



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **CARDINAL O'BRIEN JOINS BRITAIN'S RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN G20 PLEA**

#### ***G20 leaders must not forget promises to the poor***

Scotland's Cardinal Keith O'Brien has joined religious leaders in Britain to urge the G20 leaders not to forget their commitments to the world's poorest people in the current economic crisis.

In a communiqué issued in advance of next week's G20 meeting in London, they call on political leaders to consider the moral issues at the root of the current financial crisis, and to pay special attention to the needs of poor, marginalised and vulnerable people: "to forget their needs would be to compound regrettable past failures with needless future injustices".

Attention is drawn to promises made by the international community in "easier times" which now risk being "postponed by the pressing concern to rectify market failures". "Even in these difficult times we strongly urge the leaders of the G20 to hold fast to the commitments they have made to the world's poorest people."

Cardinal O'Brien is the chairman of SCiAF, Scotland's largest indigenous international aid and development agency which is already dealing with the reality of poverty in the developing world. Cardinal O'Brien said:

"The financial crisis is affecting everyone but it is the poorest people in the developing world who will be affected most. The leaders of the G20 countries have a moral responsibility to rectify past mistakes and build a fairer more equitable world for all. Our prayers will be with them so they may find the strength within themselves to cast aside narrow self interest and consider the wider needs of the global community."

His Eminence Cormac Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop of Westminster, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said

"At a time of economic difficulty, it is important for all political leaders not to forget their promises to the world's poor. We pray for the poor, vulnerable and marginalised and also for the political leaders in their deliberations this week as we seek to create a more just world."

The Archbishop of Canterbury The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dr Rowan Williams said

"The G20 meeting takes place in an atmosphere of high expectation: many people believe that this is a moment for the world's leaders to reaffirm their moral commitments to the welfare of all, especially the poorest, and to the care of the planet for future generations, as well as responding to the immediate challenges of securing a degree of financial stability. As religious leaders, we shall be praying that these expectations will be met and that the gathered politicians will be inspired to share a word of hope with all of us."

The Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth Sir Jonathan Sacks said

"Our prayers are with the world's leaders that they be blessed with the wisdom and courage to begin the journey from recession to recovery, and from the old world of national pride to a new age of global responsibility."

**The full text of the communiqué is below:**

### **Religious Leaders Communiqué – G20**

We write as religious leaders who share a belief in God and the dignity of human life. We wish to acknowledge with realism and humility the severity of the current economic crisis and the sheer complexity of the global and local challenge faced by political leaders. We pray for the leaders of the G20 as they prepare to meet in London this week. They, and we, have a crucial role to play in recovering that lost sense of balance between the requirements of market mechanisms that help deliver increased prosperity, and the moral requirement to safeguard human dignity, regardless of economic or social category.

Many people are suffering as a result of the economic crisis. The World Bank estimates that 53 million more people could fall into absolute poverty as a result of the crisis. The likelihood is that more will face significant hardship before it comes to an end, and those who are already poor suffer the most. Along with the leaders of the G20 we all have a duty to look at the faces of the poor around the world and to act with justice, to think with compassion, and to look with hope to a sustainable vision of the future.

We wish therefore to draw attention to some of the promises made by the international community in recent times - with our wholehearted support - that risk being postponed by the pressing concern to rectify market failures. We need to be properly conscious that all communities include, and must pay special attention to the needs of, poor, marginalised and vulnerable people. To forget their needs would be to compound regrettable past failures with needless future injustices.

Some aspects of this crisis will require technical economic solutions. However those solutions alone will not be enough to address all the questions that we face. At the roots of this crisis lie important moral issues.

We are concerned for people and the work they do. We believe there is a need to consider the aspirations of both rich and poor; to examine our own expectations and how realistic they are; and to root future global patterns of work in our understanding of human dignity. We recognize that people who have lost jobs, savings, or homes, or who now live with the worry of what the future might bring are in need of immediate help. Their hope is for sustainable employment and not continuing job insecurity.

The international community has made important commitments to the developing world. The Millennium Development Goals are of fundamental importance and cannot now be forgotten. Even in these difficult times we strongly urge the leaders of the G20 to hold fast to the commitments they have made to the world's poorest people. We still need to find ways to enable poorer countries to trade their way to prosperity. We hold that promises made to the poor are especially sacred.

When we spend now, we have to pay later. This also applies when we use up the resources of the natural environment. Morally binding commitments to cut carbon emissions and so to slow the devastating effects of man-made climate change have been made in recent years. They should not be forgotten or postponed. We call on the whole of the international community to hold firm to commitments already made. Most recognise that even more radical commitments will need to be agreed in the near future.

The leaders of the G20 countries are concerned to recover stability in the global economy. We support those efforts. And we pray that as they deliberate they will be mindful of the need to protect the vulnerable from unintended injustice and to respect the commitments they made in easier times.

**The signatories are (in alphabetical order):**

Dr Musharraf Hussain Azhari,

Chief Imam and Executive Officer, Karimia Institute  
Chair, Christian-Muslim Forum

Dr Mohammed Abdul Bari,  
Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain

Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield,  
Head, Movement for Reform Judaism

Dr Girdhari Bhan  
President, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK)

Mr Anil Bhanot,  
General Secretary, Hindu Council UK

Mr Steve Clifford  
General Director, Evangelical Alliance

Mr Khurshid Drabu,  
Project Director, Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, UK (MINAB)

Mr Henry Grunwald,  
President, Board of Deputies of British Jews

Bishop Nathan Hovhannisian,  
Primate, Armenian Orthodox Church of Great Britain

Mr Sanjay Jagatia,  
Secretary-General, National Council of Hindu Temples UK (NCHT)

The Most Revd Dr Idris Jones,  
Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, Primus, Scottish Episcopal Church

Mr Ramesh Kallidai,  
General Secretary, Hindu Forum of Britain

Sayyed Nadeem Kazmi,  
Founder & Director, The Britslam Partnership.

Commissioner Elizabeth Matear,  
Moderator of the Free Churches Group

Ayatollah Sayyid Fazel Milani,  
Al-Khoei Foundation

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra,  
Chairman, Religions for Peace, UK

The Most Revd Barry Morgan,  
Bishop of Llandaff, Archbishop, The Church in Wales  
His Eminence Cormac Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor,  
Archbishop of Westminster, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of  
England and Wales  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the UK

Mrs Ravinder Kaur Nijjar,

Sikh Community, Scotland

His Eminence Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien,  
Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, President of the Scottish Catholic  
Bishops' Conference

Mr Jitu Patel  
Chairman, Baps Swaminarayan Sanstha

Rabbi Danny Rich,  
Chief Executive, Liberal Judaism

Dr Nawal Prinja and the Rt Revd Tom Butler

Sir Jonathan Sacks,  
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala Nayaka Thera,  
Sangha Nayaka of Great Britain,  
Head of the Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of Great Britain,  
Head of the London Buddhist Vihara

The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr. John Sentamu,  
The Archbishop of York

Dr Indarjit Singh, CBE,  
Director, Network of Sikh Organisations UK

Dr Natubhai Shah MBBS, PhD,  
Chair, Jain Network

Sir Sigmund Sternberg, KCSG,  
Co-Founder, Three Faiths Forum,  
Senior Advisor, Community of Religious Leaders, World Economic Forum,  
Patron, International Council of Christians and Jews,  
Vice President, World Congress of Faiths

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Dr. Rowan Williams,  
The Archbishop of Canterbury