was different.<sup>2</sup> Also, with break-up of SFR Yugoslavia (1991) its former republics, Serbia as well (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), quit membership in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Where bilateral cooperation between Yugoslavia and Indonesia stopped, bilateral cooperation between Serbia and Indonesia started. Belgrade was a host of the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia (7-9 April 2011) on the highest state, religious and university levels.

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\* Reprinted from: Aleksandar Raković, "The Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia (2011), Positive Experience In Serbia's State Policy", *Law, Religion, Culture*, Proceedings of the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia held in Belgrade (7–9 April 2011), edited by Aleksandar Raković and Vladimir Đurić, Belgrade: Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, Ministry of Religion and Diaspora, Republic of Serbia, 2012, 269-275. The book of proceedings was published in Serbian with Raković's paper in English as a conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, "Yugoslav view on Indonesia", speech at the Interfaith Conference Serbia – Indonesia, Belgrade 7 April 2011. Short version of speech is published in the book: *1<sup>st</sup> Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011, 32-34.

<sup>2</sup> "Why Interfaith Dialogue has been held in Serbia?", *1<sup>st</sup> Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011, ii.

## Religious picture of Serbia and Indonesia

There are interesting similarities in religious pictures of Serbia and Indonesia, but also huge differences in secular or religious character of two states.

1. Republic of Serbia is the most western country in the world with Orthodox Christian majority and with Serbian people in whole (Republic of Serbia, Republic of Srpska, Montenegro and other parts of former SFR Yugoslavia) border of Serbian Orthodoxy goes to the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

Ethnic population of the Republic of Serbia (official census 2002)						
Serbs	Hungarians	Bosniaks	Roma	Yugoslavs	Croats	Total
82,86%	3,91%	1,81%%	1,44%	1,08%	0,94%	7.498.001

Religious population of the Republic of Serbia (official census 2002)						
Orthodox	Roman Catholic	Protestant	Muslim	Judaist	Atheist	Total
84,98%	5,48%	1,08%	3,20%	0,01%	0,53%	7.498.001

Republic of Indonesia is the most eastern state in the world with Muslim majority. Its islands and shores are stretched from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

Religious population of the Republic of Indonesia 2011. <sup>3</sup>						
Muslim	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Hindu	Buddhist	Confucian/ other	Total
86,39%	6,34%	3,36%	1,81%	0,93%	0,11%	237.566.363

2. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006), “Republic of Serbia is a secular state”, “churches and religious communities shall be separated from the state”, “no religion may be established as state or mandatory religion” (article 11), the state guarantees freedom of belief or religion (article 43).<sup>4</sup>

From 2006 Republic of Serbia has the Law on Churches and Religious Communities. This modern law recognizes traditional churches and religious communities “with centuries-long historic continuity in Serbia, having acquired legal subjectivity pursuant to separate legislation” in the Principedom of Serbia, Kingdom of Serbia, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) and Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Those

<sup>3</sup> Bahrul Hayat, speech at the Interfaith Conference Serbia – Indonesia, Belgrade 7 April 2011. Published in: *1<sup>st</sup> Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011, 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, number 98/2006.

being: the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Slovakian Evangelist Church a.v., Christian Reformist Church and the Evangelist Christian Church a.v., the Islamic Community, the Jewish Community.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (1945) this country is based on five inseparable and interrelated Pancasila principles, which are the official philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state: 1. Belief in one and only God, 2. Just and civic humanity, 3. Unity of Indonesia, 4. Democracy led by wisdom through deliberations amongst representatives of the people, 5. Social justice for all Indonesia citizens.<sup>6</sup>

As a state ideology, Pancasila connects numerous ethnic, tribal, religious and geographical differences in wide Indonesian archipelago (1.027 ethnic groups, more than 13.000 islands). Pancasila (through the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia) guarantees “all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his/her own religion or belief” (article 29).<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in Serbia and Indonesia exists similar percentage of believers of the biggest religion: Orthodox Christians or Muslims. But, it is always wise to have in mind that Indonesia has 30 times bigger population than Serbia. The Republic of Serbia is a secular state, while the Republic of Indonesia is a “religious” state (but not a theocratic state).<sup>8</sup> Both countries are democratic. These facts are important for better understanding of the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia.

## Path to the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia

Interfaith dialogues (regional, bilateral, multilateral, inter-media) are “soft diplomacy” of the Republic of Indonesia from 2004. Aims of interfaith dialogues are: to strive against negative stereotyping of Islam versus West; to introduce the moderate strain of Islam in Indonesia; to manage religious diversity in ways that promote social cohesion, peace and sustainability; to promote both countries democratic respect for pluralism; to empower the moderates; to establish cooperation among civil societies in various aspects, particularly on global issues, such as education, good governance, poverty eradication, and social welfare.<sup>9</sup>

So far, the Republic of Indonesia had bilateral interfaith dialogues with: Vatican (2005, 2007), the Netherlands (2006, 2008, 2010), Canada (2007, 2008), Austria

<sup>5</sup> The Law on Churches and Religious Communities, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, number 36/2006.

<sup>6</sup> I Made Titib, speech at the Interfaith Conference Serbia – Indonesia, Belgrade 7 April 2011. Published in: *1<sup>st</sup> Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011, 37-42. Also: <http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/about/pdf/IndonesianConstitution.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Bahrul Hayat, 84.

<sup>9</sup> “General Information Interfaith Dialogue”, *1<sup>st</sup> Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011, 1.

(2009, twice in 2010), Lebanon (2008), Russia (2009), the United States of America (twice in 2010), Hungary (2010), the Czech Republic (2010), Bulgaria (2010), Germany (2010), Spain (2010), Serbia (2011) and Greece (2011), as well as the United Kingdom Islamic Advisory Group (2007).<sup>10</sup>

How it started with Serbia? Ministers of foreign affairs of Indonesia and Serbia, Marty M Natalegawa and Vuk Jeremić, agreed “on the importance of the interfaith dialogue” at the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on the Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace (Manila, March 2010).<sup>11</sup>

Official Indonesian proposal for bilateral interfaith dialogue with Serbia came after foundation of the Interreligious Council of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (June 2010). With the Interreligious Council institutional cooperation of the Serbian state with traditional churches and religious communities was lifted on the highest level. Head of the Interreligious Council is a Minister of Religious Affairs and members are the leaders and most valuable eminencies of the traditional churches and religious communities in the Republic of Serbia. Aims of the Interreligious Council are: affirmation of religious freedom and religious culture, statements on most important social questions, organization of meetings on contemporary topics, contribution to legal aspects, consideration and interpretation of public life, consideration of importance of religious freedom and religious culture in European context.<sup>12</sup>

So, paths and aims of regional and global interfaith dialogue promoted by Indonesia and of local interfaith dialogue established in Serbia mainly coincided. It was also important for the Republic of Serbia to host our friends from the world’s biggest Muslim country also due to the fact that Republic of Indonesia recognizes Serbia’s full sovereignty in Kosovo and Metohija. Furthermore, it was important to equate (or try to equate) Indonesia’s special historical appreciation of Belgrade as the capital of non-aligned Yugoslavia and Belgrade as the capital of neutral Serbia.

Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Prof. Dr Bogoljub Šijaković and Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia in Belgrade Samuel Samson agreed in February 2011 that the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia, on high state and religious level, should be held in April 2011 in Belgrade.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> “General Information Interfaith Dialogue”, *1st Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Letter from the Embassy of Indonesia in Belgrade to Aleksandar Raković, 28 February 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Minister of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr Bogoljub Šijaković established the Interreligious Council on 17 June 2010. With professor Šijaković, members of the Interreligious Council are: Bishop of Bačka of the Serbian Orthodox Church Prof. Dr Irinej Bulović, Archbishop of Belgrade of the Roman Catholic Church Stanislav Hočevar, Reis-Ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia Adem Zilkić and Rabbi of the Jewish Community Isak Asiel. Coordinator of the Interreligious Council is Dr Aleksandar Raković, Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

<sup>13</sup> Documentation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Report from the meeting of minister Šijaković and ambassador Samson from 10 February 2011 (with Report from the meeting of their collaborators from 14 February 2011), number 337-00-3/2011-01 from 17 February 2011. – Minister and

Unfortunately, Ministry of Religious Affairs was cancelled in March 2011 and the Ministry of Diaspora was widened with the Sector for Religious Affairs to form new ministry – The Ministry of Religion and Diaspora.<sup>14</sup> This change didn't interrupt organization of the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia.

Both delegations consisted from: ministers, ambassadors, government and ministry officials, the highest religious leaders and theologians (Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholic Christians, Protestant Christians, Muslims, Hinduists and Judaists), university professors and other scholars (see footnote 15). Head of Serbian delegation was Prof. Dr Bogoljub Šijaković (State Secretary of Religious Affairs) and head of Indonesian Delegation was Andri Hadi (Director General of Information and Public Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).<sup>15</sup>

Republic of Serbia never before formed joint delegation with the highest officials from state and churches and religious communities. Just that would be enough for record. But, the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia was also a good chance for the Republic of Serbia to promote and underline the fact that interreligious relationships in Serbia are better than ever.

ambassador named coordinators of the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia: Dr Aleksandar Raković, Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Zamardi, Political Counsellor at the Embassy of Indonesia.

<sup>14</sup>The Law on the ministries, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, number 16/2011.

<sup>15</sup> 1. Members of the Serbian delegation: Prof. Dr Bogoljub Šijaković (head of delegation), Prof. Dr Irinej Bulović (Bishop of Bačka of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade), Stanislav Hočevar (Archbishop of Belgrade of the Roman Catholic Church), Adem Zilkić (Reis-ul-ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia), Isak Asiel (Rabbi of the Jewish Community), Samuel Vrbovsky (Bishop of the Slovak Evangelical Church), Árpád Dolinszky (Superintendent of the Christian Evangelical Church), Dr István Csete–Szemesi (Bishop of the Reformed Christian Church), Dr Porfirije Perić (Bishop of Jegar of the Serbian Orthodox Church), Muhamed Jusufspahić (Mufti of Belgrade of the Islamic Community of Serbia), Dr Aleksandar Raković (Coordinator of the Interreligious Council), Prof. Dr Ljubodrag Dimić (Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade), ambassador Radomir Živković (Head of Department for South-East Asia in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Representative of the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch at the Interfaith Dialogue was Prof. Dr Radovan Bigović (Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade), while the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs named ambassador Vladislav Mladenović (Assistant Deputy Minister) to speak on the behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. 2. Members of the Indonesian delegation: Andri Hadi (head of delegation), Dr Bahrul Hayat (Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs), ambassador Samuel Samson (Embassy of Indonesia in Belgrade), Prof. Dr Komaruddin Hidayat (Rector of the Islamic State University Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta), Prof. Dr I Made Titib (Rector of the Hindu Dharma Institute in Bali), Dr Margaretha Hendriks–Ririmase (Lecturer at the Moluccan Christian University of Indonesia in Ambon), Dr Heru Prakosa (Lecturer at the Sanata Dharma Institute of Philosophy in Yogyakarta), Adolfin Elizabeth Koamesakh (Orthodox Church of Indonesia), Zamardi (Political Counsellor at the Embassy of Indonesia in Belgrade), Abdul Fatah (Head of the Center for Interreligious Harmony at the Ministry of Religious Affairs), Trias Kuncayono (Deputy Chief Editor of the Kompas Daily Newspapers), Dr Ferimeldi Muslim Kudi (Head of Division in the Center for Interreligious Harmony at the Ministry of Religious Affairs), Riaz Januar Putra Saehu (Deputy Director in the Directorate of Public Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Elvis Napitupulu (Staff at the Directorate of Public Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). – Names and further information from notes of Aleksandar Raković and book *1<sup>st</sup> Indonesia-Serbia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue*, Belgrade 2011.

## The First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia

The First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia (7–9 April 2011) consisted from three parts: **1.** The Interfaith Conference in the Palace of Serbia (7 April), **2.** University cooperation (8 April), **3.** Closing meeting at the Embassy of Indonesia (9 April). **First Day (7 April)** – After the bilateral meeting of two delegations in the Palace of Serbia, Minister of Religion and Diaspora Srđan Srećković opened the First Interfaith Dialogue and the Interfaith Conference Serbia – Indonesia. In the speech at the conference, Serbian Patriarch Irinej blessed the Interfaith Dialogue of two friendly countries.

At the Interfaith Conference Serbia – Indonesia there were more than 200 guests: domestic and foreign diplomats, university professors, scholars, theologians, media, members of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship Nusantara, and others. It is very important that the Interfaith Conference was held in the Hall of Yugoslavia (at the Palace of Serbia) which hosted the First Conference of Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade (1961).

Participants at the Interfaith Conference gave speeches from the fields related to theme *Building Collaborative Communities: Strengthening Civil Society and Interreligious Cooperation for Development*, and sub-themes: *Framing the Questions of Interfaith Dialogue: the Perspective of Serbia and Indonesia; The Role of Religious Communities in Promoting Mutual Respect, Understanding and Peace: Recognizing Common Concerns; Education: Establishing Civil Society and Interreligious Cooperation*. However, there were other topics of discussion: history of diplomatic relationships between Yugoslavia and Indonesia, economic and cultural cooperation of Yugoslavia and Indonesia and Serbia and Indonesia, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Sharia banking system in Indonesia.

First day of the Interfaith Dialogue was very successful. It showed that relationship of Belgrade and Jakarta still has emotional bond pulled from the time of fruitful Yugoslav-Indonesian cooperation.

**Second Day (8 April)** – Before second part of the Interfaith Dialogue, the Indonesian delegation visited the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Their hosts were Parliamentary group for Friendship with Indonesia led by MP Meho Omerović and the Deputy Chair of the National Assembly Gordana Čomić.<sup>16</sup> During the meeting at the National Assembly, head of the Indonesian delegation Andri Hadi said that the Interfaith Dialogue with Serbia „was the best so far“ because „we had impression that we were speaking to entire Serbia“.<sup>17</sup>

The Interfaith Dialogue continued with official visit to the Islamic Community of Serbia. The Indonesian delegation and the Islamic Community of Serbia signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Islamic State University Syarif Hi-

<sup>16</sup> Delegation of Indonesia in the National Assembly, Radio-Television of Serbia, 8 April 2011. – Present were also MPs Gabor Lodi and Zoran Antić.

<sup>17</sup> Notes of Aleksandar Raković.

dayatulah in Jakarta and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Belgrade. During this visit, Muslims in the Indonesian delegation and Muslims in the Serbian delegation held common prayer at the Bajrakli Mosque.

Furthermore, members of the Indonesian delegation were guests of Prof. Dr Branko Kovačević, Rector of the University of Belgrade. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Islamic State University Syarif Hidayatulah in Jakarta, the University of Belgrade and the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade was signed at the Rectorate.

Finally, the Indonesian delegation visited the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, welcomed by Dean Prof. Dr Irinej Bulović. Members of the Indonesian delegation Prof. Dr Komaruddin Hidayat, Dr Margaretha Hendriks–Ririmase and Dr Heru Prakosa provided the lectures to professors and students of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology and students of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences. At the end, Apostolic Nuncio in Belgrade Orlando Antonini gave a speech at the very successful meeting hosted the Faculty of Orthodox Theology.<sup>18</sup>

It is to be noticed that Yugoslav-Indonesian and Serbian-Indonesian friendship were underlined at all meetings during the second day of the Interfaith Dialogue.

**Third Day (9 April)** – The Indonesian delegation were guests of Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević and Princess Katarina Karađorđević at the White Palace in Belgrade. After that, guests from Indonesia visited the House of Flowers (Mausoleum of Josip Broz Tito) and the Museum of Yugoslav History. It was a good chance for the Indonesian delegation to learn about Yugoslav history from creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918) to disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1991).<sup>19</sup>

During the closing meeting at the Embassy of Indonesia, head of the Indonesian delegation Andri Hadi once more stressed that the Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia was the best among all interfaith dialogues Indonesia had from 2004 to 2011.<sup>20</sup> Two months later, President of the Republic of Serbia Boris Tadić said that Serbia “will cherish multicultural and interfaith dialogue”.<sup>21</sup>

Success of the First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia gave basement for further interfaith cooperation between two countries. The Second Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia (Indonesia – Serbia) is expected in spring of 2012.

\* \* \*

The First Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia was a meeting of geographically distanced civilizations and cultures of two historically friendly countries. Both delegations highly evaluated the Interfaith Dialogue.

<sup>18</sup> Notes of Aleksandar Raković.

<sup>19</sup> Notes of Aleksandar Raković.

<sup>20</sup> Notes of Aleksandar Raković.

<sup>21</sup> *Politika* daily newspaper, 8 June 2011.

Indonesia has the fourth biggest population in the world and is a global leader in interfaith dialogues. Thus, Serbia cannot compare itself with Indonesia, but can see its leading regional role in interfaith dialogues.

Churches and religious communities in Serbia have constant, several decade long dialogues on religious and social topics. However, the Interfaith Dialogue with Indonesia first time gave possibility for creation of joint Serbian delegation composed by the most valuable persons from state and church and religious communities.

That fact the state, churches and religious communities can form joint interfaith delegation of the Republic of Serbia underlines that interreligious harmonization in Serbia was never stronger.

## **Dr Aleksandar Raković**

Coordinator of the First and Second Interfaith Dialogue Serbia – Indonesia

### **THE SECOND AND THIRD BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA (2013, 2015)**

#### **The Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia (22-25 October 2013, Jakarta)**

The state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia paid an official visit to the Republic of Indonesia from 22 to 25 October 2013 for taking part in the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia.

This is the most important state-religious delegation in the history of the Republic of Serbia, next to the one established in April 2011 for the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue with Indonesia.

Indonesia, which holds interfaith dialogues with over thirty countries, appraised that the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue with Serbia (held in 2011) was the best one ever held with any country thus far.

The initiator of both interfaith dialogues with Indonesia was the Ambassador of Indonesia to Serbia – H.E. Mr Samuel Samson.

The interfaith dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia is of special importance having in mind that Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country in the world with which the official Belgrade has had very cordial relations for over sixty years.

At an international level Indonesia has been providing strong support to the Republic of Serbia regarding the preservation of territorial integrity of our country in the southern Serbian province, Kosovo and Metohija.

In 2013, for the first time in the history of Serbia and Yugoslavia, state officials and all the religious heads of our country travelled together in the first official visit to a foreign country – Indonesia: His Holiness Irinej, Serbian Patriarch and head of the religious part of the delegation; Dr Mileta Radojević, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities and head of the state part of the delegation; Dr Dragan Novaković, Deputy Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities; Monsignor Stanislav Hočevar, Archbishop of Belgrade, Roman Catholic Church in Serbia; Adem effendi Zilkić, Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia; Isak Asiel, Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia; Muhamed effendi Jusufspahić, Serbian Mufti and Belgrade Imam, Deputy of Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia; Professor Dr Dragomir Sando, Vice Dean at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade; Dr Aleksandar Raković, Coordinator of the Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue

of Serbia and Indonesia and Chairman of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara”; Archdeacon Radomir Rakić, Editor-in-Chief of the Information Service of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia arrived to Jakarta on 22 October 2013 where H.E. Jovan Jovanović, the Ambassador of Serbia to Indonesia, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Orthodox faithful from Jakarta welcomed it, at the Soekarno-Hatta international airport.

The Jakarta Post, an influential English-language daily which reports of diplomatic corps activities, reported of the arrival of Serbian state-religious delegation referring to as to “historic visit”, since it was the first time that an Orthodox Patriarch paid visit to Indonesia.

The official meetings of two countries representatives started on 23 October 2013. Our delegation was received by Agnug Laksono, Coordinating Minister for People’s Welfare, who pointed out that the friendly relations of Indonesia and Serbia had been historical, that the two countries were linked by ethnic and cultural variety and that we had been “close brothers” since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belgrade and Jakarta, i.e. Yugoslavia and Indonesia.

His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej also underlined historical friendship between the two countries and added that all of us were honoured to have the opportunity to further nourish and strengthen our relations with Indonesia. The Patriarch also stated that the relations between the traditional Churches and religious communities in Serbia were friendly ones and that international cooperation was giving fruitful results.

Dr Mileta Radojević, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities conveyed cordial regards from Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić to the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, with the message that he “highly appreciates and will never forget the support Indonesia has been giving to the vital interest of Serbia – the preservation of Serbian territorial integrity and non-recognition of Kosovo’s independence”.

Thereto Minister Laksono responded that Indonesia was consistent in its standpoint that it would not recognise “the self-proclaimed Kosovo independence”.

Thereupon, the interfaith conference started, the topic being religious and cultural differences. Indonesia established state-religious delegation which included – apart from the officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs – university professors of Muslim, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Orthodox faiths.

The conference was opened by Abdurrahman Fachir, Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. After him spoke Dr Bachrul Hayat, Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They were followed by speeches by Professor Dr H. Amin Abdullah, Special Staff of Minister for Religious Affairs; Archimandrite Daniel Byantoro on the behalf of the Orthodox Church community in Indonesia; Professor Dr.

Franz Magnis-Suseno, Jesuite priest and senior lecturer at the Driyarkara School of Philosophy Jakarta; Dr Chandra Setiawan, Presidium Coordinator of Matakini (Supreme Council for the Confucian Religion in Indonesia) and Protestant priest Dr Joas Adiprasetya who heads Theological Seminary in Jakarta.

On our side, introductory word was given by Dr Mileta Radojević. All members of Serbian delegation spoke on the conference: officials of the Republic of Serbia, Serbian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church in Serbia, Islamic Community in Serbia and Jewish Community in Serbia. Thus we can point out that the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia was the gathering of all big world religions. What followed was the exchange of experiences regarding interfaith coexistence and harmonious relations in two countries and individual presentations interspersed by the exchange of opinions and interesting questions.

The state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia then visited the Orthodox Church Community in Jakarta. There are approximately 20.000 Orthodox Indonesians in Sumatra, Java and Bali. And the number has been increasing every year.

The next day, on 24 October 2013, our state-religious delegation visited the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. The delegation was welcomed by the Rector, Professor Dr Komaruddin Hidayat who recalled every day of visit to Belgrade in 2011, during the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia, when he was the member of the state-religious delegation. Mr Hidayat underlined that the University he was managing was the prime institution of high education in Indonesia with approximately 22.000 students attending lectures at ten faculties.

On behalf of our delegation, Dr Mileta Radojević responded and expressed his satisfaction for the interfaith dialogue as a good guide for deepening cooperation between our two states.

Then the Ambassador of Indonesia to Serbia – H.E. Semuel Samson and the Ambassador of Serbia to Indonesia – H.E. Jovan Jovanović addressed the students, as well as the Rector Komaruddin Hidayat. They were talking about deepening of historical relations between Belgrade and Jakarta through interfaith dialogue as one of highways towards success. The Ambassador Samson said that the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia could be held between students.

Thereupon, the members of the Serbian delegation delivered lectures at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatulla; first Professor Dr Dragomir Sando, Vice Dean for Science of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade; then Belgrade Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić; and finally Chairman of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara“ Dr Aleksandar Raković, Coordinator of both inter-religious dialogues of two countries. All three lecturers were speaking of Serbian experiences in developing harmonious interfaith life.

The state-religious delegation of our country also visited an Islamic organisation Muhammadiyah which is in charge of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Indonesia. Dr Sudibyo Markus, Senior Advisor in Muhammadiyah stated that the

organisation operated 133 faculties and had a developed cooperation throughout the world.

Serbian Patriarch Irinej pointed out in Muhammadiyah how proud Serbia was of its friendship with Indonesia. His Holiness noticed that “warm smiles of Indonesians show the gist of their natural disposal“. The Patriarch informed the hosts that in 2013 rights of Christians in Kosovo and Metohija had been jeopardised, which is why the Patriarch thanked Indonesia for “not recognising violent separation of a part of Serbia – Kosovo and Metohija, the cradle of history, culture and spirituality of the Serbian people“.

The eventful day for our delegation was completed by the Mass served by Belgrade Archbishop Stanislav Hočevar in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta. Monsignor Hočevar was received by the Archbishop of Jakarta Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo.

The Serbian delegation then visited Baznas, a state organisation dealing with social issues of Muslims. The guests were received by the Secretary General Muhammad Fuad Nassar, who presented the activities of this organisation. Mr Nassar was interested in the way the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community of Serbia deal with social issues. Patriarch Irinej and Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić elaborated on the topic. The Patriarch underlined especially difficult position of Orthodox clergy in Kosovo and Metohija, while Mufti Jusufspahić pointed out that the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo Albanians was a political issue, and not a religious one.

On the fourth day of the visit to Indonesia (25 October 2013) Serbian state-religious delegation visited Istiqlal Mosque and Roman Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta. Thereupon Reis-ul-Ulama Adem Zilkić and Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić prayed Salat-al-Jumah.

Our state-religious delegation was then received by Dr Marzuki Alie, Speaker of the People’s Representative Council within the People’s Consultative Assembly of Indonesia. After welcoming speech he pointed out that Indonesian Assembly delegation visited Serbia in June 2013 and that he was happy to have been received at the highest state level in such a friendly manner. Speaking of religious issues, Alie reminded that according to the Constitution every Indonesian has the right to freely choose his/her faith. He especially underlined that annually all Churches and religious communities record increase of the faithful.

Patriarch Irinej told to Dr Alie that our delegation had great pleasure to visit “lovely blessed country Indonesia and its people“. He stressed that Indonesia had “harmony amongst religions and peoples“. He made a comparison with the Edict of Milan which was “so ideally applied“ in Indonesia, so that everyone could from the depths from one’s heart profess one’s faith, build temples and preach one’s teaching. The Patriarch concluded that Indonesia thus gave example to the entire world and that religious harmony in that country is “pleasing to God and people.“ His Holiness thanked Indonesia “for sending such a wonderful Ambassador – H.E. Samuel Samson – to Serbia.“

Dr Mileta Radojević, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities, stressed out that friendship of our two countries established over 50 years ago did not fail, but was getting stronger. The Director also conveyed gratitude sent by the President of the Republic of Serbia – Tomislav Nikolić – to Indonesia for principled standpoint regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity of Serbia. He also conveyed friendly message sent by the Prime Minister of Serbia – Ivica Dačić – that Serbia could be an important link for cooperation of Indonesia with European countries. Radojević gave to Marzuki Alie a letter from Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić to the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Then the delegation visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia where it was received by the Deputy Minister, Dr Vardana. He said that generally the greatest success in an interfaith dialogue is achieved through dialogue. Vardana added that he hoped the interfaith dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia would be continued and would give concrete results.

Patriarch Irinej continued saying that interfaith relations in Serbia were harmonious as shown in the state-religious delegation members. The Patriarch repeated that harmonious relations did not exist in Kosovo and Metohija where Albanians had unilaterally proclaimed independence. His Holiness thanked Indonesia again for not recognising self-proclaimed Albanian secession of Kosovo and Metohija – which is our holy territory with over 1.500 churches and monasteries, the greatest shrines of the Serbian people, amongst which there is also the see of the Serbian Patriarch – the Patriarchate of Peć.

The state-religious delegation of Serbia then visited the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia – Nahdlatul Ulama. The leader of this organisation Said Aqil Siradj said that Islam respects very much Christian faith as it comes from the same source. Siradj added that Nahdlatul regarded Islam as “good, civil and modern faith” and that it acted as intermediary in settling religious disputes in the country, adding that when religious conflicts did happen – it usually turned out to be misuse of the situation for political reasons.

Patriarch Irinej agreed that religious conflicts emerged when politicians misused religious issues.

The final word to this visit to Nahdlatul Ulama was given by Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia – Adem Zilkić. He said that over 45 national communities lived in “our Fatherland Serbia”, as well as 7 traditional Churches and religious communities. Reis elaborated that the Islamic Community acted like a traditional one and that it was completely equal with other Churches and religious communities which have that status in general. He added that the faithful of the Islamic Community in Serbia belonged to 7 nationalities, “which means that we have overcome the national way of organisation”, and pointed out that “interfaith relations in Serbia have never been better”. Finally, Reis-ul-Ulema Adem Zilkić said that “after unilateral proclamation of independence of Kosovo, Muslim faithful turned out to be

on two sides of a border which has been established by violence“. He was adamant that “Kosovo problems are not of religious but of national nature“ and said to the friends from Indonesia to “be careful and not to succumb to unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo“. As a Muslim, Reis asked representatives of the Nahdlatul Ulama to support their Government to be consistent in its standpoint regarding the Kosovo issue so that “our faithful would not live on two sides of the border“.

The Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia, Isak Asiel, met with the professors of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Indonesia: Dr Chusnul Mar’iyah and Dr Dave Lumenta so as to initiate cooperation of our countries in the fields of ethnology and anthropology. This meeting marked the end of our state-religious delegation visit to Indonesia.

The state-religious delegations of Serbia and Indonesia concluded that the dialogue was very successful and that it should be continued. The dialogue of the two countries was covered by media both in Serbia and in Indonesia, and it resounded in several Asian countries. Indonesia accepted the proposal that the interfaith dialogue of our countries would take place biannually.

### **The Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia (8-13 November 2015, Belgrade)**

The Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was held from 8 to 13 November 2015. That was the occasion for the two friendly countries to debate at the highest state-religious level about religious topics relating to state bodies, Churches and religious communities.

For the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia our country made a delegation consisting of: Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia Nikola Selaković, His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej, Head of the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities – Dr Mileta Radojević, Bishop of Bačka of the Serbian Orthodox Church Professor Dr Irinej Bulović, Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia Adem Zilkić, Belgrade Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church Stanislav Hoćevar, Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia Isak Asiel, Mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia Muhamed Jusufspahić, Bishop of Raška-Prizren of the Serbian Orthodox Church Teodosije Šibalić, Bishop of Reforming-Christian Church in Serbia Béla Halász, Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology University of Belgrade Professor Dr Predrag Puzović, priestess of the Slovak Evangelic Church Anna Petrović, Chairman of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara“ Dr Aleksandar Raković and the coordinator of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Jovana Stojinović.

The Dialogue started by an introductory meeting on Sunday, 8 November 2015 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dačić received the Head of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia – Dr Abdurrahman Fachir.

Further on, the Ambassador of Indonesia to Serbia – Harry Richard James Kandou hosted a dinner in the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to mark the beginning of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia and the arrival of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia headed by Dr Fachir.

The official opening of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was marked by the conference held in the Palace of Serbia. The conference was dedicated to the youth-related topics and it took place on Monday, 9 November 2015. After the introductory speeches of Minister Selaković, Patriarch Irinej and Vice Minister Dr Fachir, Dr Aleksandar Raković proclaimed that the Third bilateral interfaith dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was officially opened. Thereupon the press conference was held where Minister Selaković, Patriarch Irinej and Dr Fachir gave statements. They underlined friendship of our two countries, the importance of dialogue and an affirmative role of youth in a contemporary society. Further on, two scientific sessions took place, opened by the presentation of Dr Mileta Radojević. All the members of our delegation presented at the conference and almost all the members of the Indonesian delegation presented as well: Directors General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for Roman Catholic Community and Hindu Community Eusabius Bensasi and I Ketut Widnya, Dean of the Islamic state University Dede Rosyada, the representative of the Roman Catholic Church father Ignatius Ismartono, the representative of Protestant Churches father Penrad Siagian, the representative of the Orthodox Christians in Indonesia Christina Jenny Sandra, the representative of the Centre for interfaith harmony of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Wawan Djunaedi, Dr Izak Lattu, Professor of the Christian University Satya Wacana and Dr Mohamed Iqbal Ahnaf, Professor of the Gadjah Mada University.

The conference took place shadowed by the impression of simultaneous voting in the General Assembly of UNESCO on the admittance of the so-called “Kosovo” into that organisation. At the previous voting in the Executive Council, the Republic of Indonesia abstained from voting. The Republic of Serbia strived to convince the friends from Indonesia that it would be best if they could explicitly be against the admittance of “Kosovo” to UNESCO. It was obvious that just a few votes would be decisive and that the vote of the Republic of Indonesia in favour of the Republic of Serbia would be very valuable. As we have been informed, it was the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo who decided that the Republic of Indonesia would vote explicitly against the admittance of “Kosovo” to UNESCO and thus bring to the Republic of Serbia one of the key votes. When the news from Paris arrived during the conference in the Palace of Serbia that the UNESCO General Assembly decided that “Kosovo” could not be the member of the organisation, the members of the delegations of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia stood up and applauded and by standing ovations greeted the decision of UNESCO General Assembly. The Republic of Indonesia once again showed that it stands firmly by the

side of international law and that it does not abandon its friends in difficult situations. The Bishop of Raška-Prizren Teodosije and hieromonk of Visoki Dečani Monastery Ilarion Lupulović thanked on behalf of the Orthodox Christians of Kosovo and Metohija to the friends from Indonesia.

On Tuesday, 10 November 2015 the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia was first received by the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia Maja Gojković, then by Serbian Patriarch Irinej, and then by Reis-ul-Ulema Adem Zilkić and Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić. The members of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, headed by Dr Fachir were that day also guests of the President of the Republic of Serbia – Tomislav Nikolić. At all these meetings friendship between our two countries was pointed out, as well gratitude of our state officials and Patriarch Irinej for the principled standpoint of the Republic of Indonesia against the admission of “Kosovo“ into UNESCO. Since Dr Abdurrachman Fachir delivered a lecture at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, and Professor Dr Dede Rosyada a lecture at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the Islamic Community of Serbia, the members of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia visited the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade and the Sukkat Shalom Synagogue in Belgrade where they were hosted by the Rabbi Isak Asiel. The Jewish choir prepared a short performance for the guests.

On Wednesday, 11 November 2015 the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia visited the Diocese of Srem and the Diocese of Bačka of the Serbian Orthodox Church. In the morning Indonesian guests were received by the Bishop of Srem Vasilije Vadić in Sremski Karlovci. Friends from Indonesia visited the Cathedral in Sremski Karlovci, the Treasury of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Seminary “Saint Arsenije of Srem“ (Karlovci Orthodox Seminary). The choir of Orthodox theology students performed several Serbian spiritual and national songs, and then the Orthodox Christian from Indonesia Christina Jenny Sandra delivered a lecture, with the assistance of the Rector of Karlovci Orthodox Seminary Archpriest-Stavrophor Jovan Petković and Archdeacon Radomir Rakić. Thereupon the delegation visited the Chapel of Peace in Sremski Karlovci. Later on, in the afternoon, the delegation was welcomed in Kovilj Monastery by the Bishop of Bačka Professor Dr Irinej Bulović along with the Bishop of Jegar Jeronim Močević. Bishop Irinej underlined the importance of frequent interfaith meetings between the representatives of Serbia and Indonesia, which was unanimously greeted by the members of the Indonesian delegation. In addition, Bishop Irinej commented that the harmonious relation of the Orthodox and the Muslims in the Republic of Serbia showed to be an explicit example of the best relation of these two faiths in Europe.

On Wednesday, 12 November 2015, the delegation of Indonesia visited the Yugoslav Archives where they were welcomed by Miladin Milošević, the Archives Director. The guests looked at the exhibition *Belgrade-Jakarta, from the establishment of diplomatic relations to today* and were informed about the research and the book *Yugoslavia-Indonesia 1945-1967: Research and Documents* of Profesor Dr Ljubodrag

Dimić, Dr Aleksandar Raković and Miladin Milošević. Thereupon the delegation visited the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, where they were cordially welcomed by the Dean, Professor Dr Predrag Puzović. The Memorandum signed during the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia (in 2011) was renewed on this occasion between the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University on the one side and the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, on the other. Then Professor Dr Dede Rosyada delivered a lecture in a full lecture hall of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. Following this, the members of the Indonesian delegation were the guests of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Belgrade where they were hosted by Archbishop Stanislav Hočevar. During the programme performed, songs were sung from our region, but also from Indonesia and Syria.

On Friday, 13 November 2015, farewell lunch was prepared for the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia. Patriarch Irinej, Dr Mileta Radojević and Eusabius Bensasi pointed out that the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was very successful, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia Harry Richard James Kandou stated that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia decided that the Fourth Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia should be held in Indonesia in 2017. Indonesian delegation especially thanked, on behalf of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the organisers of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue – Dr Mileta Radojević and Jovana Stojinović.

The delegation of the Republic of Indonesia was accompanied by the Head of the Department for Asia, Australia and Pacific in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Janković, then Saša Jovanović from diplomatic Protocol, priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church Professor Dr Dragomir Sando and Archdeacon Radomir Rakić, Imams of the Islamic Community of Serbia Emin Zejnulahu, Ramadan Mehmeti, Muhamed Ziljkić and the Chief of the Office of the Mufti of Serbia Muedib Šahinović.





**THE SECOND BILATERAL INTERFAITH  
DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA  
PROCEEDINGS OF MEMBERS  
OF SERBIAN DELEGATION**







## Dr Mileta Radojević

Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches  
and Religious Communities of the Government of the Republic of Serbia

### INTRODUCTORY WORD

Dear hosts, state and religious officials of Indonesia,  
Dear members of delegations of Indonesia and Serbia,  
Your Holiness, Serbian Patriarch,

Cordial relations between Belgrade and Jakarta date back to the 50-ies of XX century when our country – Yugoslavia at that time, supported anticolonialism, pacifism and antisegregationism at the global level.

Cordial relations of Yugoslavia and Indonesia were established under that progressive momentum and continued to develop in all the fields, except – unfortunately – in the field of religious cooperation.

Actually, the then Communist authorities in Yugoslavia did not dedicate attention to religious affairs, except when presenting them as cultural heritage exclusively.

This is the moment when this void space in cordial relations between Belgrade and Jakarta could be filled in the best possible way.

Two years ago (in 2011), at the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue with Indonesia, the Republic of Serbia established – for the first time in its history – a state-religious delegation comprising of the highest officials.

The success of the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia has showed us that the Republic of Serbia should be, and is, the leader of interfaith dialogue in our region: of the former Yugoslavia, the Balkans and the south-east Europe.

I am therefore free to say that today's Dialogue is actually the conversation not only of two friendly states and our Churches and religious Communities, but of the two leaders in the field of interfaith dialogue – each in its part of the world: Indonesia as the easternmost and biggest Muslim country and Serbia as the westernmost Orthodox country.

I wish lots of success to all of us in the Second Interfaith Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia. Let this meeting exceed the previous one and let us establish our interfaith dialogue at an annual level.

See you therefore next year in Belgrade again.

## Serbian Patriarch Irinej

### RELATIONS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH WITH OTHER RELIGIONS IN SERBIA

I address you as the chief hierarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Church that has around 12,000,000 faithful and of that number the vast majority of its believers live in the territories of the Republic of Serbia, of former Yugoslavia and around the world. The Church whose Patriarch I am is one of the local Orthodox Churches with its seat in Belgrade as the capital of Serbia. We can be proud of the fact that there are few geographical areas in the world that intertwine – like ours – not only significant historical events and personalities, but also world-wide confessions: other Christian, Jewish and Islamic communities. Our Church sees it as a gift from God and as a sign of modern civilization times where people are not only called to resort to each other in communication, social, economic, scientific and social life, but above all in religious life. Therefore, we are free to say that it is the task of our Church to recognise and build relationships with all religions, with our political leadership and the world around us, fostering love and friendship.

We also know that the current pluralistic era shows that we live in a world where different religions are professed or where people adhere to different ideologies instead of to a genuine faith in God. There are quite a few families living in mixed marriages, or as neighbours in villages and towns, so it is imperative that we build our relationships in such a way to put in focus the care for a person and the desire for others to be understood as different. This kind of dialogue, which is necessary at an early stage, is very *practical*, because it deals with issues of daily life and, above all, with ordinary family relationships.

However, there are demands exceeding local needs that simply require the faithful to engage in dialogue for the sake of building a broader community, first and foremost, so as to foster and establish peace and justice between religious communities that touch on issues of national and international importance. All Christian communities, as well as Jewish and Islamic communities, perceive the Serbian State and its territories as their own, which they actually are – by their living there. On this platform of life, religious differences contribute to a better understanding and good cohabitation, as is shown by this delegation of Serbian religious leaders who came together to visit you.

Dialogue helps us discover the true picture of us, though of different faiths, and this requires mutual trust and respect for identity. As believing people, we must be guided by that Bible commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” and knowing at least somewhat of the holy books of other religions, we know for cer-

tain that other religions are also directed to the holiness of life by respecting others and their differences.

The basic premise for any dialogue in society, no matter what composition that society is, is the premise that God, in Whom we believe, is the Creator of all matter and of all mankind, that from the beginning He wanted all that He called into life to communicate with Himself personally and to communicate amongst each other, and that for the purpose He provided communities to be created. Men and women, they are all born to interact with other people. In our first, closest environment, we meet members of our family, but soon we need to explore broader relationships, when we go to school or begin to work in a society.

We have to talk with every human being as with a creature of God, we must respect him and respect his dignity, integrity. Through dialogue with people, we must “speak the truth in love.” Even when we preach our own religious teachings, our way of life, express our traditions and our opinions with the whole code of conduct – we cannot do that without having a dialogue at the same time! All religions of the world are committed to *the dignity of human personality*. Man created by the image of God is always the real centre around which everything centres. And when we preach our religious teaching, we always have another person in mind, one who does not believe in God in the same way, who is different. The first step on the road to this man is *tolerance*, which is not enough, for the true believer should love his neighbour. Because *love* is the pinnacle of perfection, and it includes what we usually call tolerance. However, when there is no sincere love and compassion, let us start with tolerance and end with love.

The *divine gift of liberty* is the perfection of human personality, if, on the one hand, the individual carries the image of the personal God, and on the other, the personal community on the basis of belief in God shows us as His faithful. Freedom is a divine gift for man, which puts him in a position to continually advance in the spiritual advancement of the unity of mankind, and reflects our belief in one God. But this freedom, at the same time, involves the danger of disobedience, autonomous self-alienation from God, and thus the danger of falling away from Him. The terrible role that evil plays in man and the world is based on this.

The consequences of this evil in today’s life are all the imperfections and shortcomings we see happening: secularization, violence, moral decay, negative phenomena in one part of today’s youth, racism, global armament, wars and the resulting social needs, mass oppression, social inequality, human rights restriction in the field of human consciousness and, in particular, suppression of religious freedoms – which are sometimes suppressed until the complete disappearance of any religious life. There are also economic misery, unequal distribution of consumer goods or, moreover, complete poverty, the hunger of millions of undernourished people, the problems of refugees and the mass abandonment of their motherland, the devastation of the environment, the problem of a developing society due to unevenly industrialized and increasingly technocratically pressured people, the expectation from futurology

– all of these problems bring immense fear into day's mankind, in the mankind that, precisely because of its schisms, is becoming more and more aware of the fact that it contains within itself the germs of ontological unity of the human race, which is connected to the Creator through the first man Adam.

Simplifying the unity of all people to the first, divinely created, couple indicates the real source of values: freedom, equality, brotherhood and social justice. Here we could comfortably apply the words of the Christian missionary Apostle Paul (1st century AD) who, at the time of slavery, testified to the principle: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." So we as the faithful should accept each other as brothers and sisters. In addition, we believe that this unity has nothing static or monolithic. On the contrary, it is of great dynamism and multiplicity.

I tell you this in this manner because as a hierarch of my Church, I have witnessed great disasters in our former Yugoslav territories. With the breakup of the former state, the hurricane of war took the lives of the most innocent people in bloodsheds, regardless of the fact to which party in conflict they belonged. Consequently, it turns out that intolerance is in its gist ideological, not religious. The epilogue of unprecedented tragedy is the devastation that is still visible today in all fields of spiritual as well as material, cultural, artistic and existential life. There, on the ruins of that experience and knowledge, we most clearly see a man who has lost his true and genuine faith, and also his love and human dignity. Rather, the war was the result of the previous lives of our peoples, who were suppressing all the greatest values of life without being aware of it. In new opportunities and circumstances, somewhat paradoxically, we are here with one more experience. By living according to our faith and with its presence in our lives, but also in the world, we want to give a new impulse to the world. This desire is also strongly present amongst all the representatives of other religions of our region.

By living according to this truth, we – as an Orthodox Church want to contribute, first and foremost, to peace, freedom, justice and mutual understanding, and above all to *witnessing love*. "Testimony of love" means that the Church must intensify her work in situations where she finds that something does not fit the teaching of love and brotherhood among God-created beings. The Church must bear witness to the "hope that is in us" in every single situation when it comes to peace, fraternity, freedom and justice, as well as awe at the person of God as an image of God. We believe that this can only bring about love, so Orthodox Christians, in collaboration with brothers and sisters from other Churches and religions, but also with other people – such as atheists for example, will continue to testify to faith and hope in a world where this testimony is needed more than ever.

As the faithful, we must strive to eliminate diseases, war disasters and accidents; as the people who have experienced peace, the lack of peace in today's world cannot let us be indifferent. Let all of us be engaged into fostering increasing righteousness in the world, both for the individual and for society. As we experience on a daily basis

what God's mercy means, we stand against every fanaticism and every intolerance between people and nations; as we experience the freedom bestowed on us by God, we can preach religious universal values better to all men and nations and strive for the rights of every creature of God.

How do we do it in practical life? With every our activity, commemoration of various festivities, church programmes, interreligious meetings, we open the door of love for representatives not only of the Christian but also of the Islamic and Jewish world. This year, and especially these days, the celebration of 1700 years since the proclamation of the Edict of Milan (Decree on the Freedom of Christians in the World) was attended by representatives of the Muslim community. The same is done on the occasion of major Church holidays when we pay return visits, not courtesy ones, but the ones paid in the spirit of genuine joy. Interreligious seminars are also held in Serbia, theological discussions take place, scientific symposia and academies are organized to address certain issues of common concern.

Starting from the heavenly community, as an illustration of the relationship between us approaching God in prayer and spiritual life, and us approaching one another, let me give you an example used by a Christian priest early as the 6th century AD. That spiritual man was called Dorotej, so his example is also called Dorotej's Circle. It looks like this: imagine one circle, which has radii leading to the centre of the circle. We, the ordinary people, are on the perimeter of the circle. The closer we get to God (who is at the centre of the circle) the closer we get to each other. And vice versa: the more we move away from God, the more we move away from each other!

It is clear that God and His holy teaching on prayer, love, help, doing good deeds, forgiveness, respect for anyone of any race or religion, can be the Constitution of every country.

Based on our previous knowledge we have been informed of this beautiful country. But what we experience now, not only confirms all that which we have known, but exceeds what we were imagining. This beautiful country deserves such a pious nation. We are separated by thousands of miles, history, culture, branches of art, faith. But even so, what brings us closer together and directs us to one another is the possession of character, humanity, and belonging to one God as His children scattered in diversity around the world. That is why, on behalf of myself and all those who are good-willing ones from our holy places, I send you words of gratitude for your cordial hospitality and your host's love that has enchanted us.



## Dr Mileta Radojević

Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities  
of the Government of the Republic of Serbia

# RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Esteemed primates of Churches and religious communities,  
Dear representatives of the bodies of the Republic of Indonesia,  
Dear guests,

The First Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was held in Belgrade in 2011. It was for the first time in Serbia and in the territory of the former Yugoslavia that the representatives of the religions from all over the world – Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish – met and discussed the topics of interest in a scientific and expert manner.

It is immensely valuable to us that the Indonesian representatives appraised our interfaith dialogue as the most successful one of all the ones led with any country so far, and that the dialogue contributed to further deepening of the friendly relations between our two countries.

Two years ago we had the opportunity to present to Indonesia, the biggest Muslim country, harmonious relations between the State, Churches and religious communities (harmonious interfaith relations) in the Republic of Serbia.

We would especially like to underline that our friends from Indonesia heard and accepted our arguments against the self-proclaimed secession of Kosovo Albanians, which clearly represents political separatism, and by no means any kind of a religious conflict. We would like to use this opportunity to thank our friendly-oriented country Indonesia once again for supporting Serbia firmly regarding the issue of the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo Albanians.

In our interfaith dialogue we meet as different civilisations and cultures, geographically distant but genuinely friendly to each other. Our friendship dates back to the 50-ies of XX century, when Yugoslavia and Indonesia established diplomatic relations and became leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement as of 1961.

Due to the nature of Yugoslav authorities in the period when our country led the Non-Aligned Movement, there was no opportunity to include interfaith cooperation in a splendid cooperation in the fields of politics, economy and culture. We are now fulfilling that void in bilateral relations between Belgrade and Jakarta.

We are also extremely grateful to Indonesia for its initiative (addressed to us in 2010) for starting an interfaith dialogue with our country. We will gladly implement

the experience learned in the First Dialogue onto the territory of former Yugoslavia, where we see Serbia as the leader of such a dialogue.

It is therefore my pleasure and honour to speak today, on our Second Interfaith Dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia about the relations of the State with the Churches and religious communities in our country.

The Republic of Serbia is a multi-cultural state. The majority of the population in Serbia are Orthodox Serbs (83%) who are the faithful of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Traditionally, in its territory there are the members of other peoples and of other Churches and religious communities. Churches and religious communities, and especially the majority Serbian Orthodox Church, had a great role in establishing national identity and in forming national culture.

The national and religious identities of the Serbian population do not match, so that amongst the members of the same nation, there is a religious difference, just the same as in the population of the same religion, there is a difference nation-wise.

Churches and religious communities represent an important social factor whose role, impact and legal position and importance changed and depended on social and historical circumstances. The model of relations between the State and Churches and religious communities which exists today in the Republic of Serbia, and the legal position of Churches and religious communities, have been based on the Constitutional solutions and defined in the Law on Churches and Religious Communities of the Republic of Serbia.

The relations between the State and Churches and religious communities have been defined based on the freedom of religious affiliation stipulated in the Constitution and by the principles of separation of the State and Churches and religious communities; autonomy of Churches and religious communities; and cooperation between the State and Churches and religious communities. All the basic principles of the relations between the State and Churches and religious communities have positive impact on the preservation of religious and cultural differences, and the respect of national and religious differences is one of Constitutional imperatives.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006) defines that Churches and religious communities are separated from the State and as such are free to independently organise their internal organisation, religious affairs, to practice their religious rites in public, to establish schools for religious teaching, as well as social and charity institutions and to manage them in conformity with the law. In brief: the Constitutional principle about the separation of the State and the Church has been accompanied by the Constitutional guarantee of autonomy to the Churches and religious communities. Both the separation of the State from Churches and other religious communities and their autonomy provide to the great extent the preservation of religious and cultural differences in Serbia.

The Constitutional principle of the separation of the State and Churches and religious communities does not imply strict separation. On the contrary, as it is shown by the example of religious classes, but also by other legal solutions, this is more of a

model of cooperative separation. The State and Churches and religious communities cooperate in a whole sequence of social activities to the end of realising the freedom of expression of religious affinity. More detailed definition of the model of corporative separation of the State and Churches and religious communities was executed in the Law on Churches and Religious Communities which was discussed about and made by all the traditional Churches and religious communities.

The Law on Churches and Religious Communities (2006) stipulating the manner of achieving freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution, promoting religious freedoms, stimulating religious practices, and encouraging Churches and religious communities to participate in the social life, represents one of the most important systemic laws. The Law selected the model of registration, actually the model of Churches and religious communities acquiring legal person status by being entered into the appropriate Register of Churches and Religious Communities, led by the authorised organ of the State authorities.

Churches and religious communities in Serbia which have centuries-long historical continuance of existence and whose subjectivity was in the past recognised by special laws, were given the status of traditional Churches and religious communities. Aside from the most numerous and oldest Church in the region of the Republic of Serbia – the Serbian Orthodox Church, there are also other Churches in this category: Roman Catholic Church, Islamic Community, the Jewish Community in Serbia and Protestant Churches: the Slovak Evangelical Church (a.c.), the Christian Reformed Church, the Evangelical Christian Church (a.c.).

The model of cooperative separation of the State and Churches and religious communities enables that the State, through the authorised body (and in the previous Governments it was through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and then the Ministry of Religion and Diaspora) – now through the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities – should participate in affirming the freedom of religious rights, the improvement of the position and of the roles of Churches and religious communities in the society, in rendering aid to sacral construction and protection of ecclesial cultural heritage, in supporting religious components in cultural and ethnic identity of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia, in participating in popularizing the values of religious culture and helping in the development of religious teaching, in offering good services for protection of legal position of Churches and religious communities and in participating in the creation of a better social position of religious officials, pupils and students of theological schools.

It should also be noted that, apart from the State aid, Churches and religious communities also use their own financial funds to realise their roles in the society. We are very proud that the Republic of Serbia is now a big construction site of churches, mosques and other objects intended for the practice of Churches and religious communities. The same happened with the development of religious education in our country. There are three theological faculties in the Republic of Serbia and twelve high schools of religious orientation, which is a good indicator for a country

of over 7 million of residents. Speaking about religious culture, we would also like to underline that Churches and religious communities successfully develop their activities in museums, libraries and archives and enrich their environments by religious painting and music, with a significant help of the State. The public life in the Republic of Serbia today cannot be pictured without a religious component. The State gave special contribution to the improvement of the position of Churches and religious communities in the social community by enacting legislation after the First Interfaith Dialogue in 2011, which provides for pension and health insurance of priests and religious officials of all the Churches and religious communities. That way the existential issues of priests and religious officials have been resolved, both during their work period or in retirement.

In order to consider the participation of Churches and religious communities in social life, the improvement of their mutual cooperation and the cooperation with the State, an Interreligious Council was established at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2010, and it comprised of the Minister of Religious Affairs and of the heads and primates of the traditional Churches and religious communities: the Serbian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, Islamic Community of Serbia and Jewish Community in Serbia. The members of Interreligious Council of the Ministry of Religious Affairs decided by consensus about all the issues of social importance for the Republic of Serbia, interreligious relations and state-religious relations, and they gave their proposals in the form of advice to the state organs and to the public. All of that naturally impacted the improvement of relations between Churches and religious communities which are today considered extremely good. The Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities intends to revive the Interreligious Council which has temporarily stopped functioning after the Ministry of Religion and Diaspora stopped working. The Second Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia is therefore of special importance. Actually, all the members of the Interreligious Council are the members of the state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia in Jakarta.

Having in mind all the complex aspects of the relations both between the State and Churches and religious communities, and between Churches itself and religious communities and trying to appraise them from the standpoint of observation of religious and cultural differences in the Republic of Serbia, it can be freely concluded that the legal position of Churches and religious made based on the model of cooperative separation, enables realisation and expansion of their roles in the society, and thus the respect and further development of the religious and cultural versatility. In addition, very good relations between Churches and religious communities are a great contribution and a standing pledge for maintaining harmonious relations between the residents of Serbia who are religiously and culturally different. Respect and development of religious and cultural versatility and harmonious interreligious and international relations are essential characteristics of the Republic of Serbia as a democratic and traditionally freedom-oriented state.



# Adem Zilkić

Reis-ul-ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia

## OVERCOMING RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

All religions are equally great and true. They are just different paths leading to the same goal. All of them point out man's fraternity and God' paternity. All of them preach that one should love one's neighbours and all creatures. All of them incite their faithful to be good. We should treat all the religions as equal partners in a lofty task of nourishing mankind's moral and spiritual life. When different religions start enriching each other, they will complete the soul (internal cohesive unity) for which this world strives. Let us enjoy in the richness of different traditions, let us be inheritors of the heritage of entire mankind, not only of one area or nation.

The goal of all religions is, in its gist, to make a man divine, God-like, enabling him to express its divine qualities such as: universal love, compassion, grace, unselfishness, tolerance, patience, courage and others.

As man acquired first knowledge of himself through contact with other people, he started creating his opinion on his own origins which he connected to mystical forces and religious explanations. Cultures have been inseparable from religions throughout history. Even the cultures which did not have the chance to intertwine, developed their own religions, own beliefs. Such is the example of the civilizations of the Inca, Maya and Aztec which had already had their beliefs and their deities, just like the Europeans did, but before the Europeans came. Which proves that culture and religions permeate each other in all social systems. The impact of culture and religion onto education is undeniable. We could say that these are the first cradles of education. Education, as a fine fibre of life connects past and presence and creates future of every culture and religion, it ties cultures and religions mutually and brings now conclusions to a man, makes it freer.

In society-oriented literature we come across the word *society* which has several meanings. It is used first of all to denote common life of multiple individuals, bearing in mind differences between human and animal life; then, it is used to denote every particular community which is incorporated in human society (tribe, people, nation etc.), as well as professional organisations (society of sociologists, economists, lawyers, physicians, engineers etc.)

Many people wrote, thought loudly about the "issue of tolerance amongst cultures and of peace amongst religions" which stepped forward to be the first-class political issue. However, that is primarily the issue in connection with the religions,

how they treat one another in peace and what they can contribute to the development of mankind into peaceful coexistence. Monotheist religions are especially affected by this issue if they – by their origins and their essence – claim to know and profess the only true God and the only Saviour of all the people. Can that search for the Absolute be dominant even today? How does it treat peace amongst religions and cultures? When I looked through some of the lectures dedicated to this scope of topics it turned out that – starting from different points – something common got formed, some kind of unity which, although fragmented and incomplete, may not be totally useless for speaking of such a great topic that refers to all of us. That way the issues of faith, religion, culture, truth and tolerance are imposed to us.

What is religion actually?

*Religion is a system of reasoning, beliefs, behaviour, rituals and ceremonies by which an individual or a community are in relation with God, deity or supernatural world and very often in relation to each other, wherefrom the religious person gets a sequence of values according to which it acts and reasons about the natural world.*

How does culture relate to religion, and how can it relate to religious phenomena that were originally alien to it? We must first answer that only modern Europe has developed a notion of culture that makes culture appear as a field that is different from religion, or even opposed to it. In all known historical cultures, religion is an essential element of culture; moreover, it is its decisive core; religion determines the composition of values, and thus the internal organisational system of cultures. If this is so, then the inculturation of the Christian (or some other) faith into another culture seems even more difficult. It is not clear how a culture, intertwined with a religion that lives and functions in it, could be transplanted into another religion, without both of them ending fully destroyed. To take away from one's culture its own religion that created it, means to take away its heart; and if a new heart is transplanted into that culture – the Christian one or some other, it seems inevitable that this organism will reject an alien organ. Some positive outcome of surgery seems difficult to imagine. This kind of operation can only truly make sense if the Christian faith or some other religion, together with the culture that resides in it, are not totally different or diverse, but rather have an inward openness to one another, or in other words: if there has already been established in their gist the tendency to open up to each and unite. Inculturation therefore presupposes the potential universality of any culture. It assumes that in all cultures the human essence is the same, and that there is in it a common truth of our humanity that is directed towards union. Or, to put it differently: The purpose of inculturation only makes sense if injustice is not inflicted on a culture by a new cultural force opening it and developing further, starting from a common focus on the truth of the human being. What excludes such an opening and such an exchange in a culture is also insufficient in it, because the exclusion of

the other is opposed to the human being. The greatness of a culture is manifested in its openness to give and to receive, in its developmental power and in its ability to purify itself, so that it becomes more in coherence with truth and with the human being. At this point we can now try to define the culture. We could say: Culture is a characteristic of a community developed throughout history, which expresses the insights and values that shape the life of that community. Let us now look more closely at the individual elements of this definition so that we can better understand the term of the permeation and exchange of cultures – or “inculturation”.

Culture, first of all, deals with cognition and values. It is an attempt to understand the world and man’s existence in the world, but it is not an attempt of a theoretical nature, but an attempt driven by the fundamental interest of our existence. Understanding has to show us how things go: how to be human, to be properly fit and responsive to this world, in order to fulfil oneself and bring your existence to success and happiness. On the other hand, in large cultures this issue is not considered individually, as if each and every individual could invent for himself a pattern of mastering world and life. He can only do this together with others; therefore, the issue of true cognition is also an issue of the proper organisation of the community. This, in turn, is the premise that an individual’s life can be fortunate. Culture is about the understanding which is the cognition that opens practice; it is about the comprehension which includes values, what is moral. We need to add something that was easily understandable to the old world: referring to the issue of man and the world, the issue of divinity was always included as the issue of pre-existence and pre-establishment of everything. The world cannot be understood at all, nor can one properly live, if the issue of divinity stays unanswered. Moreover, the core of great cultures is that they interpret the universe by ordering the relation to what is divine.

Culture, therefore, in the classical sense, involves transcending what is visible, what appears to be; transcending in the direction of true foundations, and in this sense the culture is – at its core – the opening of the door to what is divine. This is connected with something else: in a culture, an individual outgrows himself and reveals how he and others are carried through life, in one larger common entity whose knowledge he can also borrow, and then carry on and develop it further. Culture is always tied to a common entity that absorbs the experiences of individuals and, in turn, characterises them. “O men, we created you from one father and one mother, and made you nations and tribes (different ones) so as to get to know each other ...

We can learn how to manage differences based on the example of the great German poet Rilke. He went to college with his colleague every day. At the time, a woman sat for months in the same place and begged. She would focus her eyes to the ground, held out her right hand, and waited for money. When she felt the gift was placed on her hand, she would bow her head even more. At one point, Rilke’s colleague lost her patience and questioned the poet why he never gave any money to

that poor woman. The poet was silent. The next day he carried a beautiful bud of red rose in his hand. When he reached the beggar, he calmly put the rose on her hands. For the first time, the woman looked abruptly at the donor, stood up even faster and kissed the poet's hand. She squeezed the rose onto her breasts and disappeared. She had not come to her place for ten days. The colleague of the great poet asked him: on which alms is this beggar now living...on... the rose? The poet replied: no, but on love. There are moments in our life where sincere attention raises and changes more than the usual way of helping. One example of how culture cultivates. The question is how much the riches of a religious culture cultivate our contemporaries to change.

It is impossible to turn a man towards a man *without trust*. Only on the basis of trust in the goodness of the latest reality, which transcends and sustains our world, can we maintain the basic trust that this world and human life are also essentially good, despite the undeniable presence of various forms of evil.

There is no true overcoming of differences without humility, and *humility*, above all, means not limiting God to our human way of thinking. We should always revive the awareness that *God is greater than all our thoughts and ideas*.

Despite the multiple meanings of all the world's religions, more and more Christian theologians believe that religious pluralism is part of God's mysterious plan for salvation whose last meaning escapes us. It is God, and not the devil (as many have argued before) who wanted a multitude of religions. Hence, interreligious dialogue is impossible *without research and scientific curiosity*.

Inter-religious dialogue triggers curiosity about what God has meant or means in other people's lives, the desire to explore the wealth that the merciful God has spread amongst nations, the joy of learning about other paths to God, and there are just as many, as the people in this world.

Thus, curiosity means readiness to learn about *man's multiple paths to God and God's multiple paths to man*. This way, we are slowly becoming able to better understand the neighbours of different faiths – to know their experiences, their wisdom and their truth.

As much as it is necessary and praiseworthy to learn about other cultures and religious traditions by reading the lofty books, this is insufficient for true interreligious dialogue. True faith in interreligious dialogue, with which dialogue should be conducted, *is not the faith from books but the faith of living people*. Our image of another faith is complete and true only after we come in contact with the people who live it, and this is only possible through friendship.

Since true friendship is impossible without honesty, the next virtue of interreligious spirituality is *honesty*. In dealing with each other, we must be fair about our own and others' religion - without hidden contempt and conversion. We must not contrast the ideals of our own faith with the horrific historical failures of a friend's faith. It is fair to compare ideals with ideals, and reality with reality.

Exposing our own faith and ourselves to somebody other, without beautifying and hiding, requires *courage*. This way, many of the common misconceptions and

ideas crumble, as well our own idealising picture of ourselves and of our own religious traditions.

The deeper experience of God's grace makes one's heart a source of gratitude on a regular basis. First of all, this implies gratitude for others, not only for what we have in common but also for what makes us different. Ultimately, true governance leads to joy both for unity and for differences with others - for both realities that begin to tell us about God. And gratitude frees us from anxiety and makes us relaxed on the basis of trust into the goodness of the last reality and its salvational presence.



# Stanislav Hočevar

Archbishop of Belgrade, Roman Catholic Church in Serbia

## ABOUT CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SERBIA

### Introduction

When we talk about the State of Serbia, its inhabitants and their spiritual orientation, then we surely perceive a complex history. And not only that! It seems that the state of Serbia has always been in the very heart of both geographical and historical inter-linking. Both East and West, North and South “speak“ on its soil.

“Too much history,” Churchill would say, “to be digested well.” But “complexity” can call for greater alertness and searching. This is exactly what we do today.

### 1. The history of the Catholic Church in Serbia

The structure of the Catholic Church has only been definitely completed recently. If, in Roman times, approximately 17 different emperors were born in “our” country at present, it should also be pointed out that many Christian bishops’ sees were established also at that same time (II - V century, by app. the 5th century AD). The arrival of new peoples from the beginning of the 6th century onwards, and the consolidation of predominantly Slovenian peoples on the same territory, enabled the development of Christian actuality amongst us. After the legal division of the Christian Church (from 1054 onwards, especially in 1219), the Western Christian Church (Catholic) certainly remained a minority; at times it seems to have completely disappeared. A new multiplication occurred at the beginning of the 20th century, and in the first ten years of the 21st century it assumed its present structure, which means: one Metropolitan Archdiocese (Belgrade), three Dioceses (Subotica, Zrenjanin, Srem), one Apostolic Administration (Prizren - Priština) and one Exarchate of the Eastern Catholics of Byzantine rite (Ruski Krstur - Novi Sad). This structure shows the complexity of both the history and the reality of the faithful. The faithful come from many ethnic groups, of which the most numerous are: Hungarians, Croats, Albanians, and then both Ukrainians and Ruthenians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Germans, Czechs, Bulgarians, Romanians and others.

There are almost 400,000 Catholics (Roman and Greek ones); the census itself could not have given a very precise number, since many people were not asked about or did not declare themselves regarding nationality and confessionality. I investigated this “issue” myself.

## 2. Our particularities

Not only do Catholics in Serbia belong to different national groups, but they also have a very different historical tradition: many are indigenous (e.g. Hungarians) and Croats; some come from very different places without some specific historical processes (Bunjevci, Šokci) others are indigenous; also, some Bulgarians and Romanians preserved the oldest tradition (language and Catholicism) and many other peoples came to our territory 300 years ago. There were many Germans living in our present territory - Catholics, who had to leave the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after World War II; it is just that their very large churches and buildings remained. We all know the history of the 20th century, when some borders were redefined. The birth of new republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro) formed new quantitative relations between Churches. So now there are 5% of the Catholic population in Serbia and we are left without the most important structures (Faculty of Theology, Seminary, see of the Bishops' Conference).

Therefore, our primary task now is:

- to study pastoral priorities;
- to establish appropriate structures;
- to build unity in great diversity;
- to promote integral dialogue (ecumenical, interreligious, social, cultural, etc.)
- to care for the poor who are numerous because of historical specificities (Caritas).

## 3. Main challenges for the future

- Concern for growth in identity and at the same time new integration into the society of the Republic of Serbia, which is also in a great transition and in the process of "Europeanisation";
- Care for the good and versatile provision of all Church officials (priests, monks, nuns, and catechists), not only as regards their professionalism but also as regards the best possible unity, communication and cooperation, precisely because they belong to such different traditions and they are educated in very different centres.
- Care for stronger social engagement, social responsibility and work ethics of the faithful, so that they can make a greater contribution to the social justice and spirituality of the entire population.



- Care for even more intense integral, above all interreligious dialogue and cooperation in the main areas of coexistence: restitution, education, media; the concept of family should be positioned first in all our endeavours. We believe that this is the only way to guarantee the true progress of the European continent.



# Isak Asiel

Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia

## A PART AND A WHOLE

The Jews settled in the territory of the present-day Serbia after the Destruction of the First Holy Temple in Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Before and at the beginning of the new era, the Jews followed the Roman legions as free and half-free men, mostly artisans, necessary to the army. The Jews had their own highly developed communities in the cities of Macedonia in the first century, before the Romans burned down the Second Jerusalem Temple, which existed from 515 BCE to 70 CE. This is testified by the Apostle Paul, who in “the synagogue of the Jews” in Thessaloniki and elsewhere addressed to indigenous Jews as *a Jew from Tarsus*, speaking Hebrew language.<sup>1</sup>

Since that time, Jews have survived many empires and states that were emerging and disappearing in the hilly Balkans. Unfortunately, 80% of Serbian Jews were killed by the Nazi Germany in World War II. The Jewish community has not recovered from this tragedy, and it is the rest of the rest of the once beautiful and promising community. Today, just somewhat more than 3,000 Jews live in Serbia. Judaism is recognized as one of the traditional religious communities and, although a minority, Jews enjoy all the rights and obligations as the citizens of the Republic of Serbia.

Jews are accustomed to living as a minority together with the majority of the domicile population and with other nations which, although minorities as well, were more numerous than Jews. Sometimes Christians were the majority population, sometimes Muslims, depending on the historical situation and circumstances. Jews lived with their system of values in a society that tolerated them, sometimes less sometimes more. Jewish religious law has determined the position of Jews in Diaspora by the principle of *dina de-malkhuta dina*, the law of the state is the law, i.e. Jews are obliged to obey the laws of the country which they live in. These few facts were necessary for what I want to present now.

In the current trend of globalisation, the issue of identity has become the fundamental issue for many societies and nations. With the violent dissolution of the SFRY<sup>2</sup>, the religious and national identity that had been suppressed for so long – exploded in a horrible sequence of bloody events. National elites were so happy because of the creation of national states, but then they instantly had to face the

<sup>1</sup> *New Testament, Act*, chapters 17-18, 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

European Union (which is not only a monetary union) and other globalisation processes. Individual and collective identities were questioned, and the apparent failure of national state governments to resist the trend of globalisation is becoming more and more obvious. What is the basis for national identity – that is the question we have been facing for two decades already. Are we a secular, post-secular or traditional society, whatever that means? Secularists see only a mythical story in traditional religious national identity, and want to deconstruct it. Religious fundamentalism and heightened nationalism are the most common response to secularism and contemporary globalisation processes. For politicians who insist on traditional values, religion is only the lever for group identity cohesion. Religious-moral arguments turn into demands for political action. The absolute truth of faith in the domain of politics and its interpretation nullifies an individual and his interests and opinions, since the absolute truth pre-sets the goals of political action. How to distinguish pseudo-religious discourse serving to gain political power from critique of a society that is truly inspired by theological thought and that does not aspire to gain political power?

What used to be a minority problem in the majority society – how to preserve its uniqueness and national-religious identity – now has become the problem of large nations facing globalisation. The separation lines between minority-majority, universal-particular are being deleted.

I will try to answer this question by a traditional interpretation of the famous Bible verse on the creation of man.

“Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground”<sup>3</sup>

The interpreters of Biblical text discussed the nature of the dust from the ground from which Adam, the first man i.e. the human race, was created. Some interpreters think that God has collected dust from the ground of all over the world, so as to create man. Others think that God took the dust of the ground from only one place, the place where the Temple in Jerusalem will be built in the future.

What is being discussed here? The dust of the ground or the nature of mankind?

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki) interprets the first opinion on the dust from the ground collected from all over the world in light of the fact that wherever a human being dies, the ground/Earth will receive the body of the deceased. In other words, man and woman are “at home” anywhere on planet Earth. Man belongs to the world. The human being, made of the dust from the ground gathered from all over the world, is a part of the human race, of mankind. Wherever he/she lives, he/she feels other people, absorbs their wisdom and experience. One must possess a vision that transcends his place in this world.

The second interpretation of the Bible text seems to contradict the first. God created Adam from the dust of the ground taken from only one place, the place where the Temple in Jerusalem would be erected. In other words, a human being is

<sup>3</sup> *Genesis, 2:7.*

rooted in only one place, the holiest place in the world. A person should be rooted in his/her tradition and focused on his/her uniqueness. Knowing that his/her life comes from the holy dust of Jerusalem, that person can deepen his/her relationship with God.

What opinion do we agree with?

The rabbis here did not discuss conflicting opinions, which contradict and annul each other, but rather pervasive ideas about the nature of the human race.

A person should be both universal and unique. Capable of perceiving an innate kinship with all the human beings from all over the world, and of recognising one's rootedness in one's family, tradition and society. A person who is only "universal" will lose his uniqueness. A person who is only "unique" will lose connection with the human race as a whole, and narrow his or her perspective. In both cases, humanity is lost.

The undeniable fact is that we are made of dust and will return to dust. But as long as we live on Earth, we should strive for wisdom, compassion and understanding, developing our uniqueness and nurturing our universality.

What should we protect ourselves from as a society and as a people?

Of universalisations of particular and particularisations of universal. They must not impose themselves to each other or dominate over one another. Faltering religion, a pseudo religion, establishes its key points of power in this universal-particular relationship.

One rabbi said that a man should have a piece of paper in one pocket that reads: "Because of me, the world was created," and in another pocket a paper that reads: "I am dust and ashes."

A part points to the whole and a whole to the part. Minority to majority and majority to minority.



## Dr Dragan Novaković

Deputy Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities  
of the Government of the Republic of Serbia

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SERBIA IN THE CONTEXT OF PROMOTION OF TOLERANCE, MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

Allow me to point out at the very beginning that there is a developed religious schooling of high school level in Serbia and that all the Churches and religious communities invest significant efforts to improve that form of their activities. There is a general trend now that religious schools and religious officers educated for work of good quality in contemporary circumstances represent a precondition for successful execution of religious missions, and an important factor in preserving national, cultural and linguistic identity. Recognizing religious schooling as an important element in the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, modern Serbia made an institutional framework for that field by the Constitution of 2006, and defined the field in greater detail by the Law on Churches and Religious Communities enacted that year as well.

The Law on Churches and Religious Communities of the Republic of Serbia dedicated several articles to religious schooling, which is the subject of today's presentation. Churches and religious communities can establish institutions for the sake of education of future priests, for the improvement of spiritual and theological culture and other similar goals. The climate was made for the establishment of pre-school institutions, primary schools, trade and artistic vocational schools and other higher education schools and faculties. Churches and religious communities can initiate the procedure of verification of their educational institutions for the sake of their inclusion into the public system. By getting the accreditation, religious schools acquire the right to receive financial support from the Budget of the Republic, with respect to the number of the faithful in Serbia. For the sake of improving religious freedoms and education, the State has the right to offer aid to religious schools as well, the ones which did not pass the accreditation and verification procedures. The Law guarantees programme and organisation autonomy to religious schools. Churches and religious communities independently define their respective curricula, textbooks and manuals, appoint and dismiss teachers and perform supervision of work of religious educational institutions. Certificates and diplomas of the verified religious schools are publicly recognised. Diplomas and certificates of non-verified religious schools can have – after the completed

equivalency procedure – the same status as the documents issued by the public/State educational institutions. Regular pupils and students of religious educational institutions have the right to health and social security, pupils and students standard, their parents the right to children's' allowance, under the same conditions which apply to pupils and students in public sector.

The Constitution of Serbia guarantees to parents the right to provide their children with religious and moral upbringing in conformity with their beliefs and the above mentioned Law and regulations enacted later on guarantee the right to religious classes in public primary and secondary schools (12 years altogether), one lesson a week. The curriculum of religious classes, as well as the textbooks, are approved by consensus of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Education, at the agreed proposal of traditional Churches and religious communities. The list of teachers of religious classes is formed by the Minister of Education at the proposal of traditional Churches and religious communities. The pupils who do not opt for religious classes are given the possibility of attending an alternative subject "Civic Upbringing". The organisation and realisation of religious classes is supervised by a Committee comprising one representative of traditional Churches and religious communities each and three representatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, appointed by the Government.

The experience from the past 12 years gives us right to conclude that religious teaching has been significantly consolidated. Beginners' problems have been overcome and the issues of curricula, textbooks and qualifications of the engaged teachers are being settled successfully. Professional seminars are being held regularly and religious teachers are being introduced to the newest pedagogical-psychological and didactical achievements relevant for organising modern classes. The participation of children in religious teaching depends on various factors, but it is quite certain that the results are better for minority churches, which view religious teaching in the context of preserving national, cultural and religious identity. The experience of modern Serbia in organising religious classes is relatively short, but starting from the conviction that religious classes have greater relevance and that it directly contributes to developing toleration and understanding, we are quite open and willing to study and accept the practice of other states which have decades-long practice in executing this important and responsible work. The need for almost two thousand educated religious teachers has further stimulated the development of religious education in Serbia. The Serbian Orthodox Church in the territory of the Republic of Serbia has seminaries, i.e. secondary religious schools in Sremski Karlovci, Belgrade, Kragujevac and Prizren with a temporary headquarters in Niš. In addition to the seminaries in the territory of Serbia, there are also: a seminary in Cetinje in Montenegro, a seminary in Foča, the Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a seminary in the Krka Monastery, in the Republic of Croatia. Schooling in seminaries lasts for five years, and in all seven schools, there are about 750 students. Curricula are being gradually adapted to the life in contemporary circumstances, the teaching staff

and textbooks are getting more and more high-quality ones, the boarding school is constantly improved, and students are acquiring the necessary knowledge in the IT sphere through new subjects.

Islamic religious education in the territory of present-day Serbia has a centuries-old tradition and during the Ottoman rule, madrassas were used in all major places to acquire elementary literacy and study various theological disciplines. During the existence of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1920-1945), a large number of madrassas continued to operate under the auspices of the Islamic Community, and the State funded all levels of Islamic education. The development of Islamic Community education continued in socialist Yugoslavia. In addition to the famous Gazi Husrevbeg Madrasa in Sarajevo, established in 1527, new ones began operating in Priština and Skopje. With the opening of the Islamic Faculty of Theology in Sarajevo in 1977, the system of Islamic education in socialist Yugoslavia was completed.

The Islamic Community Education has undergone significant expansion in recent years, so that the following secondary education institutions are currently operating in Serbia: Gazi Isabeg Madrasa in Novi Pazar, Sinan Bey Madrasa in the same city, Women's Madrasa in Novi Pazar and Rožaje, Montenegro, Belgrade Secondary Madrasa and the female madrasa in Prijepolje. The mentioned schools are attended by a large number of students. New and functional buildings have been constructed, enabling the educational process to proceed as per the highest standards. The engaged teaching staff is good and consists of graduates of the most famous Islamic universities. In addition to theological disciplines, modern secular subjects are taught, and special attention is given to IT training. The best graduates of madrasa continue their education at the most prestigious Islamic universities around the world and higher education institutions were opened for them as well in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Firmly committed to implementing a policy of equality for all Churches and religious communities, as a reliable way to preserve the national and cultural identity of each community, the Government of the Republic of Serbia invests significant resources in the religious school system. For many years, from the Serbian budget, all the theological seminaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the madrasa of the Islamic Community and the Catholic High School have been receiving regular monthly aid. State funds finance the salaries of professors and hired staff and help students settle their boarding school costs. Religious schools are given aid when renewing their boarding schools equipment, when procuring modern teaching aids, when establishing computer classrooms, when paying utility costs and in their other activities.

In concluding this presentation, noting that secondary religious schools, especially of the Islamic Community, are still in the process of constituting and seeking their own identity in the new reality of Serbia, let me point out that Serbia does not have any doubts as to how and in which way to bring in stimulating relationships the

secular basis of the State and the religious structure of the society. Serbia is interested in getting religion back to its essence and engaging in processes of reconciliation, harmonization, creating true spiritual communion between people and peoples of different faiths, experiences, social aspirations and political interests. The realization of these plans is possible only with the constant affirmation of religious education, of which I had the honour to speak earlier, and with the clear support of young and educated theologians.



## Prof. Dr Dragomir Sando

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Beograd

# HIGHER EDUCATION IN SERBIA AND THE FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Within the University of Belgrade, among the numerous faculties, there is also the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, which is in many ways paradigmatic among the faculties, but at the same time specific in the higher education system of the Republic of Serbia: for ninety-three years it has been the headquarters of theological knowledge and scientific research within the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, at the same time, this institution managed to bring the organisation of teaching and research fully in line with the latest standards. A lot of enthusiasm and will, time and energy, knowledge and faith in our own potentials, have been invested in making this Faculty a respectable institution in the country and a recognizable place on the intellectual map of the world, a prestigious centre for the acquisition of the highest theological education that attracts students from all our regions and from Diaspora, as well as students from numerous local Orthodox Churches and the faithful of other denominations. Responding to the strict requirements and standardisation, the Faculty, with its accreditation, has become fully aligned with other public and private faculties. Through the maximum efforts of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, students who want to explore the depths of Orthodox theology have a suitable spiritual and intellectual environment for forming a personality in the spirit of Christian ethos and acquiring the knowledge necessary for performing priestly and religious ministry, for competent professional involvement in ecclesiastical and/or state structures, in the sphere of public information, mass media, non-governmental organizations – wherever people yearn to hear the voice of the Church, the gospel message of love, faith and hope.

Studies at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology are organized into five study programs at the first, second and third year of study. The basic academic studies are realized in two study programs. General studies last four years and gain insight into the theological topics of interest. The second level of study is master's degree programs, which are also carried out in two forms – one year programmes and two years programmes, differentiated by topical divisions, while the third, the highest degree are doctoral studies lasting for three years.

There are 45 full-time teachers and associates teaching at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, which by number of students and professors is smaller type of faculty

and has 1650 students. In addition to Orthodox theology, emphasis has been placed on the study of Western, Protestant, Anglican and Jewish theology, and lately the departments of Orientalism have been established – an area of particular interest in Islam. If necessary, the Faculty also employs established practitioners, lecturers from abroad and teachers of other higher education institutions. The contribution of teachers and associates of the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade to the development of theological thought, but also of the humanities as a whole, could be qualified as very significant. During its existence, more than one hundred teachers and associates have published over one thousand monographs and more than ten thousand scientific and professional papers. The Faculty has successfully cooperated and today cooperates with other higher education institutions in the country and abroad. It is the initiator and publisher of five periodical scientific publications, some of which are in the rank of journals of international importance, where the works are published by eminent theologians and experts in other fields. Under the auspices of the Faculty, scientific-research and artistic projects, professional and scientific meetings are prepared and realised, amongst which the most interesting ones to the expert and Church audience are the regular or extraordinary symposiums (between five and seven a year) relating to specific projects.

A special impetus for the development of scientific research at the Faculty, which is systematically implemented into the teaching process, is given by the Institute of Theological Research and the Catechetical-Pedagogical Institute. These institutes are already realising an ambitious publishing activity (dissertations, theological studies, critical editions of translations of the Holy Fathers' works).

The Library of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology has over 180,000 books. The funds also feature a large number of books from both domestic and foreign periodicals. The publications that can be found in the Faculty Library are mostly of theological, philosophical and historical contents. Not only students and teachers can use it as a professional library, but also all interested researchers in these fields.

The Faculty also uses the most modern information technology equipment necessary for scientific research and study. All teachers, associates, students and non-teaching staff are provided with Internet access. In addition to the electronic catalogue of the Faculty Library, search engines of other notable libraries in Serbia and abroad are also available. There is online access to all databases and services on the Internet that are available through Academic Network of Serbia. They also provided training for students and staff to use all library and information resources as efficiently as possible.

In addition to classrooms and training rooms, the Faculty also has two amphitheatres suitable for holding not only lectures, but also cultural and artistic events, forums, promotions, scientific and professional meetings. There are developed sports disciplines at the Faculty, such as the chess club and the football club, which achieve notable successes at home and abroad. During the renovation and equipping, the Faculty received great support from the Office for Cooperation with Churches and

Religious Communities of the Government of Serbia, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science of the Republic of Serbia, church donors, and significant material resources were invested from Faculty's own sources.

The knowledge acquired at the Faculty provides a broad general culture, gives a serious insight into the tradition, contemporary state, and perspectives of theology, but the lecturers seek to strike a balance between the theoretical and applied aspects of this knowledge.

The right to enrol in the Faculty is granted to boys and girls with a completed four-year high school education, with the consent and blessing of the authorised bishop. Studies have also been opened to applicants from other Orthodox Churches and Christian Orthodox communities, with the approval of the Holy Synod of Bishops of our Church. During their studies, young theologians can apply for scholarships from the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities of the Government of Serbia and can resort to other accommodation and feeding benefits.

The diploma of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade has a high rating in both Orthodox countries and in the West. The compliance of the programmes and study regime with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, crowned by the obtained accreditation, is an additional guarantee that our students of theology are equal citizens of the academic world that knows no boundaries. That is also confirmed by the success of the former students of this institution who have acquired in the past and are acquiring today the degrees of Doctor of Theology at the most prestigious universities abroad. The Faculty cultivates intensive cooperation with a number of renowned theological institutions in the world, such as the Faculty of Theology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the School of Theology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Spiritual Academies in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, Theological faculties in Germany, Switzerland, France, US, as well as in the countries in the region.

We would also like to point out that on April 8, 2011, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, through the University of Belgrade, concluded a memorandum of understanding and cooperation with the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University of Jakarta.

The areas of international cooperation that the Faculty realises are:

- cooperation of the parties in the field of scientific exchange related to theological and religious-philosophical issues;
- organisation of the exchange of teachers and students of master and doctoral studies;
- participation in scientific conferences related to theological and religious-philosophical issues organized by one of the parties;
- exchange of scientific information related to theological and religious-philosophical issues between the parties.

The Contracting Parties undertake:

- To organise the exchange of teachers and students of master and doctoral studies in order to realise common scientific and educational programmes,
- To organise scientific (scientific-pedagogical) meetings related to current problems of theological education,
- To cooperate in the scientific management of the preparation of master's papers, master's theses and doctoral theses of mutual interest, as well as in the procedure for their verification (writing reports on the prepared dissertations, participation in topic-defending committees),
- The Contracting Parties shall exchange the teaching and scientific literature, teaching documents, information in the field of theology, religion, pedagogy and the like,
- The Contracting Parties are implementing joint scientific publications (topic-related books of studies, scientific books),
- The Contracting Parties undertake joint scientific projects of mutual interest.

Finally, let us say that the guests of the Faculty are usually pleasantly surprised by its ambience, organisation, good interpersonal relationships, warmth and friendliness of all employees and students.



## Radomir Rakić

Protodeacon, Head of Information Service, Serbian Orthodox Church

### RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS FROM THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

It is not in the spirit of Eastern Christianity to formulate relations between people primarily in view of certain rights and obligations. The Orthodox prefer to speak about relations that are “appropriate and corresponding”. These relations originate from a common experience of Christians as members of Christ’s Kingdom. They express our common understanding of the Kingdom of God, and in life they are implemented by the growth of the person according to the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27) into the condition of deification (Greek *Theosis*) becoming more like God.

1. The first thesis statement of our expose is that the ethical style of Orthodox Christianity is more *ethos* than *nomos*, more moral character than a collection of behaviors in a legalistic manner. We need to understand them as “appropriate and corresponding” to our manner of behavior. This behavior Christians practice when they dutifully and willfully communicate in accordance with the rights of their neighbors and in everyday situations and common associations. In that way, the rights are just demands that others place on our behavior and just demands that we place on the behavior of others towards us. And conversely, duties are firm regulations of the Christian way of life, which have to do in most cases with fundamental, routine, and usual aspects of life that are created by the rights of others. Rights and obligations are two aspects of the same reality that arise out of a common human experience, and whose fundamental fact is that we are all together created in the image and likeness of God, in God’s image (Genesis 1:27).

2. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible does not use the phrase “human rights” or “religious freedom”. Such freedoms were proclaimed during the French Revolution (18<sup>th</sup> Century), which in its essence was a secular revolution and dealt exclusively with an earthly man and the world in which he lives.

According to biblical teaching, *freedom is God’s greatest gift to man*, it is that which sets man apart from all other creatures. Apostle Paul sent word to Christians: “You are called to freedom” (Galatians 5:13); “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore” (Galatians 5:1); “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). But the same Apostle warned: “We have freedom in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:4). This means that Christian freedom is Christ-centered: to be

able not to sin: “I can do all things in Christ who is my strength” (Philippians 4:13). Holy people have been able to observe this throughout history – saints, who serve as a model for us in our everyday public and private behavior.

Our famous poet Njegos said: “God created freedom for man”. Freedom is an essential aspect of the human character. Without freedom we would not be human beings. Henceforth, to deny the freedom of others is to deny an element of our own human nature and humanity.

3. However, there are *limits to freedom*, although inside these limitations it is necessary to have true ethical freedom, so that man can realize his own potential. Man’s freedom is limited partially by the rights and obligations of others. They also must have freedom to practice their rights as well as to perform their obligations. In the same way, the taking away of an individual’s freedoms without moral foundation attacks a fundamental dimension of justice, human rights, and human dignity.

Freedoms themselves are often *limited voluntarily*, however, as a result of many different conditions of life. Thus, we limit our own freedom when we enter into personal relationship (i.e. marriage), when we commit ourselves by an agreement (i.e. monasticism) or take on institutional obligations. In the same way, freedom of husbands and wives have certain limitations, precisely because they became husband and wife one to the other, with all obligations and duties that marriage entails. A similar restriction of freedom exists in the relations of parents to their children and children to their parents, employers and employees, students and teachers, and in many other relationships in society.

The Bible at the very beginning speaks of the limitation of the freedom of the first man, while still in paradise. God told Adam: “You may freely eat of every tree in the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Genesis 2:17).

Nonetheless, within the framework of these parameters *freedom must be respected*. In public life, the freedom of expression of human thought must be supported and constantly respected. For the most part, people respect this right. Many civilized societies at list pay lip service to it. Difficulties emerge when the line should be drawn between authentic freedom and its limitations, such as are imposed on socially destructive practices (different sectarianism when the freedom of confessing a religion is in question), speech, and teaching.

4. From this follows the question of *censorship bans*. However difficult it is to convey this in a pluralistic society, censorship, in some aspects, cannot be escaped. But it should never be necessary to impose censorship which would result in the abolition of basic freedom. For example, the Church/religious community insists on the freedom of religion, and many other freedoms exist which would not need to be obliterated in a good, well-ordered society. Christian ethics rejects the totalitarian suppression of freedom.

However, not even civil freedom can be without limitations. A man cannot shout “Fire!” in a packed theater just because he is free, because there will be incalculable consequences, such as people wounded during the stampede out, maybe even deaths! That kind of act we judge in the light of potentially destructive consequences. If someone has AIDS, and he is free, not married, is he free to be able to enter without caution into a marriage with a healthy individual? In a similar way we look at certain Satanist sects which from their adherents demand an annulment of their personalities, the freedom of choice, the freedom to carry money and the right to live from one’s own work. Not to mention victims who, somewhere, were necessary for sacrificial rituals, or temples of prostitution, of the use of drugs to be a part of a cult.

The question of censorship has not been resolved either in a free or a controlled society. Censorship further remains a problem, and it finds application in public life. This is an issue related to pornography, prostitution, some scandalous television programs (with erotic acts, black magic, fortune-telling, horoscopes, recruiting for cult movements, satanic sects), the rights of homosexuals and lesbians. In Christian *ethos* itself the same dilemma exists. However, immoral and self-destructive behavior often has a serious and negative influence on the well-being of our neighbor in society. This dilemma exists, but there are other criteria to take into consideration.

One of these criteria is that some provable, not just assumed, destructive consequences to society justify restrictions on public behavior. Sometimes self-destructive behavior, for example, by drinks or gambling, can lead to court decisions about treatment or reparation. These destructive consequences have to be clear and evident, and should not be taken out of a wider context of interwoven values. This process of estimation we notice in the discipline of Christian development and growth towards the height of Christ’s example: “But grace has been given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s” (Ephesians 4:7). We are all invited to “grow in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10), i.e. to grow in deification. In this process of becoming real Christians we often put restrictions on ourselves because of the common welfare of the people in general. Examples of this are the prohibition of smoking on buses, planes, and elsewhere; and laws against pornography.

5. A Christian has the responsibility to limit his own freedom inasmuch as it helps carry the burden of others in the faith or weakens their trust in the Gospel of Christ. Apostle Paul showed how to exercise the right to eat meat sacrificed to idols, and, on the other hand, not to exercise that right considering the scandal of other Christians (see 1 Corinthians ch. 8). For this reason he was able to say: “Everything is permitted, but not everything is for my benefit” (1 Corinthians 6:12).

When Christians act and work, their behavior is not exclusively personal. Each of their sins is not only drawing them out of their personal growth into the image of God, but also from the total Christian ethos and integrity of the life of the Church. Unbecoming behavior on the part of Christians gives an incentive and an easy opportunity for others to justify their own disbeliefs. Apostle Paul gives an important

example: “Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother’s falling into sin, I will never eat meat, so that I will not cause him to fall” (1 Corinthians 8:13).

For this reason, one of saints, John Chrysostom (407) teaches us: “We should live in such a way that the name of God should not be reproached”. A Church writer Tertullian, even in the third century, observed that for the Christians people used to say: “Yes, those are Christians”, seeing how they lived such distinguished lives. Therefore, the Christian call to grow in the image and likeness of God is one aspect of our responsibility for the well-being of others.

6. Theologically, this acknowledgement of every man’s freedom to come to his own decisions is founded in the Scripture (the Bible), where God acknowledges man as a free being. Jesus Christ seeks faith from man, but He does not force him (see Matthew 9:28; “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”; Mark 9:23; John 6:29.67).

Freedom of religious expression belongs unconditionally to the *freedom of conscience*. Man has to have an opportunity to do that which his conscience asks of him (in which the State has no role), and he must not be compelled to act contrary to his conscience.

The freedom of religious association (i.e. the freedom that one can join any religious community or leave it) belongs inseparably to the freedom of conscience. In the same way, a freedom to create associations with religious and charitable intentions generally rests upon the social justice of man and on the principal of support for one another.

Freedom of churches/religions/religious communities results from the freedom of conscience and freedom of association. Regarding such, one should keep in mind that the church/religion is distinguished from the State by origin, by structure, and by main purpose. So from the nature of things there is no right of the State over the Church/religious community; but even more, laws and State structures should be limited to their own functions and be kept away from the area of Church/religious community and conscience.

The freedom of a religious community implies a freedom that it can perform its mission. The state is not competent regarding questions of the position of a religious community, for that is the area of the sacred. Religious communities themselves have a task to develop their activities outside of any pressure and outside of all dishonorable means.

### 7. What are religious freedoms?

Under the term “religious freedom” it is understood that the freedom of religious questions, whose guarantee and protection are required from the State, will be respected for individuals, social groups, churches and all other religious communities (Second Vatican Council). The demand for this respect has been put forth by individuals separately and by their associations (churches, religious communities, and religious groups).

Religious freedom embraces the following elements:

a) The freedom of conscience – a man requests as his natural right to be respected and protected by the State, so that he can enjoy freedom from outside pressures while investigating the religious truth, when accepting or rejecting religious faith, in private religious and non-religious behavior.

b) The freedom of religious practice, including the following:

- freedom of expressing religious convictions: religious education in families, public profession of religion, spreading of religious truth, public attitude towards modern questions through the religious prism;
- freedom of churches/religious communities: freedom in their own fields of work (creating a constitution, teaching and the organization of community life, inner discipline, educating and appointing officials, relations between religious workers and priests, communication with religious communities and religious authorities in other countries, acquisition and disposal of their own property), and freedom of the Church/religious community from abuse by the State for its own purposes.

The State guaranties that it does not control things that have to do only with the religious community itself, but also for the people who live in that religious community (the state and society are not just equal); sacred matters do not belong to the State. By establishing religious freedoms in its constitution the State widely limits itself.

Statement of the Orthodox Church in America (1983): Our holy Church cares about questions of justice, human rights, and preserving order between states and nations. On one side, the Church prays for ‘all those that are in authority’; on the other hand, it identifies itself also with ‘the poor, convicts and captives, with those who are indicted (on trial), those in forced labor, in exile, banishment, and in every kind of trouble, suffering and pain’ (Liturgy). Our world is full of human misery, which is very often the result of selfishness of the rich and of force imposed by certain ideologies.

To us Orthodox Christians it is clear that such conditions in the world do not exist simply because of contemporary and changing political conditions...

However, in civil society, where we enjoy our rights to freedom of assembly and association, action and voting, we have to practice all rights considering our faith and in love towards every human being, especially in the name of victims of injustice and oppression.

Statement of the Orthodox Church in America (1986): This Church gives “voice to the voiceless”, regardless whether they are under pressure from either left or right sides. “We express our Christian solidarity with all people who suffer from genocide,

terror, and war... and everywhere where human rights are misused or violated, destroying life and stripping humans of their dignity...”

“We believe that states and governments, who are responsible for acts of repression and terror, must be publicly revealed and called to change their behavior.

Under religious freedom belongs the struggle against abortion no matter how this right might be criticized by modern feminists...



**THE THIRD BILATERAL INTERFAITH  
DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA  
PROCEEDINGS OF MEMBERS OF  
SERBIAN AND INDONESIAN  
DELEGATIONS AND GUESTS**







## Dr Aleksandar Raković

Moderator of Conference, Chairman of the Association  
of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara”

### INTRODUCTORY WORD

Your Holiness – Serbian Patriarch, Your Excellencies – Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Ambassadors of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia, dear guests – members of the state-religious delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, Your Eminencies – heads and dignitaries of the traditional Churches and religious Communities in the Republic of Serbia, dear diplomats of the Republic of Indonesia, esteemed representatives of the state bodies of the Republic of Serbia in charge of religious and diplomatic affairs, esteemed representatives of the Belgrade University and of scientific institutes, dear students and guests, dear media representatives, dear members of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara“, ladies and gentlemen;

In December 2010 the diplomats of the Republic of Indonesia addressed the Ministry of Faith of the Republic of Serbia and asked that our two friendly countries start the interreligious and state-religious dialogue at the highest level. They presented to us their model of interreligious and state-religious dialogue. Something completely new was offered to our country and we attentively listened to them and thoughtfully considered their suggestions.

Up to that moment, we had already had in our country a very successful interreligious dialogue, the established Interreligious Council and an excellent cooperation of the State and of the Churches and of the religious Communities in all the fields. But never up to then have we entered into any state-religious dialogue of diplomatic type. Therefore we accepted the generous offer like a novices with an open hart and with a given hand of friendship and entered into the state-religious dialogue with veterans of this kind of discussion – the Republic of Indonesia. And we did not go wrong.

The very testimony of the success of the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia held in Belgrade in 2011 and of the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia held in Jakarta in October 2013 is our meeting here yesterday, today and in the coming period at the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia in November 2015.

Let us hear now, at the beginning of our conference, the welcoming addresses of His Excellency Mr Nikola Selaković – Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, His Holiness Irinej – Serbian Patriarch and His Excellency Mr Abdurrahman Fachir, PhD, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

# Nikola Selaković

Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia

## WELCOME ADDRESS

Your Excellency Mr Abdurrahman Fachir, PhD, Your Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej, Your Eminencies – heads of Churches and religious Communities, esteemed members of the respective delegations of the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of Serbia, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends;

The Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia started the state-religious dialogue at the highest level in 2011 at this very location – in the room then named Yugoslavia, today named Serbia. For both of our countries this particular room has historical significance as it was the very place where one of the meetings of the First Conference of Non-Aligned Movement took place in 1961. That was the movement which our country and the friendly country of Indonesia jointly initiated so as to provide peaceful response to the Cold War and the arms race. Thus, we are today in the historical building.

As in the socialist country of Yugoslavia religious affairs were not an important part of diplomacy, but were mentioned accidentally, there was no opportunity for the two friendly countries to realise their – otherwise fruitful – cooperation in the religious field as well. Therefore now, this state policy of the Republic of Serbia which focuses on religious dialogue with the Republic of Indonesia has filled the void space which existed in our cordial relations.

For this state-religious dialogue with Indonesia, the Republic of Serbia has for the first time in the history of its existence (be it Yugoslav one or Serbian one) made a delegation consisting of religious heads of our country and ministers and state officials in charge of Church and religious Communities issues.

On the other hand, the Republic of Indonesia which has a rich history of state-religious dialogues around the world, appraised this First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue with the Republic of Serbia in Belgrade in 2011 as the best ever, since the members of the Indonesian delegations – according to the words of their delegation leader “had the impression that they were talking with the whole of Serbia”.

Such a successful interreligious dialogue paved the way to the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia when the state-religious delegation of our country visited Jakarta in 2013. Our delegation included all the religious heads of our country led by Serbian Patriarch Irinej. It was then the first time in the history of Indonesia that an Orthodox Patriarch stepped onto its soil. Our Serbian Patriarch, and together with him, equally: our Catholic Archbishop, Reis-Ul-Ulama, Rabbi and Mufti. The proof of their immense satisfac-

tion is seen now in the fact that they are all here again at the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia.

The topic of today's Conference is youth. As the Minister of Justice and a university lecturer I especially emphasise that the work on religious education and religious tolerance amongst the young ones is one of the most important tasks of our multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society. The Republic of Serbia invests efforts to be the leader in this field in our region. The compliments we got for that from the friendly Republic of Indonesia mean a lot to us. Thus we would be really glad to deepen our university cooperation in the field of theological studies, professor and student exchange, so that the youth of the Republic of Serbia could learn first-hand about religious coexistence and theological knowledge in the Republic of Indonesia, and so that the youth in the Republic of Indonesia could learn first-hand about religious coexistence and theological knowledge in the Republic of Serbia.

I would also like to point out that both the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia are committed to observing international rights and laws, and that our Indonesian friends did a lot for preserving territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija. Therefore, our dear friends from our friendly country of Indonesia – we thank you immensely once again.

I wish this Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia to be very successful. Hopefully, the conclusions from this Conference and from our entire dialogue will be affirmative and hopefully we will meet again – as per the success of this state-religious gathering – in Indonesia in 2017 so as to continue the already set tradition to meet like this every two years.

Thank you once again dear friends for your kind visit, I wish that you feel Serbia as your home.

# Serbian Patriarch Irinej

## WELCOME SPEECH

Esteemed representatives of the Republic of Indonesia and representatives of religious Communities from that country, esteemed representatives of the Serbian side.

It is my great honour and pleasure to be able to greet this esteemed gathering, to invoke God's blessing upon this gathering of the representatives of Christian Churches and religious Communities of Indonesia and Serbia to accomplish its goal and bear the fruits which all of us want, but which the God of all of us also wants and blesses us with.

The joint feature that both our countries share is that both Indonesia and Serbia have several religions, several Churches. The great prophet and Emperor, King David, the writer of the well-known psalms said: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" This is truly wonderful and – I do believe – pleasing to God, that we gathered here to talk and agree on many important things and issues of our time. And I do think that we should talk about the issues and treat them as brothers. Whether we want it or not, whether we admit it or not, we *are* brothers as we all have one and the same Creator, the Creator of man. And when God created man, he created man and not people estranged from each other. The relationship among created people is the closest to and equal to relationship between brothers.

We are now witnessing the occurrence of many dialogues, talks and agreements between many countries and institutions which through dialogue resolve the issues that life and circumstances make. That is a good example of solving all the problems emerging in any field of our work and life, and – in the end – all the issues and conflicts *are* resolved through dialogue. They start by misunderstanding, reach their climax in horrible wars and then, in the end – people sit together and work out their problems through dialogue.

Unfortunately, our region is familiar with many problems and misunderstandings, both those in the past and those in the present, which is why this is a very good opportunity for us from Serbia to hear our friends from Indonesia as we know that such problems have been very well resolved in their country and that the relations between the representatives of religious Communities in their country are human, without deeper misunderstandings. Such knowledge will be of great use to us in this region, as we could also implement it in our circumstances.

We, here in Serbia, do have good relations – thanks to God – in the recent period with all the recognised religious Communities. That is one of the conditions for this country to prosper, and maybe the opportunity for our friends from Indonesia to

hear about our relations. First of all to hear about the past, what happened in the past, and what is the consequence of the past now, in present times, which we are striving to resolve in the best possible human way.

In my opinion, representatives and leaders of the Churches and religious Communities have a great and very important role in this. Since – what a leader of one Church or religious Community thinks is inevitably transferred to his closest associates and members of the Church or the religious Community. That is why it is most important and of greatest significance that we have as many gatherings like this one, both international ones and local ones, and that we handle potential problems which emerge unexpectedly in the manner which the gist of our faith teaches us and directs us.

Unfortunately, we very often use the mask of faith for other goals and targets. That is a true tragedy. If such misuses of faith decreased, surely there would be fewer problems as well. The dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia is the true example of talks, problem analysis and search for the methods and manners to solve the open issues. Therefore I hope that our dialogue would be of great use and shall serve as an example both to us and to others.

May God bless this meeting of Serbia and Indonesia, may God grant that such meetings would multiply. Instead of battles in battlefields, there should be more dialogues like this one is – to solve the problems and issues in the most human way.

# Dr Abdurrahman Fachir

Head of Delegation, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

## GREETING ADDRESS

Ladies and gentlemen, Your esteemed Excellency Mr Nikola Selaković, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, to you and to all the esteemed heads of religious Communities in Serbia, to all the members of the delegations both from Indonesia and from Serbia,

I am truly honoured to be here today, amongst you in the Palace of Serbia in Belgrade as part of the delegation invited by the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia to attend and participate in the Third Interfaith Dialogue of Indonesia and Serbia. I am honoured and thankful for this great and very warm welcoming, for this magnificent organisation of today's gathering and Minister Selaković's wonderful role of the host to this meeting. We have also heard today several pieces of advice from the Serbian Patriarch Irinej and we agree with the Patriarch's suggestions.

Indonesia consists of approximately 400 ethnic groups which differ greatly in the fields of culture, tradition and language. Our country is an archipelago and it consists of approximately 17.000 islands. It is a huge nation. Naturally, we must have one principle which we must stick to and follow. That is the ideology of our country which we call Pancasila. It includes these five principles: 1. Belief in the One and Only God 2. A just and civilised humanity 3. A unified Indonesia 4. Democracy, led by the wisdom of the representatives of the People 5. Social justice for all Indonesians.

We have seen all of these in the words that the Serbian Patriarch Irinej has just told us, here at this gathering. These five principles of Pancasila are our principles since Indonesia has declared its independence as the republic. In implementing these five principles of Pancasila we must always maintain the energy of tolerance and dialogue. Both tolerance and dialogue must be the DNA of our country. We must include all the elements of our people into this dialogue and mutual tolerance.

Indonesia is not a religious country, but we respect religions and all the practices of religion. We have in our country the Ministry of Religious Affairs whose goal is to create harmony in confessing all the religions in our country. Note, we have as much as 12 national holidays in Indonesia. There is less than 2% of Buddhists in the total number of citizens of Indonesia, but their great holiday is also our national holiday in Indonesia, which is celebrated by all. This policy of our Government which is implemented by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in cooperation with all religious Communities in Indonesia is exercised through the dialogue of all the religions which exists in Indonesia.

In addition, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia also provides all the necessary aid for the implementation of interfaith dialogue in our country. In the beginning of 2000 we were witnesses to several examples of intolerance or extremism, radicalism or even terrorism in Indonesia. Although Indonesia always respects and builds harmony, we are not immune to such occurrences. We also suffer. Intolerance, radicalism or terrorism is real threat to all the basic life values at us, in Indonesia.

That is the very reason why we always give priority to what we call *empowering moderation*. The majority of the population of Indonesia are actually moderate. We also implement several measures to the end of promoting dialogue. We always participate in dialogue or improvement of interfaith dialogues in other countries. This year we have had 5 interfaith dialogues with 5 countries. Up to now, we have already had 25 interreligious dialogues with different countries, Serbia included.

Why Serbia? As I have just said, Serbia and Indonesia have lots of similarities. Serbian Patriarch Irinej showed his wisdom when he started cooperating with the Government of Serbia. We in Indonesia have churches, mosques and temples, here in Belgrade there are a mosque, churches and a synagogue. That obviously shows that harmonious cooperation always brings about common interest: progress and prosperity for all the people.

This is the third time we have interfaith dialogue with Serbia, having different topics relative to the first and second interfaith dialogue, when – apart from religion – the topic was also culture. The topic of the third interfaith dialogue is the role of youth and I personally think that it is very important: it is the point where we can initiate our policy towards youth and towards their policy. We think that today's youth faces different issues compared to previous generations. Today's youth is very much influenced by technological progress. They face the paradox of information abundance. Especially in the world of global development, where what happens in one part of the world becomes known in the other part of the world in just a few seconds.

Because of that we definitely know that today's youth needs leadership, needs to be led in the best possible way so that they could find the best way to their better future. Therefore, we have included several delegation members representing religious youth in our delegation this year, for this year's interreligious dialogue.

As the Serbian Patriarch has said a while ago, we would all want our youth to learn as much as possible, and this we do through the promotion of harmony and tolerance amongst religious Communities and amongst youth. We have taken the representatives of our religious Community of the young ones who are very eager to achieve increasing harmony and understanding – how to find solutions for conflicts, how to achieve peace.

As a country with great differences, we have great challenges in improving harmony amongst the youth. We have experienced conflicts caused by differences in our country. We had conflicts in Ambon where the clashes occurred between the

members of the Christian and the Muslim Communities. But all of that was overcome in a very short period of time as both Communities found joint grounds for coexistence in peace. Ambon is proud of its tradition of helping others. If a mosque is being built – the entire Christian community helps as well. The same, if a church is being built – the Muslim Community contributes greatly with its help. It used to happen that even two families have conflicts due to different religions, and now their children go together to the same school.

In the eastern part of Java Island each month of Ramadan the Christian Community provides food for the beginning of the Lenten period to all the ones who are fasting. And this very activity is organised by the youth association. That is also one of the forms of working with youth in Indonesia. We have to help the young in Indonesia always, to support them to have the energy for dialogue and harmony. In our country we always give priority to dialogue and tolerance.

At the very end of my speech, I have to express my great wish which refers to the result of today's forum. As the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia has just said, our task is to improve the dialogue continuously, not only amongst religious communities, but also amongst state institutions which deal with religious affairs. Communication should be established as much as possible, and more gatherings like this one of the delegations of our countries should be organised. Not only these conferences, but also other meetings in between.

Indonesia and Serbia can bond with other countries in our regions and in general in promoting discussions through religious dialogue. That would be our contribution to the progress of society and of social peace.

At the end, I would like to use this opportunity to express my highest esteem and to thank once more to the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia and to the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities and to all the conference members present here today. As the Minister wished for the result of our gathering today to be constructive and successful, so do I, too.



## Dr Mileta Radojević

Director of the Administration for Cooperation with Churches  
and Religious Communities, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia

### STATE-RELIGIOUS AND INTERRELIGIOUS COOPERATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA TODAY

Your Holiness, Your Graces, esteemed guests, members of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, honourable fathers, dear guests.

It is my great pleasure to greet you as the representative of the Ministry of Justice, namely the Director of the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities, and to wish the members of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia pleasant stay in the Republic of Serbia these days. And to all of us I wish successful outcome of this interfaith dialogue. Because of the representatives of Indonesia I would like to tell you something in brief about the relationship of the State with Churches and religious communities, about the manner of managing such relations in this field and about religious communities individually, the communities which have been traditionally and for centuries active in this region.

By the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia Churches and religious communities are separated from the State. However, by the Law on Churches and Religious Communities from 2006 the activities of Churches and religious communities in the Republic of Serbia are defined within a legal framework. Article 28 of this Law especially points out that the State cooperates with Churches and religious communities in order to improve religious freedom and general welfare and common interests of the State and of religious communities. In conformity with this Law, traditional Churches and religious communities which have been recognised in the past 100 to 200 years by State acts, laws and other documents – acquired the status of a legal person. These are first and foremost eight traditional Churches and religious communities. The Serbian Orthodox Church, as the biggest one, with 85% of the population of Serbia according to 2011 census. The Roman Catholic Church in Serbia as the second biggest Church in Serbia, encompassing the Belgrade Archdiocese with three dioceses: of Subotica, Zrenjanin and Srem, encompassing 5% of Serbian population according to 2011 census. The third one (while actually, most likely the second biggest one) per the number of the faithful is the Islamic Community with 3% of the Serbian population according to 2011 census. However, as a large number of the faithful of this Community who live in the south of Serbia, in the region of Preševo, Bujanovac and some other areas did not express their religious affiliation due to problems with Kosovo, this latest census could not give exact data. It is supposed that the actual percentage of the faithful is 5% or maybe 6% or even 6.5%.

Other traditional religious communities which have acquired the right to act based on the previous period are: the Slovak Evangelical Church (a.c.), the Christian Reformed Church, the Evangelical Christian Church (a.c.), the Jewish Religious Community in Serbia and the Diocese of the Romanian Orthodox Church Dachia Felix with the see in Deta and administrative see in Vršac (the northern part of Serbia, district of Banat). In addition to these religious communities that I have listed, whose representatives today represent 95% of the population of Serbia in Serbia, there are 17 small religious communities and Churches registered and they operate in accordance with the Law on Churches and Religious Communities. What could be significant is the fact that in the last 2011 census, about 2.5% were those who declared themselves to be atheists or did not declare their religious affinity at all. We think this is a small percentage and in our opinion this number has no influence on social and religious issues in Serbia.

The very relationship between the State and Churches and religious communities is realised through the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities. In this area, too, the State allocates significant funds in the Serbian budget to enable the normal functioning of Churches and religious communities in Serbia and to ensure that every religious community can function smoothly, that every citizen can exercise the right to freedom of religion and that every religious community and Church, acting in accordance with the law, can preserve its traditional and cultural and historical features and, in the interests of its own and in the interest of its State, transmit them through the younger generations for the future.

In particular, the State takes care of the education of young people in all religious communities. And that is why significant funds are earmarked for the work of high schools of theology in all the major religious communities that I have listed. This law, which I mentioned in the previous section, somehow tried and corrected the historical injustices against Churches and religious communities, which were inflicted especially in the second half of the last century, when Churches and religious communities were not officially banned but when their actions were impeded by various instruments of the then State. Apart from that, in the post-World War II period, there was a massive seizure of property from all Churches and religious communities. In the last 20 to 30 years, these injustices started to be corrected, and the State of Serbia has made many good steps in improving relations with Churches and religious communities. In 2001, religious teaching was introduced in all primary and secondary schools, when Churches and religious communities acquired the right and the opportunity to teach the young generations – through catechists they choose themselves – about the basic postulates of their faith and prepare them for future life as the faithful. We hope that this process, which has been going on for 14 years, is yet to yield its true results in the coming years 15 to 20 years, when we will have in all spheres of State life the people sufficiently religiously educated to act and to represent both their religious community and their State to their mutual interest.

In addition to the restoration of religious teaching, the Law on Restitution was passed and the restitution of confiscated property to all Churches and religious communities in the Republic of Serbia began. This is a slow process, given that the property, which has been subject to restitution in the past 70 years, has changed its titles and beneficiaries. So far about 50% of the confiscated property has been returned to all Churches and religious communities, both in terms of restored buildings and structures, and in terms of reclaimed land and forest complexes. For the past three years, a Decree on the Pension and Health Insurance of Priests and Religious Officers of All Churches and Religious Communities has been adopted in accordance with the Law, so that all priests and religious officials, acting in their own respective Churches or religious communities, are now entitled to free health insurance and to a minimum payment of pension insurance contributions in order to obtain the right to receive a pension when necessary, in accordance with the law. Although these payments were made to the minimum wage in the Republic of Serbia and would provide a minimum pension after the end of their working lives, Churches and religious communities are given the possibility to increase these contributions by their own respective funds obtained from donations, citizens' contributions and other means obtained.

The State also finances and gives scholarships to students at seminaries and theological schools in the country and abroad, of all religious communities, in proportion to their percentage participation in the religiously committed population of Serbia. In addition, significant funds are earmarked for providing other life necessities for Churches and religious communities, such as: the assistance in the construction of new temple and other religious buildings and the assistance in the maintenance and reconstruction of old existing buildings. Funds are allocated for the preservation of religious characteristics and the preservation of a religious culture that fosters freedom and tolerance in every religious community. This would conclude presentation about the relationship between Churches and religious communities and the State in Serbia.

Now I would like to say a few words about the interfaith dialogue itself. We have invested our efforts to prepare this Third Interfaith Dialogue, with the intention that, upon its completion, we in Serbia as well as you in Indonesia could conclude that we have made progress relative to previous interfaith dialogues. In 2011, when the First Interfaith Dialogue was held, Indonesia's delegation then appraised it to be the best interfaith dialogue between Indonesia and another country of all the dialogues that had taken place before. Considering the fact that Indonesia is currently holding an interfaith dialogue with 25 countries in the world, I must admit that we are flattered and pleased that with our humble actions, even though we are a small country in relation to huge Indonesia, we have contributed to this progress and contributed to the fact that the representatives of Indonesia managed to view in the previous two dialogues all the peculiarities of our religious and historical culture, thereat possibly identifying some positivities that could serve them in ar-

ranging their relations, and I believe that this is not easy given the fact that we heard from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs – Indonesia has about 400 separate ethnic groups.

On the other hand, in the previous two interfaith dialogues, Serbian representatives were also able to recognize all the advantages arising in this area in Indonesia, which are based on the principles of Pancasila and which were presented by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am sure that it is precisely because of these principles of Pancasila that the State of Indonesia, although large and ethnically heterogeneous, is united and homogeneous in its foreign policy activities.

The topic of “Youth in Multicultural World” is perhaps the best topic at this time, when there is a great technological development and advancement all over the world and when young people are embracing all these technological advances without reservation. We should discuss such behaviour and activities of young people in the modern technologically advanced world from the point of view of their religious commitment and their influence on the upbringing of future generations for which we all, both in Serbia and Indonesia, want that they create better future for us, better than the present life and the life of our parents. It is certainly important that young people, following the path of development and progress, also preserve the heritage of the previous generations, and that such heritage, just as much as up to now, be the foundation for the development and creation of new societies.

And, as His Excellency, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia said last night in an informal and unofficial dialogue, the State of Indonesia is promoting these interfaith dialogues to get to know different civilizations, because when they meet different civilizations and create new principles in their relations, such as Indonesia adopted the principles of Pancasila for its ethnic communities, then that can be a guarantee for future overall development and progress. Serbia and Indonesia had a strong brotherly and friendly cooperation between their peoples in the 1960s and 1970s, through their activities in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Due to changes in the geopolitical sense on a global scale, the relationship between these two peoples turned to somewhat more passive and we, who are engaged in the religious sector in the Republic of Serbia, and I believe the representatives of Indonesia too, can be happy that this interfaith dialogue which commenced in 2011 is in fact the nucleus of more versatile, better relationships in all spheres of life of our countries, especially in the areas of economy, trade, and exchange of students who would gain knowledge of other cultures and who would return to their countries and passed on to future generations the positive things learned, and who would help us to better understand each other. As someone said last night, those students who will be exchanged are in fact the ambassadors of the two countries. Serbian students in Indonesia and Indonesian students in Serbia.

I think I spoke more than I planned. I would like to thank once again to the Republic of Indonesia for its principled position so far, expressed in its support to the preservation of Serbia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We hope that this sup-

port will not be left out in the future either. I wish to all the participants a successful work and to our friends from Indonesia to take with themselves a lot of good and positive impressions from Serbia when returning to Indonesia. As we brought them from the previous interfaith dialogue from Indonesia.

I also take this opportunity to thank all the members of this delegation for the warm welcome of their religious communities in Indonesia that we have visited and to all the state institutions where we have been received. We have really taken great impressions with us and we organised this interfaith dialogue under these impressions.



## **Drs. Eusabius Bensasi**

General Director for Catholic Community Development,  
Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

### **ABOUT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN INDONESIA**

Let me thank the Government of the Republic of Serbia for everything it has done, as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Belgrade. In addition, let me thank the leaders of Churches and religious Communities in Serbia who also invested their greatest efforts into and worked for the success of interreligious dialogue in Belgrade.

My experience is in managing Roman Catholic Community in Indonesia. I perform the duty of the General Director of the Roman Catholic Community within the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. In the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia there is the General Directorate for Roman Catholic Community whose task is to improve the religious life of the Roman Catholic Community in Indonesia, then interreligious relations in Indonesia and to improve education within the Roman Catholic Community in Indonesia.

Roman Catholic faithful in Indonesia are good faithful people, but at the same time – they are true citizens of the Republic of Indonesia as a whole. That has become the guiding principle of the strategy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and it encompasses all generations: children, youth and the adults. It also refers to the activities of various organisations of the Roman Catholic community.

We strive to coordinate peaceful coexistence of Roman Catholic youth in Indonesia with other religious communities. In order to do that, we organise the work of Roman Catholic youth in the whole country so as to get them acquainted with the variety of the social life of Indonesia. All of that naturally so that they could have peaceful co-life with other religious communities. Some of our methods are organising joint youth camps which gather the youth of various religions, organising artistic evenings and sports manifestations for them to get to know each other better.



## Prof. Dr Irinej Bulović

Bishop of Bačka, Serbian Orthodox Church

### LIVING TOGETHER

Your Holiness, dear friends, brothers and sisters from Indonesia, which is, as we have heard many times, and appropriately so, geographically distant, but spiritually exceedingly close to us! I shall attempt to be constrained in my exposition in which I would like to emphasize that our Orthodox Church—here in Serbia and in all the territories where Her jurisdiction extends, i.e. abroad—also participates, in general, in the dialogue of the Orthodox Church with major monotheistic religions, primarily with Islam and Judaism. I am honored to be myself involved in this Pan-Orthodox dialogue for many years; however, my opinion is that this dialogue of ours, this dialogue between Indonesia and Serbia, is specific indeed, because it includes a country not very familiar to our civilizational sphere, namely, Indonesia, and it is thus particularly significant. Here in Europe, or in the Mediterranean, people know little about Indonesia and lack an historical experience of cohabitation with religions and religious communities of Indonesia. However, such an experience is necessary because negative experiences from the past and, alas, of today, create numerous stereotypes and prejudices.

In our surrounding the media very often create, both in Europe and in America, a picture of Islam as an intolerant religion, a religion that is prone to violence. It has been said and written many times—and very wrongly—that a Muslim is, more or less, to be understood as a potential threat to non-Muslims, especially to Christians. This negative image is created mainly because of the wars in the Middle East, neglecting, at the same time, the fact that the wars in the East had not been waged by the Muslims themselves, but rather by the great powers of the West, in the same manner in which they created the whole enormous present crisis, forcing millions of people, Muslims, Christians and others, to seek refuge away from their countries, in order barely to survive. Unfortunately, this entire situation is differently interpreted by many, through stereotypes. In certain Muslim circles, however, through a sort of historical revival of the intolerant and aggressive spirit of past, medieval armies, that conducted wars of conquering and looting, there are often renewed memories of Crusader conquests, whose leaders proclaimed intentions to liberate Holy Sites from Muslim rule. As a result of such a black-and-white picture of the tragic past, some people in the Muslim world consider Christians as culprits for their afflictions and suffering. They fail, however, to understand that the political leaders of great powers are neither Christian nor Muslim: in fact, they are, more or less, materialist. As a rule, their principal motives are interests—economical, geo-political, and the like.

Consequently, very often this damages fellowship and friendship between concrete people and nations which are supposed to live together, must live together, and for centuries have been living together.

To my opinion, our task is to show in deed that such stereotypes and such prejudices are harmful and that, in fact, they are to be removed through dialogue. Mere tolerance is not sufficient; inevitably needed are mutual acceptance, respect, fellowship, love, regardless of all the differences which exist between us, and which we accept as fact of life. By our example, we can send a message to today's world that it is natural, normal and agreeable with God's will, that we collaborate in everything that serves the common good. As His Holiness said, in the words of the prophet David, common to us all, Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, it is most beautiful, and the only natural, when brethren dwell in unity. It is the will of God, for Christians, and for Jews, and for Muslims. Thus our responsibility and our mission are great. For this reason, I personally consider this dialogue of ours to have a wider significance. It serves to overcome all those ill connotations which identify Islam with Islamism and terrorism. In turn, in Muslim countries, Christianity is being, just as wrongly, identified with politics of leaders of great Western states. It is all too often forgotten that almost nowhere in Europe, and the Western world in general, is Christianity an official religion. Indeed, in the West there isn't any official religion, whatsoever. Christian values have little influence on the general life of the society, and sadly, an ever diminishing influence on private and family lives.

Here in Serbia we endeavor, within our limits, as far as it is possible, all of us together, to cultivate fellowship in our society, and to display mutual solidarity in everything. Allow me to offer several brief examples.

Mr. Radojević mentioned the resumption of religious education in our public schools. There was substantial opposition, predominantly among those who had been brought up in the spirit of atheist, Marxist ideology. Such people still exist, even among officials in state institutions, as well as in the intellectual elite and quasi-elite. One of the arguments employed against the existence of religious education in schools stated that ours is a secular state, which precludes any public religious teaching. But many other European countries are just as secular, whereas they still have religious education in schools without it undermining their secular character. As far as I am aware, Indonesia is hardly a religious state, but rather, a state like any other; notwithstanding, she has free confession of religious faith and promotes such spiritual and moral values as can be derived exclusively from the realm of faith in God. But this was not even the major argument against religious education. The major argument was that, since several religions and confessions exist in our country, mutually different—we have Christians, and even they among themselves do not agree in everything; furthermore, we have Muslims, and then Jews, we have many others—it would present a new factor of division, discord, disunion and so on. Several years upon the eventual returning of religious education to schools, a high-ranking state official, at that time a minister, who had personally opposed the process, and

himself opted not to enroll his own child to religious class, nevertheless, made an important statement. He said that a unique example of authentic harmony and sincere collaboration between different social groups, communities and persons was revealed by the Churches and religious communities, specifically in the way they carry out the task of educating children and youth in the spirit of religious faith. Such an assessment was hardly to be expected from someone who was principally against religious education of youth.

Another case in point was our appearance in the media in our country. Now we enjoy the opportunity to be freely, albeit not always regularly, presented on television—certainly, a most powerful instrument today. There are regular programs the production of which belongs to our Orthodox Church, it being in the majority, and the provider of funds. However, our intention was not for us to speak alone, but rather, that along with us, other representatives also present their witness, each in the name of their own religious community, their Church and their faith—foremost the Catholics, being our closest brothers, and, following the Orthodox Church, the second most populous Christian Church in Serbia, and subsequently, Muslims, as well as the Jewish community, a small one, indeed, small not on its own account, but due to its enormous suffering in the Second World War. Such programs had extremely good reception and were gladly viewed. Anyone who believes in God or seeks God may learn what is said on certain topics by Christians, Muslims and Jews, respectively. Notably, we always present from a common framework, at the same time, each freely and within their own identity, steering clear of any syncretism or relativizing.

A third small example of our attempt to be sincerely solidary among ourselves was revealed when the Parisian magazine *Charlie Hebdo* published blasphemous comics against Islam and against Muhammad as the foremost prophet in Islam. On that occasion, we all—Christians, Muslims and Jews—in one television show, facing our entire public, stated that, while we in no way approve the killing of these people, these unscrupulous caricaturists, nevertheless, by no means do we approve that anyone would, unhindered, offend the feelings of a billion-and-half people, a huge portion of humanity, to whom Islam is sacred, and to whom Muhammad is no ordinary person, but the person of the Prophet of God. No one has the right to insult Islam as a religion. In the same manner, various caricaturists have no right to insult the person of Christ, as Christ is to us Christians not merely a man, but God-man, Founder and Head of the Church. We hold the same position with regard to the religious teaching and religious practice of the Jews. In all these cases, we have demonstrated mutual solidarity and together we witnessed that common life in a civilized society is possible and realistic only if we accept each other the way we are, without any spiritual, particularly without physical, violence, with respect for everyone's identity.

In everything that is common good, we work together, and there is many many more of that than things beneficial only to some of us. Good is, by its very nature, always common good: it cannot be fragmented into something that is good for me, and bad for someone other, or vice versa. If it is good, then it is good in all, just as evil

is, unfortunately, in its peculiar way, universal. Evil is not confined to a single person or a single group, but it spreads like a disease, like an illness, to the entire humanity. The spirit of common endeavor for peace, harmony, love and everything that is a gift of God to all, and against the spreading of animosity, divisions, hate and everything that comprises the satanic reaping of evil in God's, and our own, world we try, inasmuch as it is possible, to convey to young people in our society. We have many young Christians who participate in the inter-Christian ecumenical movement and in meetings with Christians of different denominations. Similarly, inter-religion dialogue and cooperation are present indeed. Particularly in the beginning we had gatherings of young religious instructors from all religious communities and Churches. It was truly impressive and moving to see hundreds of young Christians, Muslims and others who teach religious faith to school children, at the same time meeting one another, work together and cultivate mutual friendships.

My hope is that, following our generation, already of mature, or even quite advanced, age, the youth from all our Churches and religious communities both here in Serbia, and in the wider region shall continue along this way, and even excel our accomplishments. In this sense I appreciate the significance of this dialogue and our friendship with the people and the Churches and religious communities of Indonesia, who by their admirable example demonstrate that the usual stereotypes and prejudices about Islam are not at all trustworthy. Represented in this large state delegation of the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia, are both Muslims and Christians (Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox), all beautifully working together, thus setting an example to others. We too strive to achieve something in this manner, albeit on a much lesser scale, being so much smaller a country and society; I trust, however, that we are able considerably to help each other on this path. I am therefore grateful to you, not only in my own respect, but also in the name of the people entrusted to myself as a Bishop. For this I thank you from my heart!



# I Ketut Widnya

General Director for the Development of Hindu Community in Indonesia,  
Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

## ABOUT HINDU COMMUNITY IN INDONESIA

I have the feeling that I have a special spiritual relation with Serbia, despite of the fact that I am in Serbia for the first time. I am also connected to Serbia by passionately watching sports and tennis player Novak Đoković. Thus I am very honoured to be in Serbia.

I thank the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities, and I also thank all the members of the delegation of the Republic of Serbia who I cannot list now name by name. Let me share with you that I manage the development of the Hindu community which focuses on the development of youth.

We are very honoured, especially myself, to briefly inform you of our activities dedicated to the Hindu youth who are minority in Indonesia, but we thank God that our state does not make differences between the majority and minority communities. All of us give contribution to the State of Indonesia.

We are very proud to contribute to the development of Hindu youth Community in Indonesia, as the young are the future of our country. The main goal of the development of Hindu youth is to make them an important part of the society of this country. We request the young people to understand the ideology of our country which follows the moral principles of Pancasila. They should understand variety in Indonesia through ethnic groups, religions, languages, traditions, customs and folklore dresses. In spite of that variety – we are one, we say “unity in differences”.

Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of 17.000 islands, both the tiniest ones and the largest ones. We have five huge islands: Kalimantan, Java, Sulawesi, Sumatra and Papua. Each of these islands has its tradition which can be seen in traditional dances, various handicrafts, cultures.

In order to unite these 17.000 islands in Indonesia we have to establish dialogue for better civilisation which is exactly what our youth has to understand – that they are the participating in the variety of our country. All the activities we have been organising, starting from interreligious to cultural and social activities, have been organised with the aim to establish harmony – so that these activities create the feeling of love towards the country and the feeling of unity. That must be important for the youth as they are also the guardians of the sovereignty of our country.

We, in Indonesia, based on 1945-Constitution and based on Pancasila principles give freedom to all the citizens of Indonesia to choose their confession, but we also expect them to love their country. There are a few countries in the world which give such freedom of choice of confession to their citizens. For that very reason, we from Hindu community are very proud to be part of Indonesia.



## Adem Zilkić

Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia

### THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF SERBIA SUPPORTS PACIFISTIC ACTIVITIES

Peace and goodness are two dimensions of a universal and civilized value, which is actually an energy that incites happiness and pleasure, love and unity, harmony, unison, dialogue and mutual understanding. Without them, the mankind is in misery, poverty, hostility, wars, hatred and intolerance.

The Islamic Community of Serbia most vigorously supports all the activities which lead to peace, mutual understanding, respect, respect for man and what he belongs to. Today's interreligious dialogue is the confirmation of several decades long friendship of the peoples of two states and the hope that the youth of our two countries – and in the world in general – will succeed in overcoming the nonsense of today, that they would understand the dissatisfaction of the meek and feeble, so that they would replace force and arrogance by justice and intolerance by mercy.

Starting from the premise that for a successful interreligious dialogue it is important to define its contents and separate difficult theological arguments about salvation from those of social pluralism, the dialogue is defined as a form of communication whose goal is to improve understanding and to build cooperation bridges between members of different religions for the sake of peaceful coexistence in tolerance and mutual respect.

Then, its key elements are identified: civilised communication, plurality of convictions, mutual learning of each other, life in peace, mutual respect and tolerance, and cooperation in good things. I especially point out that religious communities in Serbia have expressed most strongly in the past years their mutual respect, appreciation and joint attitude to all the challenges which are not in conformity with faith and tradition.

This year's interreligious dialogue is conducted in the period characterised by two things at the global level. The first one is: an unacceptable and unbearable demonstration of force and arrogance towards the ones who are strangers and who are different, under the excuse of democratisation, whereas the real reason is the exploitation of goods and the achievement of economic profit. The other one is: one of the greatest movements of peoples in the past centuries. Today's result of establishing democracy by the Western forces is over three million people, women, children, old men, sick and exhausted ones running away from their homes. Their religious identity is 90% Islamic.

If we bear in mind the fact that my great friend, the esteemed Bishop of Bačka expressed, and the perception of certain circles, especially from the West, regarding Islam, these circumstances do not suggest bright future and perspective to the youth. In order that members of all the faiths could – and this does not apply to Serbia – live the freedom of faith, and in order that the state, that is states, could be certain of their civil loyalty – it is necessary to make an all-encompassing common programme. Its holders should be young people. That programme would develop consciousness of complex requirements in the contexts of political secularism in which faith should act, it would incite understanding, it would respect differences and search for joint basis for coexistence, it would also affirm religious identity as an important means by which insecurities and conflicts should be resolved and it would make circumstances that people could live in unison of differences, it would contribute to continuous discussion on human rights, it would create understanding of others, of differences, it would point to complexity of relations between faith, politics, culture and economy and stress facts which lead towards positive contributions of faiths by means of joint efforts towards truth, justice, peace and reconciliation, it would identify religious principles, established moral-ethical norms which could be the basis for coexistence, it would underline positive historical experience of good neighbouring and coexistence – which is also a part of our history in this region and in this state of Serbia, it would establish joint platform for religious coexistence in the spirit of good will which can be found in divine books and in the hope for joint future of all the faiths and peoples.

With the feeling of delight and satisfaction for being the participant to two inter-faith dialogues, especially the one in Indonesia, and for having the opportunity to see again our dear friends from the beautiful country of Indonesia, I wish to all of you that the message from this gathering would be strong and comprehensive, and that the interreligious dialogue would continue to live in the future.



## Prof. Dr Dede Rosyada

Rector of State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta

### IN INDONESIA WE LEARN ON HARMONY AND DIVERSITY

Indonesia is the country full of diversity in culture and languages. But our country was built by former leaders who also stemmed from diverse religious communities and they succeeded in taking Indonesia to freedom, to independence. In the struggle for independence fought Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hinduists, people of multiethnic and multicultural societies. We are aware that diversity in itself is wealth, capital. We wish to be a progressive country, but also to be a rightful country.

Speaking of harmony and diversity, of accord and differences: that is the subject which is the part of any curriculum in primary and secondary school, at each university. It is this – unity and variety – that is the main topic. Islamic teaching is taught by Muslims, and in the Christian Community by Christian catechists.

In all formal schools Islam is taught in convergence with the aim to create common mentality, joint framework. In addition, Islam is taught not only in formal schools, but in informal as well. We have separate Islamic schools which are like boarding schools. In such conditions pupils have joint platform for considering and joint framework for thinking. And in such Islamic boarding schools unity and diversity are taught since pupils should know what democracy is, what human rights are and what civil society is. In that sense we receive aid from the Government and NGOs. We have also volunteers from abroad who come as lecturers to speak of democracy, human rights and civic society from their perspectives.

The third thing I wanted to mention is that Indonesia as a modern country has the Ministry of Religious Affairs which regulates the coexistence of religious Communities in the country, directing it to develop unity and accord. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has religious teachers who do not know only of Islam, but of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Confucianism. Religious teachers take care of the young people who are not able to continue studying. They include such people in choirs or in other social activities. We explain that the implementation of the principle of unity and diversity includes the implementation of religious thinking and doctrine.

In addition to the religious teachers who are under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are also religious teachers volunteers who perform missionary work. They come from Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama and other



Islamic organisations. They also must teach of unity and variety as a part of religious doctrine. Actually, implementing unity and variety in religious practice is extremely important because of the relations with other religious communities.



# Stanislav Hočevar

Archbishop of Belgrade, Roman Catholic Church in Serbia

## PROMOTE HARMONIOUS AND SYNERGIC COMPLEMENTARITY

We – the Catholics – are on one side a minority Church, but on the other – we have a great variety within ourselves. For example, nation-wise there are at least 14 different groups of us at Pentecost in Jerusalem. But in rituals, and in a special way in the area of life culture.

Earlier borders in our territory in the time of the Roman Empire, then a very tumultuous two-millennium history as well as the present universal Europeanisation of our continent – all of that produces very challenging issues at the beginning of XXI century. This is the reason why we are together and we are looking forward to our meeting. Where issues are big and problems are big – the possibilities and solutions are even bigger. Here lies the joy and happiness of this meeting. We have therefore gathered here. To find solutions and to discover possibilities.

I am personally especially happy to talk about the youth. Not for ideological reasons, no, since that is probably popular to be said now, but it is very important for the future that everything be done so that the rich tradition which we own can be organically transferred to the new generations, which is most important in this time of technology and mostly technical communication, and less personal communication.

I would like to add that besides all the mentioned areas of cooperation, I personally prefer our common study of this problematics and I express my wish that all of us could, as the representatives of all Churches and religious Communities further cooperate in this area of study and – which specially fills me with joy – in humanitarian, caritative activities, which was shown in the time of floods in Serbia, and now in the period of so many refugees. And I am so glad that we can, even through our Church, cooperate with everyone so that we could provide life with dignity to everyone.

First of all I would like that every person, and especially young people, could live in their full identity in our societies and in our religious and church communities, with joy that it is what it is, but also with great capacity for dialogue. And in such way to promote harmonious and synergic complementarity and also pro-positivity. Meaning: with good, positive proposals for the future. This challenging time invites all of us for action, and our peoples – which we represent – deserve that.



Wishing that, we sincerely pray to the Almighty Lord and truly want for this gathering and meeting to be successful, full of joy and mutual satisfaction for exchanging our personal and our community gifts.





# Christine Jenny Sandra Rungkat Hadiningrat

Representative of Orthodox Christian Community in Indonesia

## EASTERN CHURCH IN INDONESIA HAS HISTORICAL ROOTS

First of all I would like to thank God, the Creator of the world, for this very inter-religious conference and for giving me – as the representative of the Orthodox in Indonesia – the opportunity to address you. I hope that all of us would reach our goal, and that is unity, peace and cooperation between all the peoples in the world.

The Eastern Church has its deep roots in Indonesia. There are certain documents proving that before Catholicism and Protestantism came to this region, the Eastern Church had been present in certain villages on Sumatra in the VII century and that missionaries were present in the Kingdom of Majapahit on Java in the XIII century.

During the Dutch period there were two Armenian churches in Surabaya and Jakarta. The Russian Orthodox Church started operating with two parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia in Bandung and Jakarta at the beginning of the thirties of XX century. The Dutch administration officially perceived and recognised them. I would like to underline the importance of these data.

The renewal of Orthodoxy started in 1988 with father Daniel Byantoro who had spent a year at Mount Athos, the centre of the monastic Orthodox world. He continued his studies in the United States of America. There he was ordained deacon, and then in 1988 a priest, whereupon he returned to Indonesia where he started his apostolic work in Java. Thereupon, in 1990 he was promoted to Archimandrite of the Orthodox Church in Indonesia. Parishes started developing and in 1991. were recognised by the General Directorate for Christians, within the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as Orthodox Church in Indonesia.

The Orthodox Church in Indonesia operates in conformity with the regulations of this country which do not give the possibility that a foreigner could be the head of a religious organisation. Therefore, from 2004 archimandrite Daniel unified his structure with the Russian Orthodoxy and he leads the Indonesian mission within the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. Headed by him, we celebrated the reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church in Jakarta in 2007 within the parishes of St. Thomas in Jakarta. At the moment 15 Orthodox priests serve in Indonesia, mostly in all the big islands: Java, Bali, Sumatra, Sulawesi and Papua.

The Orthodox Church in Indonesia is under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia which was conceived in Serbia, in Sremski Karlovci. I pray that relations between the Indonesian and Serbian Orthodox would become tighter.



# Isak Asiel

Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia

## LECTURING IS CONSECRATION

Two things fascinated me in Indonesia. The first one was their almost innate humility which is shown even in the way of greeting somebody. In this materialistic world we should learn to be humble, but now if you speak to someone about humility, it turns out that you are giving a wrong advice.

The other thing that fascinated us was when, on the Second Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia, the present Indonesians sang their national anthem together in such a unison – as one person. I was startled – if we were supposed to sing our national anthem in unison – what would it sound like?

As regards religious teachers and religious teaching – Indonesia has advanced so much in this respect relative to Serbia. Now, having listened to all your speeches, one question comes into my mind: Learning can be delivered both as God-serving and as God-cursing. We lived in the period of totalitarian thinking, the whole concept was – we are all as one. That is when learning is a form of God-cursing, of blasphemy. And when learning is a form of God-serving, then it is pointed out that all of us stem from the One and that the One is God.

In order to raise a generation of people thinking this way, you have to have a teaching in the form of a dialogue. The teaching in which children are actively involved, pose questions and are asked to pose questions. Where pupils are not just vessels in which contents are poured and from which repetition is required, literally, word by word. A friend of mine who works in a school has told me that – unfortunately – in our country braindrain starts as early as in the fifth or sixth grade, precisely through such a manner of lecturing.

In one Talmud text on children's teaching, there is a pun which says: When God teaches His sons, His children the word that is used is banayich (your sons, your children) - "Do not read your children [banayich], but your builders [bonayich]." This shows certain dimension in education, in teaching. Lecturing is also consecration. Consecration in the societies which do not fear the questions posed is actually true education and true consecration.

Thus the message we can send from this place is that learning is a form of God-serving. God-serving is not afraid of questions as it deepens the answers and leads to new questions and new answers. If learning starts to be a form of God-cursing, it means that we are on the road of dangerous totalitarianism.



## Ignatius Smartiono

Roman Catholic priest, Indonesia

### TOLERANCE TO DEVELOP INTO DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

As the representative of the Roman Catholic Church I can say that we are trying to educate young people based on the Roman Catholic declaration *Nostra Aetate* which deals with the relation of Roman Catholics with non-Christian brothers and sisters.

There are four ways in which one can be a Christian in Indonesia. The first one is that we can be the people who are full of hostile feelings and want to induce conflicts. But that is not our goal, as we are the citizens of Indonesia. That produces conflicts, clashes— which we do not want. The second one is that we can have tolerance; but tolerance is not sufficient: we want this tolerance to be organically developed into a dialogue. And after that we want to cooperate. Conflict is not something one should strive to. If you are in conflict, you cannot have tolerance.

It is necessary to have tolerance, and we try to educate our youth by asking them to be tolerant, to accept differences. That is much better than conflicts, much better than the situation in which there is no communication. Conflicts would emerge very easily if people simply stayed in their own narrow environment. If you want to educate people, you want to introduce them into the situations in which they would be able to see what pluralism is, thus you will enlighten them to be able to cooperate later in life. That is faith. But in our culture, we want to become representatives of Indonesian people.

We first say *I* that is *Aku* and then we have the word *kau* which means *you*. So, we have *I* and *you*, then we have the word *kami* which means *we* exclusively – separately, individually, but we also have the word *kita* which also means *we*, but inclusively, we together. Thus we should develop from *aku* into *kau*, and then we go to *kami* and *kita*. These are the words and the principles which lead us – *I* and *you* to move to *us* and *togetherness*.

It is important first to have identity, then to have the ability of communication and to develop positive centripetal attitudes towards community so that we could have communication with others. And all of that is based on Pancasila principles, as we have already heard: belief in the One and Only God so to have a just and civilised humanity, to have a unified Indonesia, to live in democracy led by the wisdom of the representatives of the People and to have social justice for all Indonesians.

Aside from that, I would like to mention four steps in education, starting from personal spirituality through communication with others to building a joint community with dedication to everyone. That is beyond limits, to become men and women for other people, that is what we have talked about, that is Pancasila and the challenge to start from the first field and reach the fourth field.

# Muhamed Jusufspahić

Mufti of Serbia, Islamic Community of Serbia

## AMANET IS COMMON TO US ALL

In the name of God Himself – as we have One God, Whom we celebrate, Whom we praise, Whom we glorify, Whom we admire, to Whom we resort to.

Being conscious of that, apart from having One common Creator we also have one common word. When I say *amanet*, people who speak Serbian know that word and its meaning. However, this word is also present in the Indonesian language: *amanat*. *Amanet/amanat* (*behest, testament, trust*) means responsibility, it means trust, it includes safety, where we are all safe from evils standing before the All-Seeing Creator. To live in *amanet/amanat/trust*, to leave in *amanet/amanat/trust*. What is *amanet/amanat* really?

Somebody will leave in *amanet/amanat* (will entrust to posterity) the belonging to a people, somebody will transfer to future generations in *amanet/amanat* (in trust) the belonging to a religious community. But true believers will leave in *amanet/amanat* (will entrust to future generation) the consciousness about true God to Whom we all belong. To the Creator, One and Only. When we are conscious of that *amanet/amanat*, then we act jointly in everything. We are not in unity, as many of us say, in our differences. We are in unity in One and Only Creator.

That first principle at the top of all the principles of Pancasila – and Pancasila includes five principles – that first and foremost principle is that God is One and Only for all of us. And all the other differences are actually invisible when this principle is the principle number one. May our dear God help us not only to notice goodness and efficiency and correctness of Pancasila, but also to implement some of its principles.

We have heard here that in our friendly country of Indonesia there is the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Here in our Serbia there is no such Ministry, actually, it was closed and abolished. There is the Administration which deals with religious affairs, and that is also very important. One more thing in our brothers' Ministry of Religious Affairs: there is an official in charge of each faith separately, and that official is the believer of that particular faith. In this former Ministry of Religious Affairs in our country the employees were the faithful of just one faith – the majority one. It is necessary there as well to be responsible, to receive *amanet/amanat*, to take *amanet/amanat*.

What we want for our future generations is peace. Peace with God and peace before God.

May God bless us all.



# Teodosije Šibalić

Bishop of Raška-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija of the Serbian Orthodox Church

## WE ARE THANKFUL TO INDONESIA FOR SUPPORTING SERBIA ON KOSOVO AND METOHIJA MATTERS

Before I start my presentation, I would like to thank most cordially, as the Bishop of Raška-Prizren, to our guests, to the people and especially to the President of the Republic of Indonesia for supporting us in this essentially important and difficult moment for our people, our Church and our shrines in Kosovo and Metohija. The role of us, religious and spiritual shepherds and representatives of religious communities, in the present world bears huge responsibility, especially as regards young generations. Living in the world with constant new ideological confrontations which unfortunately also reflect onto the religious aspect of life, it is a huge challenge for us, the faithful ones, to respond correctly and wisely onto all the challenges confronting us and to give constructive support to our future, to the new generations in our region which have passed the horrible horrors of war and have still been undergoing economic and social crisis.

As the Orthodox Bishop of Raška-Prizren who is responsible for the region in which Christians and Muslims and members of various ethnic and religious communities have been living together for centuries, I have always felt that we, as spiritual shepherds, should express our faith in God through building bridges of cooperation and reconciliation. Kosovo and Metohija is the part of Serbia where, after a very serious armed conflict in which many innocent people from all conflicted sides perished and in which many religious buildings were torn down, peace has not set in yet. Unlike the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina where after the civil war and after even many more victims – peace treaty stopped every further violence, for the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija peace has never been established, in spite of the fact that International Community is actively present there. Two thirds of the Serbian pre-war population were forced to flee their homes after the war, 150 churches of ours were destroyed, approximately 500 cemeteries were demolished. Instead of an environment of respect of human rights, violence has been continually present and that is one of the main reasons why our Church opposes to the self-proclamation of this region to a state and also for the present request of so-called Kosovo to join UNESCO. Peace cannot be built just for one ethnic community, but for all communities equally.

In such circumstances our young people grow up still in the atmosphere of fear and isolation. On the other hand, they have been exposed to frequent cases of ethnic

discrimination and lack of clear perspective for the future. The conflict in Kosovo and Metohija was not the conflict of Christians and Muslims but the conflict on ethnic basis, ideological and political conflict. Unfortunately, religious buildings were destroyed and are still perishing as collateral in the conflict. For that very reason our churches are still guarded by the police and international KFOR. Being the Dean of the Serbian Orthodox Seminary of Sts. Cyril and Methodius established in 1871, where we have 54 pupils and 10 professors, I have to say that we feel as one of our basic tasks to teach these young people – who will go out amongst people tomorrow and be their spiritual shepherds – to instruct the ones surrounding them first of all to respect dignity and freedom of every single person. Intolerance and hatred are the consequences of fear of other people, of insufficient acquaintance with other people and of the feeling that others are dangerous to us and that they are our potential enemies. Every single person is a unique and unrepeatable individual and it is our call from God to share the space where we live together in peace and mutual respect.

In mass riots in 2004 the Orthodox seminary in Prizren and 34 of our churches were set on fire or completely destroyed. However, we have found the strength to start renewing what was torn down and today, thank God, our school functions with almost full capacity. For us, the renewal was never just the renewal of buildings, but the renewal of a live community. That is the greatest problem in Kosovo and Metohija today, as only a small number of displaced persons returned after the end of war. The additional, special problem for these young people is education and therefore we have been insisting that the opportunity be given to our children to have the education in our language, as per the curriculum of the Republic of Serbia. In that respect, we especially value our University in Kosovska Mitrovica. The gist of the Serbian request for the Community of Serbian Municipalities to function, is to provide for the future for our people, for its health care and education, and for the employment of young people who should form their families and stay on their properties that have existed here for centuries. This Community of Serbian Municipalities and long-term protection of our shrines are the two pillars on which the future of our people in Kosovo and Metohija can be positioned.

Special responsibility in religiously mixed environments, such as the province of Kosovo and Metohija and Raška area, is that our religious beliefs should be construed and practiced through deeds done in the spirit of love, charity and forgiveness. The greatest danger today is that faith could become ideology and as such be expressed as the means of hatred and violence. Unfortunately, all of us more or less had such problems in the history of all religions, but today they become especially blatant due to general crisis of spiritual values, and economic and social differences. Therefore we, who work on building of bridges of friendship and reconciliation, should do everything possible not to let young people misuse faith for political or ideological reasons. Therefore young people should be given not only knowledge, but also examples through our own lives, as young people believe only what they see, we should show them that we ourselves believe and act according to that. And

for that very reason, the education of young generations both in public schools and religious schools is of key importance so that we could bring up healthy people who shall be – as our Patriarch Pavle of blessed memory used to say: “first and foremost people and not beasts“. That they be the people who will be characterised by honesty, goodness and forgiveness, the people who will not disrespect others, or hate them or do harm to them. And the key element in that upbringing of young people is to teach them to see in every person, regardless of his/her origins, faith or skin colour to see the person who God entrusted us with, to live in peace and respect.

Serbia is today the most multi-ethnic country of the Balkans and it is the task of all of us to nourish young generations in the spirit of respect of others and to contribute to the society we live in, each of us in our own respective way. This is why dialogue is important, since a man is a being of dialogue and is made to be in a community. And it is therefore that we in Kosovo and Metohija always insist on having to participate in dialogue with our neighbours and on teaching our youth to act in that direction. Life in isolation make place for prejudices and new violence in young people. Hence, in our meetings, we do not have to agree about everything, let us at least get acquainted with different opinions and traditions of the others. Peace is not just a political category. I always tell to my students, priests, monks, to the faithful... Lord's peace is built first of all in the heart: by prayer, sacrifice for somebody other, forgiveness and calmness. Only if we build that peace by ourselves through prayer and in our hearts, will we be able to transfer this peace to other people around us. And in that manner, if not fully, at least to the extent it depends on us – we can change the world around us for the better too.

**Dr Izak Y.M. Lattu**

Christian University of Satya Wacana

## **IMPORTANCE OF POP MUSIC AND SPORTS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS CONNECTION IN INDONESIA**

Some of have mentioned that there is no peace from war without peace amongst nations, which cannot happen without peace amongst religions, which again cannot happen without interreligious dialogue. And, in my opinion, there is no interreligious dialogue if we do not engage our youth in interreligious activities. I would like to focus on the current situation in Indonesia in my presentation. Our community has been trying to build a civil society spirit in the region where conflicts used to happen, to organise music performances, national games and we can say that education is a very important element regarding interreligious engagement of the youth in Indonesia. It is very important to use local wisdom and predominantly local role models for that.

The first situation, the first topic I am going to talk about is the interreligious engagement of youth in one part of Indonesia which is called Ambon, the province of Maluku, in the eastern part of Indonesia, where we had a practical opportunity for Muslims and Christians who worked together on the issues. There used to be bloody clashes in this region, where many people got killed, and the first one was incited by external factors, during the transition era. The clashes happened in the period 1999-2004, when 10.000 people were killed while we were advancing from authoritarian government towards a democratic system. Interreligious engagement of the youth in this region is very important as this structuring in a way wanted to heal this gravely hurt community. It is possible that there were even some non-religious and non-faithful activities. At that key moment, the youth were accessed by socio-cultural approach. Then also through cultural approach. It was necessary that one public space be built in which Christians and Muslims would be given the opportunity to meet and to cherish mutual contacts. There were talks about popular music, reggae, hip-hop. All of that is in a way a part of cultural narrative which tries and succeeds somehow to gather and engage young people. Speaking of street gatherings, new media, we can say that they can bring to reconciliation between young people. There are Facebook, YouTube, blogs and other media. As you have heard from His Excellency, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Mr Abdurrahman Fachir, PhD, it is very important – when we talk about the new technologies – that there is a contribution of engagement in the community by building a friendly picture instead of an unfriendly one. The young

people have power both in the cases of civil peace initiatives, when state bodies or system initiatives do not succeed in managing certain disputes.

The other thing I wanted to mention is connected to one of our national games and to our everyday life in Indonesia. That game is very similar to football and we play it a lot, very often. That is another platform based on which we could engage young people in their everyday life and that is practically a daily practice of sports. It includes people which play daily together regardless of their origins, their background. When we play these ball games in Indonesia, like football, it seems that they contribute to the feeling of togetherness and unity and also incite joint dreams of the players and of all the involved ones. So that we can see a whole nation, both Christians and Muslims and Hindu and Buddhists, playing together in one national team. Which means that the engagement is not only national, but also an interfaith one. We also have to say that there are different ethnicities which celebrate victory together in a national team like that one is, and that creates a strong feeling of belonging and solidarity which is the basis of interfaith engagement.

The last situation I am going to talk about is the case of a big Christian university in the biggest Muslim country in the world, the University of Satya Wacana where I come from. Out of 15.000 students, 30% are Muslim. It is not our goal that they convert into Christianity, but the goal is to learn together how to live in accord with each other. Before I came to Serbia, I have told my Christian students who learn theology and who are going to be future church leaders in Indonesia, I have told them that next to the University there is a Muslim board school. I have told them that they should live together, eat together, play together, study together, so that through these joint activities mutual solidarity and engagement of the youth could be strengthened. I am a Christian pastor and we, for example, have Muslims who teach Christians. We call them kyai, they teach at the same classes as we do and all of us teach them to live in unity with each other. The very presence of us together at class (of me as a Christian pastor and of him as a Muslim representative) is the very example how to build democracy, interfaith pluralism and religious understanding.

Thus, based on our curriculum and based on our work as professors it is quite clear that this model of education promotes and furthers peace amongst Christian leaders in Indonesia which is the biggest Muslim country in the world. For us – peace and dialogue are the integral parts of our DNA. We live in such a way, and we love it.



## Béla Halász

Bishop of the Reformed Christian Church in Serbia

### BELIEVERS TO FULFIL CIVIC OBLIGATIONS

I am a new Bishop in our Church and have a little experience as the first man of our Church. Nevertheless, let me describe in a few words what I have already experienced for this short time of my office.

This day means a lot to me as this is a gathering where one state – Indonesia holds dialog with another state – Serbia. We are very far away from each other in kilometres, we are of very different cultures, but there is the will on both sides to further peace and understanding amongst different people. We, the Christians, read in the Holy Scripture “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him“. Obviously, a man is a God’s creature and when I, as a Christian, read “Love Thy neighbour“ it is not written there to love your neighbour if he thinks the same as you, if he believes in the same as you, but the command is very clear and brief: “Love Thy neighbour“ and it even exists in the Churches and religious Communities which forget Lord’s Commands. The history, our past, is full of such events when a man forgot Lord’s law, but I am convinced, I pray for that and work on that – that the situation be changed.

Today we speak of young people. They are the most sensitive part of a society, they are exposed to the pressures of their environment. However, as I can see here in Serbia, and I believe it is the same in Indonesia, the today’s generation of young people is a very capable one. It is a very capable generation and I use to say that it is not only future that belongs to them, it is present too. They are not future generations, but they are present here, living with us now, we are together. I, personally, am a father of five adult children and I trust these new generations. I trust that they would not make the same mistakes that our forefathers made or that we, the older generation, made. That what happened in former Yugoslavia in the 90-ties would not happen again. That these young people would not let that happen, that they would fight against evil through their knowledge and their faith, and that they would persist in the path of peace.

Since I am – as a believer and as a Hungarian – a minority group member, I would like to say a few words about the so-called minorities. We, as the members of the minority group, whether it be a religious or a national one, we are the citizens of Serbia and we should not forget that we have obligations towards Serbia as much as we have our rights here. So as a citizen of a state I should not just practice my rights, but also execute my obligations. I think that is a premise in Christian spirit, that one believer should think like that and accomplish that. I see in our country the will for

improvements as regards this issue. We are very much satisfied, or better to speak on my personal behalf – I am very much satisfied. The situation regarding religious Communities and Churches in our country has been really improved. And I am also certain that it can be even better.

And we – as the faithful – are obliged to pray and work that it be better. That it be better for all those generations which would come after us. As we do not think like some materialistically-oriented people in Europe only about the present, only about “what can I do so that *I* feel good, that my generation feels good, and what happens tomorrow – that’s not *my* concern“. We, the faithful ones, the ones who believe in eternal life, we should know that we should live and practice our beliefs in such a way that we leave to the next generations, the ones to come, something which will be better and nicer. I am certain that we are on the good path to reach that goal. God bless us, our work and especially young people.

# Wawan Djunaedi

Head of Division, Centre for Interreligious Harmony,  
Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

## ABOUT WORK ON INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY

The role of the Centre for Interreligious Harmony is to manage and facilitate to religious Communities to talk, discuss and have mutual understanding. We always try to instruct everyone in Indonesia to respect others and their religion.

In the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia each religion has its own director general. So that we have director general for Islamic affairs, director general for Christian affairs, for Protestant affairs and Catholic affairs, for Hindu affairs, Buddhist affairs and Confucian affairs – as in Indonesia Confucianism is considered to be a religion. We also have a forum for interfaith harmony on all levels, in every province, in every district. We have a total of 34 provinces and 510 districts so that every level, both the provincial one and the district one, has such a forum for interfaith harmony and that forum is made of the members of each particular religion so that we have six provinces heads representing: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. This forum holds regular discussions, interfaith dialogues and some programmes which also take place there and where young people from the Community get engaged.

Some are very interesting programmes. This year, for example, we had one competition within one interfaith harmony. We organise competitions for young people, for students and also for journalists. For example, we had a photography competition for interfaith harmony . We also had one mobile game “interfaith harmony“ and if there is time I can show you how interesting and fun these games are that our youth can play on their mobile phones. The goal was to direct young people towards interfaith unity. Around 2000 pupils and students participated in this competition. In addition, we, the Indonesians, are in constant and unceasing efforts to create interfaith harmony in our country.

Thus for example we now have a new, very good tradition regarding greeting. When someone from the Administration wants to speak or to address the Community, he shall say five greetings, five salaams. He shall say “Assalamu ‘alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh“, and then he shall say “Shalom“ and then “Om swastiastu“ which is the Hindu greeting, followed by “Namo buddhaya“ the Buddhist greeting and finally by “Wei tek tong thien“ which is Confucian greeting. So, that is one good new tradition in modern Indonesia.

We also have at least two huge Islamic organisations which demonstrate great tolerance so that practically all the Indonesians are safe if we have in mind radical

movements. There are many young people abroad who go to Iraq, to ISIS , whereas we had only approximately 50 young people from Indonesiawho joined ISIS, which is – when compared with the total Muslim population in Indonesia – app. 0.0001% of the population. We can say that we are very tolerant and that there is no radicalism as the Indonesian Islam is called “Nusantara Islam“ – practically based on the acculturation of cultures in Indonesia.

These are some of our experiences in managing our religious community. That is not an easy task in Indonesia where we have 230 million people who are members of various religious communities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs finds it very interesting to serve all of them as religious Communities.

## Prof. Dr Predrag Puzović

Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade

### YOUTH HELP US TO OVERCOME PROBLEMS

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to greet the state delegation of the Republic of Indonesia on behalf of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, on behalf of students, professors and other staff of this Faculty. Naturally, I would also like to greet all the other participants to this important interreligious dialogue, both the ones who have presented this morning and the ones presenting in the afternoon. Now let me joke a little bit: a while ago I asked about the time allowed for my presentation now. Having heard that the presentation should be five or seven minute, I would probably speak even less, as I will have the opportunity to welcome the delegation of Indonesia at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, and there I would be in my own territory, having the absolute supremacy.

This is the Third Interfaith Dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia. The First one was held in 2011, the Second one in 2013, and this one in 2015. The Faculty of Orthodox Theology was actively included in all the three dialogues. That is totally understandable as we, in this Faculty, work with youth and this dialogue is dedicated to the work with youth. At that First Interfaith Dialogue a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Belgrade on the one part and Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta on the other part. Thereupon, a delegation of the Jakarta University visited the Faculty of Orthodox Theology and the delegation members delivered very noted lectures. That signed Memorandum defined the cooperation between the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade and the State Islamic University in Jakarta in the form of the exchange of professors, students and experience in both countries in the work of interfaith communities. I personally think that is of tremendous importance for both countries. At the Second Interfaith Dialogue there was also a representative from our Faculty who travelled to Indonesia and had the opportunity to deliver interesting lectures there at the State Islamic University in Jakarta. Thank God, we are preparing for the Third meeting at our Faculty where we will strive to show our hospitality and to make the guests feel as if there were in Jakarta, not in Belgrade.

As for the work with youth, which is the topic of this Dialogue, I can tell you that the Faculty of Orthodox Theology offers courses in Roman Catholic theology, Protestant theology, Islam... Whether these courses are optional or obligatory, very eminent lecturers are engaged in them not only from our Faculty but from the whole University of Belgrade. Our goal is that our students who would soon go to serve in

their Churches, be it in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in Croatia or in Slovenia – which are all multi-national states, our goal is that they really work on that togetherness and unity with other religious communities.

I was, for long, the Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Foča, at the same time holding the office in Belgrade, and I had the chance there to welcome students who were sent there via religious centre in Sarajevo. These were the students of the Roman Catholic Faculty and of the Islamic Community who came to Foča. We welcomed these young people being conscious of what had happened there and we did not spend that particular day just having lunch and joking, but we dedicated the greatest part of that day to the issues in the field, we were discussing what we had done in the period between two meetings which were held annually, and what we could do in the subsequent period in these sensitive regions with big issues. And, do believe me: I was impressed by the friendship of these young people, by their relations and by what they were doing in their respective environments so that certain problems could be overcome.

Obviously, we can learn a lot from what I have heard here today in the presentations of our friends from Indonesia, but we also already do lots of useful things here, in the field. Thank God, this year it is our turn in the Interreligious Council in Belgrade to welcome the students from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and we will surely strive to show that we are real Christians, as we have been up to now. I strongly believe that these gatherings do have huge importance in the exchange of experiences and establishing of friendship between Serbia and Indonesia, i.e. between former Yugoslavia and Indonesia and the successors Serbia and Indonesia. I am thankful that I personally am a part of it and that I can personally contribute to all of that.



## Aris Triyono

Deputy Director for Public Diplomacy,  
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

### INDONESIA PROMOTES INNER AND OUTER INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes that young people inherit responsibility to support efforts for peace building in their country and throughout the world. Today's youth gives new intellectual contribution through social media and cooperation. Indonesia recognises that an interfaith dialogue is a very good opportunity for communication and the exchange of ideas, items of information, building of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding of religious Communities. Through sustainable dialogue and discussion, people of different backgrounds can understand and tolerate each other, and they can also cooperate and work together on projects.

With all that in mind, Indonesia is committed to promoting interfaith dialogue on all levels, internally and externally. We have initiated bilateral interfaith dialogue and cooperation with 25 countries. Indonesia has also participated in starting interfaith regional initiatives, like the Regional Interfaith Dialogue in South-East Asia and South-West Pacific which started in 2004 and the Regional Interfaith Dialogue between Asia and Europe in 2005. Globally looking, Indonesia was for the first time entrusted with being the host of the Sixth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations which took place in Bali in August 2014. That is a global forum and 100 young people from the whole world got the chance to meet each other, to get to know each other. They met so as to clearly perceive the role of the youth in education, media and entrepreneurship.

Besides, in our Ministry we implement various programmes so as to engage young people both on international level and in our provinces. As the colleague from the Ministry of Religious Affairs has said, we have 34 provinces and in cooperation with the Ministry for Youth and Sports Affairs every year we realise the programme "Young Ambassadors". Out of each of 34 provinces two students – a male and a female one – go to Jakarta, where they all gather and spend two months. They learn of the cultures of the other ones in the group. As the Vice Minister has said this morning, Indonesia has many cultures, ethnic communities and religions. The Ministry for Youth and Sports Affairs and our Ministry provide them with the opportunity to get to know each others' cultures during this programme which lasts for two months. After these two months we send them to one or two countries where that they can learn of the cultures of other countries. This year, for example we send them to Japan to learn something about Japanese culture, and that is very

important for the young ones. These young people are senior high school pupils in 34 provinces.

The other programme that we have in our department for diplomacy and relations with international public is the programme for the award of several scholarships. Here I would like to especially point out the programme for scholarship award for Indonesian art and culture. I think that we have 6 young people from Serbia who are going to join this programme which lasts for three or four months. During this programme they not only learn of Indonesian culture, but also – being the scholars from various countries – they also learn something about the cultures of other countries. So that the Serbian students are not there to learn of Indonesian culture only, but to learn something of the cultures of the other representatives as well.

In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducts other programmes with other ministries, just as it now – within this interfaith dialogue – cooperates with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. We also cooperate with the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education in the programme Darmasiswa scholarship, which I have already mentioned.

I would like to thank cordially to the Government of the Republic of Serbia and to our colleagues from the Embassy for impeccable work and great organisation of this Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia.

## Anna Petrović

The Slovak Evangelical a.c. Church in Serbia

### **“ALL CREATURES ARE MERELY VEILS UNDER WHICH GOD HIDES HIMSELF AND DEALS WITH US”<sup>1</sup>**

As our Slovak evangelical a.c. Church aroused on the ground of Reformation, it is our highly valued honor and duty to care about youth and children. That is why it is our honor and privilege to participate at The Third Serbia-Indonesia Bilateral Inter-faith Dialogue.

In the light of approaching Reformation Jubilee 2017 let me bring to the table that sometimes it is forgotten that the Reformation was as much concerned with school as it was with church and home. Luther understood that schools must provide an education that serves the world. He even urged that action be taken quickly before it was too late. Furthermore, not only Luther, but also Melanchthon, Zwingli, Bucer, Bullinger and Calvin actively promoted reformed education in their writings and works.

In his treatise from 1524 “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that they Establish and Maintain Christian Schools” (Luther’s Works, American Edition (AE), vol. 45) Luther is writing:

“It is not necessary to repeat here that the temporal government is a divinely ordained estate ... The question is rather: How are we to get good and capable men into it? Here we are excelled and put to shame by the pagans of old, especially the Romans and Greeks. Although they had no idea of whether this estate was pleasing to God or not, they were so earnest and diligent in educating and training their young boys and girls to fit them for the task...” (p. 367)

“But if children were instructed and trained in schools, or wherever learned and well-trained schoolmasters and schoolmistresses were available to teach the languages, the other arts, and history, they would then hear of the doings and sayings of the entire world, and how things went with various cities, kingdoms, princes, men, and women. Thus, they could in a short time set before themselves as in a mirror the character, life, counsels, and purposes – successful and unsuccessful – of the whole world from the beginning; on the basis of which they could then draw the proper inferences and in the fear of God take their own place in the stream of human events. In addition, they could gain from history the knowledge and understanding of what to seek and what to avoid in this outward life, and be able to advise and direct others accordingly...” (p. 368)

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Watchwords for the Warfare of Life*.

Needless to say, critical questions have been posed, about Luther's teachings even in our, Lutheran Church. Still, we must agree that the question "How are we to get good and capable men and women into the temporal government?" stays current. Furthermore, we would like to see world as a society inhabited with generations of good, peaceful, reasonable and capable men and women.

The world is changing, and we are called to act in response. To get closer to this goal, we must advocate multileveled and multigenerational dialog as well as scrutinize linguistic patterns we use. It is of great importance to ensure youth right to participate in preparation process of creating programs and policies concerning the church and society. It is up to us, who are already active in the church to learn to listen and to understand youth wording in order to make youth feel accepted. After all, in true dialogue, both sides must be willing to change.

For this reason, we are members of numerous international councils and communities highly aware of youth in society issue, we are involved in interfaith and interreligious dialogs dealing with inclusion, education and communication difficulties, and we mind youth, multiculturalism and tolerance through our church programs, projects, events as well as through the elementary and secondary schools' subject Religious education.

As a part of a great Lutheran family, our Church stays with the statement: Young people are front and center of who we are, and what we want to be and do as a Lutheran communion... We want young people have a place and voice in all aspects of church and communion life. (Lutheran World Federation, LWF Youth)

All religious communities, being it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, or any other, must act responsibly aware of the fact that we have to teach young men and women from their childhood of existing multiplicity in religious explanation and understanding of sacred text. This will help provide will for dialog as it has a lot to do with what kind of believers and sacred text reader do we rear.

It is necessary to highlight the role of academic institutions in enhancing religious communities' capacity to engage on interfaith issues in constructive ways.

We are strongly convinced that especially religious communities have to become paradigm of respect for diversity and welcoming otherness since they were for a long time blamed for keeping people in spiritual captivity. On this issue we turn our focus to Genesis 1:27: *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them;* as well as to the Dr. Martin Luther quote: *All creatures are merely veils under which God hides Himself and deals with us.* It is our responsibility to nurture our children's consciousness of being a part of God's creation and ability to treat everyone with the respect arising from awareness of this divine true. Or, as both Christians and Muslim believe, we will be judged by our manners to one of the least of human kind. (Matthew 25:31-46; Sahih Muslim 2569)

Youth is formed by models of conduct we practice. That is why teaching, education and practice may bring the positive change in long period perspective.

We see our participation in this Third Serbia-Indonesia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue in the light of empowerment young people to engage in all aspects of religious and communion life regardless their religion or national background. This consultation has a capacity to build the network of religious communities, agencies and projects involved in interfaith work to share about successes and challenges with the stress on young adults who are to become tomorrow's leaders.

Looking forward achieving positive results in practice through exchange of wisdom and experience both on Serbian and Indonesian side.

## Dr Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf

Lecturer of cross-cultural studies at the Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta

### RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE ARE BEING BUILT THROUGH CENTURIES

I am a lecturer at the Department for Religious Studies at the state university in Indonesia. What I would like to share with you today is a story from one city in central Java, Indonesia. The example of this city can show us how interreligious dialogue is continuously going on, in spite of all the challenges of the ever-changing society.

The name of the city is Lasam. That city had a long history of peaceful coexistence of the majority Islamic population and the minority Chinese population – mostly non-Muslims, either Christians – Roman Catholics, Buddhists or Confucians. The Chinese came to this city in XIV century and many of them were Muslims. Another inflow of the Chinese population into this city happened in XIX century while the Dutch were still in our country. The Dutch persecuted the Chinese in other parts of the country, they fled to this city and found some kind of safe haven there since there were many Chinese people living there already. They felt to be safe there with regards to the majority Muslim population, as the Muslims did not persecute them.

Another thing to be pointed out regarding this city is that it survived many tensions which struck Indonesia during its history. For example, in 1998, in the period of transition after Suharto's rule, there were many turmoils and riots. One of the ethnic groups of critical importance was the Chinese minority itself. There was a great concentration of the Chinese population there, but they were completely safe and in spite of all the turmoils not a single stone was cast towards their windows. That is very important when we speak of culture; the role of the young ones is very important in maintaining the culture of peaceful coexistence in the city.

There was a group of young people there who practically wrote the history of this city which in a way represented a hub of majority Muslim and minority Chinese populations. These young people collected stories from the local population. The stories they could tell about the conflict with the Dutch and about the mutual tolerance in that city. They also had common values and strengthened them by making a common holiday, festival, celebration of harmonious relations of their ancestors. That kind of contextualising is very important, as that is – in my opinion – reproduction of the culture of peaceful coexistence. They are now facing various challenges to peace.

I would say that peaceful relations in our country are, at least in majority of specific cases, based on relations and wounds from the past. Speaking of ties from the

past, these are interfaith and interethnic relations within the society that serve as the foundations to peace. Speaking of our city of Lasam, the foundation is a common memory how they jointly fought against colonisers when they simply forged solid relations between themselves, and that is something we can contextualise now. We must not forget that these relations were forged in the past century and the century before that, and that they are contextualised now.

However, these relations are now being tested. Many young Chinese people fled the city searching for a new job, or going abroad for studies, so there are fewer projects of that kind between the young ones, as there are fewer Chinese people present. And these migrations are exactly what can bring some fears or suspicions in mutual relations of different ethnic and religious groups. It is also necessary that shrines and holy places be built for religious practices, and that also often produces tensions and suspicions in the other religious community. Hence, migration is an important issue when we try to understand and speak of interfaith relations in Indonesia.

Another test to our peaceful coexistence is something that emerges in the form of increasing hate and intolerance of some smaller militant groups. Although their number is small, they very skilfully use media and other websites, so that the impression is that there are more numerous than they really are.

The third thing I wanted to say is identity strengthening based on faith, which is tied to national identity. In one study made in 2012 by an organisation, the majority of young people in Indonesia actually put their religious identity above their national identity. I think that is a serious challenge for interfaith and interethnic relations in Indonesia.

I have not told you this just because I wanted to say that Indonesia is peace-loving country in which peace is preserved, but to point out that although our history is peaceful, it must always be reconstructed as new challenges continuously and repeatedly come, not only from inside Indonesia, but from outside, from other countries as well.

## Jovana Stojinović\*

Coordinator of the Third Serbia–Indonesia Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue

### KEEPING OWN IDENTITY IS THE BASIS FOR PEACE

As this conference and this interfaith dialogue are dedicated to youth, I would briefly list the challenges I have noticed the youth of our country and of other countries have been facing with. It is important to say that these challenges primarily come from the media and not from the official state policy which recognises and nourishes all the specificities of traditional churches and religious communities. These media-related challenges should be dealt with, as they influence the creation of public opinion and the development of individual's awareness of important topics – such as faith and identity.

The following two challenges face each other. On the one hand we have an effort to marginalise traditional religions by putting them into an acceptable concept that religion is an exclusively personal thing. I see that many young people in our country often ask the following questions: “Why do we need interfaith dialogue?” and “Don't we live in a secular state?” Such questions are usually the same, although many people pose them, and by a rule they do not represent an outcome of personal thinking about the topic, but have been gently “inserted” into our heads via media, films, serials and other means of soft power which create public opinion and disposition. In that sense it is very important to clarify to our youth today that the fact that we are a secular state, does not imply that we are an atheist state. We are a society of 95% faithful according to the current census. We have just 2% of declared atheists. Which means that 95% of our society needs to see religion included in their lives, at every level, and not just in their private lives – as was tried to be imposed: “religion is a personal thing of each individual”. It is therefore important to oppose the challenge imposed to us where churches and religious communities are in a way reprimanded for publicly expressing their identity via symbols, manifestations and participation in public life of one's people, and for expressing their official opinions and standpoints regarding some important issues in the life of their own people. And that includes almost all traditional churches and religious communities. So that it is important to resist these media assaults to which young people usually succumb, as they do not pay much attention to them and are interested in some other things. Young people easily accept somebody else's opinion as their own and then they can – in a few years from now – stand up for such claims accepting them as absolute truths, whereas they are not correct and not welcome for religious freedoms. So, that is an important

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\* Married: Jovana Raković.

challenge which should be considered. We should keep our identity and our right to profess our religion which is guaranteed to us by the Constitution and the Law.

Contrary to this subtle trial of disabling the freedom of traditional religious confession, where it is natural that churches and religious communities do not have the right to be publicly and visibly present in a state, some new-age spiritual movements have been intensively promoted. Religion is promoted on some undefined level, in the sense that everything should be the same, and that this sameness is the goal and purpose of interfaith tolerance and understanding. To melt everything into one joint undefined mass.

To conclude with: on one side we have the suppression of active and public participation of churches and religious communities in social life and in state life, while on the other side we have the habit that some undefined churches and religious communities (which do not even name themselves religions) are proclaimed as something modern, desirable and something that every advanced man should adopt if he cares about spirituality and world peace. Moreover, the young people who do not think the same as media subtly propagate are labelled as retrograde and without opinion. The youth are easily swayed by such attitude as they are young, not fully formed and inclined to easily accept others' opinion. Therefore it is extremely important to deal with these topics and suggestions which are lavished upon young people incessantly.

Hence, it is important to understand and be persistent in that religious tolerance does not imply erasing diversity with the goal to unify everybody and thus be in accord as everyone is the same and everything is the same. On the contrary, religious tolerance implies our getting to know each other better, reaching to each other through an unceasing dialogue, having continuous love to each other in joint coexistence in a society and in joint facing the challenges of youth of any religious and ethnic affiliation. Keeping personal identity is the basis for personal and collective peace and stability. And we will keep our identity by affirming and promoting education of the youth about faith, culture and history of one own's people. It is actually by knowledge that we can keep our identity and in that sense it is vital to educate youth about these topics so that no one external could manipulate them, giving them illusion that it is something of their personal choice, whereas their code of identity – which has been lasting for centuries – is just being deleted as we speak.



## Ilarion Lupulović

Abbot of the Draganac Monastery in Kosovo and Metohija, Serbian Orthodox Church

### THE BEAUTY ATTRACTED ME TO KOSOVO AND METOHIJA

Your Grace Bishop Irinej, reverend fathers, Your Excellencies, dear guests from the friendly country of Indonesia, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters;

It is my great pleasure to be here with you, especially at this wonderful event in which all of us participated in a way. The event in which we see that beauty – at least today – won against something based on short-term interests and temporary short-sightedness. I speak of beauty, as I was attracted by beauty to come to Kosovo and Metohija. More than 20 years ago, I came to Visoki Dečani Monastery and as of then – my life has changed. Through the beauty of Dečani temple, Dečani church, I – in a way – viewed my inner self, I found backbone to my identity and started comprehending the beauty of Christian tradition translated into this church by Saint Stefan of Dečani, next to our other endowments which the world recognised as the cultural monuments of special importance.

Speaking of beauty, one verse is continuously in my head, of an unknown author, chiselled on Bogorodica Ljeviška Church (Holy Virgin of Ljeviš Church) about the beauty of frescoes. What is especially touching about this inscription is that it was written in an alphabet that was not supposed to be there, and it is presumed that it was written by someone who was not a Christian. And the inscription is: “The apple of my eye is the nest for your beauty“. These words are an emotional testimony to how beauty and goodness win against all the conflicts, all misunderstandings, all miseries of this world. And it could be that one strike with a chisel into the fresco painting from XIV century was transformed into poetry by this man who left one eternal testimony to the final victory of beauty. That is a universal plan connecting all of us, since every man, everywhere in the world and regardless of his mother tongue should know what beauty is and what a friendly and honest smile is.

Every child is happy when you address him or her in a friendly, paternal manner. Therefore it is important that we approach each other and get closer to each other. Thank God, we are doing our best, we are investing efforts and some of our priests speak Albanian. The moment when you see prejudices being crushed and broken is truly moving and is a truly deep experience. For example, in our case, you can see it in Albanian children coming to Dečani, when we tell them in Albanian how Saint Serbian Mother Angelina was Albanian by birth. And how Skenderbeg's (Djordje Kastriot's) mother was Vojislava and how the family of Kastriot

erected a watchtower in Hilandar Monastery and how some of them were buried in this Monastery.

We should invest efforts to speak of the things that unite us, and actually – if one is objective – there are many more things that unite us, than the ones that disunite us. And regardless of the absurdities we are facing due to political reality, we are trying not to see in KFOR members the people who bombarded us but the people who are individuals, bearing their crosses in this world. We are trying to testify of Gospel through love and respect and to transfer to others the consolation we receive from God. The same, we cannot see in our neighbours, Albanians, the people who jumped on the church cross in Podujevo, but we are trying to see in each of them individually our eternal brothers, and that so especially in children. It is very likely that one smile or one short sentence said from the bottom of the heart shall impact the development of someone's personality which is why the relationship with young people is of essential importance. The young ones should always serve as a corrective factor to us, and when we notice that they are not listening to us, or that we are boring, or that they cannot understand us – we should check if we are saying or thinking in a proper way. Because, if we enter into an inert life routine, we actually stop living in fullness and life should always be a surprise, unpredictable and thus beautiful. That is why it is especially lovely and especially moving that Arabic letters were used for the inscription “The apple of my eye is the nest for your beauty“ referring to an Orthodox church.



## Dr Vladan Tatalović

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade

### YOUTH LED BY CHRIST CAN BE BRAVE ENOUGH

I address you as the lecturer and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, who truly experienced in the period of youth a rich partnership of the institutional and charismatic features of the Faculty. These are the very foundations that I base my presentation on and I consider them to be a kind of a summary of my participation in the Orthodox experience of dealing with the phenomenon of youth at an academic level. First, through my personal experience of studying and then through my subsequent work with students. Generally speaking, such experience is nowadays possible owing to the imperative of high-level education to which, I can say, Serbian environment belongs traditionally.

When I mention tradition and when I expand that notion onto the field of academic theology, let me point out the foundations of traditional in Christianity, without which any kind of consideration of the subsequent levels, especially the contemporary academic ones, remains incomprehensible. An essential question resounds on that basic level, the question which a rich young man posed to Jesus Christ 2000 years ago and which majority of Gospel Writers recorded: “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” In its gist, this question is so fundamental that it could be heard in the broadest sense of metaphysical quest in ancient Orient. Judaism and Hellenism and Christianity and Islam have known from time immemorial that finding the right path requires simply clothing youth into the robe of education, dedication and tranquillity. In reply to this critical question Christ reminds the young man of keeping the commandments, the most important school of ancient Judaism and similar religious experiences: “Do this and you will live“. That would be some general conclusion of directing to the school of Lord’s commandments. It is interesting to notice that the story of fundamental question does not end here. After the conclusion reached, Christ introduces an unexpected concept of perfection which proposes to the one who has “observed all these“ from early days: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” The fact that Gospel further on tells us that the young man due to his great possessions gives up on reaching perfection, is for sure the proof of the earliest awareness of Christianity of the affection for possessions as the obstacle to Salvation. But if we join the accepted, legalised interpretations to this fundamental layer of tradition represented here by this situation, then any form of selling and giving possessions, either the external ones or the internal ones, either the real ones or the metaphorical ones, becomes the condition for real freedom and advancing

to perfection. The history confirms that Christian Fathers comprehended this very invitation in the broadest sense and that by their respective examples, they inspired entire time spans.

Let us go back now to the reality of the academic theology in which the increased interest of the young people for studies repeats the fundamental question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?” for it is really true. What academic theology can provide for sure is one unique school of studying Lord’s commandments in the light of different historical, sociological and cultural circumstances. But is the idea of perfection really needed to such a concept? In this sense in which it was set at the fundamental level of Christian tradition in which it has been qualified for centuries, throughout history, I would say that the answer is definitely positive. The negative example of the young man who gives up on reaching perfection due to his great possessions shows to the contemporary theology-oriented youth the best inter-religious, international path of dialogue, without danger of pseudo-perfection (as is ideological fanaticism). In other words: only the youth freed from itself and led by Christ can be brave enough to start on the path of perfection and to remain at that path authentically open to others, which is an imperative today, at this gathering of ours.

**Dr Rastko Jović**

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade

## **YOUTH IN INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES**

If we take a look back to the past, probably the best example of good cooperation between different religions has been the introduction of Religious Education in public schools in 2001. Fifty years after being canceled, Religious Education has been reestablished in Serbian public schools, allowing traditional communities to have their own confessional teaching. Serbian Orthodox Church, even though it is the major religious denomination, insisted during the dialogue with government that all other denominations should have their own Religious Education, respecting diversity and multiculturalism in Serbia.<sup>1</sup> During 2001 traditional religious groups acted together in order to get approval from the government for Religious Education in the schools. Ecumenical atmosphere of the dialogue and cooperation between different churches had victorious ending for all confessions. Serbian government decided to reintroduce Religious Education at schools in 2001. That has been a major step towards better understanding between many different religious groups in Serbia.

After a successful cooperation with other religions to reintroduce Religious Education in Serbia, the Serbian Orthodox Church initiated a religious body consisting of traditional religious communities in Serbia to have regular meetings in order to foster cooperation and solidarity between themselves. In 2010 Interreligious council has been constituted, including the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman-Catholics, the Muslims and the Jewish community.<sup>2</sup> Instead of understanding Ecumenism as something that comes from the outside, Serbian Orthodox Church tries to develop local dialogue which should make people in Serbia realize that inter-religious dialogue gives results from which we all profit, i.e. developing more trust and tolerance between different groups.

All these steps have been supported by the Theological Faculty in Belgrade, which provided several courses on other confessions and religions: History of Religions, Protestant Theology, Introducing Theology, Roman-Catholic Theology, Ecumenical

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<sup>1</sup> In Serbia we have members of the Serbian Orthodox Church 84,5%, Muslims 3,1%, Protestants 0,99%, Roman Catholics 4,97%, Jews 0,008%: Official statistics in Serbia in 2011, [www.popis2011.stat.rs](http://www.popis2011.stat.rs)

<sup>2</sup> Official statement of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the official website of the Serbian Church, [http://www.spc.rs/sr/osnovan\\_medjureligijski\\_savet\\_ministarstva\\_vera\\_republike\\_srbije](http://www.spc.rs/sr/osnovan_medjureligijski_savet_ministarstva_vera_republike_srbije)

Theology and Islam.<sup>3</sup> Offering these courses at the faculty, the Serbian Orthodox Church offered a tool to model young generations of the students to cherish different understandings of the world in which they live. Theological faculty in Belgrade has a fruitful cooperation with many different schools and institutions, developing understanding and better knowledge about others.<sup>4</sup> Orthodox Christian witness of cooperation and understanding, has been a good example for society at large.

What has to be done?

1. What needs to be done in the future is to implement Ecumenical classes in Theological high schools. Many students of the Theological faculty have been educated at Theological high schools. A reform of education at theological high schools is necessary, in order to provide the students with better understanding of inter-religious dialogue. In the future these students could be more prepared to produce better policies and methods in conversation with others.
2. What we need to achieve as responsible religious people is more than just being tolerant. In my opinion, tolerance isn't enough. If tolerance is our only goal, we'll end up in our own ghetto. In that sense, we're not far better than any other school program of secular orientation. The unique role that we ought to play together is to know each other – to cooperate more freely, going above tolerance into space of communication. Communication today is much more difficult, because we basically do not know each other and real communication is being void. Religious Education at the moment developed some kind of tolerance,<sup>5</sup> but that isn't enough. Cooperation in the building of school program of Religious Education is a necessary precondition for our youth.
3. Even though some believe that our dialogue should be primarily social and humanitarian in the service of universal values, I strongly believe that in order to make this authentic we really need to know better our theology. Curricula in our theological knowledge needs to be changed. Some kind of Academia as a joint endeavor of Christians and Muslims could be really helpful. This kind of Academia wouldn't be only for people from this area, but for all of Europe giving the attendants credits for Master Degree. Master program at that kind of Academia should have professors from Christian, Muslim and Jewish background. It would have been a new vision where people could be practically

<sup>3</sup> For these courses (except *History of Religions*) we should be thankful to Professor Radovan Bigović (1956-2012) who introduced them in order to develop ecumenical thinking in young generations of students of theology.

<sup>4</sup> Lateran University from Rome, Theological schools from Germany, Switzerland, France, USA, Russia, Greece and the region.

<sup>5</sup> Development of tolerance in RE, see statistics in: *Verska nastava u beogradskim školama*, ed. Slobodanka Gašić-Pavišić, Slavica Šekušić, Beograd: PBF ITI, 2011/*Верска настава у београдским школама*, прир. Слободанка Гашић-Павишић, Славица Шевкушић, Београд: ПБФ ИТИ, 2011, стр. 15-28.

involved in life with others in a post-conflict area and at the same time contributing to their own knowledge. This Academia shouldn't educate students to become amorphous, in a way of building some kind of World Religion – but to become one healthy community. Not one religion, but one community.

4. In that sense Religious Education should be twofold: confessional and inter-religious at the same time. Two circles would be achieved. With confessional, young people would learn more about their tradition and simultaneously about others (inter-religious). If we accept that Christianity is only for particular people, and Islam only for particular groups than we're retreating from the global scene – enclosing to our own barriers.
5. As religious people we should know better than others that today's contender shouldn't be seen in particular religion, but overtly atheistic societies which foster destruction of religion through negative inclusion. In media today, religion is usually perceived and presented as a negative mode of life. This picture cannot be changed with violence and negative disposition towards the world. Atheistic secular worldview is our chance to finally find a new way of doing theology – showing relevance of religions. And that task we cannot do alone, we need cooperation in this endeavor. As long as we run battles between us, secular society would prove right to many people sending us to isolation. Our first move would be to work with youth, offering young people not new enemies, but new alternatives. The first alternative should be the sense of de-globalization, i.e. global conflicts shouldn't affect our local situation. We can do this in the name of our future.

Young people are those to whom we submit our hopes for the future. Taking this statement seriously, we need to become more involved in order to train them with knowledge and tools for the dialogue. Our disinterest will produce future conflicts, leaving lives of our children to unsafe days.

We appreciate your presence here, presence through which we can be inspired to overcome our local tensions, if there are any. At the same time we're hoping that your work, cooperation and positive examples would enrich our understanding of future perspectives.

## Dr Joakim Striber

Research associate in natural sciences and  
the Roman Catholic Church representative in Serbia

### DIALOGUE IN THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT

An honest dialogue as a response to the challenges of today is the dialogue of love, as you can see from the hug of Sts. Peter and Paul. A man is created for dialogue. God created a man and a woman. The sculpture of Gustav Vigeland "Man, Woman and Child" shows us that the dialogue of love is a fruitful dialogue. Which kind of dialogue? There were many dialogues, but not in the Tower of Babel. Peter Breugel's "The Tower of Babel" intentionally resembles the Colosseum in Rome which the Christians of the time saw as the symbol of arrogance and persecution. The comparison of Rome and Babel had special importance for Breugel's contemporaries. Rome is the Eternal City, made for Caesar to last forever, and its fall and destruction symbolises vanity and transience. The fruits of such kind of dialogue could be seen in the painting "The Scream" by Edvard Munch, which is the symbol of anxiety of a modern man, of the moment his soul is falling apart, which is why it was often connected with Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God and with Schopenhauer's philosophy.

"In the Focolare Movement, which I have the honour to represent, the encounter between cultures and religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Traditional Religions) is an ongoing and fruitful experience not confined to tolerance or the mere recognition of diversity. It goes beyond reconciliation, essential as that is, to create, so to speak, a new identity, one that is broader, more general and shared. It is an effective dialogue which brings together people of very different beliefs, including non-religious beliefs. It spurs us to see what the real needs are and to respond together to the most difficult challenges in society, culture, economics and politics, as our commitment to a more united and socially inclusive world." That was Maria Voce in the United Nations at the High-Level Thematic Debate "Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation" on 22 April 2015.

The Focolare Movement was founded by Clara Lubich and her vision is the path of love. I have a dream. Imagine what a world it would be if next to single individuals both nations, nationalities, states started living by the golden rule. For example – to love the Fatherland of someone else like your own Fatherland. The dialogue of love has some rules of its own. It means listening to others, having trust in them, speaking clearly, being humble, patient, always start anew, carefulness. It seems to be one thing: skill of love. Forsaken Jesus, key to the dialogue.

There is one important thing for a dialogue, and that is keeping silent. In the sculptural ensemble of *Constantin Brâncuși* "The Table of Silence" the table rep-

resents gathering of combatants before the battle which would follow. The chairs represent time, since there are twelve of them, and the Apostles. The table represents family gathering and meditation, which was *Brâncuși's* wish to revive the old custom.

Commenting on a Gospel sentence: "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19) Chiara wrote: "She said Jesus. She gave Jesus. There has never been a greater apostle in the world. No one ever spoke words like her, the One who gave and spoke the Word. Our Mother is truly, and deserves to be, Queen of Apostles. And she is silent. She is silent because two people cannot talk at the same time. The word must always rely on silence, as a painting is on its background".

We also have here the painting of the Annunciation, painted by Fra Angelico. One lovely comment of the Serbian poetess Jelena Spiridonović Savić (1890-1974) is: "Only Fra Angelico could so soulfully paint that magical painting of the Annunciation (in San Marco's Church in Florence) where Mary silent, calm, dedicated, in idealistic expectation, Her arms crossed on maiden bosom with the simplicity of field lilies senses and waits for the Archangel. The dialogue with him."

The goals of dialogue are – naturally – peace and general brotherhood. "Ut omnes" – meaning that everybody should be united, mankind should find its identity which the Creator intended for it: "In the image of God he created him".

In spite of good will, misunderstandings happen on that path of dialogue, which is why we should be careful. Some people think that we should insist on what is common to us, and avoid all the issues which cause different opinions and beliefs. That principle by which we should avoid any kind of confrontation and lead the policy of false peace is called irenism. People in love say that they do not see the other one the way he/she is, but the way they imagine him/her to be. The other principle is syncretism, an effort of connecting heterogeneous cultural, philosophical or religious beliefs stemming from different cultures and doctrines. And the example is "The Adoration of the Golden Calf" by Nicolas Poussin. The third one is religious relativism and that the concept that religions are just different ways to Salvation the contents of which are equally original, meaning that it not important which religion you practice – which is illustrated by Salvador Dali's "The Persistence of Memory".

The guiding star for dialogue is Jesus Forsaken. At the moment He was crucified, He – as a man – did not feel the dialogue with the Father, and that was the very moment in which He gave us the possibility for deep dialogue with God. In order to receive Everything in ourselves, we should be nothing – like Jesus Forsaken. On that *nothing* everybody can express themselves. Let others teach us, since we really have what to learn from them. Only nothing accepts everything in itself and collects all the things into unity. In front of every brother we should be nothing (Jesus Forsaken) in order to embrace Jesus in him/her: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40).

The painter Mila Ličan painted Forsaken Jesus the way she experienced Him, and a colleague of mine commented that the painting shows in an associative way Crucified Christ, but looking at rich and lively colours, one gets the impression that this horrible event actually united people with God, expelled forsakenness and realised that dialogue of God's eternal love with people through uniting all colours into one life current which connects man with God forever.

## Dr Aleksandar Prašević

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### EARLY CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM ENCOUNTERS IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

The first Christian-Muslim encounter in South-East Europe have been deemed to be Arab assaults on Byzantine fortresses and sieges of Constantinople (674-678)<sup>1</sup>, although the historical dimension of Christian-Muslim contacts has been composed of several different but closely intertwined elements. For example, trading generated conditional economic and political cooperation between Christians and Muslims in big cities, or – different example – Muslim mercenaries were hired by Christian rulers etc. In such conditions, Muslims became acquainted with political, geographic and economic advantages of Byzantine cities and provinces. This historical pre-context of their relations, left in the shadow of negative interpretations, was pointed out by Adem Zilkić Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic community of Serbia, who has concluded that early encounters between Christians and Muslims at the gate of Europe were of trade-economic character as the Muslim tribes were important economic partners in the trade of medieval states during XIII and XIV centuries.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the goal of this research paper is the analysis of Christian-Muslim early contacts with the aim to find the answers to the following questions: When did early Christian-Muslim encounters take place in South-East Europe? In which regions? Are there any items of evidence for any type of cooperation between them?

The history of interfaith relations is connected to Arab political and economic expansion, which was visible on trade routes of the Mediterranean which connected Europe, Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East and Asia Minor. A Harvard history map of Islamic world shows trade routes from VII to XVI century. Apart from the general maritime and terrestrial routes, there were also the routes of silk, gold etc. However, that particular map does not show terrestrial trade connection between Asia and Europe via the territories above the Black Sea.<sup>3</sup> Could that be the

<sup>1</sup> L. MUSSET. *Les Invasions: Le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne (VIIe-XIe siècles)*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1965. ; P. STEPHENSON. *Byzantium's Balkans Frontiers. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> A. ZILKIC. Reis – ul – ulema islamske zajednice Srbije. *Historijski znacaj islama na Balkanu.// Islamobalcanica 1*, (2010). Founding Editor Bogoljub Sijakovic. University of Belgrade, Faculty of Orthodox Theology. Institute for Theological Research. Belgrade, 2010. p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Historical Atlas of Islam. Malise Ruthven with Azim Nanji. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004. pp. 54-55.

reason why historians skipped one of the phases of Christian-Muslim encounters which happened in this particular region, as these were the very roads which some Muslim tribes from Central Asia used to reach the Old Continent.

Striving to analyse the above stated route of Christian-Muslim encounters in greater detail, a pretentious historical statement of Ahmet Alibašić, an Islamic theologian, historian and professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was considered. This statement was published in his scientific paper "Muslims in South-East Europe". He claims that "the first (Muslim) community, consisting of the tribe of Kalisians, populated Hungary mid-IX century, almost two hundred years before the country was baptised".<sup>4</sup> However, "This early community of Muslims on Hungarian territory was described by a Muslim religious teacher Abu Hamid al-Andalusi al-Gharnati"<sup>5</sup>, an Arab writer who stayed in Hungary as late as at the beginning of XII century. Unfortunately, professor Alibašić did not quote any historical evidence for the cited conclusion, wherefore we should ask: Who is Abu Hamid al-Gharnati? Did he really write the history of the first Muslim communities in South-East Europe? In general, what did he write about?

On the other hand, there already exists a huge database of historical data relating to Christian-Muslim contacts at the coasts of the Mediterranean, which were kept both for interest and for the importance of conflicts between political and economic interests of Arab and Byzantine rulers (629-1180). In that sense, the first siege of Constantinople stands out (674-678) by which Arab tribes showed that they could jeopardise the survival of Byzantine-Christian centre. Then the second siege (717-718) which revealed serious lack of internal unity between Byzantine political, military and economic factors, some of which even collaborated with Arab invader offering Byzantine throne in exchange of vassal status. However, the history of Christian-Muslim contacts in northern parts of South-East Europe remained unexplored, left to guessing, although there are one Persian and two Arab writers from X century who left written traces of their encounters and relations with Christians while travelling through Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Their writings are one of the oldest testimonies about trade relations between pagans, Jews, Christians and Muslims in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. However, none of them even hinted that Muslims left for or lived in South-East Europe on any grounds in X century, let alone IX century. The first amongst them is Ahmad ibn Rustah (in Arabic رستم بن أحمد), explorer and travel writer, author of the writing "Kitab al-Alak an-Nafisa".<sup>6</sup> He visited the Russian city Novgorod, 500 km north of Moscow and 4000 km away from his birth place – the city of Isfahan, Iran. Ibn Rustah was not a personal witness to all the described events and places in his recordings, but he found them in some

<sup>4</sup> A. ALIBASIC. *Muslimani Jugoistocne Evrope*. // Atlas islamskoga svijeta. Udruženje ilmijje Islamske Zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini. Sarajevo, 2004. p. 574.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 574.

<sup>6</sup> Abû Ali Ahmed ibn Omar. *Kitâb Al-Alâk An-Nafîsa VII*. éd. M. J. De Goeje. Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum. Lugduni Batavorum. E. J. Brill, 1892.

other older manuscripts and then consolidated them helped by his personal experience. The second writer is Ahmed ibn Fadlan (in Arabic دشار نبا دامح نبا نالضف), a diplomat of Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir (908-932) who met the tribes and saw areas of Central Asia and Eastern Europe while realising political, economic and religious tasks of Caliphate from Baghdad. The third writer from that period is Ali al-Masudi (in Arabic ىلدع نب نىسح ىدوعسم), an explorer, historian and encyclopedist who described trade operations between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in various parts of the world.<sup>7</sup>

The most interesting testimonies about Muslim communities in South-East Europe and thus about their relations with Christians are given in the manuscripts of the Arab writer Abu Hamid al-Gharnati (in Arabic ال غرناطي حامد أبو), translated in French and published under the title “De Grenade à Bagdad. La relation de voyage d’Abû Hâmîd al-Gharnâtî (1080-1168)”.<sup>8</sup> He left an interesting piece of data about the Christians he met in Eastern Europe:

Their country is safe. When a Muslim trades with one of them and this Slav is not capable of repaying the debt, he is sold together with his house and his children so that the merchant could get his debt. Slavs are brave and they are followers of Byzantines in Nestorian Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

His next destination in Europe was Hungary in which he stayed for three years (1155-1158) as preacher, teacher and qadi, since some of the Muslims did not even now that Friday is a holy day. He saw there thousands of descendants of Pechenegs as well as a large number of descendants of Maghrebis, and also of Quarismians who served rulers in Hungary. Abu Hamid al-Gharnati underlined that Quarismians declared themselves to be Christian, hiding their Islamic confession, whereas Maghrebis served the army at Christians and declared themselves publicly to be Muslims.<sup>10</sup> Based on Hungarian archive documents it could be concluded that Muslims from the tribe of Quarisma had official duties in the state during XII century.<sup>11</sup> More precisely, they were on the positions close to the crown.<sup>12</sup>

Abu Hamid was extremely displeased to learn that Muslims fought against each other because they were on the opposing sides of Christian rulers. He then found out that Muslim mercenaries in Byzantine army did not know that Hungarian army also consisted of Muslim soldiers.

<sup>7</sup> El-Mas’udi’s. Historical Encyclopedia. Entitled “*Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*” Translated from the Arabic by Aloys Sprenger, M.D. Vol.I. London, 1890.

<sup>8</sup> *De Grenade à Bagdad. La relation de voyage d’Abû Hâmîd al-Gharnâtî (1080-1168)*. Traduction annotée de Jean-Charles Ducène. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> B. STOJKOVSKI. *Abu Hamid in Hungary*. Istrazivanja, (No22), 2011. p. 110.

I asked one group of them: “Why did you join the army of Byzantine ruler?” And they responded: “He hired each of us for 200 dinars, we did not even know that Muslims were in this region”.<sup>13</sup>

In general, Abu Hamid had a hostile attitude towards Byzantium as could be seen from his words to Muslims who fought on the side of the Hungarian king; “Fight for this king!” – I said to these Muslims – “as the robes of martyrdom are destined to you”.<sup>14</sup> However, his attitude could not have been such for religious reasons as he wrote about the Hungarian king, who was a Christian ruler, that “he loved Muslims”.<sup>15</sup> For that very reason, a conversation between a Muslim and the Byzantine emperor is a very interesting piece:

A prisoner was in Constantinople and he told me how the king of Byzantines questioned him this way: “Why did the king of Basgard (Hungary) attack our country and devastated it? Is that usual for him?” “The king of Basgard” – he replied – “has an army of Muslims. He lets them freely express their religion and they are the ones who attacked you and who devastated your country”. “I have Muslims on my side that do not fight with me!” the king responded. “But you have forcefully converted them (the Muslims) to Christianity” the prisoner responded. “I have never forcefully converted any Muslim into my faith” said the king “I have built mosques for them, so that they could fight for me”.<sup>16</sup>

Abu Hamid’s descriptions of his personal encounters with Christians and Muslims have become testimonies of their historical contacts where one can find both the examples of interfaith coexistence in South-East Europe and the evidence that they cooperated with each other in Hungary and Byzantium. He testifies to us that Christian rulers founded their relations towards them not on ethnic or religious differences but on what they could offer or how they could be used for state benefits.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96-97.



## Ana Živković

MA in Religious Education and Social Pedagogy  
and Representative of the Roman Catholic youth

### DIVERSITY ENRICHES

My presentation focuses on the relations between identity, religious identity and dialogue. If we look at the present time, as we can see, we are facing religious pluralism, especially in big cities throughout the world. Even in previously homogenous environments there comes to many changes; through migrations, means of communication, people come into contact with different religious and cultural identities than their own. In contact with religious pluralism, people usually develop several standard ways of thinking or conclusions. One is that it is better to stick to one's own group, one's own religious identity, so as not to receive the influences of others. Briefly, to cut down the interaction with others as much as possible and to make a fortress for one's own identity. And there emerges the question of how far you can go to protect your identity and not to be aggressively protective or isolate your group. In spite of worriedness due to the issue of consequences of pluralism – the solution is not to cage yourself in your identity.

The other way of facing pluralism can be indifference. I would say that everybody has the right to be what they want until the moment he/she starts exerting influence onto others. But this attitude is also opposite to the culture of dialogue and once again it invites people to be strangers to one another.

The third conclusion can be that differences should be lessened as much as possible and that a culture should be made which would be a mixture of everything. But then again – that is not the solution either, since there is the risk of losing the abundance of differences and the richness of individual identities.

However, pluralism can be regarded positively too. As the way to deepen and build one's religious identity. We can often see that when one does not have enough knowledge and preparation to grasp differences, one can fall into relativism. On the other hand, religious pluralism proved to be a good opportunity for many young people to build their respective religious identities in a more mature manner. Because, it is necessary for a person to know very well his/her own faith to be able to answer the questions posed by others, to be able to recognise similarities and differences with others.

Thus, to avoid relativism in the education of the young it is necessary to prepare people to enter the dialogue with others and not to lose their religious identities. For Christians, religious pluralism is not just a fact, but the sign of the times, as it – in spite of its complexity – expresses the essential human freedom and wish for dialogue, by recognising various opinions and standpoints regarding every issue.

If we speak on behalf of Christianity, Christianity by its nature of unconditional love does not marginalise others but gives them space. Due to its character which requires contact with others, Christian identity is a dialogue-oriented, interactive identity and it cannot be an exclusive one. No one is self-sufficient for as much as he/she is different from others, but everyone is an inclusive identity in which every part is what it is, since he/she is the brother or the sister to everyone. The authentic Christian identity strives to leave space to everyone to be what they are.

Christian message accepts differences so as not to fall into individualism and isolation. The keep one's identity, but to be open requires first of all education for solidarity and togetherness, by which religious identity strengthens and enriches itself. In this way, the acceptance of others and openness to them is not regarded as threat to one's own identity, but as the possibility of enriching one's own identity. Young people should be educated so as to achieve special identity which at the same time can provide them with an ample view of the world where they could see their specificities in intercultural perspective.

Education should start from a person and from his/her meeting others. In order that one could build one's identity, it is necessary for him/her to be deeply rooted in the culture of environment. This process is not happening in a passive way, as education is not just simple reception or transmission of information in which a person stores rules of information value, but it is an active process. Historical-cultural identity is born from the process in which a person recognises his/her identity as the same with or as different from other persons he/she lives with. Each of us belongs to different groups so that cultural pluralism impacts this very person. The ones who can be aware of various affiliations within themselves and the ones who can create harmony between these affiliations, the ones who recognise within themselves the sense of belonging and the difference with respect to others can more easily accept the variety of such groups. To have the sense of belonging means to share hope, joy and pain of one's group, while feeling as a stranger means to be able to critically view limits and values of one's own affiliation group. That is first of all an intercultural dialogue which has to be led within a person along with various religious and cultural incentives, so that this person could look for authenticity.

I can corroborate everything I have said here through my personal experience. I was born and raised in Belgrade, facing from early time differences within my family. My father is an Orthodox Serb; my mother is a Catholic Croat. Due to this difference that I have within myself, I feel rich and I think it is easier for me to accept differences of other people. I studied at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome with students from the entire world which was again a great opportunity for me to meet many other cultures. The studies were also an opportunity to deepen my religious identity, to be readier to explain the hope in me. After my studies I can say that I have still lot to learn, but that I feel readier to enter the dialogue with the representatives of other religious communities.

I can take out one positive experience of participating in the dialogue between young Catholics and Jews in 2009, when I could notice various similarities between us and where I was positively surprised by the questions they posed to us which led me think deeper about important issues of my faith which I had accepted at my early days without much thinking. So, the experience of dialogue was an ideal opportunity to learn something about others, to notice similarities between us and to deepen my religious identity, which has surely enriched me as a person.

# Aleksandar Danilović

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## BIBLE AS UNIFYING AND BONDING ELEMENT

### Social network more than two millennia old

We live in a contemporary world. In the so-called post-modern world. In the time of incredible technical progress and scientific discoveries in all the fields. We exist in a “global village“ where information exchange does not represent any problem or any obstacle anymore. We can say that we live in the age which made our lives easier. Whether that is true – many researches discussed this premise.

On the other hand, in circumstances in which everything fits us, we start to push out (slowly, but consistently) any form of thought of God. Whether this be the thought of the Creator, or the thought of the One Who we depend on. Or in other words: it seems that in our “progressive“ lives there is no place for someone like God. This is especially applicable in the case of young people. Everything has turned into a hasty search for an easy life-path, good earnings, and intense fun. He seems to be not only the Secondary One, but rather the Non-Existent One in our lives. What is important is just me, me and my personal happiness. Naturally, we should help someone in trouble, but not because we care for him/her, but because we could feel better and more fulfilled. As if that “I“ had become complete without any need for Silverstein’s “the missing piece“<sup>1</sup>, without any necessity for anybody other. As if that “I“ had become a self-satisfactory deity. However, beneath the surface other things slowly start to show...

Let us go back to the contemporary world, for a moment. We have mentioned that today the transmission of any information ceased to be a problem. Social networks are leaders in communication to such an extent that, in spite of so much positive achievement, they show numerous side-effects and deviations in relations between communicators. But that will be our topic for later.

The exchange of written words was never an easy one. Let us consider the period of Classical Antiquity or the period of Middle Ages. At that time correspondence then lasted (if any) for years. Time had to elapse for one letter to reach the recipient. Heralds used to inform people in places that were several tens of kilometres away from one another<sup>2</sup>. In other words, it was very difficult to contact someone and exchange information.

<sup>1</sup> Silverstein S, *The missing piece*, United States, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> An interesting example is Herodotus’ one from his Book 6, on Pheidippides, resident of Athens, who ran from the battlefield of Marathon to Athens so as to deliver the news of Greek victory. When he declared victory, he fell dead instantly.

Gutenberg's printing press made some kind of revolution in the field of communication. However, several centuries later telephones, computers and internet completely changed our lives enabling us to find out at any moment from any location on the planet what is happening at the other part of the world. News portals, e-news, social networks, starting from the early forms of forums and Myspace via Twitter and Facebook to Skype and YouTube which enable us to get a live contact through camera, through live streaming with someone or something that is happening at that very moment several thousands of kilometres away. Impressive, isn't it?

Unfortunately, scientists discovered several problems there. One has already been mentioned previously, that is some kind of depersonalisation, some kind of imaginary feeling of completeness. A human being who is not a number, not a reference number, not a computer card, can definitely not tolerate this depersonalisation and separation from the nature.<sup>3</sup>

Although it was mentioned that in the life of a young man of XXI century there is no place for someone like God, we could add that there is actually no place for conventional religions, the so-called "mainstream gods".

As Arnold Toynbee comments, technology (and financial gains) become object of adoration for the modern age. In other words: deity of a new "religion". However, as hinted in one of the most popular world "best sellers" – which is Bible, for sure – we can learn to use material wealth, fortune and technology for people's needs, if we are led by spiritual value exclusively.<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God", it is said in the New Testament.<sup>5</sup> Actually, technology can be of great use to a man, but it is an instrument without spirit, wherefore – if not directed, it shall roll by means of its own inertia.<sup>6</sup>

As we can see, the Bible is one of the most frequently translated and most printed books in the world. Apart from that, it is very likely that some parts of it represented one of the first endeavours of translation in the history of mankind.<sup>7</sup> One can hint from here its huge importance in the history of mankind. And that is not just for here and now, but for many generations and always.

Very often, when we speak of holy books, and especially of the Bible, stereotypes are present. One of them is that this book is full of hatred towards everything that is different and of other kind, that it glorifies its own elements and that this book is actually the greatest separation element amongst people. That it is the greatest source of wars, turmoil amongst peoples and civilisations, many lives lost. However, if we start browsing just the first couple of pages, we shall see that the situation is completely different.

<sup>3</sup> Peri M. *Intelektualna istorija Evrope*, Belgrade, 2000, page 627.

<sup>4</sup> Peri, 2000, p. 627.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew, 5:8.

<sup>6</sup> Peri, 2000, p. 628.

<sup>7</sup> The example is the Septuagint, Greek translation of the parts of Jewish Bible, commenced in the 2nd century BC. The Septuagint was later regarded as the Greek text of the Christian New Testament.

In just a couple of sentences, the example for something like that would be – numerous patriarchs and their relation towards the neighbouring peoples. We can freely, without any fear, say that the Bible connects, and not disconnects people. Some people would say that the history showed different situations. That is true, but it happens when we do not let words show us their meaning, but use them as an excuse for our activities. We cut them in half and use them as means for reaching our goals. Instead of using the example of the great readers of the Bible who were named Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church, we use the example of a child who tries to find excuses for justifying its wrongdoings. The Bible and religion in general can serve, as we have seen, both as the reason and inspiration for violence, and as prevention for avoiding violence.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the motives which speak against the Bible stereotypes are the ones referring to the mentioned patriarchs, great emperors and prophets. Then there is the story of the “Good Samaritan” from the New Testament, widely known, speaking against the above stated ideas. Not to forget the Sermon on the Mount, or other parables in the Apostle Luke’s Gospel.

What can the advocates of the interpretation of the Bible as the “book disseminating hatred towards others” say about the fact that the main characters, the most important, the most just and the greatest Bible characters were sometimes presented in negative light and criticised, just for showing that “the other ones” are also just and worthy of God’s love.

We could just mention great Abraham and his appearance with his wife Sarah first before the Pharaoh and afterwards before Abimelech, and the subsequent just behaviour of these two men.<sup>9</sup> Or the story of Abraham’s grandchildren, Esau and Jacob and the way Jacob gets the primacy.<sup>10</sup> For sure, the most “drastic” case is the one of the King David who is regarded as “the Father of the nation” and yet has been portrayed as someone doing a huge mistake towards the just Uriah the Hittite, taking away his wife Bathsheba and sending him to the battlefield to get killed<sup>11</sup>. David has repented, but this important moment cannot be left out.

Or the prophet Jonah, described as just before God, as some ideal of piety, and yet criticised as the one who, to put it in modern language, is intolerant, since he did not want to accept others as his equals.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Slaviša Kostić, *Dijalogom i tolerancijom protiv govora mržnje na verskoj osnovi*, periodical “Bogoslavlje”, Belgrade, 2014, page 235.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. 12:20.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 27.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Sam. 24,25.

<sup>12</sup> The book of Jonah tells the story about this prophet whom God sends to prophecy the destruction of Nineveh to the Ninevites, for their great wickedness. After a sequence of events, Jonah does what he was sent for, but the Ninevites repent and God forgives them. The prophet thought it was unjust, and he gets mad at God for justifying them. The end is very interesting, as God underlines to Jonah his injustice in a very picturesque way.

Naturally, there is also the Book of Ruth which advocates the unity amongst peoples. A Moabite<sup>13</sup> woman accepts the Lord (Jehovah) as her God and shows such sacrificial love for her mother-in-law, that she becomes the grandmother of King David. In other words, this book shows that God not only accepts people of different races and nations, but also gives them important roles in His plans.

In general, the Bible as a book is full of archetypal motifs, eternal parables that can be valuable at any moment to any person of any confession. The universal story of Cain and Abel, prophets' eternal messages and lessons, Christ's parables...

Actually, many characters from the Bible can relate to our reality and everyday life. And that is just a small insight into a myriad of facts that show that the Bible, as an ancient book, is not and will never be a simple artefact of some ancient past. However, it should be noted that lately Christianity, Bible and all the other religions are in danger of turning into "museum exhibits", things from the past, from history. In other words, there emerges something that could be called "religion without God".<sup>14</sup>

Having that in mind, we can notice an incredible influence of numerous Biblical motifs onto the European and world culture. Starting from the motifs in the novels and in the thoughts of great intellectual and literary names of Dostoyevsky, Bulgakov, Goethe, Kant, Kafka, Coelho and many others; via a large number of painters, artists, musicians (both classical music and the popular one); up to the film and television – the titles of which could be listed incessantly, either explicit or subliminal.

Faith was, for a long period, regarded as something characteristic of old people. Their privilege or their backwardness, depending on the beholder. Being rebellious, young people rejected faith as something old-fashioned and outdated, as something constraining their freedom and not letting them live their lives freely, in the best possible way. On the other hand, the ones who stayed in faith were very often marginalised, claimed to be too young and inexperienced, which is why they often gave up.

All of that is the consequence of the development of the European and worldly spirit in the past two, three centuries. It could be said that we were led astray by the negative consequences of the Enlightenment.

Speaking of the Enlightenment, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt, spoke of how the reason itself – by which enlighteners fought against myths and religion so as to stimulate man's liberation – then turned against itself, becoming the means for submission of individuals to the mechanisms of modern technocracy. According to them, we should blame the Enlightenment for that, as it advocated instrumental reason which tended to overpower nature and society by technical means, and which declared suspicious everything that did not fit into the calculations of usefulness. Such an attitude alienated human beings from nature, allowed for domination of human beings one

<sup>13</sup> Moabites and Jews were quite hostile to each other, as can be noticed through the entire Old Testament.

<sup>14</sup> Krstić Z., *Pravoslavlje i modernost*, Belgrade, 2012, page 168.

over another and turned an individual into an impersonal component of conceptual system. Thus, according to them, ideological foundations of totalitarianism can be found in the philosophy of the Enlightenment.<sup>15</sup>

Starting from early period in school, if not earlier, an individual is systematically alienated from his creativity and heritage, that personal uniqueness, so as to be modified into an element useful for mass and technology society.<sup>16</sup>

Widely looking, one can hardly find young people who would be interested in religion. Who would be ready to fight against the usual stereotypes (*unfortunately, not only stereotypes*) which plucked out religion, that is God, from our lives, so that the void was left empty for the above mentioned deities. Therefore, the ones who have been lucky to have another angle of viewing and especially the ones who have chosen teaching faith as their vocation, should stick together, in spite of all the differences. Or at least close enough to each other. So that the faith in something more than the position in the company or than the money on the bank account could incite them to something more elevated. So that - instead of the current verbal and physical wars - we could talk, exchange experiences, start from what is common to us, instead of from what is different between us. The very book of the Bible teaches us that. We just have to look a bit more carefully.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, has said something similar by saying that we should put strong accent on the principles of faith which allow the people of different faiths to coexist and cohabit in peace. He has also said that searching for common understanding in teaching religions which we engage in the dialogue is also very much important. For, really, narrow thinking causes lack of understanding.<sup>17</sup>

Religious communities and their learning institutions should be sources of peace, and they should provide their staff with the opportunity to learn of other religions as well. Gatherings of the students of theology should be regularly organised. Teachers of religious classes in primary and secondary schools should be engaged in presenting other religions as well to their pupils and students. While the society itself should be incited to provide space for religious communities in the media.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, having in mind that the world is not that much inclined to us, we should focus on all the things that unite us. We should be aware of the fact that not only social networks, but also the Bible (for example) can be an element of unity. Something that connects us, even unconsciously. If not regarding the very truths of the faith, than at least regarding all the things that are without exception parts of our lives in XXI century.

We should use the achievements of contemporary man and invest all the efforts first of all to educate ourselves on everything, having in mind the channels of com-

<sup>15</sup> Peri, 2000, page 628.

<sup>16</sup> Peri, 2000, page 629.

<sup>17</sup> Kostić, 2014, page 234.

<sup>18</sup> Kostić, 2014, page 246.



munication, and then we should direct social networks and information technology achievements to reach the goal of getting closer, with the idea of following the examples of great men in the history of mankind who did that themselves in their respective periods of life.





## Marko Jelić

Secretary General of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara”

### THE ASSOCIATION OF SERBIAN-INDONESIAN FRIENDSHIP “NUSANTARA”

Your Excellencies, esteemed friends of Serbia and Indonesia, I take this opportunity to greet you on behalf of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara” and to wish us success in developing interfaith dialogue between our two countries.

Now is the moment to remind you that the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara” was established 12 years ago, as an expression of the firm conviction that the friendship which our two Presidents – Tito and Soekarno – established mid-past century should be furthered and improved in all fields.

The Association “Nusantara” is a citizens’ association whose goals are to:

- to contribute to maintaining, preservation and enrichment of the traditional friendship between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia;
- to help establish co-operation concerning social issues, art, education, culture and other fields by contributing to strengthening and development of political and economic relations and co-operation between the two friendly countries; and
- to organize artistic, cultural and educational activities as the incentive to expanding mutual contacts, taking the role of a bridge that will accelerate development of the bilateral exchange as a whole between the two countries.

Since the moment when the governments of Serbia and Indonesia decided to develop interfaith dialogue as the model of getting to know, understand and cherish our religious, cultural and other differences, the Association “Nusantara” strived to contribute greatly to such activities. Aside from the fact that the President of the Association “Nusantara” – Dr Aleksandar Raković – was the coordinator of the First and the Second Interfaith Dialogue of Serbia and Indonesia in 2011 and 2013 respectively, our Association has also strived to promote interfaith dialogue and multiculturalism in the spirit of the national motto of the Republic of Indonesia “Bhineka Tunngal Ika” (Unity in diversity).

Having in mind that the members of “Nusantara” are mostly young people we have tried in the past four years to inform them of the values and importance of interfaith dialogue. To that end “Nusantara” organised several lectures and gatherings

where we could hear impressions about life in a rich multi-cultural environment from our intellectuals who paid visit to Indonesia. In addition, "Nusantara" has organised a tour for visiting important cultural-historical monuments of all the peoples in this area, and of churches and monasteries. We would like to point out that there were some students from Indonesia, fellows of Government of the Republic of Serbia, joining us on these trips with other young people through the programme "World in Serbia". The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia was the host to many activities, when the young people from the two countries had the opportunity to get to know each other, exchange their personal experiences and establish new friendships.

I assure you that the Association "Nusantara" will strive to promote and further the traditional friendship of our two countries in its future activities, especially through interfaith dialogue.

The ample array of our religious, cultural and other differences must be the mission of our understanding, friendship and cooperation. I strongly believe that we shall have huge success in this mission!

# Aleksandra Trifković

Journalist

## YOUTH IN INTERCULTURAL AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUES: PERSPECTIVES, POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES – UNESCO CANDIDACY OF THE SO- CALLED REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

One of the most troublesome challenges facing the Serbian youth today is the candidacy of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo for UNESCO membership. We are obliged to present to you and to the whole world all the items of evidence and undisputable arguments which without doubt prove that Kosovo is the very heart of Serbia, Serbia's historical, cultural and religious cradle to which we are so emotionally tied. Over 1.700 monuments of the Serbian cultural treasure testify that. "An impressive number of monasteries gives hope to the Serbian people that they will strengthen their faith by visiting them. They have immense meaning for our history, culture and everything happened in them first – the first book, the first fresco, the first law, the first icon" (Serbian Patriarch Irinej).

Educated monks and church dignitaries impacted the establishment of nation's spiritual character and stimulation of Orthodoxy. They are still there today, defending their faith and Fatherland. These wonderful, educated people defend our tradition not by guns, but by prayer and learning.

There are over 1.100 Serbian churches in Kosovo and Metohija, 534 Serbian ancient graveyards, around 100 fortresses and 14 castles of the Serbian noblemen. Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija do not have cultural monuments, nor have they ever built a water fountain. They do not have capacities to protect Serbian heritage there. Actually, they do not want that, they have no intention of protecting anything Serbian, but have other plans for Serbian cultural treasure. Kosovo institutions actively work on forging history. The main goal is to proclaim the entire cultural heritage (which belongs to Serbs) to be the property of the so-called Republic of Kosovo. Bluntly: what is going on now is snatching away from Serbs our heritage that has existed for centuries! "UNESCO membership of the self-proclaimed Kosovo would be genocide against culture and the support to that membership – disgrace for Europe. So far UNESCO was the protector of cultural goods, and this way it exposes them to danger" (Serbian Patriarch Irinej).

Why? "In the period 1999-2004 over 150 Serbian churches, monasteries and other buildings were destroyed in Kosovo – out of which 61 have the status of cultural monuments; more than 10.000 icons, ecclesial-artistic items and service items

were destroyed or stolen. Exactly 5.261 gravestones were demolished, there is no whole gravestone in more 50 graveyards. Bones from Serbian graves were dug out and scattered around, and the cemeteries were turned into waste dumps“ (Statement issued by the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, 2012). That is a continued process of systematic eradication of all the traces of spirituality and culture of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, and the perpetrators were and still are the same. The criminal organisation Kosovo Liberation Army expelled around 200.000 Serbs and others from their houses, from their homes existing there for centuries. The ones that have stayed, now live in isolated ghettos fighting for bare life, without basic human rights, personal safety, without the possibility to leave their houses safely, without the right to work, to get educated, to have access to medical treatment. It frequently happens that their buses – when they go to a nearby town, escorted by the police, to buy necessities – get stoned by the Albanians, while the police do not react at all, just calmly watch what is happening.

Bishop Teodosije said: “We shall oppose by peaceful, civilised methods, using all our rights, and most of all – prayer and serving to God. These are live and God-serving elements, and not monuments and museums, as they would want them to be. Any trial of their misuse shall be advocated everywhere in the world as an example of violation of basic Christian religious rights.“

Here are three examples of what foreigners said on Kosovo candidacy for UNESCO membership:

1. “While I served as UNESCO Director-General, from 1987 to 1999, five times I condemned NATO’s military campaign in Kosovo. The invasion of Kosovo was not approved by the UN. My standpoint did not change, I would vote against Kosovo’s admission to UNESCO” – Federico Mayor.
2. “Kosovo is a self-proclaimed state which has never even tried to prevent destruction of Serbian Orthodox cultural sacred monuments. Such a thing could happen tomorrow anywhere in Europe” – Konstantin Dobrilović, President of Austria’s Christian-Liberating Platform.
3. “I have a message for UNESCO: Do not succumb to pressure, as the same ones who tore down and set on fire now want into UNESCO. Kosovo should not be the member” – Jacques Hogard, former Commander of a KFOR special unit. This officer and noble man saved Devič Monastery and its nuns near Srbica in 1999, although that was not the primary goal of the unit he was the Commander of. “Several centuries of history located in one place. Kosovo is not filled just by Serbian heritage, but it is – because of it – one of the European cradles of Christianity“ – Hogard concluded.



## Velimir Perović

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### EDUCATION TO BE MORE FOCUSED ON SPIRITUAL VALUES

The importance of religion in today's world is tremendous. Although that importance is very often neglected, we cannot ignore the fact that the foundations of the modern society are based on tradition which derives from religious and faith-based values in life. Relativisation of values on which one society is based is a huge problem, especially in the western part of the world.

We have to admit that the importance of religion was silently or explicitly neglected in the Republic of Serbia in the second half of XX century. The process that followed was often colloquially called "recognition of the Church". But the very recognition of the existence of a religious Community in a society is not a sufficient effort that a State has to invest so that a society would be more tolerant. The State must positively react and enable all the people to develop their personalities in conformity with their moral and religious convictions. As per the principles of a civil society in which taking part in asocial life represents a kind of obligation of each individual, while each of us, the faithful people, is obliged to stand up for the defence of that particular system of values which represents the foundations of each State and each Community.

Today's pluralistic world is an additional incentive to all the peoples to dedicate more attention to a mutual dialogue as the path to achieving peace and advancement. Wherefrom the strengthening of civil society and interfaith cooperation stems, for the sake of development. Faith is like an integral part of every society, the basis for the improvement of cooperation of peoples which consequently leads to solving the greatest problems of world security and peace.

One of the most important pillars onto which every society stands is for sure education. Education is today committed first of all to exact sciences, and less to spiritual values. In that way students are unjustly deprived of the possibility to actively participate in the creation of a more tolerant society by cherishing their spiritual values. They become the children who do not have any incentive to acquire knowledge of the system of values which represents the basis of a society. In that manner, they are turned to media, deprived of the possibility to think of important issues, and thus they turn into passive beings, they become media products. Preoccupied with the idea of false liberation from the "bonds of society" (as "freedom fighters" of today call the traditional values), the young actually refuse to accept their role in the soci-

ety, which is how the very idea of democracy is violated. Democracy stays without people.

However, there is consciousness in the contemporary society about the importance of all-encompassing education. UNESCO has foreseen for XXI century education to be based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live, learning to be. Religious education is learning to live. Creating more tolerant society and the culture of dialogue.

The most secular state in Europe is – without any doubt – France. The French Minister of Education Régis Debray said in 2002 that complete illiteracy of religious culture hindered young generation from understanding an essentially important part of its own heritage, but also of the entire contemporary world. He also said that ignorance and lack of cultural references cut young people from their own roots and prevented them from gaining knowledge in certain areas. What more, this ignorance – to his words – represented the basis for intolerance and prejudices.

There is a large number of international documents guaranteeing the right to parents and foster parents to provide to their children religious and moral upbringing in conformity with their own convictions (e.g. Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights. Article 18, paragraph 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights etc.)

International institutions supervising the implementation of human and minority rights hold the standpoint that parents' right to provide the appropriate religious education to the children implies certain positive obligations of the State, such as offering the possibility of religious classes in educational institutions.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe pointed out in 1999 vast importance of dedicating special attention to religious education and considering what it should be.

The case of Indonesia shows us that peace and harmony in one society are achieved by developing dialogue between Communities and by understanding and accepting differences which do exist. That dialogue is necessary so that tyranny of majority religion over minority religions could be prevented.

Education is most important for elevating consciousness about religious harmony and mutual understanding and respect. To the end of establishing interfaith dialogue and more tolerant society one of the role models which could serve to our country is the introduction of teaching about religion which would be a mandatory and regular subject in all primary and secondary schools.





# PHOTOGRAPHS





# THE FIRST BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA-INDONESIA

Photographs: Friedo Samson



BILATERAL MEETING OF  
TWO DELEGATIONS



INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



DELEGATIONS OF SERBIA  
AND INDONESIA





SERBIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH IRINEJ WITH THE MINISTER OF RELIGION AND DIASPORA SRĐAN SREČKOVIĆ, AMBASSADOR OF INDONESIA SEMUEL SAMSON AND HEADS OF DELEGATIONS BOGOLJUB ŠIJAKOVIĆ AND ANDRI HADI



INDONESIAN DELEGATION VISITING THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



INDONESIAN DELEGATION VISITING ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF SERBIA HEADED BY REISU-L-ULEMA ADEM ZILKIĆ

SIGNING THE MEMORANDUM  
OF UNDERSTANDING BY THE  
UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE AND  
THE FACULTY OF ORTHODOX  
THEOLOGY WITH THE STATE  
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SYARIF  
HIDAYATULLAH. MEMORANDUM  
IS SIGNED BY RECTORS BRANKO  
KOVAČEVIĆ AND KOMARUDDIN  
HIDAYAT AND DEAN IRINEJ  
BULOVIĆ



INDONESIAN DELEGATION AT  
THE FACULTY OF ORTHODOX  
THEOLOGY



INDONESIAN DELEGATION  
VISITING CROWN PRINCE  
ALEKSANDAR II KARADORĐEVIĆ



# THE SECOND BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA-INDONESIA

Photographs: Friedo Samson, Deacon Dragan Tanasijević



SERBIAN DELEGATION  
AT THE BELGRADE AIRPORT



INDONESIAN ORTHODOX  
CHRISTIAN WELCOMING SERBIAN  
ORTHODOX PATRIARCH IRINEJ



SERBIAN DELEGATION AT THE AIRPORT IN JAKARTA



SERBIAN DELEGATION WITH HEADS OF INDONESIAN DELEGATION ABDURRAHMAN FACHIR AND BAHRUL HAYAT



SERBIAN DELEGATION AT THE MEETING WITH THE COORDINATING MINISTER AGUNG LAKSONO





INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



SERBIAN ORTHODOX  
Patriarch IRINEJ, Archpriest-  
Stavrofor DRAGOMIR  
SANDO, Archdeacon RADOMIR  
RAKIĆ and Director of the  
Office for Cooperation with  
Churches and Religious  
Communities MILETA  
RADOJEVIĆ with Indonesian  
Orthodox Priesthood



SERBIAN DELEGATION WITH  
STUDENTS OF THE STATE  
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SYARIF  
HIDAYATULLAH

SERBIAN DELEGATION IN FRONT  
OF THE NATIONAL MONUMENT  
OF INDONESIA – MONAS



SERBIAN DELEGATION VISITING  
THE MUHAMMADYAH ISLAMIC  
ORGANIZATION REPRESENTED  
BY A SENIOR OFFICIAL SUDIBYO  
MARKUS



SERBIAN DELEGATION  
VISITING THE NATIONAL  
ZAKAT BOARD – BAZNAS





SERBIAN DELEGATION VISITING  
THE ISTIQLAL MOSQUE



SERBIAN DELEGATION IN THE  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL



SERBIAN DELEGATION AT  
THE MEETING WITH THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF  
INDONESIA MARZUKI ALIE

HEAD OF SERBIAN DELEGATION  
MILETA RADOJEVIĆ GIVES TO  
MARZUKI ALIE THE LETTER  
OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
TOMISLAV NIKOLIĆ



SERBIAN DELEGATION WITH  
THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF INDONESIA  
WARDANA



MEMBERS OF SERBIAN  
DELEGATION REISU-L-ULEMA  
ADEM ZILKIĆ, SERBIAN  
ORTHODOX PATRIARCH IRINEJ,  
MUFTI MUHAMED JUSUFSPAHIĆ,  
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR  
COOPERATION WITH CHURCHES  
AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES  
MILETA RADOJEVIĆ AND  
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF SERBIA IN INDONESIA JOVAN  
JOVANOVIĆ WITH THE HEAD OF  
THE ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION  
NAHDLATUL ULAMA SAID AQL  
SIRADJ



## THE THIRD BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA-INDONESIA

Photographs: Milivoj Grujičić, Deacon Dragan Tanasijević and others



MEETING OF THE MINISTER  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF  
SERBIA IVICA DAČIĆ AND VICE  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF INDONESIA ABDURRAHMAN  
FACHIR



THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF  
SERBIA NIKOLA SELAKOVIĆ  
GIVES WELCOME ADDRESS AT  
THE INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



INTERFAITH CONFERENCE



SERBIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH IRINEJ WITH HEADS OF SERBIAN AND INDONESIA DELEGATIONS





DELEGATIONS OF SERBIA AND  
INDONESIA



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING THE NATIONAL  
ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF SERBIA



RECEPTION AT THE CABINET  
OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX  
PATRIARCH IRINEJ



SERBIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH IRINEJ AND SERBIAN ORTHODOX BISHOP OF BAČKA IRINEJ WITH THE HEAD OF INDONESIAN DELEGATION ABDURRAHMAN FACHIR, AMBASSADOR OF INDONESIA IN SERBIA HARRY JAMES KANDOU, DIRECTOR OF THE ADMINISTRATION FOR COOPERATION WITH CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES MILETA RADOJEVIĆ, COORDINATORS OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE ALEKSANDAR RAKOVIĆ AND JOVANA RAKOVIĆ AND AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FROM INDONESIA CHRISTINA RUNGKAT HADININGRAT



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA VISITING ISLAMIC COMMUNITY OF SERBIA HEADED BY REISU-L-ULEMA ADEM ZILKIĆ





DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING THE PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
TOMISLAV NIKOLIĆ



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING JEWISH COMMUNITY  
IN SERBIA HEADED BY RABBI  
ISAK ASIEL



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING SERBIAN ORTHODOX  
BISHOP OF SREM VASILIJE



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING THE ORTHODOX  
SEMINARY OF ST. ARSENIJE OF  
SREM IN SREMSKI KARLOVCI



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING SERBIAN ORTHODOX  
BISHOP OF BAČKA IRINEJ AND  
THE KOVILJ MONASTERY



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA  
VISITING THE ARCHIVES OF  
YUGOSLAVIA HEADED BY  
DIRECTOR MILADIN MILOŠEVIĆ





RENEWAL OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY IN BELGRADE AND FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND THE STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH. MEMORANDUM IS SIGNED BY RECTORS VLADIMIR BUMBAŠIREVIĆ AND DEDE ROSIADA AND DEAN PREDRAG PUZOVIĆ



DELEGATION OF INDONESIA VISITING THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF BELGRADE HEADED BY ARCHBISHOP STANISLAV HOČEVAR







