



Keeping Faith, Transforming Tomorrow

1ST ASSEMBLY ON WOMEN, FAITH & DIPLOMACY

*A message of peace from
Lindau around the world.*

Lindau, Germany | 10-13 November 2020



 Religions for Peace
50 YEARS

supported by



Federal Foreign Office

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Keeping Faith,
Transforming
Tomorrow

1ST ASSEMBLY ON WOMEN, FAITH & DIPLOMACY

HYBRID CONFERENCE

10-13 NOVEMBER 2020

PEACEBUILDING, CONFLICT TRANS-
FORMATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
MULTI-RELIGIOUS COLLABORATION

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS,
DIPLOMATS, AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM GOVERNMENT,
CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACADEMIA

1000+

INVITEES FROM MORE THAN

90

COUNTRIES

#rfpwomenfaithdiplomacy
#faithinspirespeace

Prof. Azza Karam, PhD.

Secretary General,
Religions for Peace

Lindau will host the first ever assembly at the intersection of women, faith, and diplomacy. The time to address this intersection is *now*, as our world suffers from exclusion, marginalization, and violence, and confrontation and polarization is emerging as “normal.” This world utterly misses the art of diplomacy – and it is a threat to our ability to co-exist as planet and peoples.

At the 10th Assembly of Religions for Peace, which Ring for Peace and the German Federal Foreign Office graciously enabled, a woman was elected leader of the *Religions for Peace* movement – me. This election was possible thanks to existing women leaders in the movement as well as male leaders who are committed, brave, and visionary.

A virtuous cycle then began: recognition of the feminine, openness to transformation, and willingness to be self-reflexive and inclusive. This allowed us to grow stronger in our faithful collaboration.

At this upcoming Assembly, we come together to assess, learn from, and strengthen this cycle. We embark on the journey of redefining diplomacy with the power of religions, and the leadership of women and men together.

But why religions? Namely, because faith is as a central part of thought, belief, and behaviour across the world. Many governments and inter-governmental institutions have failed to recognise this centrality, marginalizing the impact of religion. This impact includes being the largest, oldest, and most far reaching social service providers; being influential political actors; and being among the most creatively self-resourced institutions in the world. We cannot afford to marginalize this impact. Finally, if religions are identified as a source of violence; and if religious reasons are given to ignore or violate international human rights norms and laws, how can religious actors *not* be engaged?



The usual pushback to the above rationale, is often to note that not all religious actors work in accordance with all human rights. This is true in some cases, but it is precisely why religions must be engaged. Moreover, religious actors who see and struggle for human rights can also articulate and advocate for them. Religious leaders adhere first and foremost to their sacred texts, but this does not nullify the need of standard of judgement for all humanity. Human rights are this standard.

Religions for Peace's worldview for half a century is this: all violations of human dignity and damage to our ecosystem are incompatible with faith traditions.

Simultaneously, no siloed institution has successfully eradicated the myriad forms of oppression and injustice – we need more partners, including faith partners, working together to make progress on this front.

SDG 17, “Global Partnerships,” provides a framework for us to make progress, and it is one of *Religions for Peace's* six priorities in our 2020–2025 Strategic Plan. When we engage with and serve together, we establish more knowledgeable, inclusive, and effective institutions to meet the challenges of our time.

The pandemic has required an adaptation of our *modus operandi*, which came in the form of a Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund. We wanted faith and interfaith groups across the world to have the means to collaborate across religious siloes – so we gave them the financial means to do so. The results have been astounding, clearly demonstrating the power of religions working together.

Given it is clear now why we must serve together towards common goals, the question remains why we are specifically appealing to women's leadership, even as most religious leaders are men.

Myriad women have led religious communities, institutions, and inter-faith movements in various capacities, including through ordination, scholarship, as head of religiously affiliated NGOs, and as ambassadors of religious institutions. In Lindau itself, you elected me to lead your International Secretariat, but our Interreligious Councils have already had women serving as head for decades.

Learning from an international programme I managed in 1996 showed that including women means including women's *insight*. This translates into how we deliberate, and what we deliver. Where women are leading, there is more active listening, more inclusive decision-making processes, more diverse staff, and more social service programming and delivery.

Religions for Peace can both be instructed by, and contribute to, inspiring other institutions in the realm of gender equality. Our Strategic Plan was co-developed by 200 religious

leaders, for the first time in religious and interreligious history, and gender equality included as a priority.

This Assembly is a means of realizing SDG 17–partnerships. Through this, *Religions for Peace* is illustrating that religions are committed, capable, deliverers and champions of gender equality. In Lindau, we will hear the words – and learn of the actions – of women and men who are reimagining diplomacy to build back a better tomorrow.

Dr. Andreas Görgen

Director-General for Culture and Communication,
German Federal Foreign Office

Cultural policy is social policy – this is a vitally important maxim for modern diplomacy. In the context of German foreign policy, cooperation with civil society actors is of increasing importance and in this relationship religious communities are some of the most important and dynamic actors, engaged in cultural, humanitarian, educational and conflict resolution work. Given that we are confronted with an ever increasing number of existential challenges – the current Corona-Pandemic and its political, cultural and social effects being just one of these – civil society's contribution to strengthening dialogue between various actors across the globe cannot be overvalued.

The potential for religious communities to play an instrumental role in strengthening civil society and in conflict resolution has already been recognized and powerfully addressed in last year's 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Lindau. Having been in Lindau last year, I remember encountering a large

number of inspiring and powerful women leaders, whose participation initiated the idea for an assembly, which examines the role which women of faith play in civil society and in conflict resolution.

Therefore it is particularly fitting that the first ever Assembly on Women, Faith and Diplomacy take place in Lindau – and virtually across the globe.

The 21st Century is the century of women – women of faith in particular both in the past and today act in leadership roles in their faith communities and in civil society. From a diplomatic point of view, women of faith, particularly in interreligious contexts, play critical roles in bringing together and focusing expertise in conflict resolution, in education and healthcare, in humanitarian work and in ensuring community-based action. We are, therefore, delighted that we will look for synergies and ideas for co-operation in the activities of diplomats and faith-based leaders during this event.



Prof. (em) Dr. h.c. Wolfgang Schürer

Chairman of the *Foundation Peace Dialogue of World Religions and Civil Society*

In his letter from a Birmingham jail, the Rev. Martin Luther King jr. wrote that negative peace was the absence of conflict, while positive peace was the presence of justice. So, when in 2019, about 900 religious leaders, people of faith and representatives of civil society from around the world convened in Lindau for the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, they reflected on and discussed the diverse aspects of positive peace. Moreover, they set an agenda that aims at realizing it – an agenda that has been substantiated by defining six strategic priorities to realize shared well-being among and across the world's religions.

Gender justice is one important pillar of positive peace and a foundation for securing a more peaceful and inclusive world for all people. Women play key roles in achieving and maintaining peace in and across communities and societies. While women feature as role models in various religious traditions, we must candidly acknowledge that women are still often marginalized in contemporary religious institutional representation. Empowering them and supporting them is one central

element of the 1st Assembly on Women, Faith, and Diplomacy.

The assembly is being held in challenging times. Political and social conflicts dominate the agenda, while the COVID-19 pandemic poses the greatest global challenge to public health in generations. Care for humanity and for nature is in short supply. Now, it is even more imperative not just to reflect on joint action, but to get engaged. As much as the world's religions embody the notion of care, it is women of faith realizing it.

Preparing and realizing this assembly has been a particular challenge. Hence, profound gratitude and appreciation are due to all involved giving testimony to the power of trust and collaboration. We especially appreciate the trustful cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office. In challenging times, faith provides solace and hope. Though we regret not being able to convene in Lindau, I am confident that the spirit of this assembly and the subsequent impact will convey a ray of hope around the world.



Program

DAY 1

TUESDAY, 10 November 2020

12:45-13:45 DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

14:00-15:30 OPENING CEREMONY

15:30-16:00 COFFEE BREAK

16:00-17:00 VOICES from WOMEN LEADERS

17:00-18:15 PLENARY I: REDEFINING LEADERSHIP

DAY 2

WEDNESDAY, 11 November 2020

08:45-09:00 MULTI-RELIGIOUS PRAYER & MEDITATION

09:00-09:45 HEART-Talk on PEACE

09:45-11:00 PLENARY II: Advancing Gender Equality - Women in Diplomacy

11:00-11:30 COFFEE BREAK & MULTI-MEDIA EXPERIENCE

11:30-12:30 LIGHTNING TALKS: FAITH, ACTION AND COVID-19

13:15-15:15 INTERACTIVE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

15:15-15:45 COFFEE BREAK & MULTI-MEDIA EXPERIENCE

15:45-16:30 HEART-Talk on HATE SPEECH

16:30-17:45 PLENARY III: Combatting Hate Speech as Cornerstone of Conflict Prevention

18:30-19:15 PEACE AND LIGHT CEREMONY

DAY 3

THURSDAY, 12 November 2020

08:45-09:00 MULTI-RELIGIOUS PRAYER & MEDITATION

09:00-09:45 HEART-Talk on EDUCATION

09:45-11:00 PLENARY IV: VALUES-INSPIRED EDUCATION

11:00-11:30 COFFEE BREAK & MULTI-MEDIA EXPERIENCE

11:30-12:30 FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION WITH FILM DIRECTOR

13:15-15:15 INTERACTIVE BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

15:15-15:45 COFFEE BREAK & MULTI-MEDIA EXPERIENCE

15:45-16:30 HEART-Talk on ENVIRONMENT

16:30-17:45 PLENARY V: PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

18:00 FIRESIDE CONVERSATION WITH DIPLOMATS on Religion, Women, and Peace

DAY 4

FRIDAY, 13 November 2020

08:45-09:00 MULTI-RELIGIOUS PRAYER & MEDITATION

09:00-10:00 HEART-Talk on TRANSFORMATION

10:00-12:30 CLOSING CEREMONY: A PLEDGE FOR CHANGE

NORTH AMERICA

ASIA

AFRICA

MENA

LATIN AMERICA and the CARIBBEAN

EUROPE

[#rfpwomenfaithdiplomacy](https://twitter.com/rfpwomenfaithdiplomacy)
[#faithinspirespace](https://twitter.com/faithinspirespace)

DAY 1

14:00–15:30

OPENING CEREMONY

15:30–16:00

COFFEE BREAK

16:00–17:00

VOICES from WOMEN LEADERS

17:00–18:15

PLENARY I: REDEFINING LEADERSHIP

Bishop Margot Kässmann

Former Chairperson, Evangelical Church of Germany;
Co-President, *Religions for Peace*

If you think of a meeting of “religious leaders”, what image comes up in your mind. I guess, for most people it would be a convention of elderly men. When I was elected bishop I was surprised myself – I did not have an image of myself as mother of four children age 41 in that position.

Female leadership differs from male leadership – which does not say it is better or not as good. In my experience women use power differently. They try hard to make transparent in what way and for what goals they use their position. Rarely they use a loud voice to come to the decision they want to see in the end but they use contacts, try to convince others, keep calm but decisive. Maybe chancellor Angela Merkel is a perfect example for that. In the beginning most people thought, she would not be tough enough as a leader, today she is a role model.

In the Christian faith we know religious leaders from the very beginning. Jesus called women to bring the message of his resurrection to the disciples, Junia was an apostle, Lydia the founder of the first parish in Europe. But it took centuries until finally some churches called women in leadership at the altar. They are a minority until to today.

That is a loss. Because the skills of women for instance in peacemaking are not used at leadership level. Their special view on the situation of children and the elderly are not recognized in negotiations. And the female link to birth, to the earth, to the elementary needs of people could change leadership. Then it is no more about the leader but about the people and their perspective for life in all its fullness.

By the way: In my experience women in leadership connect easily. Because whatever religion they practice they have very similar experience. And usually they have good humor, too.



DAY 2

08:45–09:00

MULTI-RELIGIOUS PRAYER & MEDITATION

09:00–09:45

HEART-Talk on PEACE

09:45–11:00

PLENARY II:
Transforming Tomorrow by
Advancing Gender Equality:
The role of Women in Diplomacy

11:00–11:30

COFFEE BREAK

11:30–12:30

LIGHTNING TALKS:
Faith, Action and COVID-19

13:15–15:15

INTERACTIVE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

15:15–15:45

COFFEE BREAK & MULTIMEDIA EXPERIENCE

15:45–16:30

HEART-Talk on HATE SPEECH

16:30–17:45

PLENARY III:
Keeping Faith in Times of Hate:
Combatting Hate Speech as a
Cornerstone of Conflict Prevention

18:30–19:15

PEACE AND LIGHT CEREMONY

JOIN US!

Wednesday at 18:30

Peace and Light Ceremony



Bringing Together Faith Communities with the Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund

As we celebrate 50 years of existence, Religions for Peace can look back at a legacy of work guided by religious leaders, religious institutions, grassroots networks of women and youth, and various international donors. This work has brought together faith communities from around the world to heal wounds, address common concerns and seek social cohesion based on human dignity and environmental sustainability. Today, we continue that legacy with multiple programmes in over 90 countries. These now includes efforts pursued through the Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund (MHRF) set up in March as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which is changing our world.

The MHRF is a mechanism to provide seed funding for humanitarian projects that unite disparate religious communities behind common needs in times of shared crisis. The immediate aim of the fund is to enable religious communities to come together in their responses and services to vulnerable populations.

In both the immediate and long-term, the MHRF enables service-oriented collaborations among faith groups who are anyway, first responders in humanitarian crisis, anywhere and everywhere.

This year has been full of unprecedented difficulties and growing needs for the whole world, including Religions for Peace’s own institutional and grassroots members. We have realized without a doubt, that social cohesion, security and spiritual sustenance are as essential as medicine, food and shelter. Organising virtually and executing physically (respectful of all public health advisories) through our Inter-Religious



Councils (IRCs), we have used the MHRF to respond to the simultaneity of these urgent needs during a global pandemic. These efforts have spanned the globe, and are possible thanks to the support from GHR, Fetzer and Risho-Kosei-Kai.

In the Philippines, youth leaders from our IRC reached out to temporarily closed houses of worship to organise volunteers and distribute essentials to vulnerable groups. In Peru, where migrants and refugees were excluded from government relief programmes, two refugees – Magdalays and Nolbis – collaborated with our IRC to set up an “interfaith soup kitchen” to feed those left with little sustenance. For our religious leaders in Sierra Leone, the Ebola outbreak was still fresh in their memories as covid-19 spread. Using their influence and learning, they spearheaded a nationwide information campaign. With pulpits temporarily closed, they took to the airwaves, social media, and WhatsApp, translating and disseminating critical health guidelines in 6 local languages.



These are just three of the more than 20 projects currently being financed by the Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund. Funded projects always require multi/inter faith collaboration – including those who envision, those who implement the project *and* those who are being served. We believe this mechanism of collaboration in service, launched in our 50th anniversary year, will be a milestone in social cohesion and solidarity, for the next 50 years.



DAY 3

08:45-09:00

MULTI-RELIGIOUS PRAYER & MEDITATION

09:00-09:45

HEART-Talk on EDUCATION

09:45-11:00

PLENARY IV:
VALUES-INSPIRED EDUCATION

11:00-11:30

COFFEE BREAK

11:30-12:30

FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION WITH DIRECTOR

13:15-15:15

INTERACTIVE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

15:15-15:45

COFFEE BREAK & MULTIMEDIA EXPERIENCE

15:45-16:30

HEART-Talk on ENVIRONMENT

16:30-17:45

PLENARY V:
Keeping Faith by Nurturing a Sustainable Environment: The role of Religious Leaders to protect the Earth

18:00

FIRESIDE CONVERSATION

A moderated conversation with Diplomats hosted by the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD). For further information, please visit the event website at wfd2020.ringforpeace.org.

¹ Back in 2012, RfP facilitated the process of religious leaders from Buddhist, Christian, Islamic and Hindu communities to co-build the country's first multi-religious mechanism, Interreligious Council of Myanmar (RfP Myanmar). This interreligious platform is now recognized by all sectors of the Myanmar society. The women of faith and interfaith youth networks are integral part and the current Secretary General of RfP Myanmar is former chair of Women of Faith Network and former President of Myanmar Council of Churches Daw Yin Yin Maw.

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino

Deputy Secretary General,
Religions for Peace

Faith and Diplomacy: The Case of Myanmar

As 700,000 Rohingyas and Hindus fled to Bangladesh, the *RfP* delegation led by Bishop Gunnar Stålsett entered northern Rakhine to meet with Rohingya and other ethnic groups. Back in Yangon, *RfP* initiated consultations with ambassadors from 20 countries in Asia, Europe and Middle East to create a multi-stakeholder process for peace and reconciliation, drawing upon recommendations from Kofi Annan Report.

In November 2018, the *RfP* Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace was formally launched with the involvement of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and 15 ministries, the military, 10 Ethnic Armed Organizations, parliamentarians from ruling and opposition parties, civil society groups, foreign diplomats and UN officials. The Forum was conducted under the Chatham House Rule.

The presence of Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim leaders from Asia, alongside *RfP* Myanmar¹ leaders,

fostered this safe and open space for dialogue. Women leaders comprised nearly 60%.

Norwegian Amb. Ms. Tone Tinnes helped organize diplomat-religious leader joint briefings to navigate a balance between Asian and European states. German Amb. Mrs. Dorothee Janetzke-Wenzel facilitated the linkage between Myanmar and international partners through the German Foreign Office/Lindau Foundation supported *RfP* 10th World Assembly in August 2019. The Myanmar delegation engaged in the Track II dialogue with their Bangladesh counterparts to commit to multi-layered and multi-dimensional actions for peace building and the safe and dignified return of refugees.

The country's peace and developmental challenges persist, trust and a habit of collaboration among religious communities have paved the way for *RfP* Myanmar's timely response to COVID-19 with the support of *RfP* Multi-religious Humanitarian Fund.



Interactive Breakout Sessions

On 11 and 12 November various Interactive Breakout Sessions will be offered during the main programme. In small groups of 15–30 participants, in-depth conversations on some of the most pressing topics affecting communities today can be held.

The themes of the Interactive Breakout Sessions will correspond to the overarching theme of the nexus between women, faith and diplomacy.

With expert partners acting as facilitators or co-conveners, each participant shares their expertise and experiences in engaging discussions that will culminate in the joint determination of relevant action points and possible collaborations.

In cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office, various senior diplomats will join the conversations and share from their experiences, discuss questions and exchange ideas with participants.

All Interactive Breakout Sessions will be offered virtually via Zoom.

Date:

Wednesday, 11 November

13:15-15:15 CET

Thursday, 12 November

13:15-15:15 CET

Please register in advance at:

wfd2020.ringforpeace.org



Gunnar Stålsett

Bishop Emeritus of Oslo, Church of Norway;
Honorary President, *Religions for Peace*

Faith in sustainability.

The term sustainability invigorates today's ethical debate and religious discourse. It is at the core of the United Nations development goals, the Paris Climate Accord and the COVID 19 epidemic. The term had a global breakthrough in 1987 with the Brundtland Report "Our Common Future."

In 2004, Wangari Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work for sustainable development, democracy, and peace. In her acceptance speech, she said: "In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. This time is now."

The golden standard of sustainability is a world where we meet the need of the present without jeopardising the life of future generations.

Common sense and moral sensitivity urge us to stop destroying our ecological life-support system. Sustainability has become inexorably linked to the crisis of climate change. Among other symptoms - and drivers - of unsustainability are poverty, hunger, migration, inequality, discrimination, and today's global pandemic. These are harbingers of injustice, human misery, and death.

Grounded in scientific evidence and driven by a shared moral conviction, people of goodwill, of every faith and none, are increasingly united in what works for peace, justice, and reconciliation. At a time of materialistic driven consumerism and a technological hybris, religion should be a clear voice for social well-being, eco-harmony, and planetary balance. The two traits, sustainability, and decay define all creation. Spirituality and ethical norms mobilise resources of resilience and perseverance.

Because faith recognises vulnerability as fundamental of our being, it adds humility to our striving for the perfect. When I am weak, then I am strong, is sacred wisdom.

For all people of faith, this is the Kairos - the chosen time - to embrace the pursuit of sustainability and to be co-workers for positive change. This is a time of conversion, to shift to a new consciousness and to demonstrate a seriousness of purpose. The vision of organisations like Religions for Peace is a reinforced joint action for our shared sustainable future.



Rabbi Rachel Rosenbluth

Global Interfaith Youth Network,
Religions for Peace

On Ritual

This photo series explores our rituals – which anchor us in the particular, and open us to the universal.

Our diverse customs embody collective ideals.

Where the ancient is manifest in the present – attunement, belonging, connection and consciousness – and builds the future.

Our rituals are personal, communal, cultural. Yet they invite us beyond that very particularity, driving and infusing our collective commitment to sanctity and service.

In the uncertainty of the times, our wisdom traditions drive us to action.

As told by Sacred Design Lab, “Ancient practices remind us what makes us human. They ground us in our better nature, which compels us to lives of love, justice, and risking the impossible.”

photography and writing by
rabbi bluth | www.rbluth.com



DAY 4

08:45-09:00

MULTI-RELIGIOUS PRAYER &
MEDITATION

09:00-10:00

HEART-Talk on TRANSFORMATION

10:00-12:30

A PLEDGE FOR CHANGE

Conference 2020

The 1st Assembly on Women, Faith & Diplomacy is an innovative hybrid conference. Participants from all over the world come together – virtually!

Please go to the event site wfd2020.ringforpeace.org and log in with your personal credentials from the registration process.

There you can:

- Watch Live Streams
- Register for Interactive Break Out Sessions
- Exchange and Discuss with Participants from around the World
- Contribute to the Assembly
- Find Technical Support
- See and Share Social Media Content

We also encourage all of you to spread the word about the Assembly on social media! Please use the following hashtags:

#rfpwomenfaithdiplomacy
#faithinspirespeace

wfd2020.ringforpeace.org

Renz Argao

Coordinator, International Youth Committee,
Religions for Peace

Women. Faith. Diplomacy.

Decades ago, these three words probably would not make sense if you put them in a single sentence. The idea of an assembly that highlights the important role that women play in leadership, peacebuilding, and diplomacy, back then, seem out of the ordinary. Thankfully, we now live in 2020 and what was once an impossibility is something that became a reality. As the world work together to overcome one of the greatest challenges in our lifetime, the COVID-19 Pandemic, we come together to discuss – and more importantly, to CELEBRATE – the contributions and role of women leaders to society and to humanity.

This 1st Assembly on Women, Faith and Diplomacy is a testament to the world and to future generations that there is still HOPE. As young people have lost hope for a future that we are not sure we would even have, this Assembly shows us that when we come together and act as one, we can transform the future.

We can bring back the hope that this world can still be a better place. As young people get tired of the wars that older men started, we find comfort in the compassionate approaches that our women leaders show us in dealing with today's conflicts.

Women are the leaders we need towards transforming our future.

Women had fought several battles for their rights and many of these were won with nonviolent approaches. Women lead with compassion and care and their approaches to leadership are likely to mobilize actions for the greater good. Women are capable of challenging traditional structures and are showing us that their role in democracy and peacebuilding is as equally important. Young women across the world have also shown great examples of leadership, many of them changing the world and creating ripples of influence in society.

We, young people, recognize that women have equally important voices in today's issues. We wonder why women are given less roles in peacebuilding processes when they have shown that their involvement leads to more sustainable peace? Why are we not giving them their seats on the table when it is women who can sit and talk and come up with actions?

In this year's Assembly, we will not just find the answers to these questions, we will act together to amplify women's voices. We will help build their space and their seats on the table. We will ensure a future where women and men of faith are not defined nor limited by their genders. We will transform tomorrow by starting today.



Imprint

Publisher:

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World Religions and Civil Society
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