

# Religions for Peace Japan

## Annual Report 2024

For the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace Executive Committee Meeting in Singapore, April 28-31, 2025.

### Overview of all the activities

Under the theme of "Caring for our Common Future: Advancing Shared Well-Being," Religions for Peace Japan had developed its activities based on the action guidelines of promoting (1) networking, (2) raising-awareness and advocacy, (3) peace education, and (4) humanitarian support. Religions for Peace Japan has utilized online and social networking services to conduct our action plans.

We also set up 5 Task Force Teams, to (1) Stop Nuclear Dependence (2) Respond to Climate Crisis, (3) Promote Education for Reconciliation, (4) Prevent Trafficking in Persons, and (5) Provide Disaster Relief and those 5 task force teams played key roles to address those issues and implement action-oriented activities. Peace Research Institute, Women's Committee, and Youth Committee of Religions for Peace Japan also actively engaged respective activities through multi-faith collaborations.

### Key Issues of 2024

- A. The Second Tokyo Peace Roundtable
- B. AI Ethics for Peace: World Religions Commit to the Call from Rome

### National Issues

- C. Disaster Relief Service
- D. New President of Religions for Peace Japan

### Key Issues

#### A. The Second Tokyo Peace Roundtable "Beyond War and Towards Reconciliation: Multi-Religious Peace Roundtables"

The second Tokyo Peace Roundtable, "Beyond War and Towards Reconciliation: Multi-Religious Peace Roundtables," was held from February 19 in 2024, organized by Religions for Peace International and Religions for Peace Japan in partnership with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). Approximately 100 participants from 16 countries, including religious leaders from conflict areas, such as Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine, Myanmar, Columbia, Haiti, gathered at the conference. The



second roundtable was based on the statement of the first roundtable held in 2022, which called for "religious leaders to build bridges for peacebuilding," "responsibility for healing communities torn apart by war," and "continued dialogue to promote cooperation among religious leaders".

The opening ceremony on February 19 was moderated by Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu, Chair of Religions for Peace Japan, and Ven. Gijun Sugitani, President of Religions for Peace Japan, gave a welcome speech. Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis, Elder Metropolitan of Chalcedon and Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace, emphasised that "It is imperative for all stakeholders to commit to long-term goals of reconciliation and that the continuation of multi-religious peace dialogue is vital to achieve peace." Dr. Vinu Aram, President, Shanti Ashram and Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace, reminded us of the critical need to engage women and children in our efforts and asked all those convened in Tokyo and "all those who have the courage to dream of a better world, to be held accountable to the two billion children of the world." Hon. Katsuya Okada, Co-Chair of RfP International Parliamentary Network and the Member of the House of Representatives in Japan, stated, "The role of Religions for Peace in disarming hatred and hostility is critical, and I have high expectations for its activities. We, politicians, would like to adopt the results obtained from this roundtable discussion in making constructive policy proposals."



Throughout the discussion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Roundtable, participants shared conflict situations in each country, discussed the role of religious leaders to heal and rebuild the communities, and sought concrete peace-building practices for the future. Speaking at the closing ceremony, Rev. Kosho Niwano, President-designate, Rissho Kosei-kai and Co-Moderator of Religions for Peace, stated that "If religious people act in earnest, they will move society and the world will move from confrontation to dialogue." The Second Tokyo Peace Roundtable concluded with [the Beyond War and Towards Reconciliation: Multi-Religious Peace Roundtables Statement](#) that made commitments "to continue to pray and work multi-religiously towards a culture of peace that advances shared well-being, grounded in respect for the sanctity of life and human dignity."



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFOnPLdixd0>

## B. AI Ethics for Peace: World Religions Commit to the Call from Rome

“AI Ethics for Peace: World Religions commit to the Rome Call” was taken place in Hiroshima, Japan, on July 9th and 10th, 2024. The event was organized by the Pontifical Academy of Life, Religions for Peace Japan, the United Arab Emirates’ Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace, and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel’s Commission for Interfaith Relations, and 150 people from 13 countries attended, including religious leaders, politicians, representatives of global tech companies, and academics. This event was convened in Hiroshima, a city that stands as a powerful testament to the consequences of destructive technology and the enduring quest for peace. In this symbolic location, leaders of major world religions gathered to sign the Rome Call for AI Ethics, emphasizing the vital importance of guiding the development of artificial intelligence with ethical principles to ensure it serves the good of humanity.



Following the opening remarks from the four co-organizers, a video message from Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Fumio Kishida was introduced. In the first day's sessions, leaders from major tech companies such as Microsoft, IBM, and Cisco, as well as religious leaders, explained the importance of the “Call from Rome” in the actual technology industry. In addition, a report was given by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Technology, Amandeep Singh Gill, said, “The Rome Call embodies the spirit necessary for global AI governance”.

At the meeting on the following day, July 10, the participants listened to an atomic bomb survivor's testimony. Through this testimony, the participants shared an empirical awareness of the relationship between AI and war,



and AI and weapons. At the meeting, the participants adopted the “Hiroshima Appeal”, which calls on the international community to immediately end all armed conflicts, to ban and eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and to ensure that AI is used only for the welfare of humanity and never to destroy or harm life.

The participants visited the Cenotaph in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, offered flowers in memory of the victims, and held a signing ceremony for the “Rome Call”.

<https://www.romecall.org/ai-ethics-for-peace-hiroshima-july-9th-2024/>

<https://www.romecall.org/ai-ethics-for-peace-hiroshima-july-10th-2024/>

On August 21, Ven. Gijun Sugitani, President of Religions for Peace Japan, Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu, Chair of RfP Japan, and Rev. Kosho Niwano, Board Member of RfP Japan, visited Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to hand “Hiroshima Appeal” and to report on the “AI Ethics for Peace” held in Hiroshima in July.



## National Issues

### C. Disaster Relief Service

The Noto Peninsula was hit by two destructive disasters - a major earthquake on 1 January 2024 and torrential rains in September 2024 - which caused massive damage to the area. Religions for Peace Japan immediately launched a fundraising campaign in response to the disaster, sending donations to local NPOs that provide support to vulnerable people. Religions for Peace Japan also supported the activities of interfaith chaplains to provide a place for people in evacuation centres to talk to each other. The Disaster Relief Task Force Team of Religions for Peace Japan also visited the disaster area on 14 November and held a memorial service for the victims and for early recovery.



### D. New President of Religions for Peace Japan

At a council meeting held in Kyoto on 19 June 2024, Religions for Peace Japan appointed Ven. Gijun Sugitani, Head Master of Myohoin Temple, as its new president. Ven. Sugitani succeeded the position from Rev. Niwano Nichiko, President of Rissho Kosei-kai, who had served as President of Religions for Peace Japan from 2012 to 2024.



### E. Other Activities by Taskforce Teams



Tree Planting Project



Online Seminar about a danger of Nuclear Power Plants



Multi-Faith Peace Memorial Ceremony for the Atomic Bomb Victims in Nagasaki



Seminar for Training Facilitators for Reconciliation and Peace



Multi-Faith Roundtable Discussion for Preventing Trafficking in Person



Women's Committee visited diverse religious sites in Yokohama



Online Exchange Program with KCRP Youth Members online.