



FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION

BETWEEN

**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE
IN CONFLICT
("O-SRSG-SVC")**

AND

**WORLD CONFERENCE OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE, INC
(RELIGIONS FOR PEACE)**

The Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (O-SRSG-SVC) and *Religions for Peace*, collectively referred to as the "parties," have agreed to sign this Framework of Cooperation (FOC), which represents a statement of intent by the parties to work together and outlines the basis for collaboration and joint activities of mutual interest.

PREAMBLE

The Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (O-SRSG-SVC) is an office of the United Nations Secretariat that supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict whose role is to serve as the United Nations' spokesperson and political advocate on conflict-related sexual violence; to provide coherent and strategic leadership; to work effectively to strengthen existing United Nations coordination mechanisms, and to engage in advocacy efforts, inter alia with governments, including military and judicial representatives, as well as with all parties to armed conflict and civil society. The OSRSG-SVC was established by Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), which reaffirms that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence and emphasizes that this crime is a threat to international peace and security.

The Special Representative chairs the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network, which is comprised of 21 United Nations entities and her work is also supported by the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Special Representative has established three strategic priorities for the mandate, namely: (i) converting cultures of impunity into cultures of justice and accountability through consistent and effective prosecution; (ii) fostering national ownership and leadership for a sustainable, survivor-centred

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response; and (iii) addressing the root causes of CRSV with structural gender inequality and discrimination, poverty and marginalization as its invisible driver in times of war and peace.¹

Religions for Peace is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious movement advancing common action among the world's religious communities for peace. Founded in 1970, *Religions for Peace* works through its Interreligious Councils, in over 90 countries in six regions, along with their women of faith and youth networks at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Working at the highest level and simultaneously at the grassroots, *Religions for Peace* brings together the great strengths of religion in daily life and the legacy of each community for concrete action and cultural change. Its six priority areas, which aligns with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, focuses on: (i) promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies; (ii) advancing gender equality; (iii) nurturing a sustainable environment; (iv) championing the freedom of thought, conscience and belief; (v) strengthening interreligious education; (vi) and fostering multi-religious collaboration and global partnerships.

THE CONTEXT

Conflicts continue to rage and worsen while sexual violence in conflict continue to be used as a tactic of war, terrorism and political repression, designed not only to inflict bodily harm on the victims, but also to terrify, dominate, humiliate and degrade them, their families and communities.

Sexual violence has serious and multiple health, social and economic repercussions for survivors, as well as their social networks and communities. It often turns victims into social outcasts, fracturing families and corroding community structures. Fear and cultural stigma prevent most survivors from ever coming forward. Stigma and victim-blaming are compounded by a historical absence of accountability. Children born of sexual violence face unique risks of stigmatisation and discrimination. They are often marginalised and rejected within and outside families and exposed to a range of physical, psychosocial, economic, cultural and legal risks and harms.

Security Council Resolution 2467(2019) encourages religious leaders at the national and local level, to play a more active role in advocating within communities against sexual violence in conflict, to avoid marginalization and stigmatization of survivors and their families, as well as to assist with their social and economic reintegration and that of their children, and to address impunity for these crimes. Humanity's welfare and humanity's very future depend on solidarity and working together as a global family to achieve common goals. Now is the time to re-embrace global solidarity.

¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict: <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/about-us/about-the-office/>



SCOPE AND AREAS OF COOPERATION

This agreement has been entered into to formalize the working relationship between the Parties for purposes of advancing multi-religious collaborative efforts to combat conflict-related sexual violence² in situations of armed conflict, used as a tactic of war, terrorism and political repression, tackle its root causes, prevent its occurrence and adequately respond to and meet the needs of survivors through a survivor-centred approach.

Recognizing their joint priority to protect and promote the rights of all persons affected by, or at risk of, conflict-related sexual violence, and the critical role that religious leaders and multi-religious collaborative efforts play in the culture and sustenance of communities, faith organizations and leaders are uniquely positioned to champion efforts to end all forms of violence against women, counter stigmatization of survivors and reach large audiences of people, often underserved by other groups or authorities, with messages of safety and support for victims and with information about offender accountability. The O-SRSG-SVC and *Religions for peace* will collaborate to prevent and respond to sexual violence, with emphasis on addressing its root causes. Under this FOC, the Parties aim to convene, coordinate and collaborate to:

- **Account:** Strengthen the capacity of religious leaders on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence, including shifting the focus on accountability for the perpetrators. Leverage the moral authority and credibility of religious leaders to interact with parties to the conflict, including those who commit, command or condone conflict-related sexual violence, for the adoption of time-bound commitments to address these crimes and as a strategy for structural prevention.
- **Instruct:** Serve as channel of communication with all parties -to listen, share their teachings and use their respective pulpits to preach, promote and disseminate messages that support equality and respect for women and girls, as well as the promotion of women's rights to live free from violence. This would include sensitizing and encouraging boys and men to speak out and use their influence to enforce a zero-tolerance narrative for sexual violence against women and girls, as well as men and boys.
- **Heal:** Ensure that religious, spiritual, and faith-based communities are safe environments to allow victims of sexual violence to discuss their experiences and seek healing, including referral to specialized services;

² "The term "conflict-related sexual violence" refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. That link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a State or non-State armed group, which includes terrorist entities; the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a political, ethnic or religious minority group or targeted on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; the climate of impunity, which is generally associated with State collapse, cross-border consequences such as displacement or trafficking, and/or violations of a ceasefire agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict". Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (S/2019/280).

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- **Inform:** Raise awareness and educate the public at large on the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the plight and rights of survivors and their children born of violence;
- **Advocate:** Advocate for relevant laws and policies to address sexual violence and for their full implementation and enforcement where they already exist;
- **Build resilience:** Support survivors, their families and communities, including children born of sexual violence with particular focus on combatting stigma, ostracization and discrimination to create an enabling environment for their socioeconomic reintegration in the communities and provide spiritual, psychosocial and other forms of support to appropriately meet their needs.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Resources: Implementation of the areas of cooperation in this FOC will be subject to the availability of sufficient financial and human resources for that purpose and will be conducted in a gender- and culturally sensitive manner, in compliance with the Office of the SRSG-SVC and *Religions for Peace's* programme of work, priority activities, principles, internal rules, regulations, policies, administrative procedures and practices.

Communication: The Office of the SRSG-SVC and *Religions for Peace* commit to promoting and communicating their joint activities to relevant audiences in a spirit of collaboration and joint ownership.

Intellectual Property and Data Protection: As part of this collaboration, intellectual property applicable in each jurisdiction will apply, and intellectual property matters will be handled on a case-by-case basis, with the following basic governing principle: background Intellectual Property will remain the property of the organisation which owns it, though arrangements may be entered into as part of any project or programme. Parties commit to upholding data protections requirements in their jurisdictions and, over and above the legal requirements.

Responsibilities and Key Points of Contact: All notices and other communications under this FOC must be in writing and must be sent to the contact persons of the Parties specified below, or the delegates nominated by these contact persons. The Parties agree to inform each other as soon as possible about any change in the designated contact person, including that person's contact details.



Contact Person for The Office of the SRSG-SVC:

Name: *Alejandro Sanchez*

Title: *Deputy Team Leader, Programmes*

Phone:

E-mail: *alejandro.sanchez@un.org*

Contact Person for Religions for Peace:

Name: *Ms. Deepika Singh*

Title: *Associate SG & Director of Programmes*

Phone:

E-mail: *dsingh@rfp.org*

Commencement and Duration: The effective commencement date of this working relationship will be the date of the signing of this FOC. The working relationship shall remain in force unless either party writes formally to request termination (see Section "Termination and Amendments")

Termination and Amendments: This FOC is ongoing until terminated by either party in writing. The working relationship can be terminated at any time by any Party following a consultation period of 30 (thirty) calendar days. This FOC may be amended only by written approval from all participating parties, and the decision to amend the agreement shall include the date of the amendment, the signatures of appointed representative of each participating organisation and any new terms and conditions amended or added to this agreement.

IN WITNESS WHERE OF the parties hereto execute this FOC:

For The Office of the SRSG-SVC

Ms. Pramila Patten
Under Secretary General and
Special Representative of the
Secretary General on Sexual
Violence in Conflict
17 June 2022

For Religions for Peace

Prof. Azza Karam
Secretary General
17 June 2022