

**inter-
religious
peace
colloquium**

*Flx
Bellagio*

Suite 1000 • 432 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016 • (212) 686-8670

Steering Committee
(In Formation)

June 27, 1975

Rabbi Irwin M. Blank
Rt. Rev. Joseph Gremillion
Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh
His Eminence Iakovos
Philip M. Klutznick
Sol M. Linowitz
Matthew Rosenhaus
Rev. Krister Stendahl
U Thant
Cyrus R. Vance

Henry Siegman - Coordinator

Dear Friend:

At the outset I ask your pardon for not personalizing this letter. It is going to each of the participants in the Bellagio Colloquium, and I did not want to hold it up any more than is necessary.

I am pleased to send you a copy of the statement that was composed by Rev. Krister Stendahl on the basis of the several workgroup reports and the general discussion.

We expect to have this statement available as a printed brochure. If you would like to order quantities of this brochure, or to make it available for larger distribution through institutional channels, please let me know what number you might need and I will inform you what cost, if any, is involved.

I have already heard directly from many of you, and would urge everyone to let me have your impressions of the Colloquium, your suggestions for follow up, and information about yourself - particularly about your activities that relate in some way to the concerns that were discussed in Bellagio.

On the basis of these communications, we hope to circulate an informal newsletter to the Bellagio "alumni," so that the sense of living community that was fashioned during those five days on the shores of Lake Como will be kept alive.

We also hope to have available before too long the three work-group reports, and we are discussing with foundations the possibility of publishing the entire proceedings. I will keep you informed of the progress we make.

Looking forward to hearing from you, and with warmest good wishes,

Sincerely,

Henry Siegman

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The following statement is an introduction to the reports of the Workgroups which met during the course of the first Interreligious Peace Colloquium in Bellagio, Italy, May 26-30, 1975.

It contains views which were expressed by the participants in the Colloquium - Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims - during five unusual days of study, prayer and fellowship.

The statement, the workgroup recommendations, and the proceedings (which we hope to have available soon) do not contain formally-adopted policies, nor are they intended as a "message to the world." They are no more than a reminder to the participants in the Colloquium of their intention to work for the alleviation of hunger, each by the means available to him, as they return to their own communities.

"THE FOOD CRISIS: A CHALLENGE TO PEACE A CALL TO FAITH"

A Statement from the first Interreligious Peace Colloquium

We met, conscious of the four hundred million - 1/10 of the world population - who lack sufficient food, one half of that number being children; a world of starvation and malnutrition causing permanent damage to brain and life; a world where many of the attempts at rectifying this situation have not worked but rather tended to make the rich richer and the poor poorer; a world which may double its population from the present four billion to eight billion prior to the year 2020.

Under different symbols - powerful in our various traditions - there emerged a common vision in which "bread" and "rice" are far more than a commodity manipulated by the laws of market and commerce. The right to breathe the air and to drink the water becomes coupled with the right to eat. Some would even speak of the holiness of bread. To others, the basic human need for

food leads to similar reverence for the fruits of the earth. In short, food is not just a commercial commodity among commodities, and cannot be so treated by society. And an enhanced dignity of the farmer must consequently be translated into improved economic status for him and for his almost sacred service to us all.

We were made aware of how the scarcity of food and the scarcity of energy are closely related, and we became convinced that the first claim on resources of energy should be made for agricultural development in terms of fertilizers and irrigation, and that at a price acceptable to the less developed countries.

We rejoiced in the efforts now getting underway through the World Food Council of the United Nations, grateful that this amount of cooperation between sovereign nations has been possible. We appreciate its emphasis on local development where it is most needed and promises more lasting effects. We hope reserves of grain will be so located that they can reach people in need speedily and efficiently.

We were strengthened in our convictions that neither short-term nor long-term alleviation of hunger and malnutrition can be achieved without structural changes in the societies of which we are a part. In a world of scarcity, the increased affluence of the affluent is intolerable. And it is unacceptable for the economic burden of a slowdown in the increasing standard of living in the affluent nations to be borne by the unemployed and the poor in those countries. Scarcity calls for a just distribution of resources, both within and among nations. In developing countries no less than in the developed ones, the first and last aim must be that of just distribution.

As religious communities and individuals we consider it our immediate duty to hold up this simple truth before ourselves and our political leaders, and for leaders of industry and finance, so that the poor may be assured their right to eat. We shall do so through organizations available to us and through local and national "food councils," working in cooperation with whatever agencies are formed to administer the programs of the World Food Council of the United Nations.

The deepest and strongest expression of any religion is "the style of life" that characterizes its believers. It is urgent that religious communities and individuals scrutinize their life style and turn from habits of waste, overconsumption and thoughtless acceptances of the standards propagated by advertisements and social pressures.

The cry from millions for food brought us together from many faiths. God - Reality itself - calls us to respond to the cry for food. And we hear it as a cry not only for aid but also for justice. The spirit - if not the words - of one of the prayers used in our meeting sums up not only our hope but our resolve: "Give bread to those who have hunger, and to those who have bread, give a hunger for justice."

May 31, 1975