

Tveit: In striving for sustainable development, role of religion is hope

by [Albin Hillert](#) â€” last modified 17 February 2016 05:59 PM â€” [History](#)

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“Today, thankfully, religion is no longer a ‘taboo’ in political science and development literature,” said Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at an international conference on religion and sustainable development.

Tveit was the keynote speaker at the conference, entitled “Partners for Change: Religions and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” held 17-18 February in Berlin.

Participants acknowledged that religion plays an integral role in all societies and is the most important source of values for many people. They discussed how any development policy that takes the individual seriously must also take his or her world view seriously. For most people, this world view is fundamentally shaped by their religion.

“This is a moment of hope,” said Tveit. “The theme and the initiative behind this event are meant to give hope to those who need that the Sustainable Development Goals will be pursued with commitment and all available resources.”

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, is composed of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets to eliminate extreme poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.
New international partnership announced

At the “Partners for Change” conference, participants acknowledged that religion has made a practical contribution toward meeting people’s basic social needs. In many developing countries, education and health care systems are inconceivable without this contribution.

At the conference, a new International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development was launched. “This initiative speaks eloquently of a new recognition and appreciation by governments, bilateral donors, multilateral organizations and the entire international development community of the critical role of religion and religious actors in human and sustainable development, in humanitarian response, and in the search for peace in our conflict-torn world,” said Tveit.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) play a crucial role in supporting processes to end extreme poverty and advance the sustainable development goals. For decades, faith communities have been delivering humanitarian and development services in areas where even governments didn't have access. FBOs can inform and nurture peoples understanding of the good life, their hope, their self-esteem and belief in their own dignity and rights and to be resilient in times of distress. Therefore, the role of FBOs is directly relevant in development policy making and implementation.

Tveit said he hoped that the new partnership would share its insights with a growing circle of governmental and intergovernmental actors; promote coordination across governmental agencies and departments so that religious engagement is systematic, consistent and meaningful; ensure that the views and values of faith groups are taken seriously, resist the temptation to instrumentalize them to accomplish policy goals; and address legal and constitutional constraints inhibiting engagement with religious actors.

“Indeed, he said, “the need for forms of engagement and collaboration that bring all relevant actors together to address situations of conflict, poverty, environmental and social crisis, oppression and injustice has been powerfully evident throughout my recent visits to churches and partners in many parts of the world.”

Tveit emphasized that the churches in the WCC as well as recent popes for many years have called for respect for the human rights of many and for the respect of international law as platform for a just peace.

[Full speech by Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit: The role of religion in sustainable development and peace](#)

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