

International and Interreligious Conference

Organised by Global Ministry University (GMU), Harmony Institute, the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies (IRDIS) and Umma University

THEME: *Building Bridges for Human Solidarity in the Light of Pope*

Francis' Encyclical Letter: Fratelli Tutti

The conference will take place from **Thursday August 19 to Saturday, August 21, 2021** and will be based at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference is co-organised by four institutions that are involved in interreligious dialogue both at the academic and grassroot levels. The **Global University Ministryⁱ** is based in California. It offers postgraduate degrees in interreligious dialogue. **Harmony Instituteⁱⁱ** is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic organization encouraging peaceful coexistence of human fraternity with the purpose of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue, peace and sustainable development. The **Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies (IRDIS)ⁱⁱⁱ** is an institute that offers, amongst many activities, to train people of different faiths in Interreligious Dialogue, within a Catholic university college. **Umma University^{iv}** is “the University of the people.” It was established in 2013.

Participants to the conference will be drawn from across the globe and organised in different hubs (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America) with themes that are relevant to each hub. Participants will be able to access the conference through online portals or take part in person at Tangaza University.

This conference will draw upon the experience of people from diverse religious, cultural and economic backgrounds who are developing new ways to transcend many of the divisions that are afflicting the human community and our common home on planet earth. We plan to engage global citizens to build transformative models of community development that bridge economic, political, religious and cultural divisions in the world.

The conference will focus on the message of **Fratelli Tutti** (2020) as a spiritual handbook promoting solidarity among all peoples on earth. It will also recognize opportunities provided by the document on Human Fraternity for world peace and living together (2019) and Makkah Declaration (2019). It will use the platform provided by the world's religions to support a Global Ethic of inclusion, shared commitments, resources, compassion, and interdependence of the human family with other life forms on earth. The goal of the conference will be to develop an ongoing global platform as well as centers on the ground for growing leadership and resource development, for unifying the human family and providing guidance about how to achieve this overarching goal. Regional hubs in Africa, Americas, Asia and Europe will be established as part of this conference.

We will examine the types of community building activities that have successfully translated the hopeful message of **Fratelli Tutti** into actualizing educational strategies that build communities promoting new bonds among diverse social, cultural, and religious groups in various parts of the world. We plan to use the latest technological platforms to publish the outcomes and recommendations of this conference.

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ⁱ **Global Ministries University** was founded in 2001 after the tragedy of 9/11 in New York and is based in San Jose, California. It has created interfaith courses and programs over the past 20 years using primarily an online modality. It has faculty and students from diverse religious traditions located in diverse parts of the world. It has partnered with other educational institutions in the United States, Africa, Thailand, and Bangladesh to offer interfaith degree programs and international and interfaith conferences. Global Ministries University has pioneered the development of new forms of interfaith ministries including specialized training programs for interfaith chaplains in the United States. It now offers graduate degree programs both in English and Spanish.

In Kenya, Global Ministries University has developed interfaith training for educators in the coastal region of Kenya since 2012 that have been recognized and encouraged by the Kenya Director of Education in the coastal region of Kenya. Global Ministries University is now affiliated with the Tangaza University Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies. Global Ministries University has also developed a graduate feminist studies program for women seeking new forms of ministry in their respective communities to service marginalized populations on an interfaith basis. For further information on Global Ministries University please go to our website at globalministriesuniversity.org.

ⁱⁱ **Harmony Institute** was founded in Kenya in 2014 with the purpose of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue, peace and community building. It does this by bringing people together through discussion forums, courses, capacity building meetings, publications, luncheons, community engagement and outreach programs. Harmony Institute is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic organization encouraging peaceful coexistence of human fraternity. It aims to facilitate dialogue on a whole range of social and environmental issues, regardless of any faith, religion or ethnicity. It stands with environmental consciousness, women empowerment, freedom of expression and human rights. It considers the path to harmony is through democracy, civic engagement, rule of law, social integration and cohesion.

ⁱⁱⁱ **IRDIS** - Since 2017 the Catholic congregation Missionaries of Africa (MAfr) is partnering with the German organization AGIAMONDO-Civil Peace Service. As a culmination of partnership activities, IRDIS was founded in November 2019. IRDIS is expanding its academic curriculum to develop and host comprehensive degree programmes in IRD and Islamic Studies. IRDIS serves as the coordination office to reach out to national and international actors/ partners on IRD matters, organizes meetings and conferences and establishes networks of IRD actors. Specific trainings, summer courses, advisory services and outreach programs are implemented with a diverse set of partners to reach a wider audience within Catholic structures and towards external (faith-based) organisations to change their attitudes towards other religions and enable them to use IRD tools for peace and social cohesion.

IRDIS' partnerships include Umma University; St. Paul's University; CJPC Kenya; Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; International Institute of Islamic Studies, Qom, Iran; Harmony Institute Nairobi; Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM); National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC); Hekima University College, Nairobi; Coastal Interfaith Council of Clerics, Mombasa; Exposure and Dialogue Programme, Germany; Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB); The Kofi Annan Institute

for Conflict Transformation (Univ. of Liberia); Foundation for Religious Sciences John XXIII, Bologna; and Muslims for Human Rights, Kenya (Muhuri).

Umma University is the biggest Islamic University in East Africa, chartered by the Commission for University Education and is based in Kajiado, Kenya. It grew out of the former Thika College for Sharia and Islamic Studies, which was established in 1997 at Thika, Kenya and became a University in 2013. The Thika College for Sharia and Islamic Studies was offering certificate, diploma and degree studies in partnership with International University of Africa, Sudan. This collaboration was accredited by the Kenya Government Ministry of Education. The University is committed to diversity of humanity, where people professing different faiths can peacefully coexist through learning, working, living and serving communities together. The University is offering certificates, diploma, degree and postgraduate programmes. The University has collaborative partnership with Tangaza University College of Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), International Institute of Islamic Thoughts (IIIT), International University of Africa, University Sains Islami Malaysia, GARA, various embassies, government departments, counties governments, Muslim organizations, and UN Agencies. The University research and outreach activities are active in communities to promote social transformation.