

European Council of Religious Leaders



Budapest Statement, May 2018

On 7-8th May, 2018 the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) came together in the beautiful and historic city of Budapest to explore the important theme of 'Multi-religious Collaboration on Community Cohesion and Human Security'.

The choice of Hungary for ECRL's annual meeting was particularly meaningful. It is a country which faces many of the challenges experienced in countries across Europe today: mass migration between continents driven by conflict and social and economic inequalities; balancing freedoms, rights and human security; the rise of consumerism which can contribute to the destruction of our natural environment; and the growth of political populism driven by the fear of religious and cultural change.

We recognise that Hungary is a country which has been portrayed in a negative light for the ways in which it has understood and dealt with some of these challenges. As a Council we came to listen, learn and respect the views and concerns of the host country and communities, whilst at the same time sensitively sharing our own vision of the positive role religion can play in addressing the significant challenges evident in Europe today.

Following our profound considerations, ***as the most representative body of senior religious leaders in Europe today we call on community, religious and political leaders across Europe to:***

- Realise and recognise the humanity and dignity of every single individual regardless of their origin or background, and to work tirelessly together to overcome all forms of prejudice and discrimination. We know that fear, hatred and division are typically based on false negative stereotypes, and much greater support is needed for projects and initiatives which bring people from all backgrounds together, and help build positive relations and communal harmony;
- Challenge negative popular and political discourse which confuses religious identity and human security. On the anniversary of VE day as a Council we remember that in Europe violent and oppressive ideologies have taken many guises. The overwhelming majority of religious people across Europe and the world strongly reject and condemn all forms of violence, persecution and hate speech;
- Remember that history clearly shows that a society or politics based on fear can only lead to greater anxiety, communal tensions, and anguish. A society or religion that is afraid of change is one that cannot be secure and confident in its own identity;
- Publicly acknowledge and support the shared positive moral, ethical and spiritual values inherent in all the world's great religions: we pray and work for the peaceful and harmonious existence of people of all religions and those of none.

The ECRL express our deepest gratitude to the people and faith communities of Hungary for our warm and sincere welcome and open and constructive dialogue; and to our gracious hosts the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

As a Council drawn from diverse religious traditions and beliefs, our work as a multi-religious Council is based on the firm belief that the values, beliefs and hopes that bring us together are far greater and more powerful than the differences that distinguish us. As our deliberations have reminded us once again, people of all religions and none need not agree on everything in order to agree on the most important calling of our time: the need to work tirelessly for greater peace, respect and love across Europe and the wider world.

The European Council of Religious Leaders
8th May, 2018. Budapest