

Information Kit on the Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony
[For Religious Organisations]

1. What is the Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony?

- a. In view of global trends and practices that are dividing communities along religious lines, senior religious leaders from the apex religious bodies and the largest religious organisations in Singapore agreed it is important for Singapore's religious leaders to continually reaffirm their commitment to shared values that undergird religious harmony.
- b. With Government's support and facilitation, religious leaders then drafted the Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony ("**Commitment**"). The Commitment articulates the shared values to safeguard our religious harmony, as well as some of the desired behaviours among Singaporeans of different beliefs that are necessary for fostering a cohesive society.
- c. The full text of the Commitment is in Annex A.

2. How can my organisation support the Commitment?

- a. Religious organisations that wish to affirm the Commitment may fill in the form in Annex B.

3. Does the Commitment supersede the 2003 Declaration on Religious Harmony?

- a. No, it does not. Instead, the Commitment elaborates on the 2003 Declaration on Religious Harmony, which outlines the broad principles for inter-religious confidence.

4. Which organisations have affirmed the Commitment?

- a. All the apex religious bodies of Singapore's major religious communities have affirmed the Commitment. These are the Catholic Archdiocese, Hindu Advisory

Board, MUIS, National Council of Churches of Singapore, Sikh Advisory Board, Singapore Buddhist Federation and Taoist Federation.

- b. As of Apr 2019, over 30 religious groups, both within and outside of these apex bodies, have also affirmed the Commitment, including the Inter Religious Organisation, the oldest inter-faith group in Singapore.
- c. In order to preserve religious harmony in Singapore, in their interactions with each other, Singaporeans need to exhibit behaviours and norms that demonstrate mutual respect and enable mutual understanding and trust to grow. Organisations and individuals representing all major segments of society have thus also expressed support for this initiative. This shows Singapore's consensus on the importance of safeguarding religious harmony, and the values and behaviours in the Commitment.

5. Is the Commitment legally binding?

- a. The Commitment is not legally binding. Instead, as a document that was developed by Singapore's senior religious leaders, the Commitment aims to be an anchor document to guide religious leaders and their communities in fostering a religiously harmonious and cohesive society.

6. What are the implications if my organisation affirms/ does not affirm the Commitment?

- a. It is not mandatory to affirm the Commitment. However, the Commitment is a recognition by religious leaders that although Singapore is an exemplar of religious harmony, this is only because of the continuous efforts by the Government, religious leaders and every Singaporean, and we must continually strive to nurture and strengthen it. Affirming the Commitment is a symbolic but important expression by an organisation that it is willing to do its part to uphold religious harmony.

COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Singapore has enjoyed a high level of harmony and peace in our religiously diverse society. This is not by accident, and we must constantly work to protect, cherish and promote our religious harmony, as it is key to our peace, prosperity and progress. To this end, we reaffirm the following:

Upholding Freedom of Religion

1. We will uphold the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, and the right of every person to profess, practise, and propagate beliefs different from our own, including not having religious beliefs.

Building Stronger Bonds

2. Strong bonds across faiths are key to religious harmony. While our faiths may be different, we share common values, such as charity, love, respect and empathy. It is consistent with our values to encourage regular interaction, including the following:

- a. Building and maintaining meaningful relationships with others of a different faith;
- b. Offering help to others of a different faith, including in times of crisis;
- c. Offering non-religious commercial services to all regardless of faith, and procuring the same from establishments where owners may have displayed symbols of their faith;
- d. Allowing each other space to profess our faiths, and to do so in a respectful and sensitive manner;
- e. Eating together with others, even if we have different religious dietary requirements and practices;
- f. Expressing good wishes for and attending each other's festival celebrations; and
- g. Attending the life events of others of a different faith, such as weddings and funerals, even if these are held in the place of worship of that faith.

Fostering a Culture of Consideration and Mutual Understanding

3. We will foster a culture of consideration and mutual understanding. When interacting with people of other beliefs, we will uphold social norms of compromise and accommodation. We recognise that while our society is multi-religious, the State is secular, and that in the

common spaces, the expression of one's faith may give rise to misunderstandings. We accept that not all persons will be aware of religious sensitivities, and when misunderstandings or disputes arise, we will resolve them through respectful dialogue.

Sharing and Propagating Beliefs Respectfully and Sensitively

4. We will share and propagate our beliefs respectfully, paying attention to inter-faith and intra-faith sensitivities. We will ensure that our practices are also done in a respectful and sensitive manner. We will not denigrate or insult other faiths, or promote ill-will. We reject unequivocally and will never tolerate any form of violence against anyone, including because of his faith.

Maintaining Solidarity in Crisis

5. In times of crisis, we will express solidarity with each other, consult one another, help one another, and work together towards maintaining social cohesion as our overriding goal.

Supporting Institutional Efforts

6. We will support national institutions that aim to uphold and promote religious harmony, such as the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles, National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony and the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony. We will work towards organising and participating in activities for all to build friendship and trust, and jointly work on projects for the common good.

Safeguarding Religious Harmony for a Better Singapore for All

7. We embrace and will practise the affirmations in this Commitment. Through our words and actions, we can contribute to religious harmony in Singapore. Together, we ensure that our nation continues to progress and prosper in peace and harmony, and enable all to lead fulfilling lives in accordance with their beliefs.

AFFIRMATION OF THE COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD RELIGIOUS HARMONY

1. Religious bodies in Singapore are eligible to affirm the Commitment. These include religious organisations that are:
 - (a) A company registered under the Companies Act (Cap. 50); or
 - (b) A society registered under the Societies Act (Cap. 311)
2. To complete the form, you will need to provide basic particulars of your organisation and a point of contact for your organisation. The point of contact should be available to follow up on the organisation's registration, if necessary.
3. Your registration will also need to be endorsed by a representative of sufficient seniority to act on your organisation's behalf. The point of contact need not be the same as the endorsing representative.
4. Organisations that have affirmed the Commitment will be listed at a webpage together with other details on the Commitment. This webpage is www.ircc.sg/commitment.
5. The completed form should be emailed to **Commitment@ircc.sg** or sent by post to:

**“Commitment Secretariat”,
Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth
140 Hill Street, Old Hill Street Police Station, #01-01A
Singapore 179369”**