

Religious Leaders Put Aside Differences to Find Solutions to Problems in the Americas

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LOS ANGELES, CA, USA, June 6, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A collection of interfaith institutions is gathering experts on religion, governance, and development from throughout the Western Hemisphere for the FIDELA (Foro Interligioso de las Americas) Conference, held within the framework of the [Summit of the Americas](#).

Approximately 70-80 prominent religious leaders, representatives of faith-based organizations, and academic experts will join to discuss urgent issues in the Americas over the course of the two-day forum.



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W. Cole Durham Jr., President of the [G20 Interfaith Forum Association](#) (one of the event’s co-hosts), said organizers hope to make this forum a regular event connected to inter-governmental meetings in the Hemisphere.

“The FIDELA conference is the second Interreligious Forum of the Americas. The first one was held during the last Summit of the Americas in 2018 in Peru,” Durham said. “Our goal is to have FIDELA become a fixture of all future Summits. Interreligious voices can be a powerful influence in the region.”

Larry Eastland, President of The John A. Widtsoe

Foundation (another of the event’s co-hosts) said the gathering is very unique in its unity.

“It is inspiring to see religious leaders from diverse faith traditions put aside religious and

national differences to come together and discuss how to support religious liberty and promote human rights and human dignity," Eastland said. "This forum helps us realize St. Paul's hope that we will become 'no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.'"

The forum will be held within the framework of the Summit of the Americas, a yearly gathering of North and South American and Caribbean nations where heads of state discuss urgent issues and commit to uniting in joint action to address challenges.

Cynthia Juarez Lange, Senior Fellow at ICLRS and OAS Representative, emphasised that religious values play a critical role in the identity of people throughout the Americas, and religious voices are essential in these Summit discussions.

"Just as the Summit of the Americas demonstrates a desire for nations to come together to solve common problems, so the FIDELA conference demonstrates that people of faith have a desire to come together and build solutions for the future," Lange said. "We see our shared beliefs and humanity as we strive to overcome today's issues in collaborative and positive environment."

The meeting (in-person/virtual) will take place June 7-8 in Los Angeles, and will address the following themes connected to the Ninth Summit of the Americas' agenda, looking at the issues through a lens of religious engagement:

- Peacebuilding & Sustainable Development: the role faith communities play in in the Americas;
- Improving pandemic response to health and resilience through multireligious collaboration;
- Promoting a green and equitable recovery;
- Strengthening inclusive democracies and protecting human rights;
- Ensuring full engagement of women and girls in religion and society;
- The role of religions in providing assistance to migrants throughout the Hemisphere;
- Engaging religious leaders in the fight against corruption;
- Addressing the challenges of racism, diversity and inclusion in the Hemisphere and how religions can contribute to the solutions

Confirmed speakers include:

- Nestor Mendez – Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of the American States (OAS)
- Archbishop José Gomez – Archbishop of Los Angeles, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Melissa Rogers – Executive Director, White House office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
- Ambassador Rashad Hussain – Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, U.S. Department of State
- Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie – Interim President and General Secretary, National Council

of Churches, USA

- Rev. Jim Wallace - Director, Center on Faith and Justice, George Washington University
- Rabbi David Saperstein – Director Emeritus, for the Religious Action Center of Reformed Judaism
- Elias Szczytnicki - Secretary General, Latin America and Caribbean Counsel of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace
- W. Cole Durham Jr.– President, G20 Interfaith Forum Association
- Michel Klein-Solomon – Regional Director for Central and North America and the Caribbean, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Omar Cortes – Director National office of Religious Affairs of Chile
- Kevin O’Reiley – Summit of the Americas National Coordinator, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State
- Evens Souffrant – General Director, Ministry of Worship of Haiti
- Katherine Marshall – Senior Fellow, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University and, Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue

About the Summit of the Americas and the Interreligious Forum of the Americas

The Summit of the Americas are institutionalized gatherings of the Heads of State and governmental leaders of the Western Hemisphere created to discuss common policy issues, affirm shared values and commit to concerted actions to address continuing and new challenges facing the region. Religious communities, as other social actors, play an essential role in the Summits of the Americas, providing recommendations to the various governments and assisting in the implementation of the initiatives adopted for the development of the hemispheric agenda. The First Interreligious Forum of the Americas was held in Lima, Peru, in 2018, within the framework of the Eighth Summit of the Americas.

About the G20 Interfaith Forum

The G20 Interfaith Forum seeks global solutions by collaborating with religious thought leaders and political representatives to help shape the overall G20 agenda. It draws on the vital roles that religious institutions and beliefs play in hemispheric affairs, reflecting a rich diversity of institutions, ideas, and values. Through its extensive network of networks, it helps prioritize key global policy goals and point toward practical means of implementation at every level of society.

For more information, please visit www.g20interfaith.org.

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