

Lord Mayor of Bristol Clare Campion-Smith

Welcome speech to delegates to Faith in the Future,
the Bristol UN faiths meeting co-hosted by ARC and UNDP,

Delivered in the Lord Mayor's Chapel, Bristol, 8 September 2015

Conference delegates, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the people of Bristol. You arrived yesterday on a lovely September day of sun and I believe the weather is set fair for your stay so I hope you get a sense of the beauty of our city and the reason we are proud to be Bristolian. I have been a councillor in the city for 9 years and have seen many sights on College Green but nothing as colourful and splendid as your procession from the hotel to the Lord Mayor's Chapel.

Bristol has been buzzing this summer as Green Capital gains momentum. To be able to host a conference for world faith leaders and the UN gives it an extra buzz.

You come from all over the world and Bristol is well used to that. Our history as a port has made us a cosmopolitan, multi-cultural, multi-faith community. At the last estimate, there were 91 different languages spoken in Bristol. I believe that our diversity gives us strength, it challenges convention in the best possible way, it makes us an innovative city and one in which people of vision and tenacity chose to make a difference by their actions. Community activity was a cornerstone of our success in becoming European Green Capital – community activity through the faith organisations will also become a cornerstone in the UN Sustainable Development goals.

We are proud of our city but we also acknowledge a dark past. Much of the wealth of Bristol in the 1700s was built on the transatlantic slave trade – an abhorrent trade that was both defended by the churches and challenged by the churches. A city cannot turn the clock back but a city can determine to do things right now and help shape a better global future. There are millions across the globe who are still enslaved by poverty, by ignorance and by pressures to conform. We look forward to hearing those Bristol Faith Commitments which will come from the conference and which will be taken forward to the UN later this month and we will support you locally to progress the 10 year commitments you will make.

I am delighted that we have such a power house of faiths and world organisations in the Chapel today and on behalf of the city, I wish you every success in your discussion and in the links that you will forge.