

*Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy in Lindau  
Opening Ceremony, 4 October 2021, 13:30 – 15:30 CET*

**Welcome Remarks by Bishop Dr Bertram Meier**

Eminences, Excellencies,  
Distinguished Religious Leaders,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear brothers and sisters,

I warmly welcome you to the “Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders on Faith and Diplomacy: Generations in Dialogue” in Lindau. Dear Professor Azza Karam, a few weeks ago we had the opportunity to exchange some ideas within the framework of the G20 Interfaith Forum 2021 in Bologna. I am delighted to meet you again.

As President of the Committee for Interreligious Dialogue of the German Bishops’ Conference and as bishop of the diocese of Augsburg, whose territory includes Lindau, it is a particular pleasure for me to welcome each and every one of you here today. Thanks to digital technology, we are looking to Lindau from very different corners of the globe. I regret that we cannot all meet in person on the shores of beautiful Lake Constance. But I am confident there will be another chance to do so.

For four days, the participants of this conference will devote themselves to crucial questions of our times: peace and security, humanitarian commitment, public health, environmental and climate protection, to name just a few keywords. The goal is nothing less than caring for our common home, which is a concern particularly close to Pope Francis’ heart and mind.

The organizers of the conference have put a special emphasis on the role of young people, on how they can and must become active as multipliers for justice and peace in our globalized world. The young people who work together across borders to protect our creation and to fight climate change are a wonderful example of this. Together with them, we need to build inclusive alliances in order to make progress on the most pressing issues of our planet.

“Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved” – these are the initial words of the “document on human fraternity” signed by Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyeb and Pope Francis in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019. We are reminded that God “has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and [...] has called them to [...] make known the values of goodness, love and peace.” This testimony of an inspiring interfaith encounter describes a vision in which religions are not a cause of the problem but part of the

solution. People of faith have the God-given mission to point out injustices in their own societies and worldwide – and to take responsibility by setting a good example. The aim is a fairer, a more respectful way of living together.

I am speaking to you as the bishop of Augsburg, a city steeped in history, which has experienced several periods of violence since ancient times. But the decisive element of our historical memory is the experience that peace is possible – despite everything that may divide us. For it was here, in 1555, that the so-called “Peace of Augsburg” was concluded, which paved the way for a peaceful and lasting coexistence of believers of different confessions. This is why Augsburg is still called the “city of peace” today.

Certainly, the path to realizing the vision of peace and justice is often full of hurdles. It is a matter of finding a fair balance, keeping different interests in mind, and achieving concrete improvements in people’s living conditions. As someone who spent several years of his life in the diplomatic service of the Vatican, I know how difficult such processes can be. But at the same time, I have seen political and religious actors successfully join forces – in awareness of their different mandates and competences. Let us strengthen the means by which diplomacy and religion can have a positive impact. And let us create new networks, so that we can reach as many people as possible and bring about change.

Allow me to come back to the interfaith conference that took place in Bologna last month. The motto was “time to heal”. Yes, that is the task of all of us, religious leaders, politicians, diplomats, young and old: to contribute here and now to the healing of wounds, to set the right course for a more sustainable, more peaceful future. Just like the individual parts of the “Ring for Peace”, which is set up not far from the “Inselhalle” in Lindau, let us move closer together so that our common home becomes a place worth living for everyone.

My heartfelt thanks go to all those who have been making this meeting possible. I wish you fruitful discussions and encouraging encounters.

God bless you!