

Message from Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International

Your Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal,
GNRC Members from the Middle East,
Distinguished Guests, and
Friends of Arigatou International;

I send you greetings of peace from Arigatou International. Thank you very much for making time to attend this meeting, which I hope will have great significance for the future of the children of the Middle East and beyond.

As you may know, the Global Network on Religions for Children (GNRC) was inaugurated in the year 2000 by Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, my father and then President of Arigatou International, with the strong belief that religious leaders have a moral responsibility to create an environment where children can grow up safe and sound. He was convinced that truly securing children's well-being and future potential could not be achieved without cooperation among religious people of diverse faith traditions.

The first global GNRC Forum in the year 2000 brought together about 200 religious leaders and grassroots workers from around the world, including a good number from the Middle East. Together, the participants endorsed the GNRC First Forum Statement and agreed to launch new efforts for interfaith cooperation for children. In 2004, at the second GNRC Forum held in Geneva, we were blessed to have the participation of Your Royal Highness, Prince El Hassan. The gracious keynote address you gave provided great inspiration and deep insight to the GNRC members gathered from around the world, and this impact has continued to multiply through the GNRC ever since then.

I am delighted that today, building on this solid foundation, members of the GNRC network from Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen have

gathered in Jordan to discuss how best we can contribute and work together to address violence against children.

Here again, I would like to express my deep respect and heartfelt appreciation to Your Royal Highness for making time in your demanding schedule to attend today's gathering and share your wisdom with GNRC members once again. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to building a better future for the children of the Middle East and the world.

At the most recent global GNRC Forum, the fifth one, held in May 2017 in Panama City, 526 participants including representatives from the United Nations, governments and religious communities came together from 70 countries.

On that occasion, Your Royal Highness kindly sent us a message of goodwill, which was very well-received by the participants. All the participants committed themselves to working to end violence against children. I understand that some of the participants of the GNRC 5th Forum are in attendance today, and I would like to thank them for all they have done to follow up on the commitments we all made in Panama.

I hope that over the two days of this meeting, together you can make plans to bring about significant change by addressing the serious challenge of violence against children across the region.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Arigatou International's commitment to working with a wide range of partners to protect children from violence and foster their well-being by promoting the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

In this regard, together with the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children, Arigatou International has initiated a multi-religious study to review the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) since its adoption in 1989.



We hope that this study will provide a multi-religious perspective in the international discourse, as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the CRC in 2019, while at the same time reflect on what more we can do, together, as faith communities.

Only together can we find sustainable solutions that will protect our children from the scourges of the war, violence and conflict that children have witnessed, and suffered from, for far too long.

At Arigatou International, we look forward to working with all of you to ensure that no child has to suffer from violence — in the Middle East, or anywhere in the world.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Rev. Keishi Miyamoto,
President, Arigatou International.