

**WORLD**  
**DAY** of Prayer  
& Action  
for **Children**  
**2021**

**WEAR** *my* **SHOES**  
CAMPAIGN



## Speakers of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2021

### Rev. Keishi Miyamoto

Leader of Myochikai, President, Arigatou International, Convener, Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)



Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, the convener of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), is a strong advocate of interfaith cooperation for the well-being of children worldwide. He directs the work of Arigatou International, an international NGO in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Inheriting the spiritual lineage of his father, the late Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto. He serves as Leader of Myochikai, a Buddhist organization in Japan which established Arigatou International to build a better world for children. Rev. Miyamoto also serves as International Trustee of *Religions for Peace* and as Board Member of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. He served as the 5th

Secretary General of WCRP Japan, and is currently Executive Board Member of the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan (Shinshuren), Council Member of the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations (Nishuren) and Advisor of Religions for Peace Japan.

# His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Bin Mubarak Al Nahayan – Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, United Arab Emirates

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mubarak Al Nahayan is the Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, which was announced in October 2017. His Excellency joined the Federal Government in 1992. He held several positions in the Federal Government including the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development.

In addition to his ministerial duties, His Excellency had previously served in many positions in national universities. H.E. was the Chancellor of the United Arab Emirates University since 1983 to 2013, the Chancellor of the Higher Colleges of Technology from 1988 to 2013 and the President of Zayed University from 1998 to 2013.

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Bin Mubarak Al Nahayan received his education from the British Millfield School until secondary school before joining the Magdalen College at Oxford University-UK.



## Rebeca Rios-Kohn J.D.

Director Arigatou International New York

Rebeca Rios-Kohn serves as Director of Arigatou International New York Office since 2015, a not-for-profit organization working for children's rights and well-being, and leads the initiative Prayer and Action for Children. She was one of the lead writers of the *Faith and Children's Rights: A Multi-religious Study on the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, developed by Arigatou International with UNICEF and other partners, published in 2019. She has over 30 years of experience working for UNICEF and UNDP in the areas of human rights, women and children's rights, where she held senior positions. She received a Juris Doctor from the University Richmond, Virginia, and before joining the UN she practiced law in the states of Virginia and New York.



## Dr. Mustafa Ali

Secretary General GNRC



Dr. Mustafa Yusuf Ali is the Secretary General of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and Director of Arigatou International – Nairobi. He previously worked as Africa Representative for Religions for Peace Africa, and as Secretary General of the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL). He has been involved in sustainable conflict resolution, prevention of violent extremism and interfaith dialogue. He holds a Ph.D in Sociology and International Relations from the University of Portsmouth, UK.

# Ms. Muzoon Almellehan

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

Muzoon Almellehan, 22, is a Syrian refugee and education activist. Muzoon has been campaigning for children's education in emergencies since she was forced to flee Syria in 2013 with her family. Muzoon started her campaign in Jordan, where she was living as a refugee in camps for three years, including 18 months in Za'atari. As part of a UNICEF-supported back-to-school campaign, she first advocated for more girls to go to school in August 2013 and went from tent to tent speaking with parents of children who were at risk of child marriage or early labor. Over the next two and a half years she became synonymous with standing-up for the rights of children, particularly girls, to stay in or go back to school. She accompanied Malala on two visits to the camp.



Muzoon is currently studying in Newcastle, United Kingdom, where she has been resettled with her family. She is the first UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador who is a refugee and offers a powerful, credible, authentic voice on education in emergencies.

Most recently in April 2019 she travelled to Mali with UNICEF to raise awareness of the impact of the rising insecurity and violence on children's education and safety. In July 2019, Muzoon was the keynote speaker representing the voices of children at the UN event for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Muzoon has received the following awards and honors: Dresden Peace Prize 2020, Cle de Peau Power of Radiance award 2019, BBC's list of 100 influential and inspirational women in 2017, TIME's 30 Most Influential Teens of 2017, Teen Vogue's 21 Under 21 Class of 2017 and a 2017 Glamour Women of the Year Award. In 2019 Muzoon was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Glasgow Caledonian University.

# Dr. Adolfo Perez Esquivel

Peace Nobel Laureate

Dr. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, is an Argentine sculptor and architect, who became a champion of human rights and nonviolent reform in Latin America. His work as secretary-general of Peace and Justice (Paz y Justicia), an ecumenical organization established in 1974 to coordinate human rights activities throughout Latin America, brought him the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1980. Pérez Esquivel, son of a fisherman, was already well-known as a sculptor when he was appointed to a professorship at the Argentine National School of Fine Arts in 1968. He resigned his chair upon being chosen to lead Peace and Justice in 1974. In the years following his receipt of the Nobel Prize, Pérez Esquivel lectured and traveled extensively. He continues to be an outspoken advocate of human rights into the 21st century



# Rabbi Joseph Potasnik

JD. Vice-Chair, The International Conference of Rabbis and Executive Vice President, The New York Board of Rabbis



Rabbi Potasnik is the Executive Vice President of The New York Board of Rabbis, the world's oldest and largest interdenominational rabbinic body and Vice-Chair of the International Conference of Rabbis. Since 1972, he has been the spiritual and educational leader of Congregation Mount Sinai in Brooklyn Heights, New York and is presently Rabbi Emeritus. He has served as Chaplain of the New York City Fire Department since 1999. Rabbi Potasnik maintained a high profile, helping many families cope with the disaster of September 11th, 2001. Rabbi Potasnik co-hosts *The Rev and The Rabbi* on WABC Talk Radio 77 in New York, together with Rev. AR Bernard, since 2018 and is the Religion commentator for 1010 WINS

since 1992. He is the host of the TV program *Faith to Faith* on Jewish Broadcasting Service ("JBS"), which is seen around the country and invites people of all faiths to participate in meaningful conversation. He is Honorary President of Religious for Peace.

## Dr. Husna Ahmad

Secretary-General at World Muslim, Leadership Forum



Dr. Husna Ahmad OBE is the CEO of Global One 2015 which is a faith based International NGO focused on women. She has a PhD in International Environmental Law from the School of Oriental and African Studies, [SOAS] London University, and an honorary fellow of the Edward Cadbury Centre for the Public understanding of Religion, Birmingham University. Dr. Ahmad is currently a Board member of Faith for the Climate, Faith In Water,

and Palmers Green Mosque (the MCEC). She is also a member of the Women's Faith Forum UK and Executive committee member of Barnet Faith Forum. She is a co-Chair of the Multi faith Advisory Council to the UN Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development and sits on the Steering Committee of The World Bank's Moral Imperative Initiative.

Dr. Ahmad is an author and thought leader who has presented many papers internationally focusing particularly on faith and the environment. She is the Secretary General of the World Muslim Leadership Forum and the Coordinator for the Alliance of NGOs and CSOs for South-South Cooperation [ANSSC] which works in collaboration with the UN office of South South Cooperation. She was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year's Honours list in 2010 for her services to disadvantaged people for work promoting social justice with disadvantaged communities. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the Faith Leaders Training Initiative under the UK Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG].

# Dr. Reham Salamam Abdulla

Al-Azhar University



Dr. Reham Abdullah Salamah Nasr is a lecturer at the Department of Urdu Language and Literature at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, and Supervisor of the Urdu Department at the Al-Azhar Observatory in Foreign Languages. Dr. Nasr has a Master's degree and Ph.D. in Urdu language and literature. She also works at the Al-Azhar Centre for Translation and has contributed to the translation and validation of books and articles from Urdu to Arabic and vice versa. She is a member of The Egyptian Family House and has conducted workshops related to preventing violent extremism at regional and international levels. She has made presentations on Al-Azhar to the United Nations, the European Union, OSCE (Vienna), UNDP and to presidential delegations from China and India. She was a member of the peace emissaries to Pakistan in 2015.

# Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid

Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children



On 30 May 2019, the Secretary-General appointed Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid (Morocco) as his Special Representative on Violence against Children. Dr. Maalla M'jid took her position on 1st July 2019, ten years after Marta Santos Pais (Portugal) was appointed as first Special Representative on Violence against Children.

Dr. M'jid, a medical doctor in paediatrics, has over the last three decades devoted her life to the promotion and protection of children's rights. She was Head of the Paediatric Department and Director of the Hay Hassani Mother-Child hospital in Casablanca.

Dr. M'jid was a member of the Moroccan National Council on Human Rights and founder of the non-governmental organisation Bayti, the first programme addressing the situation of children living and working in the streets of Morocco.

From 2008 to 2014, she served as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Dr. M'jid also worked as an Expert-Consultant for national and international projects, strategies and policies relating to child rights' promotion and protection. She has vast experience in the development of national policies on the protection of the child, and has worked with several governments, non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations.

She also worked as a lecturer in Moroccan and international universities on child rights' protection, promotion, programming and monitoring, as well as social and development policies. A member of several regional and international non-governmental organisations and networks working for children's rights, Dr. M'jid was also involved in the training of social workers, law enforcement, teachers, judges, and medical staff.

Dr. M'jid holds a Doctorate in general medicine from the University of Rabat, a specialization in paediatrics and neonatology from the University of Bordeaux II and a Master of Human Rights from the Human Rights Institute, Geneva. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honours for her strong commitment to protecting the rights of the child.

# Dr. Kezevino Aram

President

Shanti Ashram

International Center for Child and Public Health



Dr. Kezevino Aram has served as President of Shanti Ashram since 2014. Shanti Ashram, founded in 1986 on Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Sarvodaya (progress for all), is an international center for learning, development and collaboration. It accompanies communities in their efforts to move out of poverty, address inequalities, build creative leaders and ensure sustained development. Today, Shanti Ashram serves over 70,000 vulnerable children across 100 villages in Tamil Nadu.

In 2017, Dr. Aram founded the International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH) on the 30th anniversary of Shanti Ashram. ICPH is an innovative model of integrating primary care with public health, where the best of global knowledge steers comprehensive interventions for children. Besides contributing to the public health discourse and policy at the national level, ICPH directly impacts the health outcomes of 20,000 vulnerable children. Dr. Aram was invited to serve on the 'Experts Committee' of the Government of Tamil Nadu in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic affected India. Her mandate was to advise on child health and child protection issues. In realizing this responsibility, she worked with the Ministry of Health, the Health Secretary, the Director of Health Services, and Public Health experts at WHO. Dr. Aram's assessment of the impact of the pandemic on children shaped her policy response that subsequently led to the resuming of the Early Childhood Services and opening of over 54,000 Anganwadi centres in Tamil Nadu. Over the last two decades, Dr. Aram has worked with the Government of India to make several notable contributions to India's Public Health landscape.

Internationally, Dr. Aram has continued to leverage her global leadership positions for the common good. She was invited to serve on the World Economic Forum's Advisory Committee on the Social Determinants of Health Platform. Dr. Aram also serves as Co-moderator and Executive Committee Member of Religions for Peace-International where she works closely with faith-based organizations in 90 countries to advance Peace building efforts. Dr. Aram is a Board Member of KAICIID, and during the pandemic, was elected as Chairperson of this prestigious Inter-Governmental Organization for Interfaith Dialogue. Dr. Aram also serves as the Vice Chair of the Advisory Board of Arigatou International where she has collaborated to advance the interfaith collaboration to ensure wellbeing and progress of children worldwide. Dr. Aram is also a Trustee at the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation.

## Ms. Esther Lehmann-Sow

Partnership Leader - Faith and Development

With more than 25 years of field experience working with vulnerable communities and children, Ms. Lehmann-Sow has managed country programme offices, led major emergency responses and directed World Vision's work across West and Central Africa. She is passionate about the holistic well-being of children, and the role of faith communities in realising this. She has worked in a number of multi-faith settings to test, refine and scale approaches that engage faith communities to promote positive values and behaviours for the most vulnerable children. In her current role, she leads World Vision's global work to drive positive change for the world's most vulnerable children by boldly and humbly living out the organisation's Christian faith and calling, and by joining hands with diverse partners. Dr. Lehmann-Sow is a German citizen, widowed, mother of three, and currently lives in Dakar, Senegal.



## Ms. Paloma Escudero

Director, Division of Global Communication and Advocacy, UNICEF



Paloma Escudero was appointed Director of Global Communication and Advocacy at UNICEF in April 2013. Bringing her extensive experience and expertise in the areas of communications, fundraising, advocacy and brand management, she oversees UNICEF's global public outreach and communications as its senior communication official. Prior to the appointment, Ms. Escudero had already been well known among the UNICEF family as Executive Director of the Spanish National Committee. Under her management between 2007 and 2013, the Committee was transformed into a highly efficient organization — increasing its

contribution to UNICEF programmes in over 150 developing countries and contributing significantly to emergencies such as the Haiti earthquake in 2010.

Ms. Escudero started her professional career, which spans more than two decades, in 1989 at Procter & Gamble Spain, where she was the company's Brand Manager overseeing the marketing teams responsible for the brand repositioning of products. After a sabbatical year spent travelling around the world with her husband, and working as an aid worker in Guatemala, Ms. Escudero joined Oxfam in 1997. In 2000, she became the Director of the Oxfam International Advocacy Office for the European Union. First based in Spain and later in Brussels, she worked on issues such as overseas development aid, external debt, humanitarian law, international agriculture and trade, and climate change. Escudero holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Business Sciences from ICADE – Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid. She obtained an Erasmus grant to specialize in marketing at ESSEC Business School in Paris.

## Mr. Eltayeb Adam

UNICEF's Representative to the Gulf Area



Mr Eltayeb Adam is the UNICEF Area Representative for the Gulf. Since 2018, he has been leading UNICEF's work in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates providing leadership and vision to UNICEF domestic programmes advancing children's rights and the achievement of SDGs and 2030 agenda, as well as leveraging partnerships and resources for changing the lives of the most vulnerable children globally.

Previously, Mr Eltayeb Adam served with UNICEF in several operations including in Somalia, Syria, and Yemen where he was responsible for leading UNICEF's humanitarian and development programmes in Education; Health; Nutrition; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; Adolescent Development and Participation; and Social Protection and Child Protection. He represented UNICEF to authorities, local communities, international organizations and other related stakeholders.

Mr Eltayeb Adam also worked with UNDP in the United Arab Emirates, Save the Children in Iraq and Oxfam in Indonesia. Mr Eltayeb Adam's humanitarian and development work

experience spans more than 25 years, covering the Middle East, South East Asia and Africa.

Mr Eltayeb Adam holds a Master of Business Administration from the University of Durham in the UK and a certificate of Development Studies from the University of Birmingham in the UK.

## Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and member of the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors (appointed by the Holy Father Pope Francis)



Benyam Dawit Mezmur is Professor of Child Rights Law, and Coordinator of the Children's Rights Project at the Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance, and Human Rights, Faculty of Law, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa. Since early 2018 he also serves as Deputy Dean for Research and Post-Graduate Studies of the Faculty. He is a member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and served as its Chairperson from 2015-2017. At the regional level, he served twice on the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), a treaty body of the African Union, and was its Chairperson from 2012-2014. In 2018 Pope Francis appointed him to serve on the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors.

# Speakers of the Interfaith Service

## Tiago Masrou

Director and Treasurer, ADIR



Tiago Masrou was senior project manager for the Bahá'í House of Worship of South America until its completion in 2016, in Santiago, Chile. He is currently dividing his time between business management at an IT firm, promoting spiritual education, particularly among youth, studying online for a masters in global technology and development at Arizona State University and his family.

Masrou has focused on interreligious efforts since his appointment to the Interreligious Council of the Chilean government, between 2015 and 2018, and then helped the founding of the Interreligious Dialogue Association for Human Development of Chile. Over the past decade he has collaborated with diverse

religious communities, governmental agencies and civil society to promote the defense of human and religious rights and the advancement of universal peace. He is interested in learning from others and sharing experiences, discovering inspiring efforts and encouraging young people to be more conscientious and involved.

## Archbishop Felix Machado

Archbishop of Vasai, Roman Catholic Diocese of Vasai (India)  
Archbishop Felix Anthony Machado was born in Remedy in Vasai diocese and was ordained a priest in 1976 in the diocese of Bombay. In 1998 he was incardinated in the diocese of Vasai. He was appointed as the Archbishop of Nashik in January 2008 and was ordained in March 2008. He was later transferred to the diocese of Vasai and was installed in 2009. Archbishop Machado worked as Undersecretary in the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican, from 1999 to 2008. Presently, he serves as the chairperson for the Office for Interreligious Dialogue of the Federation of Asian (Catholic) Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and as chairperson for Office for Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. He is a member of the Arigatou International Advisory Group since 2018.



## Swami Atmapriyananda

Vice Chancellor

Swami Atmapriyananda is an **Indian university administrator**. He was the first Vice-Chancellor of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University in Physics from the University of Madras. He joined the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in 1978. He has organized annual local events on the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children and has partnered with Arigatou International to raise awareness about children's rights and well-being within local communities.



## Prof. Akhtural Wasey

President of Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur, India, and a former professor of Islamic Studies

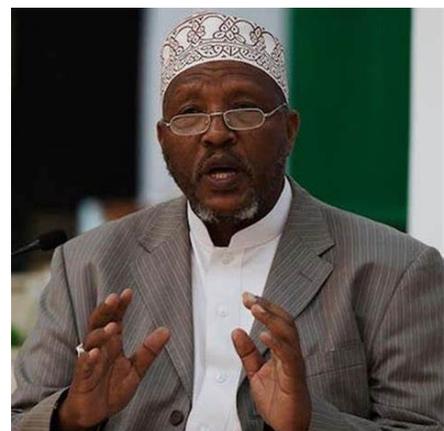


Professor Akhtarul Wasey is the president of Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur, India, and a former professor of Islamic Studies. He taught at Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University) in New Delhi, where he remains professor emeritus in the Department of Islamic Studies. In 1980 he joined Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi as lecturer and worked there until 2016. Wasey was a lecturer, reader and professor at Jamia Milia Islamia University in New Delhi from 1980-2016 serving as the director of Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies and later becoming head of the Department of Islamic Studies and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Languages. He is currently the president of Maulana Azad University in Jodhpur and remains a Professor

Emeritus in the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia. In 2014, Professor Wasey was appointed by Indian President Shri Pranab Mukherjee to a three-year term as Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in India, and became the first Urdu-speaking commissioner since 1957

## Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome Asmani

Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome Asmani, A Kenyan Muslim Religious Scholar. He holds a Master's Degree in Law and Islamic Shariah, a Bachelor's Degree in Education and a post-Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. He is a member of the global Advisory Group of Arigatou International since 2018. He is also a member of Jamia Mosque Committee – Nairobi and Legal and Religious Advisor to Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, Secretary General of the Center for Sustainable Conflict Resolution, and Chairman – Global One – Kenya.



## Prof. Dr. Isabel Phiri

WCC Deputy General Secretary (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian)



A Malawian by nationality, Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri is an academic and professor within the field of African theology. A former dean and head of the School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics as well as the former director of the Centre for Constructive Theology at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Upon her leave of the University of KwaZulu Natal, Dr. Phiri was appointed as an honorary professor and continues to serve as editor of the *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*.

Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri has been engaged with the churches and the ecumenical movement for two decades. From 1984 to 1991 she was a commissioner of Programmes on Theological Education of the WCC; from 2002 to 2007 she served as general coordinator of the Circle of Concerned

African Women Theologians. In 2006, she presented a paper entitled “Called to Be the One Church: The Future of Ecumenism—A Protestant Voice” at the WCC 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. She has also served as moderator of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation.

## Master Tan Zhixia

Taoist Missionary

Master Tan Zhixia is a Taoist missionary ordained in the Complete Perfection *Quanzhen* Tradition of Taoism, the 21st Generation of *Longmen* Sect.

Besides serving as Priest-in-Residence at the Temple of Heavenly Jade Emperor *Yu Huang Gong*, a National Monument of Singapore, she is also the Vice President of Taoist Mission in Singapore, an association that promotes Taoism and Chinese cultures and traditions. This gives her ample opportunities in developing Taoist studies and discipline and programmes for community engagement on social cohesion and peacebuilding from the Taoist perspective. Although Taoism is a religion indigenous of China, it does not deter her from



learning and practising Taoism in the cosmopolitan city of Singapore. She loves to share the fundamentals of philosophical and religious Taoism, and has been introducing “Tao Ecological Intelligence”, a solution to save Mother Earth and Humanity. Master TAN Zhixia often quotes the wise teaching of Laozi, in the scripture Tao Te Ching, “Conduct oneself with the Three Treasures of TAO - Compassion, Frugality and Humility, harmony and peace will always prevail.”

