



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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The Commission, the Council and the Parliament debate the future of the European Union with religious leaders

High-level representatives from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and Mormon communities today met with the leaders of the European Union to exchange views on, amongst others, current societal developments in and outside the EU, on Europe's role in the world and in the immediate neighbourhood, and on the part religions can play in this context. The participants observed a minute's silence in respect of the victims of the tragic attack in the Jewish museum in Brussels on 24 May and adopted a [joint declaration](#) regarding Meriam Ibrahim, a Sudanese Christian sentenced to death for apostasy.

The high-level meeting – the tenth of its kind – was hosted by José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and co-chaired by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and László Surján, Vice-President of the European Parliament, representing EP President Martin Schulz.

President Barroso said: “Across Europe, dialogue on the future of Europe is taking place at all levels. Integration and legitimacy have to advance in parallel. More democracy is the corollary of the greater institutional integration needed to enable the European Union to rise to current global challenges. In this respect, there is a pressing need to strengthen links between EU citizens and the democratic process of the Union. I strongly believe that the active involvement of Churches and religious communities can contribute decisively to this reflexion.”

President Van Rompuy stated: “In a recent speech, delivered at the University of Aachen, I focused attention on the values of peace, of prosperity and strength, strength in the sense of required economic and political power. These values have shaped our Union, they form, in a certain way, the framework of our ‘common home’. Over the last years our common home has been in the centre of a heavy storm. But it has overall resisted well, thanks to both the framework of its values and the soul of the house - the soul that resides in a certain idea that we pursue, in the Union, of the human person and the relationship to the other.”

Vice-President Surján declared: “Churches, religious associations and communities have been during the crisis a bastion against the deterioration of the social fabrics that makes Europe: they have contributed not just to the economic, but also to the social and moral recovery of the continent. Their voice matters and the European Union must continue to build on this relationship to its own benefits and to that of its citizens.”

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the high-level meeting with religious leaders. This year's meeting has been called by President Barroso under the motto "The future of the European Union" as genuine part of the broader political dialogue on the future of Europe that is taking place at all levels. This includes a series of citizens' dialogues between European and national politicians and citizens, initiated as part of the European Year of Citizens 2013 and continued in 2014, and the call from President Barroso and the European Parliament for artists, intellectuals and scientists to draft a new narrative for Europe for all citizens.

The open, transparent and regular dialogue between the European Commission and churches, religious communities, as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations, is enshrined into primary law by the Lisbon Treaty (Art 17 TFEU). Beyond regular seminars with the different interlocutors, there is one annual high-level meeting with religious leaders and one with philosophical and non-confessional representatives.

More information:

List of participants: see [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-14-407_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-407_en.htm)

Statement on Meriam Yahya Ibrahim, a Sudanese believer sentenced to death for apostasy: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release STATEMENT-14-186_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-186_en.htm)

EU Guidelines on freedom of religion and belief:

https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137585.pdf

Information on the European Commission's dialogue with churches, religious communities and philosophical and non-confessional organisations:

http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/activities/outreach-team/dialogue/index_en.htm

Debate on the Future of Europe: http://ec.europa.eu/debate-future-europe/index_en.htm

Website of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/index_en.htm

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