



International
Labour
Office

Convergences: decent work and social justice in religious traditions

A handbook



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International Labour Office

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Foreword

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“... universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice...” The ILO’s founders were visionary indeed when in 1919 they set out the premise of this new Organization. With these words, the ILO’s Constitution recognized that peace could not be reduced to the absence of war. There was a broad understanding that it was also a matter of preserving human dignity and waging a war against want and inequity.

The ILO was born out of real life struggles for equity centred on the workplace as the heartbeat of economy and society. In work, issues of human dignity, the well-being and stability of families, communities and societies mesh with the productive system.

After the ravages of the First World War, the ILO represented hope and the promise of an economic system with the checks and balances that could deliver social justice with work as a principal instrument of this process. Its mission is distilled in the concept of decent work. Over the last few decades the world has experienced the upheaval of a process of globalization from which many benefitted – but too many more have not. The backlash was predictable and in the wake of the worst crisis since the Great Depression it has come to a head with more and more people feeling that they are too small to matter, that human dignity counts for little, that globalization lacks an ethical foundation. There is a growing sense of anger and disarray.

The downside of globalization is commonly experienced through the world of work – poor wages and working conditions, unemployment, underemployment, forced labour, child labour, sweat factories, diminished or no social protection, restrictions on organizing, and the list goes on.

Today, realizing decent work for all – promoting opportunities for work in ways that respect human dignity and in the context of each society – is an imperative in restoring balance and bringing human values to bear on policy choices.

When Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and I met in 2010, we both felt that our organizations should engage in a common journey based on the conviction and knowledge that peace, social justice and the world of work were intertwined.

This handbook is the very first outcome of that encounter. We were delighted when our project was reinforced with the participation of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Spirituality and values are essential in the quest for a fair globalization. This handbook demonstrates that in different religions and spiritual traditions there is great convergence of values on the subject of work. Human dignity, solidarity and above all the connection between work, social justice and peace put us on common ground. There is much to inspire and guide future action.

This handbook is a first step. I see much scope for future collaboration to expedite the dawn of a new era of social justice drawing on our shared values.

I look forward to our continuing collaboration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juan Somavia', with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Juan Somavia
Director-General of the ILO



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Introduction

Peace and social justice in an era of globalization

Today, globalization is taking its toll. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and its Decent Work Agenda can contribute significantly to building a fairer globalization through its strongly articulated values and concrete objectives for improving labour conditions and the market.

Starting from this context, we have been continuing our journey of dialogue with religious organizations and communities. We have had a longstanding and ongoing interaction with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Catholic Church through the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), an organization of the Islamic Conference and Muslim scholars, has also joined the dialogue. Quite naturally, together we have been discussing our fundamental values: questions of human dignity, solidarity and security, peace, and social – values enshrined in the Decent Work Agenda.

With religious leaders, a common concern for the future

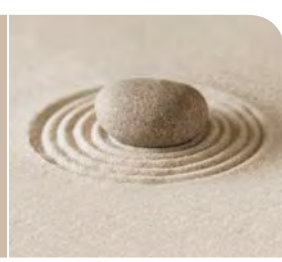
Religious leaders, when they engage in dialogue, reflect not only their own tradition and heritage but also their commitments to society. Through such conversations, the future of our common humanity becomes the point of central concern.

Religious communities share the life and concerns of their followers. They recognize that work is the cornerstone of everyone's humanity. Decent work – work undertaken in conditions of dignity and security – helps sustain individuals and their families, children and youth. It also means providing care for the elderly. It helps individuals, neighbours, society and the environment.

A global convergence on values

As the economic crisis and other changes arose globally, we conducted a series of seminars with religious leaders. Everywhere we went – Addis Ababa, Dakar, Geneva and Santiago – convergences were striking. This is reflected in this handbook.

Convergence means respecting each tradition. We did not want to start an ethical discussion by being overly global and ultimately disrespecting the history



and commitments of each community. So we decided to avoid general synthesis and to present instead each tradition in its own words and from its own perspective. Each tradition discussed here should be able to recognize its references and sources.

Convergence also means mutual enrichment. Many groups have already engaged in inter-religious dialogues and have experienced the rich understanding that follows as well as the importance that cultural dialogue can have for peace. They also have witnessed the limits of such exercises. But dialoguing about the workplace has been in a sense a completely new experience. The mosaic of voices in this handbook is an invitation to keep the space open for dialogue.

Finally, convergence enables loyal partnerships. This handbook was supported by WCC, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and ISESCO. In addition, we were greatly assisted by scholars of the Yeshiva University as well as those of the European Buddhist Association (EBA). At a local level, Chilean and Ethiopian delegates have agreed to create an interreligious council for the promotion of decent work in their respective country. As our seminars continue across other regions, it is our hope further platforms will be created. These will form the basis for future cooperation.

As we explore new convergences, many religious traditions will be invited to join the discussion. This will help us deepen our understanding of each other and we sincerely hope that this first attempt will facilitate future cooperation. Our network can be also be expanded to bring scholars and universities into these in-depth discussion of ethics in the world of work.

Toward concrete projects

This handbook also represents other commitments. The convergence of values it reflects clearly demonstrates that we can do more together for peace – peace through social justice. Work resonates in the lives of many. This is recognized by religious communities and their leaders, many of whom are worried especially about their young populations. Many also want dignity, security and aspirations to be a fundamental part of everyone's life. This process of dialogue we have begun aims to open dialogue and build bridges in a search for solutions to these concerns. Can we together look for ways to help our youths' futures? Can we together find and encourage the provision of an adequate social protection for all? This remains to be seen, but these convergences hold promise. ‘

A value-based organization

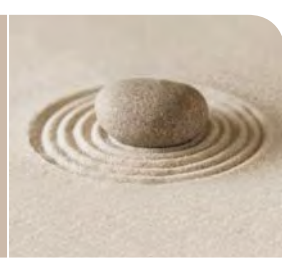
Today, the ILO's mandate is fully expressed through the Decent Work agenda. Decent Work is defined by four equally important strategic objectives – employment, social protection, social dialogue and fundamental rights at work. These objectives are inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive. By focusing on these areas, the ILO continues its nearly one-hundred-year commitment to value-based responses to challenges in the world of work.

The ILO's core values were identified in two foundational documents: the ILO Constitution (1919) and the Declaration of Philadelphia (1944). There are also two significant texts addressing globalization in relation to these values: the Declaration on Fundamental Rights at Work (1998) and the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008). Both laid out objectives for improving workers' conditions and the contribution of labour to the global economy with underlying values affirmed by the Organization.

The International Labour Organization

The ILO Constitution (1919), is the founding document of the Organization. Following from the Constitution, three ILO Declarations have shaped the Organization's values and its programme and priorities:

- Declaration of Philadelphia (1944)
- Declaration on Fundamental Rights at Work (1998)
- Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008)



Peace and social justice: Values in the history of the Organization

The ILO Constitution

The pursuit of peace through social justice and the improvement of labour conditions are the double values expressed throughout ILO history and central to the ILO's vision and mandate. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) laid the groundwork for the ILO Constitution. Written out of the growing awareness in the post-war era of the world's economic interdependence, the Constitution is a response to the need for international cooperation to obtain comparable universal working conditions. The ILO was the first tripartite organization and brought together governments, employers and workers. The Constitution's preamble states:

“Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;”

In the recognition that improved working conditions directly impact the realization of peace.

“And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperiled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required;”

Where such improvements can herald greater and sustained cooperation between countries, facilitated by the Organization.

“Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries.”

These fundamental values reflected the common goal of the Organization and have consequently shaped its activities and initiatives.

The Philadelphia Declaration

During the Second World War, the Organization reaffirmed these principles and the Declaration of Philadelphia, adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1944, confirmed this commitment. It strongly affirmed that:

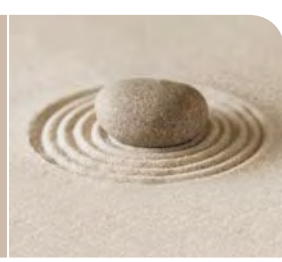
- Labour is not a commodity;
- Freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress;
- Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere;
- The war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare.

In addition, the Organization restated its commitment to social justice by articulating with greater force its values and objectives:

- All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity.

This objective should be “the central aim of national and international policy”. It is the role of the Organization to assess these in this light. Significantly, material well-being and “spiritual development” are at the core of the Declaration and central to the world of work.

Following the 1944 Declaration, in the shadow of the Cold War, the Organization adopted key Conventions which changed the landscape of labour relations and enjoyed successful ratification levels. In fact, during the period of 1930-1999, six of the ILO’s eight core Conventions were adopted. At the same time, the ILO created and expanded technical cooperation, paving the way for its future work in social justice and globalization.



Values in the era of the Globalization

At the turn of the new century, the expansion of globalization and the recent social and financial crisis have created new challenges. In their wake, the International Labour Organization has been compelled to re-examine its role as a value-based organization and define its role on the international stage.

Declaration on Fundamental Rights at Work (1998)

The necessity to adopt a new Declaration specifying the obligations of ILO members emerged with the rise of globalization in a context where “economic growth is essential but not sufficient to ensure equity, social progress and the eradication of poverty.” To this end, the 1998 Declaration encapsulates the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work:

- Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- The elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour;
- The effective abolition of child labour;
- The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

What had comprised the principles of the ILO’s core Conventions were now embodied in the Declaration.



Declaration on social justice for a fair globalization (2008)

The current state of globalization can be characterized by the diffusion of new technologies, the flow of ideas and capital, the exchange of goods and services and the internationalization of business and business processes. In addition, globalization has brought about increased movement of people, especially working women and men. All these changes have profoundly reshaped the world of work. This process of economic cooperation and integration has helped a number of countries achieve improved rates of economic growth and employment creation. In addition, these nations have been able to absorb many of their rural poor into the urban economy while advancing developmental goals and fostering innovation in product development and the circulation of ideas. However, global economic integration has also caused many countries and sectors to face major challenges such as income inequality, high levels of unemployment and poverty and vulnerabilities to external economic shocks. In addition, globalization has contributed to an increase in both unprotected work and a larger informal economy. This has in turn impacted the employment relationship and the protections it traditionally offers (ILO Social Justice Declaration).

“The ILO is concerned with decent work. The goal is not just the creation of jobs, but the creation of jobs of acceptable quality. The quantity of employment cannot be divorced from its quality. All societies have a notion of decent work, but the quality of employment can mean many things. It could relate to different forms of work, and also to different conditions of work, as well as feelings of value and satisfaction. The need today is to devise social and economic systems which ensure basic security and employment while remaining capable of adaptation to rapidly changing circumstances in a highly competitive global market.”

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia, 87th Session of the International Labour Conference, 1999



The goal of full and productive employment and decent work has also become widely recognized on the world's stage. At the UN World Summit in 2005, 150 global leaders resolved to make it a central objective of their national and international policies and strategies. This commitment was reaffirmed in 2006 at the UN Economic and Social Council and UN bodies and international financial institutions were called upon to mainstream this goal into their policies, programmes and activities.

Concern over the effects of globalization led to 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the reaffirmation of the fundamental values of freedom, human dignity, social justice, security and non-discrimination. These values have been put forward as essential for sustainable economic and social development and efficiency. They support the Decent Work Agenda and underscore the spirit of ILO activities and commitments.

The Declaration on Social Justice is built on the concept of decent work as it is laid out in the Decent Work Agenda. ILO values are now articulated through the four strategic objectives set forward in that Declaration: employment, social protection, fundamental principles and rights at work and social dialogue, where gender equality is a cross cutting initiative.



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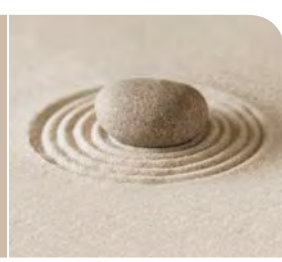
Religion in dialogue: a contribution for peace and social justice

Interreligious dialogue is an effective and important tool for building peace and justice on the local, national and international level. To this end, the ILO has been working in the spirit of interreligious dialogue as part of its continuing exploration of the meaning of work and social justice. Together, the ILO and civil society partners including faith-based organizations have been identifying common values and goals. Through these discussions, they are poised to form deeper understandings on work and social justice and find new solutions for instilling them on every level. Furthermore, though this interreligious cooperation, wider recognition of universal decent work values has been generated, intensifying the push for their realization.

In preparation for this project, we have assembled a repository of information on religious, philosophical and spiritual perspectives on work and social justice. This collection has been instrumental both for facilitating a comparison of faith-based responses to these issues and pinpointing philosophical convergences and differences on areas of common concern such as child labour, minimum wages, forced labour and maternity rights. Furthermore, these partnerships have helped think through the meaning of interreligious dialogue itself and its contribution to international development.

The ILO's first broad-based interreligious dialogue was organized on the heels of the adoption of the Decent Work Agenda. Following a year-long consultation, and in conjunction with the World Council of Churches (WCC), an international seminar on faith-based and spiritual perspectives on decent work was held in Geneva in February 2002. The seminar was attended by international scholars and activists representing different spiritual faiths and philosophical traditions who shared their perspectives on decent work. Through this initiative, relationships were formed with an international, interfaith community and resulted in the ILO/World Council of Churches publication entitled *Philosophical and Spiritual Perspectives on Decent Work* (2004).

Since the 2002 dialogue, the ILO has continued to build a network of partners interested in contributing to an ongoing comparative religious and philosophical discussion on work. Some of these partners attended a second seminar in Geneva in



April 2011, held in cooperation with the WCC , the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the ISESCO and other partners (such as globethics.net). Participants addressed the topics of commitments to social justice, rights based approaches and ethics to work and the meaning of work in each tradition. In exchange, ILO specialists detailed current challenges facing youth employment, child labour and social protection and explained ILO standards.

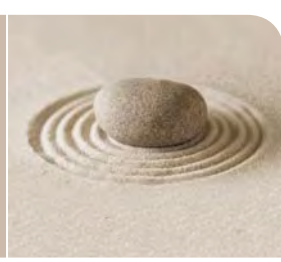
The ILO has also been recently moving this interreligious dialogue out of its Geneva headquarters and into various regions in the world. In December 2009 the seminar, “Le travail décent: perspectives interreligieuses,” was held in Dakar, Senegal, hosted by the ILO and in cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The ILO Office in Santiago, Chile, in conjunction with the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace met in July 2011 to discuss faith-based perspectives of the ILO agenda in the Chilean context with representatives from the Catholic, Christian Evangelical and Jewish traditions. From this meeting came a Declaration to create the Interreligious Commission on Decent Work in Chile, with the aim of furthering social dialogue on decent work in that country. In November 2011, another interfaith dialogue on social justice and decent work agenda was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between representatives from the Christian Orthodox, Muslim, Lutheran and Evangelical Christian communities.



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In conjunction with these dialogues, the ILO has also been collaborating with research and faith-based centres to make academic papers, data and research and conference proceedings accessible to scholars who are concerned about social justice and devoted to interreligious dialogue. The WCC is a long-standing ILO civil society partner and the two have collaborated on hosting interreligious seminars and have issued joint publications. The WCC has and continues to provide guidance and support to the ILO in its work on interreligious dialogue.

Of course, the ILO is not unique in encouraging interreligious dialogue for the promotion of social justice. Interreligious, or interfaith, dialogue is a widely respected means for forging understandings between groups in a pluralistic globalized community. The World Council of Churches has a long-standing programme on inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. Its handbook *Ecumenical Considerations for Dialogue and Relations with People of Other Religions* (2003) sets out guiding principles on how to approach religious plurality and advocates joining “in a common pursuit of justice, peace and constructive action for the good of all people”. The WCC has also participated in regular bi-lateral dialogues with other religious traditions. Over the past decade, the WCC has especially focused on interreligious work with Muslim organizations. In November 2010, the WCC co-organized a major consultation with two leading Muslim institutions which focused on how education can encourage openness and interfaith dialogue. The WCC has also cooperated with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). Together, these three organizations have published a “code of conduct” which sets out principles for appropriate Christian witness. For its own part, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) – the Catholic Church’s central office for the promotion of interreligious dialogue – was created by the Church for the promotion of mutual understanding, respect and collaboration between different religions and to encourage the study of religion and encourage dialogue. Recently, it has been collaborating with the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (RIIFS). This Institute was formed under the patronage of Prince El Hassan bin Talal. Its research initially focused on Christianity in Arab and Islamic society and has since grown to encompass cultural and civilizational diversity on the regional and global level. RIIFS and PDIC have been cooperating on an education project, using the two traditions as a point of departure for discussion and debate on notions of human and religious education.



Protestant traditions


The Bible is the main source of reference.

The Ecumenical movement has held regular world conferences in which it has committed itself to social justice. Before the founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC), these included:

The Stockholm Conference, 1925: The Report of the Universal Council of Life and Work

Conference at Oxford, 1937: The churches surveyed their tasks, reported to the Conference

Since the WCC was formed, it has met regularly in Assembly, including: Amsterdam 1948; New Delhi, 1961; Uppsala, 1968; Nairobi, 1975; Vancouver, 1983; Canberra, 1991; Harare, 1998 and Porto Alegre, 2006.



Catholic tradition

The Bible is the main source of reference. For the social doctrine of the Church, its major texts are:

Council Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965 (GS)

Papal Encyclicals:

Leo XIII: *Rerum novarum*, 1891 (RN)

Pie XI: *Quadragesimo anno*, 1931

John XXIII: *Mater et Magistra*, 1961; *Pacem in terris*, 1963

Paul VI: *Populorum progressio*, 1967 (PP); *Octogesima adveniens*, 1971

John Paul II : *Laborem exercens*, 1981(LE); *Centesimus annus*, 1991 (CA)

Benedict XVI: *Caritas in veritate*, 2009 (CV)

Pontifical council for Justice and Peace: *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church* (CSDC)



Islamic tradition

The fundamental text in the **Islamic** faith is the Qu'ran, believed to be the verbatim word of God spoken to the Prophet Mohammed. It was exemplified and illustrated by the *Sunnah* and the *Hadith*. The Holy Qur'an is the document of spiritual and moral guidance of Islamic doctrine, law and ethics. The *Sunnah* is the law deduced from the normative practices set up by the Prophet. It gives the concrete shape of the Quranic teachings – various degrees of permissibility and prohibition. The *Hadith* is the narrative by individual companions of the normative practices of the Prophet. There are five acts, or pillars, of Islam that Muslim are expected to follow: 1) testimony; 2) prayer; 3) fasting; 4) almsgiving; 5) pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (if one can afford it).



Jewish tradition

The main source is the Torah, comprised of 5 books (also known as the Pentateuch): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

In addition to the 5 books of the Torah, are 19 others, totaling 24.

- Nevi'im (Prophets) is comprised of 8 books
- Ketuvim (Writings) is comprised of 11 books

Together, these three parts – Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim – make the Tanakh

The Talmud (“instruction”, “learning”) is the collection of Rabbinic commentary, debate and discussion on Jewish law, ethics, philosophy, customs and history. It is divided into two components: 1) Mishnah (c. 200 B.C.E.), a written compendium of Jewish law; 2) Gemara (c. 500 C.E.), a discussion on the Mishnah and the Tanakh. Two centres of Jewish scholarship produced two Talmuds: the older compilation is the Jerusalem Talmud (fourth century, Israel) and the Babylonian Talmud (500 C.E.). The Babylonian Talmud is most commonly referred to.



Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion and philosophy mostly based on the teachings of Siddhartha Guatama, also known as the Buddha (“the awakened one”). The Buddha lived and taught on the Indian subcontinent sometime between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE. There are three different ‘yâna’ (vehicle or path to enlightenment) in Buddhist philosophy: Mahâyâna (Great), Hînayâna (Lesser), and Vajrayâna (Diamond). Each stipulates different requirements for moving from ignorance to enlightenment. Mahâyâna is the “Great” vehicle because it is the most accessible and the most widely practised. It has spread throughout East Asia and is today practised in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. It is also the most widely known form of Buddhism in Europe.

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The Meaning of work in religious traditions

Work touches on many aspects of human life. The kind of labour people are involved in and how they are treated while at work directly impacts their sense of dignity, their solidarities, their life at home and their involvement in the community. Understanding the meaning of work across religious traditions provides insight into possibilities for worker and employer responsibilities and relationships as well as different conceptions of social protection and justice. This section provides brief explorations into the meaning of work across five traditions: Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. Still, with these short sections we can begin to make connections between these faiths, which could in turn help set a foundation for dialogue.

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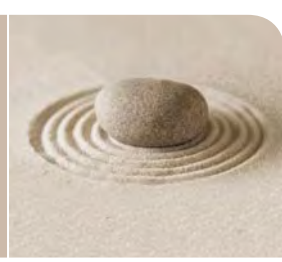


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Protestantism



The Ecumenical engagement with labour and social justice predates the founding of the WCC in 1948. Over a decade before, the Oxford Life and Work Conference (1937) fully affirmed the social and economic rights of working people. This is predicated on the belief that the image of God can be found in each person so should be treated with dignity. This belief has informed many of the WCC's labour-related activities which have focused on race, caste, gender equality, economic and conflict-driven migration, and especially, finding a just international economic order. As early as the 1980s, the WCC Labour and Employment Advisory Group on Economic Matters focused on the issue of "jobless growth". In 1996 at the Harare Assembly, the WCC supported putting the challenges of economic globalization at the centre of the Ecumenical agenda, affirming that, "For the ecumenical movement, globalization must be assessed against the goal of a life lived in dignity in just and sustainable communities." Since then, the WCC has critiqued the assumptions underlying the current economic order including the feminization of labour issues, trade policies, the effects of climate change on the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and of globalization of capital on unemployment and agriculture. This has resulted in a series of campaigns including the 2002 global "Trade for People" campaign which called "for recognition that human rights and social and environmental agreements take priority over trade agreements".

Catholicism



In Catholic teachings, the meaning of work stems from the meaning of human life. Both men and women cooperate with God and are entrusted with Creation, nature, the environment and what is "seen and unseen". All human activities, ranging from agriculture to industry, services to public administration, are part and parcel of this relationship. In *Laborem Exercens* (LE), John Paul II reiterates this, "The word of God's revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the Creator and that, within the limits of his own human capabilities, man in a sense continues to develop that activity, and perfects it as he advances further and further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation" (LE 25).

Work brings joy and satisfaction on the one hand and pain and suffering on the other. While it is true that man eats the bread produced by the work of his hands – meaning not only the daily bread that his body keeps alive, but also the bread of science and progress, civilization and culture – it is also true that he eats this bread by “the sweat of his face”. This means that it is not only through personal effort and toil but also through tensions, conflicts and crises that one’s relationship with the reality of work disturbs the life of individual societies and also of all humanity (LE 4). Catholic social teachings have always examined the conditions of work carefully and how the principles of justice can be brought to it.

The best approach for incorporating the principles of justice into work is by paying attention to the subjective dimension of work. The objective dimension changes drastically over time, with the development and expansion of technology, industrial production, communication, trade and communication. However, the “human being is the subject of work” and the purpose of all human action is to serve and nurture humanity. Therefore, work is not and cannot be treated as a commodity. Still, there is risk involved in treating work as a kind of “merchandise” or an “impersonal force” as Pope John Paul II warned.

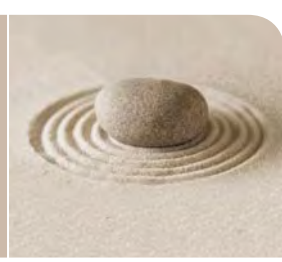
Lastly, an expression of the meaning of work can be found in the debate on wages. The social teachings of the Church have always emphasized that a just wage cannot only refer to the task accomplished. Wages should enable workers and their families to live above the poverty line and provide them with enough for food, lodging, rest and family responsibilities including educating their children.

Islam



The Arabic equivalent of the word “work” is “*amal*”, referring to a form of worship in a broad Islamic sense. According to this perspective, the rituals of worship in Islam are not just satisfied through prayer, fasting and pilgrimage, but also through lawful work. The Qur’an states: “on those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will Allah most gracious below love” (19/96). Several *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed) reiterate this perspective. The Prophet said, “the one who, at the end of the day, is exhausted by the work of his hands, is forgiven by God” (Ref 13). As such, Muslims are not encouraged to give up working and earning a living, even to worship God.

Another close Arabic equivalent of the word work is *sun*^c meaning creation



and production of arts and crafts. In the Islamic tradition, there are significant differences between the acts of God and those of human beings. Unlike the acts of God, human acts are never of creation from *ex nihilo*, but of transformation, sometimes in a creative way: matter to matter, matter to energy, energy to matter or energy to energy. Furthermore, God does not expect to be rewarded. On the contrary, human work is motivated by reward and performed in exchange for wages (called *ajr* in Arabic) that maintain workers and their families. Work can also be charitable unpaid works of goodness where the reward is reaped in the hereafter.

In the Islamic tradition work is an effort and considered a positive load rather than a negative burden. Any activity is considered work if it is purposeful, guided by intent and undertaken lawfully. Any harmful activity, even if it results in significant wealth, is unlawful.

Judaism



The Jewish traditions' perspective on the meaning of work is taken from its written and oral traditions, which together inform Jewish perspectives on social justice and labour. In this tradition, work is both a privilege and an obligation. People have a sense of dignity when they are given work that is based on their capabilities and their creativity. Work is a fundamental right which ensures self-sustenance and provides a means for serving God.

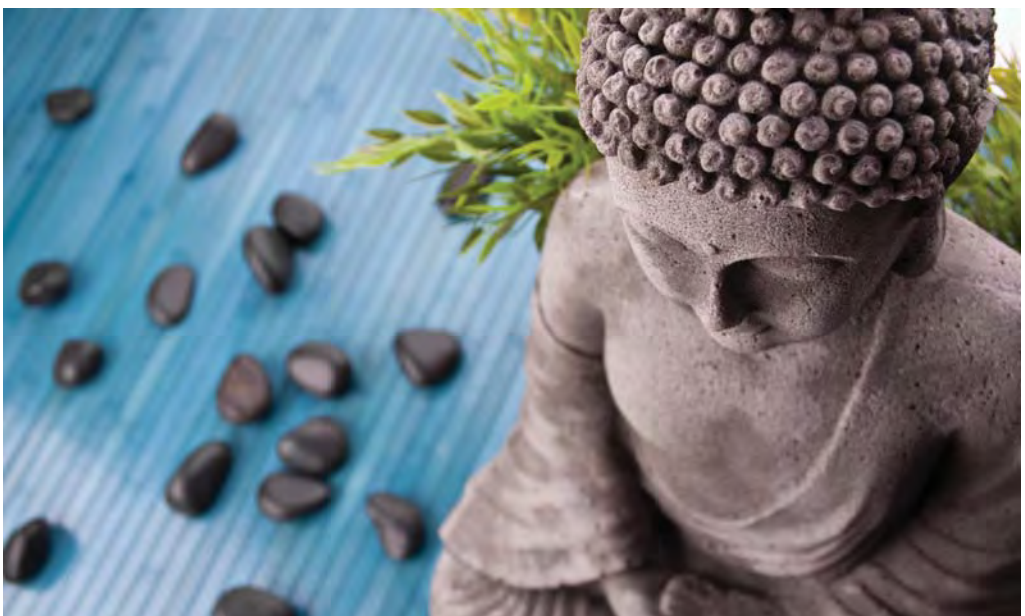
Two words are connected to the concept of work in Hebrew – *melakhah* and *avodah*. The first, means “envoy of a King” and can be used to describe angels working in the service of God. The second, can either refer to the work of a labourer or service in the Temple. *Avodah* can in fact be used to refer to the work of slaves. The connection between work and slavery brought together through this word demonstrates the potential slippery slope that can occur from working in order to glorify God to working to serve a master. Becoming imprisoned by labour can be an individual choice, or can happen through an external factor. In either case, slavery is repudiated by Judaism, a principle stemming from the Jews' enslavement in Ancient Egypt. It is believed that coercion to work results in social inequalities. As a means of pursuing equality, the Jewish tradition outlines employers' and workers' rights and obligations. Together, the meanings for *melakhah* and *avodah* show fluidity in the Jewish concept of work. Work is at once a manner of glorifying God and for contributing to the present world.

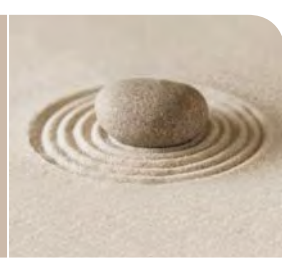
Buddhism



Many Buddhists recognize that work has two main functions. First, it is the means of earning a living and ensuring autonomy. Buddhists consider financial independence an act of generosity because the rest of the community is not burdened by providing for the individual. This generosity is also manifested when work allows people to provide for their children with a healthy and stable environment. Second, work fosters personal development and growth. Buddha advised his followers to test his teachings on a daily basis and to continually examine their meaning. Tensions in everyday life and actions in domains such as politics, economy, family life, generate emotional reactions. Through these tensions, believers experiment with the truth of the Buddha's teachings.

The meaning we attribute to work largely depends on the intention through which it is pursued. While constantly evaluating responsibilities and contradictions in life can be exhausting, this process also opens a space to understand the suffering of ourselves and others. Through such suffering, it is possible to realize the extent to which one is in touch with the inner self and understand how emotions can cloud our judgment.





Core ILO values in religious traditions

“The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.”

Juan Somavia, ILO Director-General

Three values – human dignity, solidarity and security and social justice – are at the root of the ILO’s activities. Since the Constitution was written in 1919, these values have been fine-tuned and nuanced to reflect the struggles of each time and address an evolving economy and a globalized world. This value-based approach to the respecting workers has also been a central consideration for many religious traditions. In fact, just like for the ILO, many religious traditions have based their positions upon deep examinations of dignity, solidarity and security and social justice.

Human dignity

All ILO activities stem from the concept that “Labour is not a commodity.” First expressed in the 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia, it has helped shape how the ILO defines human dignity. Because full and productive labour is a key factor in ensuring human dignity, respect for workers and labour is paramount. The Preamble to the Declaration proposes the following basic labour requirements:

...regulation of the hours of work including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education and other measures.

The ILO is not alone in its definition of labour rights and human dignity. Most of the rights laid out in the Declaration of Philadelphia and subsequent ILO Declarations are congruent with religious texts and commentaries stating that work is a fundamental right which brings personal fulfillment and ensures independence:



Protestant traditions: Work is both a calling from God and a duty. 1 Peter 4:10 declares that each person has a vocation which they have been granted by God: “serve one another with the gift each of you has received.” Each person is responsible for developing this vocation to become a contributing member of society. In so doing, the individual lives with dignity by supporting his family and his community.



Catholic tradition: The religious teachings explain the role and significance of work as part of the human experience. This concept is linked to the tradition of Personalism which places the human being at the centre of Creation in relation to God and also at the centre of the social question. “Work is a fundamental right and a good for mankind, a useful good, worthy of man because it is an appropriate way for him to give expression to and enhance his human dignity. The Church teaches the value of work not only because it is always something that belongs to the person but also because of its nature as something necessary” (CSDC 287). In his support for the Decent Work Agenda (DWA), Pope Benedict fully developed that labour conditions respect and foster human dignity when the work is freely chosen and effectively associates workers – both women and men – with the development of their community and when it enables workers to be respected and free from discrimination (CV 63).



The Islamic tradition: *Karama* is the Arabic word for dignity. The Qur’an and on several occasions, the Prophet, stated unequivocally that work has to be performed in an environment and under conditions that safeguard the dignity of human beings. Menial or degrading labour is forbidden in Islam, especially that which objectifies and dehumanizes workers for the sake of productivity and profit. On the dignity of labour and workers’ rights in Islam, the Prophet said, “Your servants are your brothers. God has put them in your care, so feed them with what you eat, clothe them with what you wear, and do not assign tasks s/ he cannot bear, if you do so, help them in their hard job” (Al-Bukhari).



Therefore, decent working conditions and respect for human dignity are obligations in Islam.



The Jewish tradition: Scriptures reiterate the value of work and the dignity it brings to the workers. The rabbis in the Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 8a state: “he who takes pleasure in his work is more worthy than one who is content to fear God.” Deuteronomy 24:14-15 explains all workers be respected and paid for their work, regardless of who they are: “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers, or one of the strangers who are in your lands and your gates. At his day you shall give him his wages, nor shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and his life depends upon it, lest he cry against you to the Lord and it be a sin for you.”



The Buddhist tradition: Buddha taught that employers should provide good working conditions to their employees, paying close attention to fostering decency and dignity. Likewise, he stressed that workers should contribute to the development of his workplace to the best of their abilities. In so doing, he underlined the interdependence of all stakeholders in a place of work. In this time of deregulation, there is a tendency to concentrate on personal interest and short-term gain; however, eventually interdependence becomes unavoidable. Disrespect for the dignity of others stems from one cause: not being or trying to be fully present in one’s own situation. Overcome by superficial worries in the world of work, people are continually assaulted by torrents of emotion and look for immediate gratification to seek reassurance. Injustices in the workplace are not a result of hatred, but rather, of blindness to the fact that people do not perceive how they are interconnected.

Although each tradition takes a unique perspective on the meaning of work, there is nonetheless a collective and unstated agreement that work is a fundamental right for all. In granting this right, individuals can derive a sense of dignity through labour and the potential to support themselves and their families. This general agreement lends implicit support to the ILO’s guiding principle of full and productive employment for all and opens the way for building mutual support between social and religious actors and the ILO.

Solidarity and security

The ILO recognizes that solidarity among nations and security for workers are crucial for the wellbeing of all. The social dimension of work indicates that workers must come together and cooperate in order to accomplish the work at hand. When workers and employers are allowed to organize themselves, their collective voice becomes a powerful medium through which they can protect their rights derived from this recognition. The basic right to freedom of association was written into the ILO Constitution and later reaffirmed in the Declaration of Philadelphia, which cited it as “essential to sustained progress”. This brings security not just in the workplace but also to families and the community. In addition, since its foundation, the ILO has acknowledged that this security could not be ensured unless cooperation and solidarity among nations was anchored within an international organization. The creation of the ILO derived from this recognition. By functioning as a tripartite organization, the ILO has written social dialogue into its very structure and its activities support governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations by setting international labour standards and providing technical cooperation. In so doing, the ILO has been contributing to the promotion of solidarity and security since the end of the First World War.

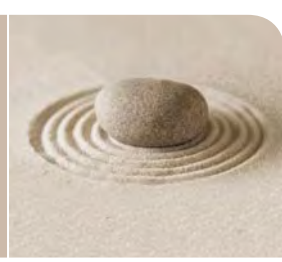
Religious traditions’ positions on solidarity and security in the world of work are rooted in each faith’s texts and have been realized in their application throughout history and across regions.



Protestant traditions have a history of promoting solidarity by advocating for the rights and dignity of labourers so they are able to take pleasure in and profit from their hard work. In fact, Reformed thinkers agreed that workers’ rights and freedom of association were basic political rights. Today, the Protestant traditions’ non-hierarchical system offers a good position from which social dialogue can be encouraged.



Catholic social teaching recognizes that people’s activities and even societies as a whole are increasingly interdependent. This is also true for work – people do not just work for themselves for also for others. John XXIII indicated this trend as one of the positive reasons for the development of economic and social rights (*Mater et Magistra*). However, there are two obligations



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that result from this trend: firstly, developing and reinforcing cooperation between States and political entities so that solidarity does not become limited by boundaries. Secondly, it is necessary to strengthen the responsibility for protection. Pope Benedict emphasized this dimension in an address to the United Nations (UN). Therefore, special attention needs to be paid to the poor as well as the eradication of poverty.



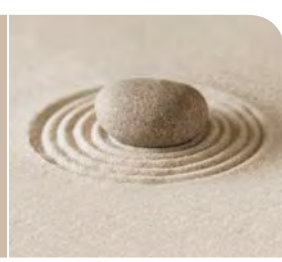
In the **Islamic** tradition, the Arabic word *haqq* binds together the notion of rights and duty. One of the five pillars of Islam is *zakāt* – donating a certain proportion of wealth annually to charitable causes. *Zakāt* is a mandatory process for Muslims to physically and spiritually purify their yearly earnings that exceed their essential needs. It can also take the form of useful voluntary unpaid work. In the Islamic tradition, these works are rewarded in the present and the hereafter. *Zakāt* helps promote a more balanced relationship between the rich and poor and demonstrates how equity, mutual respect and consideration for others are inherent in the moral teachings of Islam. These same principles must also be at the foundation of the employer/worker relationship.



Jewish support for solidarity is rooted in Talmudic law which contains specific laws supporting the rights of the worker. It was generally believed that workers needed protection and as well as freedom of association, where social dialogue is an essential component for building solidarity. In the 20th century, Talmudic laws intended to build solidarity were put into practice when strong Jewish labour organizations were created first in Europe and later in the United States of America. These organizations were secular in practice, but derived from traditional Jewish laws and values.



A key concept in both **Buddhism** and globalization is interdependence: exclusion can have a detrimental effect on workplace solidarity, especially when conflict, pride and greed fuel competition. In response, organizations often claim authority for the well being of all but in so doing create a deeper divide between workers. Only solidarity can fuse individual energies to allow the entire group to move in the same direction. However, the question remains how to stimulate collective cooperation when morals or ethics have failed. There is no single solution for attaining workplace solidarity. Support for collective endeavours cannot be decreed and positive ethical attitudes only come from individual commitment. One possibility is to help people acknowledge their jealousies and demonstrate how these can be disruptive, consuming, and insatiable. A second response is to encourage people to be fully present at their jobs and help them be more mindful of their own emotions and those of others. Although difficult to maintain this state of awareness on a daily basis, it should be cultivated when it happens. Recognizing this self-awareness leaves space for building solidarity. Furthermore, when solidarity expands, so does security: physical security increases because people are protecting each other and psychological security increases when people become more in tune with themselves.



Social Justice

“I come to you from the International Labour Organization with a secular appeal to all people of faith: we need action now, right away, urgently. To begin with, for each of us to live our values, to integrate principles of justice, fairness, equality and compassion into our daily lives, from the intimacy of our homes to our interaction with the world. To consciously use our moral compass to take decisions, to influence decisions. To make our voices heard. To promote solidarity without frontiers.”

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia statement to Pope John Paul II and attendees of the 1 May 2000 Jubilee of Workers, Vatican City, Italy

Even before the global financial and economic crisis, the ILO had been raising concerns over the way globalization had been reshaping the world of work. The 2008 Declaration for Social Justice for a Fair Globalization is the ILO’s response to the mounting inequalities around the world which have been due in part to an increasing globalized economy. Globalization is defined in the Declaration as “the diffusion of new technologies, the flow of ideas, the exchange of goods and services, the increase in capital and financial flows, the internationalization of business and businesses processes and dialogue as well as the movement of persons, especially



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working women and men.” The measures and recommendations contained in the document were intended to be used by leaders and decision-makers on the local, national and international levels to improve the lives and livelihoods for all. Now, in the face of the global crisis, these recommendations are even more imperative for helping workers, the poor, the unemployed and the underemployed and their families.

The Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization and the Decent Work Agenda are the ILO’s current formulations for how to effect change in the world. As this section has indicated, each religious tradition has also formulated its own interpretation of social justice, made evident through their definitions of human dignity, commentaries on personal and community responsibilities and establishment of rights and regulations in the world of work. These religious formulations are often based on hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years of textual reinterpretation. However, like the ILO, these faiths also continue to evolve by reflecting on current conditions and reworking their respective positions on issues of social justice and rethinking their place in the world.



Protestant traditions: Throughout its history, the ecumenical movement has reflected upon and committed itself to social justice. Today, its main organization, The World Council of Churches is currently the broadest and most inclusive ecumenical movement seeking church unity. Founded in 1948, the fellowship includes most of the world’s Orthodox churches, the Old Catholic and Mar Thoma churches, churches of the historic denominational traditions such as the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed, many united and uniting churches as well as churches such as the Mennonite, Friends, Congregational and Disciples. Part of the WCC’s mission is to engage in Christian service through social justice programmes intended to break down barriers and uphold justice and peace. Part of their mandate is to contribute to interreligious dialogue, recognizing the role it can play in conflict resolution and peace-building. It does so through multi-lateral and bi-lateral encounters that build trust and cooperation in order to meet common challenges and address conflict.



The **Catholic tradition:** *Laborem Exercens* states: “Commitment to justice must be closely linked with commitment to peace in the modern world.” Since the end of the 19th century and in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the Catholic tradition has repeatedly revisited its commitment to social justice. Pope Leo XIII’s *Encyclical Rerum Novarum* (“Of New Things”), subtitled “On the Conditions of Labour,” delivered on May 15th 1891, is the first modern Church response to the social conflict that arose out of the Industrial Revolution. It contains a detailed discussion on justice issues related to the work place. Following *Rerum Novarum* were numerous Church documents which delved deeper into these issues, most explicitly with Pope John Paul II’s *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and recently with Pope Benedict XVI’s 2009 Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. Since John XXIII, the Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly expressed its support for the ILO’s work. This commitment to social justice is also strongly associated with a commitment to peace. According to the social doctrine of the Church, social justice represents a real development in general justice, where working for justice is not restricted to the mere observance of the law. Instead, social justice is related to the social question and is worldwide in scope. The structural dimension of these social justice issues and their respective solutions straddle the social, political and economic domains (CSDC, 201).



In the **Islamic tradition** social justice includes the valuation of work and worker protection. *Wajib*, the common Arabic word for duty conveys the notion of legal obligation. Part of a worker’s duty is to honour the lawful working contract: “O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts” (5:1), and in exchange, they enjoy certain rights. The Qur’an stipulates: “Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.” (16:97). The Prophet Muhammad said, “Give to the worker his wages before his sweat dries” (Ibn Majah), and “I myself shall be the prosecutor of the employer who does not give the worker his dues.” Furthermore, the Islamic state plays a role in ensuring the rights of workers and employers in addition to societal well-being. These mutual obligations are intended to create a peaceful coexistence, a precondition for sustained economic and social prosperity and good governance. Islam prohibits all forms of aggression and violence, except in cases of self-defense and to accept peace with opponents

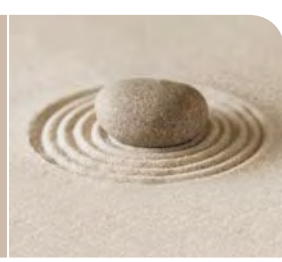
when possible. While Islam allows that perpetrators be brought to justice, it also advocates forgiveness after repentance. The Islamic faith encourages everyone to promote justice, even if that means going against family, the rich or powerful. Evil should be counteracted by good actions.



The **Jewish** concept of *tikkun olam*, which means “repairing the world,” is another prism through which we can understand social justice in this faith. Around the second century CE, the word *olam*, world, had a philosophical meaning tied to the notion of eternity. Much later, *tikkun olam* was subject to reinterpretation and the meaning of *olam* expanded to include the physical world. Over the past fifty years, *tikkun olam* has been reappropriated mostly by the Reform movement and the concept has struck a chord in communities around the world. It is now widely used to teach that all people can be agents of change where everyone possesses the means to improve our world and the lives of all.



In **Buddhism**, committing oneself to social justice is demonstrated through both words and action and is usually driven by a sense of humanism. People’s actions might be derived from either empathy or fear, in each case determining a different attitude to social justice and informing individual ethics. There are two major ways to engage socially in the Buddhist tradition. One is to connect with those who share the same ideals to support the disadvantaged and work to improve the most unjust situations. Gandhi suggested another option for social engagement: “Be how you want the world to be.” This perspective advocates not activism but transformation. When people are first individually and then collectively inspired by a vision of social progress they can affect real social change. These two models of social commitment – activism and transformation – are not mutually exclusive and it is possible to move between the two depending on circumstances. Someone who espouses the transformative model may take part in circles of silence or be delegated to negotiate in difficult situations to bring parties together to find equitable solutions. Ethics lie at the foundation of Buddhism. At the very minimum, this means not doing harm to anyone, and beyond that, being generous, disciplined, patient, enthusiastic in work and concentrating on helping others. Living in this way reflects both an active and a transformative life, in short, the Buddhist as transformative agent as expressed by Gandhi.



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Living in this way means that social commitment also becomes a personal commitment first reflected through thought and then transformed into a permanent state of being.

Buddhists tend to accompany social movements to nourish them with their transformative energy, not create social movements of their own. This is because Buddhists do not seek unanimity and consensus; rather they are encouraged to analyse situations individually and then support others in their convictions. The means that people strive to achieve their utmost without being influenced by the decision of others.

Through these combined reworkings of the meaning of social justice in a globalized world, religious traditions are proving to be strong actors on the world stage. Many of these faiths have their own programmes already in place and have established deep connections in communities around the world. By not only by engaging with these tradition and organizations in dialogue, but also through cooperation on the programme and policy level, many of the vulnerable in each region can be lifted out of poverty.

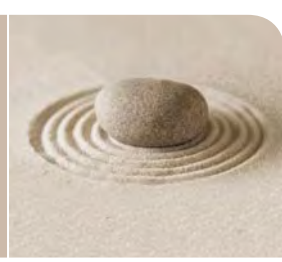
The Decent Work Agenda in dialogue with religious traditions

The core concepts of dignity, solidarity and security and social justice find their current expression in the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (DWA). This agenda is a re-expression of these core values into practical and active terms, placing full and productive employment and decent work at the centre of economic and social policies. Built upon four interdependent pillars – jobs creation, maintaining and supporting rights at work, ensuring social protection and security for all, building social dialogue, and the cross cutting initiative of gender equality – it structures the ILO's programmes and priorities and keeps the issues of workers on the international agenda.

Employment

Creating and promoting employment is the central focus of the employment pillar in the Decent Work Agenda. On an individual level, ensuring a sustainable institutional and economic environment means that people have the possibility to develop their knowledge and skills, making them productively occupied and giving them the chance to attain personal fulfillment. Public and private enterprises can be made more sustainable, leading to their growth as well as generating employment and income opportunities for all. For nations, employment promotion helps societies achieve economic development goals, improves citizens' living standards and contributes to social progress.

The ILO Global Employment Agenda contains comprehensive employment policies and guidelines agreed upon by ILO constituents. The primary aim of this Agenda is to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies in order to better the lives of the unemployed or those whose current remuneration is unable to help them escape from poverty.



Protestant traditions: Employment generation is generally considered to be the responsibility of the community, especially the wealthy. There is an obligation to give work to the employed and to consider one's wealth as a means of creating employment opportunities for others. The responsibility for educating and training individuals first rests on society. The tradition mandates that all people should be given the opportunity to learn to read, write and count, since these are the tools for attaining economic and political freedom. The Ecumenical Council in 1925 stated that while it is not the church's role to generate employment opportunities, it should be there to provide moral and spiritual support to its parishioners. Members of the church were encouraged to work in their communities to help find solutions for unemployment.



Catholic tradition: The most recent Papal Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, addresses the question of employment stating that the goal of access to steady employment for everyone should remain on the international agenda (CV 32). It calls upon all people, especially governments, to continue striving to boost the world's economy while at the same time not ignoring the primary capital – people – by fully protecting their rights (CV 25).



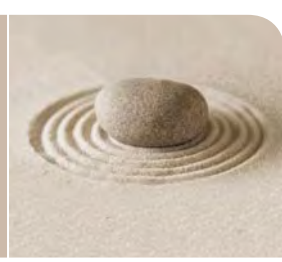
Islamic tradition: Islam teaches that anyone who has the ability and the possibility to work should do so and must not rely on private or public assistance. Laziness is eschewed: included in the daily prayer is a supplication to God to protect each person from sin. According to the Prophet: “the best food man eats is what he earns working with his own hands” (Al-Bukhari). In fact, even the Prophet held a profession, first as a shepherd then as a trader and businessman, even while fulfilling his divine mission, thereby reaffirming the value of work. Muslims are ordered to learn a profession and be trained for a craft. The Prophet said, “God likes when one of you does a work s/he achieves it in a professional way” (Ref 39). He also said “God likes the believer has a profession” (Tabarani).



Jewish tradition: Work is a right, a means of ensuring one's independence and also an obligation. Furthermore, laziness and sloth are frowned upon, Proverbs 18:9 reads "One who is slack in one's work is like a sibling to a vandal." In addition, once people are trained in a profession, they are expected to apply their skills and education to contribute to the greater good. Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim 2 reads: "If a person of learning participates in public affairs and serves as judge or arbiter, that person gives stability to the land... But if a person sits in their home and says to themselves, 'What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people's voices of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!' — if one does this, they overthrow the world."



Buddhist tradition: Buddha urged the wealthy to provide decent working conditions to their employees. Likewise, employees were advised to work their hardest to ensure the smooth functioning of the business. Today, the meaning of employment has changed, where it is defined in opposition to unemployment. This shift has had serious implications on how we view workers, casting them as pawns to be moved between jobs, instead of respecting individual talent. As a result, values such as dignity, solidarity, security are pushed aside, as is any deep discussion on the meaning of a fulfilling professional life. Such attitudes not only disrespect workers, but also have a deleterious effect on their psychological condition, potentially leading to anxiety, increased loneliness and the feeling of lack of prospects for improvement. This current model will not change quickly: history has shown that reason rarely prevails over emotion, and in this case greed dictates employment decisions. Furthermore, because the inherent power structure is so deeply rooted, the mechanism for change exceeds the capabilities of any individual. Buddhists therefore tend to approach this problem from the transformative perspective, where some will join non-violent movements to contribute more wisdom in the world of work.



Social Protection

The social protection pillar is built on two priorities resulting in dignity for all: social security and labour protection. For the first, the ILO recommends that social security be available to all and it include measures regulating basic income protection. For the second, labour protection should entail healthy and safe working conditions as well as wage protection and decent working hours. Each nation's programmes and policies should be implemented in a sustainable manner and in accordance with national circumstances.



Protestant traditions: Part of the Protestant concept of social security included providing work for the unemployed. Contracts between workers and employers were argued for as early as the sixteenth century by Reformed Protestant who also advocated for the legal protection of workers' rights. In 1937, the Oxford Declaration of the Ecumenical Council called for a decent living wage for all workers, irrespective of their work, as well as safe working conditions for all. The tradition has always commanded the right to take a day of rest.



Catholic tradition: Social security, in its traditional form, is ensured through charitable work. Christians are taught and encouraged to care for others, especially the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the vulnerable and the weak. Before any form of work can commence a contract stipulating a fair wage and working hours must be mutually agreed upon both by workers and employer. On the one hand, workers should perform their tasks "fully and faithfully" as per the agreed contract. On the other hand, employers must treat the worker with respect, allow time for religious practice, provide a safe working environment and one day off per week. Social security systems are also key for building solidarity among workers and within society. When the financial crisis began in 2008, Pope Benedict warned of the dangers that financial turmoil could have on social security systems in both developed and developing countries.



Islamic tradition: There is support in Islam to protect workers and employers and their dependents. The Qur'an has outlined a comprehensive view of social protection: "Worship Allah and associate

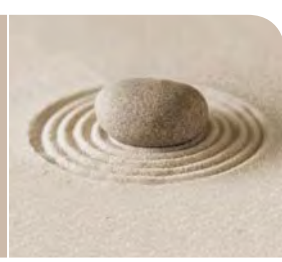
nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess” (4:36). It also says, “give the relative his right (*haqq-abu*), and also the poor and the traveller, and do not spend wastefully” (17:26). Islam preaches moderate consumption, exhorts people to avoid wasting resources, and encourages maintaining the natural balance necessary for promoting social and economic stability as well as security. Thus, social protection is both a right and a responsibility for individuals and society.



Jewish tradition: The Hebrew word *Tsedek* (justice) lies at the root of the Jewish commandment to give- *tzedakah* “righteousness”. The tradition teaches that caring for the poor and helping to eradicate poverty is an expression of human solidarity. In the workplace, workers and employers must agree upon a contract stipulating the type of work, its duration and wages. Ideally, the workers and employers should be considered partners and both are servants to God, as written in Leviticus 25:55, “For the people of Israel are servants to Me” (Leviticus 25:55). Wages are to be paid at the end of each day, as stipulated in Deuteronomy 24:14-15 and Leviticus 19:13: “You shall not defraud your neighbour, nor rob him; the wages of he who is hired shall not remain with you all night until the morning.” Workers and employers are required to take a day of rest from Friday sundown to the following sundown. In fact, refraining from work on the Sabbath is a *mitzvah*, a good deed.



Buddhist tradition: Connected to the principle of interdependence in Buddhism are the notions of solidarity and basic social protection. The nature and extent of basic social protection varies according to national circumstances; however, it is problematic when social protection becomes commodified and corrupted by financial arrangements driven by greed. When this happens, equality and respect for individuals become subordinated. Such situations are deeply unjust, betray an underlying right that comes with work and destroy the generosity that individuals provided to their community and families.



Social Dialogue

This third ILO pillar includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchanges of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers. The primary goal of such dialogue is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among the main participants in the world of work. Successful dialogue has the potential to resolve important economic and social issues, advance peace and stability and boost economic progress. Dialogue might take place either as a tripartite or a bipartite process between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organizations). It may be informal or institutionalised and happen at the national, regional or at enterprise level. Social dialogue can also occur across sectors, professions, or a combination thereof. The ILO's role in social dialogue is to assist member states in establishing or strengthening legal frameworks, institutions, machinery or processes for bipartite and tripartite social dialogue. It also aims to promote social dialogue among member states and regional or subregional groupings as means of consensus building, economic and social development and good governance.



Protestant traditions: Throughout its history, the ecumenical movement has supported and encouraged the development of trade unions and the participation of Christians within these organizations. In 1937, during the Oxford conference, members of the assembly viewed the role of unions as essential for limiting the concentration of power within societies. In 1948, the ecumenical movement reiterated its support for unions, recognizing the positive role they can play in humanizing the world of work and the economic sphere. This is especially true when members act with integrity and in the spirit of dialogue. In 1954, this support was further affirmed when the conference encouraged dialogue between employers and workers. Later, a dimension was added with respect to the participation of workers in the decision making processes within companies (1966).



Catholic tradition: The social teaching of the Church acknowledges the importance for workers and employers to form unions in order to facilitate dialogue. Workers' unions are especially significant for protecting workers rights as well as for developing solidarity. It is evident that unions are the true advocate in the struggle for social justice and workers' rights in

their respective professions: “This struggle should be seen as a normal endeavour for the just good ... not a struggle ‘against’ others” [CSDC 306]. The ultimate objective of social dialogue is to achieve societal well-being.



Islam: While the mosque is a house of worship, its activities are not limited to prayer. Indeed, following the Prophet, Muslims consider worship a way of life. Throughout Islamic history the mosque has been the court of justice, an educational and cultural institute and a meeting point. Every Friday, Muslims around the world go to the mosque to not only to perform ritual prayers, but also to discuss issues of the day as a community. From these practices, we can infer that collective social dialogue is at the core of Islam and coherent with social dialogue among workers, employers and legislative bodies in the promotion of rights and values through peaceful means.



Jewish tradition: The relationships between worker and employer should be equal so that each side respects the conditions of the set contract and performs to their utmost abilities.



Buddhist tradition: Buddha teaches that discernment is a pillar of wisdom. Social dialogue derives its strength from the confrontation of opinions and expression of divergent interests. Dialogue has two virtues: first, it represents a final resort against violence. Second, it awakens consciousness and provides the potential for new sources of insight. Dialogue is in itself neither good nor bad. Just as a sailboat is led by the wind, dialogue reflects the intentions of the dominant speakers, resulting in either ambiguous discourse or reconciliation. All people are responsible for their intentions, words and actions when they engage in social dialogue.



Fundamental Rights at Work

The four rights included in this final pillar are grounded in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work which underlines the following principles: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) the effective abolition of child labour; and (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. For each of these there are corresponding Conventions which are promoted for universal ratification. By ensuring the global application of the fundamental rights at work, the ILO took up the international challenge to establish a social minimum at the global level in response to the realities of globalization.

Forced Labour

Forced or compulsory labour is any work or service extracted from a person under the menace of penalty or when the person has not agreed to the work out of her or his own free will. The ILO has estimated that nearly 12.3 million people worldwide are victims of forced labour, usually coming from poor minority social and ethnic groups already subject to discrimination. Forced labour is a criminal offence that affects every region of the world and a range of sectors.

The ILO is striving to eradicate forced labour by supervising the implementation of ratified Conventions and providing technical cooperation to assist states in fulfilling their obligations. Most of ILO support to member states is carried out through the ILO's Special Action Programme to combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL). Since 2002 it has been raising awareness, offering policy and capacity-building advice and building community-based prevention programmes in partnership with ILO Constituents.



Protestant traditions: Expressly denounced forced or compulsory labour, a perspective that informed the Geneva conventions.



Catholic tradition: The Catholic social doctrine is against forced labour because it is perceived as antithetical to freedom and human dignity. It is a form of oppression and a manifestation of the commodification of

the human being. Further, it notes that “Even in countries with democratic forms of government, these rights are not always fully respected” (CA47).



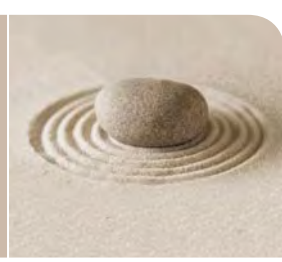
Islamic tradition: Work is neither penance nor punishment. When Adam and Eve left Paradise they were pardoned and granted free will. The Prophet said, “Works are by intention and everyone shall have what s/he intended” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). All people have rights, regardless of their occupation and making them work forcibly or overburdening them with tasks not just violates their rights but goes against Islamic values. It is written in the Qur’an that “Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity” (2:286).

Jewish tradition: There is always danger of coercion in work and for this reason employer and employee should be considered equal. In order to maintain the optimal egalitarian relationship, the tradition stipulates workers’ and employers’ rights, where both are ultimately servants of God. In Biblical times when slavery did exist, slaves were also given rights, and were commanded to be freed every seven years. Exodus 21:12: “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.” If the slave chose not to be freed, the Exodus 21:6 states: “Then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.”



Buddhist tradition: In Buddhist ethics, the basic morality is to “do no harm.” Forced labour directly contradicts this principle where all forms of forced labour enslave people, preventing them from developing autonomy and freedom. Slavery engenders hatred, animosity and eventually leads to uncontrollable social violence. Forced labour is therefore a factor in and an amplifier of violence. Perpetrators often ignore the potentially negative and bloody social ramifications of forced labour, forgetting that social change is possible.





Child Labour

The elimination of child labour has been an ILO priority since 1919 when the first international Convention against child labour was adopted. This Minimum age Convention (C5) stated that children under 14 were not allowed to be employed in industrial undertakings, for instance, working in mines and quarries, manufacturing and construction and transportation services. Since 1992, most of the ILO's work in the elimination of child labour has been carried out by its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Two equal objectives underline IPEC's activities: to implement and monitor programmes and projects in the field; and to raise awareness of the issue at the local, national and international levels. IPEC is already working with faith-based organizations at the local and national levels to assist with child labour monitoring, education and social mobilization and advocacy and research. With 215 million children still in labour, and 115 million of those engaged in hazardous work, there is still a lot of work to be done.



Protestant traditions: The rights and dignity of children should be safeguarded and there is an obligation to protect the earth they will inherit. This issue was directly addressed in 1925 at the Ecumenical Council's Stockholm conference which stated that children should not be forced into labour, but educated. In addition, early labour has the potential to impair a child's physical and intellectual development. This was reiterated at the Ecumenical Council at Canberra in 1991, which endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Catholic tradition: "Child labour, in its intolerable forms, constitutes a kind of violence that is less obvious than others. But this does not mean that it is any less terrible" (CSDC 296). Since the origins of the social doctrine of the Church, the Catholic tradition has positioned itself against violence and the injustice associated with child labour. Pope Leo XIII issued this warning: "in regard to children, great care should be taken not to place them in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed. For, just as very rough weather destroys the buds of spring, so does too early an experience of life's hard toil blight the young promise of a child's faculties, and render any true education impossible" (RN 42).



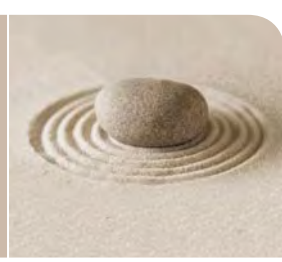
Islamic tradition: In any lawful profession, a worker must enter into an agreement with the employer. According to Islam, children cannot legally agree to a contract until they have reached an appropriate age. Therefore, child labour is unlawful; moreover, children also enjoy certain rights. First and foremost of these is the right to be properly raised and educated. The Prophet said, “Every one of you is a shepherd and everyone is responsible for whatever falls under his responsibility. A man is like a shepherd of his own family and he is responsible for them” (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Therefore, it is possible to infer that children should not work until a certain age, before which time, their parents and guardians should ensure that domestic duties do not affect their education and growth.



Jewish tradition: In order to respect and protect the dignity of all children, the tradition has articulated duties and responsibilities for the family and the community. Parents are required to take responsibility for their children’s daily care, including educating them and equipping them with a skill and means of self-protection. In the absence of parents, the community must provide food, education, clothing and shelter. Maimonides stated in his Code that children should not be subjected to hard labour or even harsh speech and it is a serious transgression that causes them harm.



Buddhist tradition: Issues related to forced labour also apply to child labour. It must not be forgotten that children have talents and capacities that will one day be beneficial to humanity and therefore forcing them into labour stunts their potential. Perpetrators of forced and child labour create situations that are terrible to endure, including living in a terrible state of mental anguish. Although it is possible to bear for a while, it quickly becomes an unsustainable way of life. However, the issue of child labour is difficult because for many parents, selling or loaning their children is the only method of survival. There is a lot of ignorance on this subject, and in addition to educating parents about its dangers, high-level solutions to the problem should include passing anti-child labour and anti-forced labour legislation.



Freedom of Association

Freedom of association means that workers and employers have the right to freely form or join organizations that promote and defend their interests at work without interference from one another or the State. This right applies to everyone in every sector and it should be guaranteed by the State. The right to collective bargaining provides for a voluntary process through which employers (or their organizations) and trade unions (or workers' representatives) negotiate their relations in the workplace, pay and other terms and conditions of work. This mechanism helps find mutually beneficial solutions in potentially conflictual relations between workers and employers and builds trust between parties. These rights are fundamental because they underpin democratic representation and governance.

The ILO provides assistance on this right to its constituents through advocacy, awareness raising, training, advisory services, technical cooperation and capacity building. Even with widespread recognition of these rights, they are not yet enjoyed by millions of people. With the help of faith-based organizations, a greater, stronger voice can provide an enabling environment in the workplace, wherever it may be.



Protestant traditions: The Protestant faith generally takes a more economical approach to this issue by maintaining that collective bargaining and freedom of association represent the economic aspects of basic political rights.



Catholic tradition: Social activism and community involvement can play a vital role in society when voluntary associations and institutions support their development. When people join such organizations the collective spirit is strengthened and otherwise unreachable objectives become attainable. Such organizations encourage people to take initiative and responsibility for their community and promote everyone's rights. For these reasons, labour or trade unions are strongly encouraged by the Catholic Church. Indeed, the Church's Compendium on Social Doctrine states that unions "are a positive influence for social order and solidarity, and are therefore an indispensable element of social life" (CSDC 305).



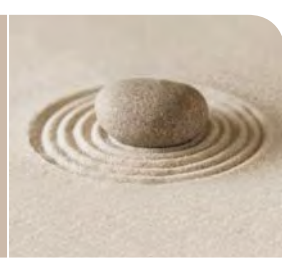
Islamic tradition: Although Islamic law allows everyone the right to enter into any lawful profession or occupation, there are several key principles that guide the treatment of workers. First, there must be clear and proper contracts, preferably written. Second, all agreements, whether oral or written, must be transparent, just and lawful. The Prophet Mohammad advocated for being firm and fighting for one's rights. Based on these principles, it becomes apparent that workers can exercise freedom of association and form unions in order to establish and safeguard their rights, gain the bargaining power and receive just compensation.



Jewish tradition: In ancient times, in cases where labour disputes arose between workers and employers, they were expected to be settled in the rabbinic court. At the time Talmud was codified, there are records of workers organizations and workers had a right to collective bargaining and to strike. Since the turn of the 20th century, there has been a history of strong Jewish labour groups forming unions and fighting for workers' rights in both Europe and North America.



Buddhist tradition: Banding together to achieve a common goal is a basic human impulse that influences all areas of life, and work in particular. Combining individual strengths, skills and knowledge diminishes forced labour and discrimination while promoting values of social justice. This type of collective endeavour is sometimes perceived as subversive to the point of being forbidden and repressed. But a surfeit of violence has never resulted in peace. Only compromise can offer a way out of conflict. Freedom of association and social dialogue therefore constitute intangible pillars of democratic values.



Discriminations

Discrimination in employment means treating some people less favourably due to characteristics that are not related to merit of the person or the requirements of the job. The ILO works toward eliminating discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinions, national extraction and social origin. It is also addressing other forms of discrimination in respect to age, disability, HIV/AIDS, as well as persistent and widespread anti-union discrimination. All forms of discrimination are a violation of human rights and a waste of human talents. They can also have a detrimental effect on productivity and economic growth. In addition, socio-economic inequalities may arise from discrimination, contributing to problems of social cohesion and solidarity and the slowing of poverty reduction. One major form of discrimination is sex-based. Gender equality is the only cross cutting initiative in the decent work agenda and the ILO's Gender Bureau offers advisory services, disseminates information and provides technical cooperation and knowledge development on issues of gender equality. Furthermore, the Bureau has instituted a gender audit, the first of its kind in the UN system. This participatory



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audit promotes individual and organizational learning on ways to mainstream gender in order to help achieve equality between women and men.



Protestant traditions: Any form of discrimination in employment has been denounced by Protestant churches. It is believed that opposition to discrimination should not just come from the church, but also stem from a personal sense of Christian responsibility to correct social injustices. The Ecumenical Council on the Economy stated in 1992 that despite advances in gender equality, there was still room for improvement in this area, especially regarding equal pay, maternity leave and recognizing work in the home.



Catholic tradition: All humans are equal regardless of social position; therefore, all forms of human discrimination go against God's intent. This includes discrimination based on race, creed and sex. The Catholic Compendium of the Social Doctrine recognizes "the rights of women in the workplace are seen especially under the aspects of pay, insurance and social security" (295).



Islamic tradition: All humans are equal in the eye of God. This means that Islam denies all discrimination based on class, race, colour and gender. It is stated in the Qur'an: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another ... (not that you may despise each other)" (49:3). Islam celebrates diversity in work, recognizing a variety of human aptitudes and abilities. It does not prioritize certain jobs over others or indicate a preference for work that is intellectual or manual, skilled or menial, domestic, agricultural or commercial. Furthermore, Islam prohibits the preferential treatment of male workers over female. The Qur'an also says, "... Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another ..." (3:195).



Jewish tradition: The tradition believes in equality between people. Exodus 12:49 reads: “There shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you.”



Buddhist tradition: Discrimination is a means of separating oneself from the other: by negating the other the perpetrator of discrimination temporarily feels more valued. It is also a form of madness because it goes against reason and a form of ignorance because it is governed by presuppositions disqualifying human qualities. The illusion of legitimacy created by discrimination further engenders ignorance when people are unwilling to question its foundation. Furthermore, discrimination is fickle, and the perpetrator can easily become the victim. Discrimination prevents people from self-enrichment and the gifts that others can bring. In fact, to push the argument to its limit, it is akin to killing one’s neighbour, because perpetuating stereotypes also means being cut off from social change and development. The implications of discrimination are therefore grave.



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Other contributors

In addition to working with our partners in the interreligious project, we have also submitted this document to individual contributors for their views and expertise. We are thankful to scholars at the following institutions.

The **European Buddhist Union** (EBU) is a federation of Buddhist communities and organizations in Europe. Broad and impartial, it is open to Buddhist organizations of all schools and traditions. Its principal aims are to promote fellowship between Buddhists in Europe and to encourage co-operation between them on matters of common concern and interest. By uniting the Sangha and respecting the diversity of traditions, the EBU supports and promotes a natural growth of Buddhism in Europe and provides a reference point and interface for European and international institutions as well as representing European Buddhism on an international level.

www.e-b-u.org

Yeshiva University, founded in 1886, is the oldest and most comprehensive educational institution under Jewish auspices in the United States. It is an independent university with campuses in New York and Israel and has been ranked as a leading university for both Jewish and secular research and instruction.

www.yu.edu

Partners

In the writing of this handbook, the sections relating to each religious tradition were submitted to and verified by our relevant partners. This does not mean, however, that they approve of all other views expressed in this document. We are thankful for the contributions and assistance from the following institutions.

The World Council of Churches (WCC)



The WCC is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The WCC brings together 349 churches from more than 110 countries, and represents over 560 million Christians all over the world. For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other.

<http://www.oikoumene.org>

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

The Council is a part of the Roman Curia dedicated to "action-oriented studies" for the international promotion of justice, peace, and human rights from the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church. To this end, it cooperates with various religious orders and advocacy groups, as well as scholarly, ecumenical, and international organizations.

http://www.justpax.it/eng/home_eng.html

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)



Established in 1979 by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), ISESCO is one of the largest international Islamic organizations and specializes in the fields of education, science, and culture. The objective of the ISESCO includes strengthening and promoting and consolidating cooperation among Member States (OIC) in the fields of education, science, culture and communication, developing applied sciences and use of advanced technology within the framework of Islamic values and ideals, consolidating understanding among Muslim peoples and contributing to the achievement of world peace and security, particularly through education, science, culture and communication.

<http://www.isesco.org.ma>

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