

Beat: Politics

Inter-religious dialogue: the way to defeat extremism

Conference in the EP

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USPA NEWS - "We will defeat radicalism only if we stay united," said Parliament's First Vice-President Antonio Tajani, opening high-level conference of MEPs and religious community leaders on the rise of religious radicalism and fundamentalism.

EP President Martin Schulz, who closed the debate, said that "we have to have the courage to take people on board and encourage dialogue between religions." At the start of the meeting, Vice-President Tajani called for one minute's silence for the victims of the Airbus Germanwings crash on Tuesday. "Dialogue between religions has a key role in advancing the project of peace that European integration is," said Mr Tajani (EPP, IT) to religious community leaders in his opening remarks. "Who shoots in the name of God, shoots against God," he added, stressing the need to curb all violence.

"The founding principle of Europe is solidarity," and "Europe will not leave Arab countries alone in the fight against radicalism and fundamentalism," Mr Tajani promised in his preliminary remarks. Closing the debate, EP President Martin Schulz said: "The second half of the 20th century brought the principle of mutual respect (''). We are now living in a time when this respect is no longer to be taken for granted". He therefore stressed the relevance of promoting dialogue between people with differing views, so as to "enable us to live together with respect and tolerance."

European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, Foreign Affairs Committee chair Elmar Brok (EPP, DE) and Civil Liberties Committee chair Claude Moraes (S&D, UK) also took part in the conference, which consisted of two panel discussions, one on the rise of religious radicalism and fundamentalism, and the other on promoting tolerance and respect for human dignity. Invited speakers included the Chief Rabbi of the city of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni, the President of the Conference of French Imams, Hassen Chalgoumi and the Vice-President of the Christian Community of Sant'Egidio, Hilde Kieboom.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org

info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com