

Dear Multiregion Cooperation Circles,

Following on the heels of an historic regional leadership gathering and looking ahead to 2018, I want to pause to share with you some exciting developments for our region of URI.

From November 13-17, individuals from seven different countries came together at Kashi Ashram in Sebastian Florida for the first gathering of Multiregion leadership in five years. The purpose of this retreat was to organize our leadership and collaboratively strategize about goals and objectives for the Multiregion in 2018. Above the mantle in our meeting space we hung a large banner that said "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CCs." In all our conversations and activities, every day, we brought to the forefront you: the 57 Cooperation Circles in the Multiregion, and continually asked ourselves what would serve your best interests.



From this gathering has emerged something extraordinary: an expanded and empowered leadership team that has chosen to call themselves *The Baraza*. *Baraza* is a Swahili term meaning council or assembly. These five young leaders come from Malaysia, Kenya, Argentina, India and USA. They each represent one or more CCs and bring to the team remarkable talents, skills and passions. The five members of the Baraza will serve as strategic anchor points across our global region, and work alongside the Regional Coordinator to energize, grow, connect and support the Multiregion CC network.



Together with the three Global Council trustees and the RC, this group of nine now serves as the **Multiregion Leadership Council**.



During our three full days together, we looked at what IS, what COULD BE, and how we might get there. We took our time getting to know one another, building trust and fellowship, and learning each other's strengths and skills. We told our stories, acknowledged the ancestors whose struggles brought us here to this space, and recognized that the land we are on is not ours.

We dwelt together with the PPPs (and attempted to act them out via Charades!) and familiarized ourselves with the structures of the URI network.

Together we walked through all 57 CCs in the Multiregion, projecting each group's profile up onto the wall and sharing information about their history and present work. In this exercise, in particular, we grew our appreciation for the vastly varied interfaith peacebuilding work happening around the world by CCs in the Multiregion.



Finally, we spent some time looking ahead to 2018. Together we discerned how to move forward with pilot projects of smaller facilitated networks of CCs around particular themes or desired skills. We strategized about our social media presence and communications within the Multiregion. And we discussed what kind of a presence we might have at the Parliament of World Religions in Toronto next year.

I feel deep gratitude to the three Global Council trustees of the Multiregion: Suchith Abeyewickreme, Elana Rozenmand and Audri Scott Williams, for their guidance, wisdom and insight throughout the retreat and in the past year. With the creation of the Baraza, these three who have served as de facto support staff in the Multiregion, can now transition back to their intended duties of providing mission-based leadership and governance.



I am also grateful for the presence of Karen Watson, CC leader of the LGBTQ CC in Multiregion, and Jaya Priya Reinhalter, URI staff, in our midst. It is thanks to Jaya, who grew up at Kashi Ashram, that our group was able to make use of the extraordinary ChoZen Retreat adjacent to Kashi and benefit from the tremendous generosity of their staff and unparalleled beauty and sanctity of the space around us.

The Multiregion is poised for creative, collaborative, experimental work in 2018, thanks to the expanded capacity of our leadership team. We carry you, the CCs of the Multiregion, with us into 2018 and are hopeful about increased connectivity, collaboration and support. Stay tuned for more information and request for feedback regarding our 2018 work plan in the weeks ahead.

In peace,

- Frederica Helmiere, Staff: Regional Coordinator (Seattle, USA)

With

- Suchith Abeyewickreme, Global Council Trustee (Sri Lanka)
- Sowmya Ayyar, Baraza (India)
- Kate Kiama, Baraza (Kenya)
- Vincent Leong, Baraza (Malaysia)
- Francisco Morales, Baraza (Argentina)
- Mikuak Rai, Baraza (Washington D.C., USA)
- Elana Rozenman, Global Council Trustee (Israel)
- Audri Scott Williams, Global Council Trustee (Alabama, USA)

## THE BARAZA:



Francisco Morales is an Indigenous leader, writer and activist from Buenos Aires. He is passionate about the concerns of urban indigenous people and will be spearheading the Multiregion's initiative to greater inclusivity by becoming functionally multilingual, and helping to organize across CCs with indigenous members.  
**[fmorales@uri.org](mailto:fmorales@uri.org)**



Kate Kiama is a lawyer and activist from Nairobi. She is passionate addressing social injustices that affect women and adolescent girls globally. Kate will be focusing on social media, training and mentorship of CCs in the Multiregion.  
**[kkiama@uri.org](mailto:kkiama@uri.org)**



Mikuak Rai is an artist, songwriter, producer, vocalist, musician, event planner, web designer, videographer, and peace activist hailing from Washington D.C. He is passionate about providing alternatives and solutions to violence via creative self-expression and self-development. Mikuak will be focusing on communication, fundraising and the Multiregion presence at the Parliament of World Religions in 2018.  
**[mrai@uri.org](mailto:mrai@uri.org)**



Vincent Leong is a youth leader and growth/development coach from Kuala Lumpur. He is passionate about challenging youths to think about their values and attitude, and seeks to understanding of the needs of young people and raise their aspirations. Vincent will be working on fundraising and the Multiregion presence at the Parliament of World Religions in 2018. **[vleong@uri.org](mailto:vleong@uri.org)**



Sowmya Ayyar is a yoga teacher, violinist, singer and connector of people. She hails from Bangalore, and will be working on storytelling, training & mentorship, social media, and intern support for the Multiregion.  
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