

committed academics to become a call and culture shaping the attitudes and orienting the research activities and interest of the university community of academic staff and students”.

The Congress was officially closed by the Deputy Rector (Academic and Planning), Prof. Dato’ Dr. Md. Tahir Azhar representing the Rector. A group photo of the participants was taken at the end of the closing ceremony. Based on the returned questionnaires, the Congress seemed to have been well received by the participants with 88.7 % rating it as either being ‘excellent and ‘good’, with 11.3% rating it as ‘fair’.

Among the organizations and agencies that extended their contributions and assistance to the Congress are ISESCO and FUIW, TV Alhijrah as the official broadcaster and media partner, Syarikat Takaful Malaysia Berhad, Goldnet International Sdn Bhd, and the Royal Police of Malaysia.

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The 13th international symposium on the contributions of psychology to peace

The 13th International Symposium on the Contributions of Psychology to Peace, a biennial event, was held at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) from 10th to 15th June, 2013. It was organized by the Departments of Psychology and Political Science, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), IIUM. Professor Mahmood Zuhdi, Dean, KIRKHS welcomed the local and foreign participants to the symposium and Professor Ahmed Faris Ismail, Deputy Rector (Research and Development) of IIUM, made inaugural remarks.

A special talk was delivered by Dato’ Tengku Abd. Ghaffar Tengku Mohamed, who was Malaysia’s representative at the peace talks between the Filipino government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

He delivered a fascinating account of the ups-and-downs in negotiating the framework agreement to bring peace to Southern Mindanao. This was followed by keynote speeches by Professor Chandra Muzaffar, and Professor Anouk Ride. Professor Chandra Muzaffar highlighted the importance of ending hegemony in world affairs as it threatens peace. He also stressed that religion, which embodies in its philosophy a notion of “boundaries” may be able to play a vital role to bring peace to the troubled world. Indeed, in Islam, as in Buddhism, the principle of boundaries is closely linked to peace. In his view, the great psychological strength inherent in religion is a fundamental prerequisite for global peace in a world that is moving from hegemony to multi-polarity. In the second keynote address, Professor Anouk Ride focused on the possibilities of peace and conflict in post-natural disaster scenarios. She emphasized the need for educating the public about the potentials of negative impacts of natural disasters. She also called for taking initiatives in the following three areas: increasing local resilience, improving relief capabilities, and facilitating relocation of people from the vulnerable areas. Using narratives of victims of natural disasters, Professor Anouk vividly demonstrated how the experiences of natural disasters may indeed lead to bonds of friendship and cooperation among the victims.

The symposium brought together leading academics, activists and students from IUM and other institutions of higher learning. Around 40 participants from home and abroad, including the US, the UK, Canada, Japan, South Africa, Venezuela, and Thailand attended the symposium. A total of 27 papers in six sessions were presented highlighting such issues as the use of non-violent techniques in conflict resolution and conflict management, creating peace by using respect for human rights, and by observing tolerance. Natural disasters, like earthquakes and tsunamis, leave behind traumatized survivors. This important issue was dealt with by various paper presenters. Participants from Japan discussed the impacts of tsunami of March 2011, on the survivors. Disaster management also did not escape their attention. A number of papers focused on the positive roles played by psychologists in ending various conflicts in different parts of the world. The symposium interestingly included two dialogue sessions with the participants: One was devoted to a discussion on “Islam, Peace and Conflict” and the second was devoted to the “Development of Peace Psychology Programmes”. Both sessions were lively and appreciated by the participants. In particular, the foreign

participants demonstrated keen interest in understanding the role of Islam in conflict resolution and bringing peace to a volatile world. The second dialogue session emphasized peace education as an important means to create the necessary human resources to deal with outbreak of conflicts, and bring peace. In this connection, there was an enthusiastic response to the announcement that the Departments of Psychology and Political Science, IIUM, would soon offer a programme on Peace and Conflict Resolution. When offered, this would be a unique programme with a distinct Islamic input. Parallel to the academic sessions, a Poster Exhibition was also organized during the entire duration of the symposium. The participants of the symposium were taken on a tour of the museums in Kuala Lumpur and the historical sites of Malacca.

The symposium had some immediate objectives like creating awareness on issues related to Peace Psychology among the academics and the practitioners. The organizers of the symposium also aimed at promoting network among researchers and practitioners, and promote the contributions of Islam towards peace. It was also hoped that cooperation would increase at the university level. It is hoped that such symposiums would continue to hold on an annual basis with the Department of Psychology of IIUM in cooperation with Departments of Psychology in other universities. In addition, the symposium suggested getting affiliation with some of the reputable organization such as the American Psychological Association; publishing research works in highly regarded academic journals; uploading research works' abstracts in the designated websites within the circle of psychologists as part and parcel of information sharing; and finally rotation and election of the patrons of this kind of symposium in future. It was decided that the 14th International Symposium on Contributions of Psychology to Peace will be held in South Africa in 2015.

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