

THE TANDEM PROJECT

<http://www.tandemproject.com>.

UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

*The Tandem Project is a UN NGO in Special Consultative Status with the
Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

Separation of Religion or Belief and State

PROPOSED FORUM

ACADEMIC DISCOURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO ACADEMIC FACULTY, GOVERNMENTS & CIVIL SOCIETY

*Program on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief for Study, Research and
Engagement from Multidisciplinary Perspectives at the University of Oslo*

OBJECTIVE: Implement a multi-disciplinary approach to international human rights law on freedom of religion or belief **at academic and research institutions**, as a follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review and the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (2010-2014), Second Phase Plan for Higher Education.

Academic Schools, Departments and Institutes, Governments and Civil Society Organizations and expert Keynote speakers in this Forum Proposal **have not been approached or asked for an endorsement**. The Tandem Project, as a follow-up to Universal Periodic Reviews & Freedom of Religion or Belief, may propose Academic Forums be held in a diversity of secular and religious universities and colleges within each country, on ways to implement the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education Second Phase (2010-2014) for Higher Education.

Proposed Keynote Speakers:

The Honorable Kjell Magne Bondevik

Former Prime Minister of Norway, Pastor in the Lutheran Church of Norway,
Founder and President, Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights

[1998 UN Conference Report](#)

Recollections of the 1998 Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The Honorable Ms. Bente Angell-Hanson

Vice President, UN Human Rights Council, Opening Remarks by Norway
for the UN Human Rights Council Panel Discussion on 14 June 2011

[UN Human Rights Council Panel Statements, Resolution A-HRC-16-18, 2010 General Assembly Third Committee Actions](#)

*Progress Report on Implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 66/167,
a Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief*

University of Oslo Academic Faculty Participation:

- **University of Oslo Faculty: Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, Theology, Education, Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, Medicine, CULCOM interdisciplinary program, Comparative and International Education, Norwegian Center for Human Rights (NCHR).**

Academic Faculty: Proposed Panel Topics: (1) Multi-disciplinary approach to human rights and freedom of religion or belief at the University of Oslo, (2) Strategies and obstacles from diverse academic disciplines, (3) Follow-up to the Oslo Universal Periodic Review, (4) Plan of action for Human Rights Education proposed by the U.N. Human Rights Council in September 2010.

Government & Civil Society

- **Norway Centre for Human Rights, Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, Church of Norway, Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities, Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights, Islamic Council of Norway, Norwegian Humanist Association, Forum 18, Norway Pen Centre, Norwegian Nobel Institute.**

Government & Civil Society: Proposed Panel Topics: (1) Universality of Human Rights, (2) The Constitution of Norway Amendments to 1814, (3) Assimilation and Multiculturalism, National and Local Action Plans since Anders Brevik, (4) National and Local Governments Response to 66/167, a *Culture of Tolerance and Peace Based on Religion or Belief*.

[United Nations Resolution – a Culture of Tolerance & Peace Based on Religion or Belief](#)

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/167 may be the best hope since 1984 to reconcile issues and divergent views on human rights and freedom of religion or belief, assimilation and multiculturalism. *UN Seminar on the Encouragement of Understanding, Tolerance and Respect in Matters Relating to Freedom of Religion or Belief (1984)* ST/HR/SER.A/16, Geneva: United Nations.

World Programme for Human Rights Education (2010-2014)

Second Phase Action Plan for Higher Education

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/secondphase.htm>

Draft plan of action for the second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (A/HRC/15/28): U.N. Human Rights Council

(b) Teaching and learning processes and tools

27. Introducing or improving human rights education in the higher education system requires adopting a holistic approach to teaching and learning, by integrating programme objectives and content, resources, methodologies, assessment and evaluation; by looking beyond the classroom and the higher-education institution to society; and by building partnerships between different members of the academic community and beyond.

(v) Develop multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary human rights academic programmes. 20

²⁰ **Multidisciplinary programmes would include the study, research and engagement with human rights from different disciplinary perspectives, such as philosophy, sociology, languages, international and domestic law, etc. Interdisciplinary programmes would entail the crossing of boundaries between disciplines and the pooling of approaches and methodologies to study, research and engage with human rights with a new integrated perspective.**

There can be no adequate understanding of the most important issues we face when disciplines are cloistered from one another and operate on their own premises. It would be far more effective to bring together people working on questions of religion, politics, history, economics, anthropology, sociology, literature, art, religion and philosophy to engage in comparative analysis of common problems. As the curriculum is restructured, fields of inquiry and methods of investigation will be transformed.

End of the University as We Know It – Collaboration Rather than Specialization, New York Times Op-Ed, April 29, 2007, Mark C. Taylor, Chairman, Religion Department, Columbia University, New York.

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

University of Oslo: <http://www.uio.no/english/>

The University of Oslo is Norway's largest and oldest institution of higher education. It was founded in 1811 when Norway was still under Danish rule. It is Scandinavia's largest university in terms of staff and students with nearly 3,600 students and 4,500 employees in permanent positions. Multi-disciplinary

Faculty from Departments and Institutions to be invited to a University of Oslo Forum for Academic Discourse on Human Rights & Freedom of Religion or Belief include disciplines in Humanities Social Sciences, Law, Theology, Education, Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, Medicine, CULCOM interdisciplinary program, Comparative and International Education, Norway Institute for Human Rights (NIHR).

REFLECTIONS

The Tandem Project

The First Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Surely one of the best hopes for humankind is to embrace a culture in which religions and other beliefs accept one another, in which wars and violence are not tolerated in the name of an exclusive right to truth, in which children are raised to solve conflicts with mediation, compassion and understanding.

There is an increase in dialogue today between religions and other beliefs to embrace diversity, but few persons, less than one percent of any population, ever participate. This is a challenge. The value of such dialogues is proportionate to the level of participation. For civil society increased participation would create opportunities for education on inclusive and genuine approaches to human rights and freedom of religion or belief.

In 1968 the United Nations deferred passage of a legally-binding convention on religious intolerance saying it was too complicated and sensitive. Instead, they adopted a non-binding declaration on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief. While very worthwhile, the declaration does not carry the force and commitment of a legally-binding international human rights convention on freedom of religion or belief.

Religions and other beliefs historically have been used to justify wars and settle disputes. This is more dangerous today as the possible use of nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction increases. Governments need to consider whether religions and other beliefs trump human rights, human rights trump religions and other beliefs or neither trumps the other. Can international human rights law help to stop the advance and use of such weapons in the face of this historic truth?

- **QUESTION:** Weapons of mass destruction as history teaches are legitimized for national security and justified by cultural, ethnic, religious and other ideology. The U.N. Review Conference on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and studies on biological and cyber weapons demonstrate advances in science and technology is being used to increase their potential for mass destruction. The question is whether an International Convention on Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief, supported equally by the U.N. Human Rights Council and U.N. Security Council, would help offset the risk of weapons of mass destruction. Recognition of the need for synergy to balance rights and security is the foundation for solving this issue.

“I am become death, the destroyer of worlds” - Robert Oppenheimer, quote from the Bhagavad Gita after exploding the first atomic bomb, Trinity 1945.

The Tandem Project a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1986 to build understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity of religion or belief, and to prevent discrimination in matters relating to freedom of religion or belief. The Tandem Project has sponsored multiple conferences, curricula, reference material and programs on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.