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Bristol faith leaders ask people to pray for UN Faiths Meeting in Bristol this week

5 September 2015: Faith communities in Bristol have asked their people to pray for the success of the historic meeting between faith leaders from around the world and senior United Nations officials in Bristol this week.

The Lord Mayor of Bristol, Clare Campion-Smith, wrote to the city's faith communities to ask them to hold the event, entitled: *Faith in the Future*, on September 8-9, 2015, Marriott Royal Hotel, Bristol, in their prayers.

A letter from Rt Rev Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, asking people to hold the event in their prayers was read out in every Catholic church in the Diocese. Methodist churches also asked their members to pray for the event.

The Bristol UN meeting will look at how faith groups can help implement the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aimed at lifting people out of poverty and creating a sustainable planet.

It is co-hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), which is based in Bath.

During the UN Bristol Meeting, the faiths will announce their own 10-year action plans which will be known as the Bristol Commitments.

Martin Palmer, Secretary General of ARC, said: "That the faith commitments will be known as The Bristol Commitments is a source of great delight to me. As a Bristolian whose family has been in Bristol for over 500 years, I am proud that this historic meeting between key sectors of the UN and the world's major faiths is taking place in my home city – Europe's Green Capital.

"The Bristol Commitments are specific, faith-related, detailed programmes of work by actual faith communities from around the world, each inspired by their own values and beliefs and finding common cause in working to make life better, not just for billions of people, but for all life on the planet."

The Bristol UN meeting will be attended by 24 faith traditions and faith-based organisations as well as by representatives from the United Nations, the World Bank, The Nature Conservancy, WWF and the Governments of France and Germany.

George Ferguson, Mayor of Bristol, said: "This is an exceptional opportunity for faith groups from around the world to work alongside senior UN representatives in the shaping of the new Sustainable Development Goals. In this, our European Green Capital year, there is no better time for Bristol to host such an event which will see the development of what we trust will be a truly influential dialogue.

"Our aim is to help increase the ability of civil society to contribute to the future of global sustainable development. Together with ARC, our Lord Mayor and leaders from amongst Bristol's diverse faith groups, I look forward to welcoming representatives from around the world to what I am sure will be a lively and constructive conversation.

"This major event follows on the international workshop and symposium at which I had the privilege of taking part in The Vatican in the presence of Pope Francis. Our invitation to speak at that event alongside 65 leading city mayors from across the world is further testament to Bristol's growing international reputation as a sustainable city."

The UN Bristol meeting will open on **Tuesday, 8 September**, with a Procession and Welcome Ceremony. Faith leaders and secular representatives will process from the Marriott Royal Hotel to the 800-year-old Lord Mayor's Chapel. They will be greeted by The Lord Mayor, Clare Campion-Smith, and her Sword Bearer on behalf of Bristol. George Ferguson, Bristol's first elected mayor, will host a dinner for the delegates at At-Bristol on Tuesday night.

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Notes for editor:

Date: **Tues 8 and Wed 9 Sept, 9am**

Place: **Marriott Royal Hotel, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TA**

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Picture opportunities:

- **TUES 9am-10.15am:** Welcome Ceremony: Faith leaders will process from the Marriott Royal to the Lord Mayor's Chapel.
- **TUES 12.30pm:** Formal presentation of the Bristol Commitments to Deputy Secretary-General Magdy Martinez-Soliman.
- **WED: 4pm** Dance performance by Bristol's "Flamingo Chicks" dance troupe – an inclusive dance group that gives children with disabilities the opportunity to explore movement and have fun alongside their friends.
- **Interview requests**, please contact Susie Weldon (ARC) or Antje Watermann (UNDP).
- **Event photographs** will be available to download from Flickr: <http://tinyurl.com/p3ua5hn>
- **Event hashtags:** #promise2015 and #action2015

Examples of the faith commitments to be launched in Bristol include:

- Buddhist organisation, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, is launching a range of initiatives to help poor people, including micro-finance, micro-credit and livelihoods support programmes. (*SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.*)
- The Shinto of Japan are building the Great Forest Wall, a five-metre high embankment retained by sustainable forest as a buffer against future tsunamis. (*SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.*)
- The Church of England is disinvesting from specific segments of the fossil fuel industry and companies that derive more than 10% of their revenues from the extraction of oil sands or thermal coal. (*SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.*)
- Many faiths, including the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and the Church of Uganda, are training people in faith-based forms of climate-smart, sustainable agriculture such as Farming God's Way (Christian) and Islamic Farming (Muslim). (*SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture.*)

About ARC: ARC works with the world's major faiths to help them develop environmental programmes based on their own beliefs, teachings and practices. It was founded by HRH The Prince Philip in 1995 and is based in Bath, UK. www.arcworld.org

About UNDP: UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations. www.undp.org

SDGs: There are 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <http://undp.org/globalgoals>