

# Towards Sustainable Tolerance: Leveraging Religious Actors and Inclusive Partnerships to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals

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## ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Tolerance of the United Arab Emirates has made significant strides in promoting tolerance and sustainable peace both locally and globally, setting a unique example as the only United Nations Member State with a dedicated ministry for tolerance. To emulate this example, other entities must adopt a strategic approach to engage with and leverage the potential of religious actors as vital assets in promoting sustainable tolerance. Currently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not on track to be achieved, with only six years remaining. To ensure success, strategies for SDG implementation must be reevaluated and contextualized by allowing local governments and communities to take ownership and mobilize flexible financial resources. Further, a concerted effort must be made to increase inclusive engagement in policy and program development and implementation, including religious actors, women, youth, and marginalized groups. While recent recognition of these actors in multilateralism spaces is noted, their engagement is essential to promote tolerance and reach the SDGs. A robust mechanism is required to ensure systemic change, integrating a 'whole of society' approach and SDG 17 on partnerships to strengthen collaboration between religious actors, civil society, and government. The lack of inclusive participation and leadership by women, youth, and marginalized groups minimizes efforts to foster peaceful and tolerant societies. Religious communities, especially the leaders, must ensure meaningful participation and leadership opportunities for these groups to meaningfully participate and lead. Despite their extensive reach and local community knowledge, resources for development among religious actors, women, youth, and other marginalized groups remain scarce. The funding schemes need to provide a direct channel for funds to reach the communities, as was done in South and Southeast Asia with the European Union funded projects, 'Awareness with Human Action' and 'Southeast Asia Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue for Freedom of Religion or Belief.' Through strategic partnership and resource allocation, entities can collectively strive for to actualize tangible progress in advancing sustainable tolerance and peace.