U.S. Trade Representative Greer and Former Australian Prime Minister Morrison Call on Faith Leaders to Shape Policy

Calling on faith communities to bring their moral vision and on-the-ground experience to the policies that shape the global economy and global development



G20 Interfaith Forum

SALT LAKE CITY, UT, UNITED STATES, October 16, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison delivered keynote addresses to the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) on Friday, calling on faith communities to bring their moral vision and on-the-ground experience to the policies that shape the global economy and global development. The two morning plenaries at the University of Utah Institute of Religion opened the first full day of the IF20's first annual Forum held in the United States.

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> *U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer*

In the first plenary, "Unleashing Human Potential for the Common Good," Greer said every faith tradition expects people to work, but God does not measure human worth in economic terms. He warned that offshoring has hollowed out local economies, and said policy should help people meet their economic needs in their own towns. "A global economy and international economic policy should operate to bless a society and not the other way around," Greer said.

He urged governments, families and faith communities alike to treat people as producers first. "Even though we live in an imperfect world, governments can promote economic policies that increase the chances for all to live the good life," Greer said. "Importantly, governments must recognize and encourage the work of individuals and families

as producers and not just as consumers." Responding to the panel, Greer praised the concrete proposals he heard for helping people build wealth in their own communities, and invited faith groups to bring specific, practical ideas to his office, which he said is focused on action.

Panelists offered working models. Dr. Kim Tan, Co-Founder of the Transformational Business Network Alliance, described enterprises that run low-cost schools, employ survivors of trafficking and restore degraded land, arguing that while "there will always be a place for aid and charity," lasting change requires enterprise. Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, described nearly 70 years of Sri Lankan community development rooted in Buddhist and Gandhian teaching, now reaching some 15,000 communities. Eric LeCompte, Executive Director of Jubilee USA Network, said debt relief remains "the strongest issue that the G20 continues to lead on." Anne Simmons-Benton, Chair of Women20 USA, cited W20 findings that closing gender gaps in agrifood systems would add $1 trillion to global GDP and lift 45 million people out of food insecurity.

Kevin Hyland OBE, CEO of SMI and the United Kingdom's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, noted that a century after the 1926 Slavery Convention, some 50 million people remain trapped in trafficking and modern slavery, with 99 percent of victims missed and 99.9 percent of perpetrators going unpunished. "We owe it to those girls, those boys, those women and those men, that we will fight their cause because many of them can't," Hyland said.

In the second plenary, "Deadline 2030: Extending G20 Horizons," Morrison argued that politics cannot replace religion, and that faith supplies what policy alone cannot. "Science can tell us what, but it can't tell us why, and it can't tell us what direction we should head in," Morrison said. "I think that's where faith comes in: it does provide moral direction and a moral guide." Faith, he said, builds the trust that strong societies depend on. "Faith has created sustained moral communities of good faith," Morrison said. "It sanctifies a moral order and a social order which enables trust to be established between strangers. This builds strong societies, which build stronger nations." Religion is often blamed for the world's problems, he acknowledged, but the answer to bad religion is not no religion; it is good religion. He urged faith communities not to vacate the field.

Professor Melissa Rogers of Wake Forest University School of Divinity, former Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, recalled that the Ebola response in West Africa depended on religious leaders as well as public health experts. She called for restoring humanitarian aid where it has been cut and for religious freedom for everyone, everywhere. "Providing humanitarian relief for the most vulnerable people in the world is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do," Rogers said.

Steve Messeh, Director of the Center for Faith at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said today's problems are too urgent to wait for government alone. He pointed to the USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box program, through which local faith-based organizations helped deliver 17 million boxes of food during the COVID-19 pandemic. "That's not a political strategy. That's not a

sermon. That’s government and faith communities working hand in hand,” Messeh said.

Rev. Dr. David Beckmann, President Emeritus of Bread for the World, warned that historic progress against poverty is grinding to a halt and urged participants to press governments to raise these concerns when G20 leaders meet in December. “Whenever people of faith vote,” he said, “we should remember God’s special concern about people in need.”

Dr. Esben Lunde Larsen of the Pandemic Fund at the World Bank urged faith-based organizations to form national councils that governments can partner with, adding that “the future is built by the youth and they need to be part of the table and the conversation.”

Elissa McConkie Gifford, Director of Humanitarian Services for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, described the Church’s work strengthening women and children at the grassroots level.

IF20 President W. Cole Durham and Vice President Katherine Marshall opened the day, and Marshall framed its purpose. “Our ambition is to bring the best of religious wisdom and religious experience into the global governance system, as exemplified in the G20 itself,” Marshall said.

The plenaries took place October 16, 2026, from 8:30 to 11:45 a.m. MDT, moderated by Timothy Stratford, Senior Counsel at Covington & Burling LLP, and Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi, Executive Director of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. The Forum concludes October 17 ahead of the G20 Leaders’ Summit in Miami on December 14–15. The full program is available at g20interfaith.org/2026-forum-program.

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