



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK

**Informal briefing by the Secretary General on United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard
Religious Sites: In Unity and Solidarity for Safe and Peaceful Worship**

12 September 2019

11:00 AM to 12:15 PM in the Economic and Social Council Chamber

Intervention by

H.E. Ambassador Katalin Annamária Bogyay

Permanent Representative

Your Excellency, Mr. Secretary-General,

Honorable Permanent Representatives, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites.

Hungary highly commends the UN Alliance of Civilizations for giving us such a valuable tool to prevent attacks against and preserve sites, which represent the cornerstones of our identities, cultures, and our civilization. We appreciate that the Plan of Action builds on the highly relevant work of UNESCO in this regard, as well as on the extensive series of consultations held with relevant stakeholders in preparation of the Plan.

In the face of terrorism and violent extremism resulting in destruction of places of worship and intimidation of believers, we underline the importance of ensuring the realization of human rights as a solid basis for safeguarding religious sites. These human rights include the right to freedom of religion and belief and to practice one's religion or belief, in private and in public, freely and safely, with special regard to places of worship. We believe that this freedom does not only include protection against physical attacks, but also verbal or symbolic ones, such as the expressions of extremist ideologies, hate speech and incitement to

violence, as well as discriminatory measures, legal and administrative barriers to practicing religion.

It is the primary responsibility of States to promote, protect and maintain the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity. However, we commend the focus of the Plan to involve moderate religious and traditional leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society and the media in these efforts.

Hungary highlights the importance of fostering and practicing a culture of dialogue with mutual respect and acceptance. The protection of places of worship should go hand in hand with an education for tolerance for religious and cultural pluralism.

We firmly believe that strengthening the international cooperation and dialogue among religious denominations is essential, therefore we highly appreciate the organization of this informal briefing by the Secretary-General and we welcome the United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites. This initiative clearly demonstrates the participants' commitment to fight against the attacks on religious sites and it paves the way for a closer cooperation in the future as well.

Thank you.