



# **MEDIA GUIDEBOOK**

**For Media**

**History, Timeline, and Activities of the  
VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional  
Religions**

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## ABOUT THE CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, an initiative of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was first convened on 23–24 September 2003. The idea of establishing such a forum was initially presented on 13 February 2003 at the International Conference on Peace and Accord. The Congress aims to promote shared values of the world and traditional religions and to serve as a permanent international platform for constructive interreligious dialogue.

Key objectives:

- Promotion of peace, mutual respect and tolerance;
- Prevention of conflicts arising from religious differences;
- Countering extremism, hatred and the notion of a “clash of civilizations”;
- Strengthening cooperation with international organizations, including the United Nations, UNESCO and the OSCE;
- Expanding dialogue with the participation of youth, the media and the academic community.

Between 2003 and 2022, seven Congresses were held in Kazakhstan, establishing themselves as an important global platform for dialogue. The Congresses have brought together representatives of diverse religious traditions – including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and others – as well as Heads of State and leaders of international organizations.



# 02

## HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS

### **I CONGRESS (2003)**

**“The Role of Religious Leaders in Strengthening International Security”**

17 delegations  
13 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration on collective actions to ensure peace and harmony on the planet, inspired by the light of the future.

### **II CONGRESS (2006)**

**“Religion, Society, and International Security”**

43 delegations  
20 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration affirming commitment to fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, and respect.

### **III CONGRESS (2009)**

**“The Role of Religious Leaders in Strengthening Tolerance, Mutual Respect, and Cooperation”**

77 delegations  
35 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration reaffirming the commitment to strengthening peace and harmony among religions.

### **IV CONGRESS (2012)**

**“Peace and Harmony as the Choice of Humanity”**

86 delegations  
40 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration aimed at deepening cooperation and mutual understanding among religions, cultures, and civilizations.

### **V CONGRESS (2015)**

**“Dialogue of Religious Leaders and Politicians in the Name of Peace and Development”**

80 delegations  
42 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration calling for mutual understanding and cooperation among all nations.

### **VI CONGRESS (2018)**

**“Religious Leaders for a Safe World”**

82 delegations  
43 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration expressing the commitment to strengthening peace, security, and harmony in international relations.

### **VII CONGRESS (2022)**

**“The Role of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in the Spiritual and Social Development in the Post-Pandemic Period”**

100 delegations  
50 countries

Adoption of a joint declaration affirming the commitment to strengthening solidarity and cooperation in the world.

### **VIII CONGRESS (2025)**

**“Dialogue of Religions: Synergy for the Future”**

100 delegations  
60 countries

# 03.

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE CONGRESSES

- **II Congress:** The International Center for Cultures and Religions was established. The document "Principles of Interfaith Dialogue" was adopted, along with a declaration signed by the participants.
- **III Congress:** The Council of Religious Leaders was formed with the primary goal of strengthening interfaith dialogue and cooperation with major international organizations
- **IV Congress:** The global electronic platform G-Global was launched to promote tolerance and trust. This congress also hosted the first joint meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders and the Congress Secretariat.
- **V Congress:** Two awards were established: the Astana International Award for Contribution to Interfaith Dialogue and the Honorary Medal of the Congress. The proposal to create a Museum of Peace and Reconciliation was also put forward.
- **VI Congress:** The International Center for Interfaith and Interreligious Dialogue was founded.
- **VII Congress:** The Concept for the Development of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions for 2023–2033 was adopted. Additionally, a decision was made to hold a Forum of Young Religious Leaders.



# 04.

## XXIII SESSION OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CONGRESS

The Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is the permanent working body of the Congress, established by the decision of the participants of the First Congress, held on 23–24 September 2003. Within its mandate, the Secretariat functions as the permanent executive body of the Congress. Its responsibilities include shaping and implementing the strategic agenda, as well as monitoring and coordinating the implementation of commitments adopted at plenary sessions and within the framework of high-level agreements.

The primary task of the Secretariat is to ensure the continuity of the Congress's activities between its sessions. The Secretariat is chaired by the Speaker of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Its membership comprises authorized representatives of leaders of world and traditional religions – including Islam, Christianity (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Lutheranism), Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Shinto, as well as international organizations.

The meetings of the Secretariat are convened annually and focus on the implementation of the Congress's decisions, preparation of subsequent sessions, agreement on key themes and the global agenda, adoption of rules of procedure, and development of outcome documents (Declarations, Appeals). They also serve to coordinate cooperation with international structures on issues of interreligious and interfaith dialogue.



## VIII CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

The VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions is expected to bring together more than 100 delegations from around 60 countries. Among the participants will be spiritual leaders of **Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Shinto**, as well as representatives of international organizations, the expert community and public figures.

Within the framework of the Congress:

- On **16 September**, the **XXIII Session of the Secretariat** will be held under the chairmanship of the Speaker of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Head of the Secretariat of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, H.E. Maulen Ashimbayev. On the same day, under the **auspices of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, a Special Session on the Protection of Religious Sites** will take place. The session will gather leading religious and political leaders, diplomats, representatives of civil society and international organizations to discuss global challenges related to threats against places of worship, sacred sites and religious institutions.
- On **17 September**, the plenary session of the VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions will be convened under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The main theme of the forum will be “Dialogue of Religions: Synergy for the Future.” A number of pressing issues will be addressed in the format of thematic sessions.
- On **18 September**, the **II Forum of Young Religious Leaders** will be held on the theme “**Youth for Peaceful Coexistence: Synergy for the Future**”, and “**Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Today**” **Expert Roundtable**.

# 06.

## II FORUM OF YOUNG RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Launched at the VII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in 2022, the Forum of Young Religious Leaders was created to ensure the continuation of interfaith dialogue by involving the next generation.

Its main goal is to provide a platform where young religious leaders can share their experiences and work together on global issues, all based on shared spiritual values. The forum aims to build stronger partnerships between different cultures and faiths by bringing together young people, international organizations, and academics.

This initiative is officially part of the Concept for the Development of the Congress for 2023–2033, a strategic document supported by Kazakhstan's President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

Each forum concludes with the Joint Appeal of Young Religious Leaders, which outlines key priorities for promoting peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding.

The II Forum of Young Religious Leaders will be held on September 17–18, 2025, during the VIII Congress. The theme is “Youth for Peaceful Coexistence: Synergy for the Future.”





# 07.

## **SPECIAL SESSION ON SAFEGUARDING RELIGIOUS SITES UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (UNAOC)**



For the first time, the platform of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Astana will host an official United Nations event – the Special Session of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) dedicated to the protection of religious sites. This global initiative of the UN Secretary-General, launched in 2005, is aimed at strengthening mutual understanding among cultures, religions and peoples. The UNAOC plays a key role in advancing interreligious and intercultural dialogue, preventing extremism and countering discrimination on religious grounds.

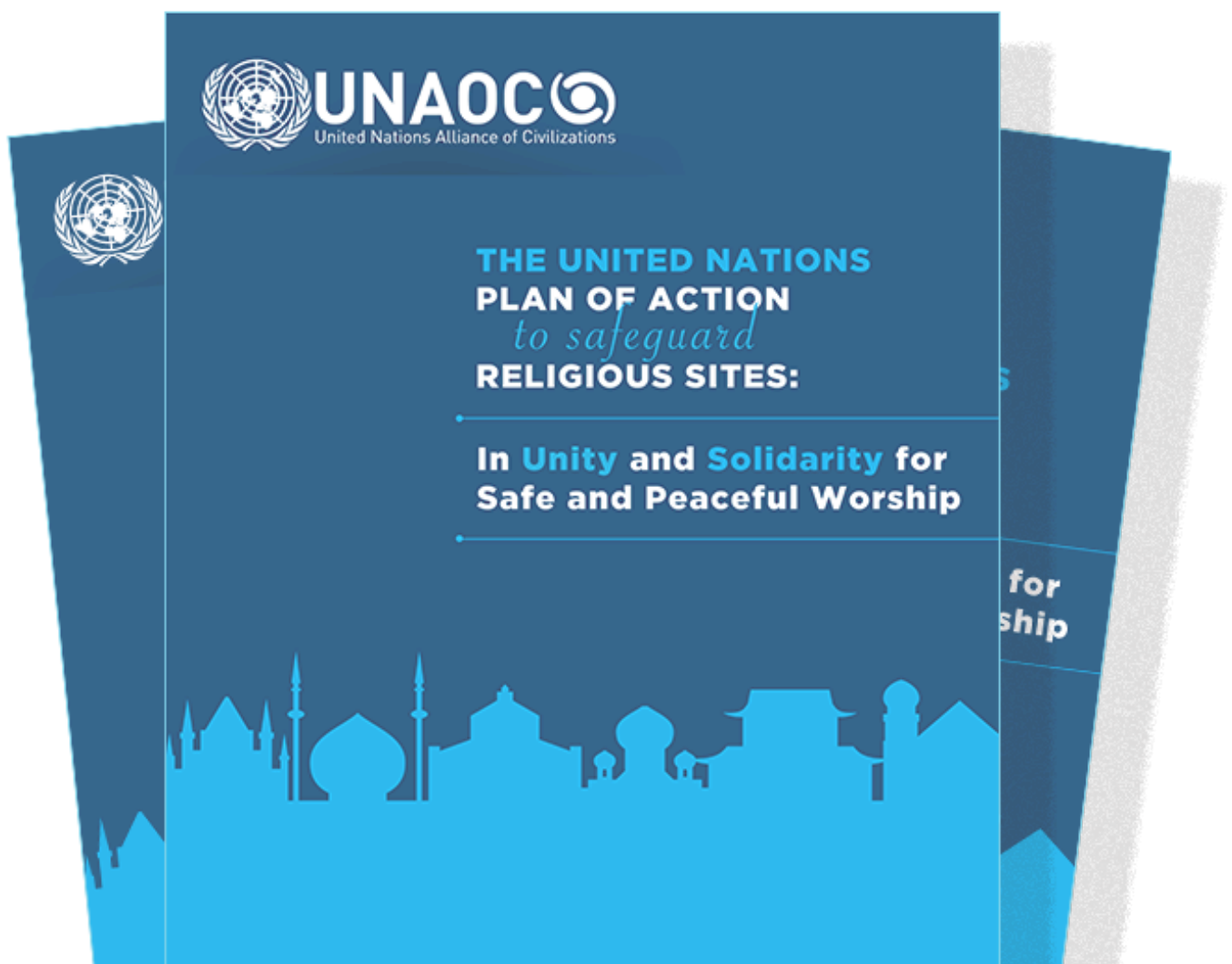
The convening of the session in this new format underscores the importance of international cooperation and, more broadly, enhances the status of the Congress as a platform for uniting the global community around common challenges.

One of the Alliance's priority areas of work is the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites, developed under the leadership of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and United Nations Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, Miguel Ángel Moratinos. The document outlines concrete measures to ensure the safety of believers and sacred sites, strengthen legal mechanisms and promote the values of mutual respect and solidarity.

The choice of Kazakhstan as the venue for such a significant international event is both symbolic and natural. The country has established itself as a unique platform for interfaith and interethnic dialogue, where representatives of more than 100 ethnic groups and 18 religious denominations live in peace and harmony. Kazakhstan's initiative to convene the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions has received high international recognition and has been hailed as a model for promoting a culture of peace and mutual respect.

For Kazakhstan, hosting the UNAOC session is not only an honorable mission but also an important reaffirmation of the country's high international standing as a reliable partner in strengthening global stability. The event highlights Kazakhstan's leading role in advancing the principles of peace, tolerance and intercivilizational dialogue.

The central message of this session fully resonates with the core idea of the Alliance of Civilizations: the path to lasting peace lies in harmonious coexistence and respect for cultural and religious diversity.



# 08.

## EVENTS CALENDAR



### VIII CONGRESS OF LEADERS OF WORLD AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

TUESDAY

16

10:00, 15:00

- 10:00 **XXIII Session of the Secretariat of the VIII Congress**  
*(Astana, Palace of Peace and Reconciliation, 57 Tauelsizdik Ave.)*
- 15:00 **Special Session on Safeguarding Religious Sites under the auspices of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** *(Astana, Palace of Independence, 52 Tauelsizdik Ave.)*

WEDNESDAY

17

10:00

- 10:00 **Opening and Plenary Session of the VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions**  
*(Astana, Palace of Independence, 52 Tauelsizdik Ave.)*

THURSDAY

18

09:00, 10:00, 11:00, 15:00

- 09:00 **Opening of the Park of Peace and Reconciliation**
- 10:00 **Breakout Sessions of the VIII Congress**
- 10:00 **II Forum of Young Religious Leaders**
- 11:00 **Expert Roundtable**
- 15:00 **Closing of the VIII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions**  
*(Astana, Palace of Independence, 52 Tauelsizdik Ave.)*