

Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue - Meeting at UN

In a high-level gathering of the world's foremost leaders, experts, and esteemed religious figures at the UN Headquarters, our very own Swami Svatmanandaji from the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam at Saylorsburg PA, USA was invited to share his wisdom on the topic: "Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue: Building Bridges between East and West". In a world rife with conflict, tension, bigotry, and ideological battles, the religious, cultural, and ethnic identities of communities have become a mobilizing tool to spur division and cause destruction in the hands of the conflict mongers.

Swamiji was invited to address this historic gathering to share his views on the topic mentioned above, in an attempt to bring the world back to the path of shared values and worldviews connecting the East and the West. Swamiji in his quintessential manner of deftly bringing the core of an issue into sharp focus almost effortlessly, invited the learned participants to consider how impactful bridge-building would ideally look like. He pointed out the need for high-level conversations and decisions to percolate to the commoners on the streets and the imperative of the UN body to facilitate synergies and more fruitful exchanges between policymakers and religious leaders, and doing so with a focus on noble intentions. He emphasized the need for influential leaders to walk the talk in their own lives and communities while continuously partnering and collaborating across the social, political, and religious spectrum. He thus embodied the role of a lighthouse providing a sense of direction that was essentially the wisdom sought through his speech. Swamiji's presentation brought the attention of the 500 leaders and experts present that evening to the need for an integrated approach to bridgebuilding and the important role of religious leaders as grassroots influencers taking the messages to the masses in a language and value-guided format that would truly inspire change.

During the closing remarks, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Moratinos, the High Representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, specifically referred to Swamiji's comments. His speech was lauded as the best speech by Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Al-Issa, the Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, and appreciated unanimously by the attendees as a thought-provoking and truly insightful presentation.

As a result of this momentous event, Swamiji received an invitation from His Excellency Mr. Arthur C. Wilson, Special Advisor on Faiths and Religion to the UN. Swamiji was invited to assemble a team and "join a High-level Working Group to set an agenda for continuous dialogue and to work together on areas of mutual interest to achieve progress on critical global issues".

Photo in the cover page #2