PeaceCon 2019 Brings Together Peacebuilders From 50+ Countries And 289 Organizations – The Largest Annual Conference Yet!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 10, 2019

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Washington, D.C., USA. – Last week, the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) hosted our annual conference, PeaceCon 2019, from October 2nd – 4th in Washington, D.C., bringing in over 800 registered participants from 50+ different countries and 289 organizations. From exploring ways to better engage women and youth in peace processes, to unpacking environmental drivers of conflict, to measuring successes and setbacks in the peacebuilding field – PeaceCon 2019 truly lived up to its central theme of “Seizing the Moment for Peace in a Disrupted World.” The three-day event reached over 2.3 million social media users, with #PeaceCon2019 trending on Twitter and garnering over 31.4 million impressions.
To kick off PeaceCon 2019, some 40+ AfP members spent October 1st on Capitol Hill for the first-ever Peacebuilding Advocacy Day with the +Peace Coalition. The day started off with high-speed advocacy training at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation, led by Porter Delaney of the Kyle House Group and Kate Gould of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. Peacebuilders from across the United States and the world then split up into assigned groups and met with approximately 30 Congressional offices in both the House of Representatives and Senate to discuss peacebuilding policy priorities. While most conversations were focused on the Global Fragility Act and impending Youth, Peace, and Security legislation, each peacebuilder was given the opportunity to discuss country or issue specific priorities as well. Advocacy Day brought AfP’s members together to stress the importance of elevating peacebuilding policy priorities on the U.S. and global policy landscape.
The first day of PeaceCon started off at the iconic headquarters of the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) on October 2. In opening remarks, USIP President Nancy Lindborg urged the capacity crowd to reimagine international institutions and approaches to violent conflict to be more agile, more adaptive, and better able to evolve to the complexities we face. Peace Direct CEO and AfP Board Chair Dylan Mathews highlighted the vital role of local leadership and civil society in ending violent conflict and sustaining peace. AfP CEO and President Uzra Zeya underscored the opportunity for integration within and beyond the peacebuilding field, and the imperative for transformation to make peacebuilding more impactful, evidence-based, and inclusive. She also presented AfP’s new logo, which integrates our three main lines of effort on Policy, Learning and Evaluation, and Partnerships in a compelling new vision. Opening keynote speaker Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former president of Liberia, galvanized the audience with an emphatic call to action on including women in peace processes. Dynamic discussions from unpacking 20 years of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, to countering the disruptive aspects of technology on conflict and democracy, to understanding the power of grassroots activism and mobilization, were held throughout the day. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace President/Ambassador Bill Burns’ closing keynote remarks addressed the evolving U.S. role in a disrupted world and how civil society and government can work
together to build a more responsive and effective international system. Most of these sessions were recorded and can be viewed on USIP’s website [here](https://www.usip.org).

Days two and three, October 3rd and 4th, were held at the conference facilities of our generous sponsor, FHI 360. Day two started off with a welcome by AfP’s CEO and President Uzra Zeya, who highlighted how AfP and its member network are performing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and how DEI is both the right and the smart thing to do, in terms of greater organizational impact and innovation. In plenary keynote remarks, Judith Heumann, former Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. State Department, advocated applying a disability lens to DEI and described various ways for peacebuilding organizations to make progress. This was followed by a morning plenary session on DEI where Peace Direct CEO and AfP Board Chair Dylan Mathews made an impassioned case for “no more excuses” when it comes to making peacebuilding more inclusive. The remainder of day two involved thought-provoking discussions on peacebuilding in the United States, the nexus of gender and technology, private sector-civil society social impact partnerships, MeToo and peacebuilding, and new frontiers in peace education. Day two wrapped up with a ceremony honoring fallen peacebuilders from 2019 and the winners of the Melanie Greenberg U.S. Peacebuilding Award of Excellence and Peace Direct’s Tomorrow’s Peacebuilders Award.
Winners of the AfP Melanie Greenberg U.S. Peacebuilding Award of Excellence

Peace Direct’s Tomorrow’s Peacebuilders Award
The final day of PeaceCon 2019 kicked off with video remarks by Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Eliot Engel, and Lead Republican of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Michael McCaul, thanking AfP for presenting them with the inaugural Peacebuilding Champion Award. They further stressed the importance of AfP’s members’ peacebuilding work and putting conflict reduction and violence prevention at the center of U.S. foreign policy. These remarks were followed by a morning plenary focused on “Building Modern Movements,” moderated by Michael Silberman of MobLab with Rebecca Crall of Rotary International, Gulalai Ismail of Aware Girls, Oscar Award winner Claire Sliney, and Bria Smith of March for Our Lives. Bria Smith energized the audience with her call for not using young people “as tokenized props in advocacy,” and instead working across generational lines to tackle the problem of “people dying on the streets, every day.” The day carried on with sessions covering topics from trauma-informed peacebuilding and peace engineering to the challenges facing children of veterans and the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants.

PeaceCon 2019 engaged a diverse group of peacebuilders from far and wide. Domestically, we welcomed university students from coast to coast — from UC San Diego to Notre Dame University, to NYU and George Mason University, to the Fletcher School to Kennesaw State. We were also thrilled to welcome high school and college aged NewGen Peacebuilders from Houston, Charlotte and Charlottesville. Internationally, we brought together peacebuilders from 38 different countries – from Gulalai Ismail of Pakistan to Kessy Ekomo-Soignet of the Central African Republic. PeaceCon attendees heard and heeded the rich diversity of experience in locally led peacebuilding.
While our annual Conference has come to an end, we know the connections and partnerships built will continue beyond PeaceCon and truly harness collective action for peace as we face an increasingly disrupted world. From launching a new committee on DEI to seeking new legislation on Youth, Peace, and Security in the U.S. Congress, the Alliance for Peacebuilding is seizing the moment to unite our members, and champions well beyond our network, for peace.

With over 110 member organizations, AfP brings together the largest development organizations, most innovative academic institutions, and influential humanitarian and faith-based groups to harness collective action for peace. We build coalitions in key areas of strategy and policy to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.