

Joint Statement

We Christian and Hindu leaders, scholars and practitioners have come together for the first Hindu-Christian Conference held at Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, on 6 December, 2016 under the theme: “The Light of Peace: Christians and Hindus in Dialogue.” The Conference was a result of a series of preliminary meetings held in Rome involving the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the Italian Hindu Union, the Centre for Interreligious Studies of the Pontifical Gregorian University, the National Office for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue of the Episcopal Conference of Italy, the Focolare Movement and the Italian Chapter of Religions for Peace.

The Conference had an inaugural session, an academic session and a cultural programme.

Encouraged by the successful outcome of the conference, we the participants agreed upon the following points:

1. We recognize that the mere fact of our coming together today gives witness to the light of peace.
2. We unanimously affirm that this conference has significantly contributed to the deepening of our mutual understanding, respect and co-operation.
3. We stress the importance of building strong bridges of friendship among people of diverse ethnicities, cultures and religions in this globalized world.
4. We note with great concern the emerging social phenomenon of religion and culture becoming markers of identity and tools of political mobilization, at the expense of minorities, disadvantaged groups, marginalised communities, migrants and refugees.
5. In accord with our respective religious traditions, we are convinced that that the light of peace first flows from those who live in a state of harmony with the Ultimate Reality, with themselves, with others and with nature. Thus, before appearing outwardly, the light of peace is interior.
6. We emphasize the rich contribution that educational institutions can make for the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.
7. We also highlight the role that information and communication technologies can play as instruments for promoting interreligious and intercultural harmony as well as for countering xenophobic narratives and demonizing of the “other,” by breaking down stereotypes and prejudices.
8. We agree that as co-learners, co-pilgrims and co-builders of peace, rooted in our respective religions, our common task today is to show forth and foster the light of peace in our world. To this end we pledge to promote non-violence and peace, recognizing and respecting the inherent dignity of every human being, and responsibly caring for our common home.
9. We reiterate that interreligious dialogue is a priority and a sign of hope and light in our troubled time. It must continue!