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THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Poland



## **2020 Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Warsaw, November 16–17, 2020

*NGO Component – General and Thematic Sessions*

## **FORB in support of Agenda 2030**

### **Session 2 – Thematic Session 2**

**17 November 2020**

**14.45–16.15 (Warsaw time)**

### **Background:**

In the modern world, the question arises how to create sustainable mindsets for ensuring inclusive development? Ensuring of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) cannot be separated from development. A truly sustainable development should not only focus on economic growth but also should create conditions to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, including FoRB.

Such reflection is not a new approach among the international community, and should therefore find its place in broader efforts for realization of Agenda 2030. However, all state actors committed to fulfilling of SDGs need the support from a wide range of NGOs, including FoRB actors. To support dialogue with FoRB actors on SDGs and to encourage dialogue and cooperation between FoRB actors and those dealing with SDGs issues is crucial to ensure that the objectives of the Agenda 2030 will be met.

None of the SDGs can be achieved in isolation. Active engagement of faith-based organisations in SDGs implementation, including in crucial areas of development like health, education, peace and justice; promoting and supporting tolerance and understanding for different faiths and beliefs is the key to ensuring success for all of us. However, in many countries persons belonging to religious minorities experience economic, educational, cultural and political marginalization. As such, existing inequalities not only endanger social cohesion and political stability but also risk losing

economic, social and human capital of important sections of any society. Hence, it may be often needed to develop special strategies and policies to better engage religious communities to untap their potential, create fair conditions for their full contribution to social and economic development and make sure no one is left behind in realization of SDGs.

Members of different religions will translate the SDGs into their own practice in different ways. That is why the partnerships between networks of faith-based organisations and States are needed for a greater incorporation of values related to religions or beliefs for successful implementation of the SDGs. One place to guarantee that members of all religions participate fully in sustainable development seems to be national action plans on SDGs. Certain provisions included in this key strategic document can secure equal access and non-discrimination in education, labour market, justice, political and social life. Special measures could be planned to strengthen disadvantaged religious communities and help them realize their potential. This would require domestic political will and international support for such an approach.

Where religious doctrine is an integral part of the conflict, faith-based actors engaging in development may face conflicts of interest. Ensuring FoRB is thus the first and most difficult step to resolve the conflict. Therefore, governments and leaders, while formulating their strategies and development policies, should take into consideration inputs from religious communities that serve as important providers of social needs.

This breakout session will provide an opportunity to discuss interlinkages between the freedom of religion and belief and realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. We would like participants to reflect on two elements. On the one hand: how to ensure that members of religious communities will be part of inclusive development and on the other hand how to enhance positive contribution of religious communities to attainment of Agenda 2030. Particular attention will be paid on the role of international development cooperation in support to marginalized groups and religious minorities.

#### **Panel Discussion:**

Moderator: **Dr. Karol Wilczyński**, Member of „A World of Neighbors” Network, founder of islamistablog.pl

Panelists:

- **Silvia Sinibaldi**, Humanitarian Director, Caritas Europe, Concord (European Association of Development Non-Governmental Organisations);
- **Shireen P Huq**, Naripokkho Foundation, Bangladesh;
- **Dr. Marie Juul Petersen**, Senior Research, The Danish Institute for Human Rights;
- **Prof. Emma Tomalin**, Professor of Religion and Public Life, University of Leeds.