* What are your hopes for the R20? What are your desired outcomes?

We hope to have the universal faith values of morality, compassion, mutual respect, charity and commitment to sustainable ecology infused in policy.

After all, major global challenges today are not merely political or economic challenges. They are moral challenges. And navigating the world out of these crises requires moral and spiritual leadership.

Take for instance the prospect of a global economic depression. Economic turmoil has historically often resulted in dire social outcomes - undermining communal harmony and respect for other groups. Holistically addressing such a crisis and its fallout, requires moral leadership in partnership with political and economic leadership.

That’s why this year, the world’s religious leaders are for the first-time part of one of the world’s biggest political and governmental policy forums, the G20. It is high time we acknowledge that religion and faith must be part of the solution to global political crises.

* How are you going to make the main G20 heads of state summit take notice of the R20?

We feel the power of religious diplomacy is central to fixing so many of the world’s problems – whether it is conflict resolution or addressing the climate crisis.

I feel confident that world leaders are beginning to wake up to this realisation. The fact that there is now a G20 religious leader’s summit is evidence of this growing realisation.

After all, consider that so many of the world’s conflicts have some connection to religious identity.

As such, to achieve and then maintain a lasting peace, society’s moral and faith leadership *must* be involved in the world’s major conflict resolution and peace building processes.

Instead of a business-like approach to conflict resolution, we desperately need religious leaders to be included in order to address the crucial faith, identity and emotive aspects of peace building.

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* With the RSS present do you have any concerns about them gaining legitimacy by being at the R20? or are you hoping that by them being at the R20, they may be moved to change of attitude towards the Muslim minorities in India?

The R20 is an engagement group of the G20. As such, given protocol - the 2023 host nation, India, has the prerogative to select their own delegates to attend this current R20 summit in Bali- a right they exercised. Such Indian delegates, therefore, are not conventional invitees like most participants at this R20 – they are delegates appointed by, and representing, the nation of India.

Furthermore, it is wise to communicate with everyone, because doing otherwise leads to a void in which there is no understanding and no answers to questions and incorrect perceptions.

Over time, as these misunderstandings accumulate, further problems which deepen the gaps between groups, and confirm individual and unilateral convictions arise. In fact, these issues and convictions will develop and become more complicated, leading to a greater loss.

Each of us has a good seed that we must look for and rally around, for man is the brother of man. Through my experience, most perceptions and attitudes are based on inner convictions, and in reality we are all responsible for those inner convictions, as we have disconnected from others or helped promote an incorrect idea that one group is responsible for something when we all are.

It is our human obligation to search for truth and logic, and eventually it will become clear to everyone.

How good is it if we humans work together as brothers? The closer we get to each other, the faster the gap and void will shrink, and as a result trust and love will deepen. If we do not work together, the opposite will happen. These problems will not only remain, but will build up and drift, and we would have caused it.

The organisation that I represent, the Muslim World League, is responsible for building bridges between everyone. By building bridges, removing obstacles, overcoming challenges, and resolving misunderstandings, we find that there is mutual goodwill. Most people have this goodwill and act on it because of their innate nature (fitra) which is good & pure. As for those who are stubborn, and are always persistent and obstinate despite having heard the truth and seen the logic behind it, they are different, and we do not mean them here.

* The Climate Crisis is desperate – how can religious voices help the situation?

By creating an authentic culture of ecological respect and preservation at the grassroots level across the globe.

This is the big missing piece of the puzzle in climate action efforts globally. At the upcoming COP conference there will be many important, necessary and welcome conversations around climate financing, loss and damage and climate targets. This is vital. But beyond money, science and data, we need a climate preservation culture that is embraced by - and connected to - the moral compass of most people around the world. That can only happen by connecting such a culture to religious values - especially when you consider 84% of the world identifies with religion.

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* How was the R20 set up? Was there an invitation by the G20 to have the R20 set up? Or did you have to lobby for it?
* Do you know what the status of the G20 interfaith Forum is? were they consulted over the new R20?  Do you feel it would have been better joined forces?