

# Ousseimi Foundation Prize for tolerance 2014

Initiatives of Change  
A history of peacebuilding and changemaking



**Fondation Ousseimi**  
Genève



*Initiatives of Change*



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## THE OUSSEIMI FOUNDATION PRIZE FOR TOLERANCE 2014 awarded to INITIATIVES OF CHANGE

The Foundation was created by Khaled Ousseimi in 1990, to promote action in favour of a more tolerant world in the sense of the acceptance of others, no matter how different, and recognition that they are equal in rights and liberties, no matter what their sex, race, ethnic group, religion or opinions may be. Tolerance means overcoming mistrust, fear and prejudice, but also indifference, in order to open up to others and live not necessarily as them but with them.

The very concept of tolerance posits the existence of minimum values shared by all men – a kind of common set of rules of the game or universal normative framework, such as that set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The mission of the Ousseimi Foundation Prize for Tolerance is to contribute to greater tolerance in this complex and divided world.

**The Ousseimi Foundation** was created by the Ousseimi family in 1990 by notarial deed. It is recognised as an institution of public utility as defined in the decree of the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva of 16 May 1990.

The basic motivation of the Ousseimi family in creating the Foundation is clearly expressed in the address of the President of the Foundation, Mr Khaled Ousseimi, to the first meeting of the Foundation Board on 28 February 1991, whose text is reproduced below.

“Man is little more than the product of his life experience. What merit he has stems from the use he makes of that experience.

Success is meaningful only if its fruits are shared with others. The Ousseimi Foundation was founded out of a desire to share with others and as a tribute to the communities in which I have lived throughout my life. Hence Damascus, Beirut and Geneva, cities that, each in its own way, have made me the man I am today, are the subjects of special attention. Sharing with others is the essential value transmitted to me by my father. Within the Foundation, this means sharing first and foremost with the helpless victims of circumstance, but also with those who seek knowledge but lack the necessary means, and lastly with researchers whose efforts are aimed at improving the lot of mankind.

Allow me to conclude with a confession that tempers what might be viewed as the excessive altruism of what I have written so far. The two most beautiful days of my life were the day that I decided to establish the Foundation's endowment and the day on which my decision received the unreserved endorsement and support of the members of three generations of the Ousseimi family...when all is said and done, a purely selfish sentiment.”

Khaled OUSSEIMI, 28 February 1991

The activity of the Foundation has been carried on in accordance with the goals which it set itself. Today those goals are principally:

1. To promote a more tolerant world, notably (at the initiative of the Founder and President) by means of a Prize for Tolerance, created in 2004.
2. To assist deserving and brilliant students who lack the financial means to continue their studies.

This brochure celebrates the ceremony for the award of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ousseimi Foundation Prize for Tolerance to Initiatives of Change, held at Mountain House, Caux-sur-Montreux, Vaud, Switzerland on 6 July 2014.

## ADDRESS BY MARIA OUSSEIMI FOR THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF THE OUSSEIMI FOUNDATION PRIZE FOR TOLERANCE

At the beginning of this century, when our Foundation wished to develop its action in favour of a more tolerant world, it adopted the following definition of tolerance:

“Tolerance is both a state of mind and an attitude. It is truly meaningful only if tested in daily contact with others. Tolerance is more than peace (especially if the latter is defined as the ‘absence of war’): it implies acceptance of others, no matter how different, and recognition that they are equal in rights and liberties, no matter what their sex, race, ethnic group, religion or opinions may be. Tolerance means overcoming mistrust, fear and prejudice, but also indifference, in order to open up to others and live not necessarily as them but with them.

The very concept of tolerance posits the existence of minimum values shared by all men – a kind of common set of rules of the game or universal normative framework, such as that set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – and recognition of the fact that, in respecting others, we all expect to be recognized and respected in turn.”

On this basis, the Ousseimi Foundation decided, on the one hand, to support projects which it considered to make a reality of this definition, and, on the other, in a public and concrete manner to recognize or to bring recognition to men, women or institutions that had made a real contribution to a more tolerant world.

The choice for the first Ousseimi Foundation Prize for Tolerance was easy ! In fact, it imposed itself upon us by the very personality of Nelson Mandela, that remarkable man who succeeded not only in leading his country to democracy, but also, through his extraordinary aptitude for tolerance and forgiveness, managed to avoid a blood-bath and chaos. We presented the prize to him personally in April 2004.

Following the choice of our first prize, the Foundation decided to present the prize, not to a person, but to an event, the Fès World Festival of Sacred Music, whose activity we viewed as exemplary. For while so many wars and conflicts originate from religious differences, the fact of bringing together the so called “sacred” music of several religions seemed to us to be a highly symbolic act of tolerance. This second prize was awarded in 2006.

Then there was the question of our third prize. What if, rather than honouring a living person, we were to recognize the merit of a model from the past with continuing value for today ? The rescue of the Christians of Damascus by Emir Abd El-Kader-al-Jazairi in 1860 presented us in 2010 with the opportunity of celebrating

a 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Moreover the whole life and actions of this man provided our age with an example worthy to be emphasized and followed, for 1860 was for the Emir but the summit of a long life of open mindedness and tolerance.

A full 20 years before Henry Dunant and the first Geneva Convention, he entrusted to his own mother the protection of enemy prisoners of war and laid down strict rules for their protection and treatment. Abd-el-Kader, a faithful and committed Muslim, encouraged the Jews to attend their synagogue and the Christians to attend their church, since all that counted was "not to forget God".

What better model to propose to our age, in which so many manifestations of extremism wear a religious mask to conceal their political motivation; in which the content of the great religions is altered and caricatured and converted into a weapon for conquest; in which a fanatical mankind perverts the message which it claims to have received from God; in which the selective evocation of the Divine Word kills the spirit of its message in all religions?

Thus it is that in 2010 we decided on the posthumous award of the Ousseimi Foundation Prize for Tolerance to Emir Abd-el-Kader.

For its fourth Prize for Tolerance, The Ousseimi Foundation has decided to make the award to an institution based in Switzerland, but with an international vocation and dimension, which has for many years repeatedly, even systematically, contributed to greater tolerance in our complex and divided world.

In our opinion, Initiatives of Change fitted this definition perfectly and deserved the prize more than any other institution in our country, for the reasons set out in the next section of this brochure.

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## Initiatives of Change: A history of peacebuilding and change-making

So many of the world's problems – and their solutions – are rooted in human nature. Fear, hate, greed and indifference perpetuate injustice, poverty, conflict and environmental destruction. Yet it is also in human nature to be compassionate, courageous and creative. We can live the change we want to see. Change in the world can ripple out from changes in each one of us.

**Initiatives of Change International (IofC International)** is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working for peace, reconciliation and human security worldwide. It stresses the importance of personal responsibility and ethical leadership in building trust across the world's divides. *IofC* focuses on the vital link between change in individuals and global change, and aims to inspire, support and equip people to play their part in creating a better society.

Active in 60 countries and formally incorporated in 44 countries, *IofC International* is a federation of independent national organizations all carrying the same name and seeking the same goals. The international association was incorporated in 2002 under Swiss law and has its seat at the international conference centre in Caux, above Montreux on the Lake of Geneva, in Switzerland.

*IofC's* structure is bottom-up, and its approach is tolerant of different cultures and national realities. *IofC* has always allowed space for different religious expressions and works for inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding in a holistic approach. *IofC International* is an NGO in special consultative status with the *Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)* of the United Nations, and has participatory status at the Council of Europe.

**CAUX-Initiatives of Change**, the Swiss national body, is an independent foundation. Since 1946 it has organized conferences in the former Caux-Palace Hotel, bringing together tens of thousands of people from around the world.

## The lofC approach

People matter – and people can make a difference, contributing to building a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

It will take more than human reason and ability to solve the problems of the world. *lofC* places the search for inner wisdom at the heart of its approach. When people listen to what is deepest in their hearts, insights often come which lead in unexpected directions. Many understand this experience as guidance from God, others as the leading of conscience or the inner voice.

Also integral to *lofC* is a commitment to:

- Start with oneself: an honest look at one's own motives and behaviour is often the start of personal transformation. Cultural and religious traditions across the world offer moral standards as guides for individual and community living. Of these, *lofC* singles out absolute honesty, unselfishness, love and purity of heart and action as practical tests for motives and daily actions.
- Listen to others: honest conversation, undertaken in an open spirit, builds bridges of trust and community between people. These enable healing, partnership and common action.
- Take focused action: *lofC's* people and programmes seek to strengthen the moral and spiritual foundations of society and to bring healing and reconciliation where there is conflict; build bridges of trust between different communities and countries; embed ethics, justice and transparency in the global economy; empower leadership to act with integrity, serve unselfishly and be effective agents of change.





*The Caux conference centre.*

## Initiatives of Change and the Caux conference centre

For over 70 years *Initiatives of Change* has built trust between people of diverse backgrounds and faiths, providing a rallying point for individuals and groups to work for justice, healing and human development. Two important on-going themes in recent years have been building *Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy*, and the *Caux Forum for Human Security*. *Initiatives of Change* has a broad theatre of work, with a vast array of activities that seek to promote human rights and tolerance.

Its work touches upon peacebuilding and reconciliation, human rights and democracy, sustainable development, and conflict resolution. Broadly speaking, the projects fall under:

- Peace and trustbuilding;
- Training for ethical leadership and good governance;
- Living sustainably.

These projects take part around the world, overarched by the conferences held in Caux every summer. In this breath-taking setting, thousands of people have found the inspiration and determination to work for positive change.

## Beginnings

**Initiatives of Change** grew out of the work of Frank Buchman (1878-1961), an American Lutheran minister. In the 1920s his work became known as the *Oxford Group* and in 1938 was named *Moral Re-Armament (MRA)*. It changed its name to *Initiatives of Change* in 2001.

In 1908 Buchman had a personal spiritual experience of release from bitterness that altered the course of his own life. That experience convinced him that moral compromise destroys human character and relationships and that moral clarity is a prerequisite for building a just society. His ideas took root at Oxford (leading to the original name) and in some American universities.

As the European nations re-armed for war, Buchman called for “moral and spiritual re-armament” as the way to build a ‘hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world’. Following World War II, *Moral Re-Armament (MRA)* launched a programme to foster change in private and public life based on a change in motivation and character.

In 1942, in the thick of the war, a young Swiss man, Philippe Mottu wrote, “If Switzerland is spared by the war, our task will be to make available for *Moral Re-Armament* a place where Europeans, torn apart by hatred, suffering and resentment, can come together: Caux is the place.” In the spring of 1946, Mottu and his friends took the decision to buy the run-down former Caux-Palace Hotel, and started its transformation into an international conference centre.



Frank Buchman (centre) with Philippe and Hélène Mottu in 1946.

## Some stories from lofC's history : Franco-German reconciliation

Historians have documented the contribution of Caux to the Franco-German reconciliation after World War II. Three thousand Germans and 2,000 French visited Caux between 1946 and 1950, among them parliamentarians, industrialists, trade unionists and journalists. Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, two of the key actors, both participated, and Buchman was decorated by both the German and French governments for his contribution to European reconciliation.

In 1951, Adenauer wrote to Frank Buchman: "It is my conviction, too, that men and nations cannot outwardly enjoy stable relationships until they have been inwardly preparing for them. In this respect Moral Re-Armament has rendered great and lasting services... Very soon after the war Moral Re-Armament reached out a hand to the German people and helped them to make contact again with other nations... In recent months, too, we have seen the conclusion, after some difficult negotiations, of important international agreements. Here, also, I believe, Moral Re-Armament has played an invisible but effective part in bridging differences of opinion between negotiating parties, and has kept before them the objective of peaceful agreement in the search for the common good which is the true purpose of human life." Eleven members of his family visited Caux over the years.



*Konrad Adenauer (centre) in Caux.*

## Apology for Japan's mistakes

In June 1950 a delegation of 60 Japanese, among them politicians, trade unionists and industrialists, embarked from Caux on a tour of Europe and America. The delegation included the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and seven provincial governors. The party also included seven women, almost unheard-of in such a male-dominated society. Before the group left Japan, the Nippon Times, an English language publication, carried an editorial on MRA, concluding, "If Japan can honestly repent her past misdeeds against her neighbours and can show sincerity of purpose to work unselfishly in the interest of world peace, the struggle to overcome the distrust and suspicion felt against her will be more than half won."

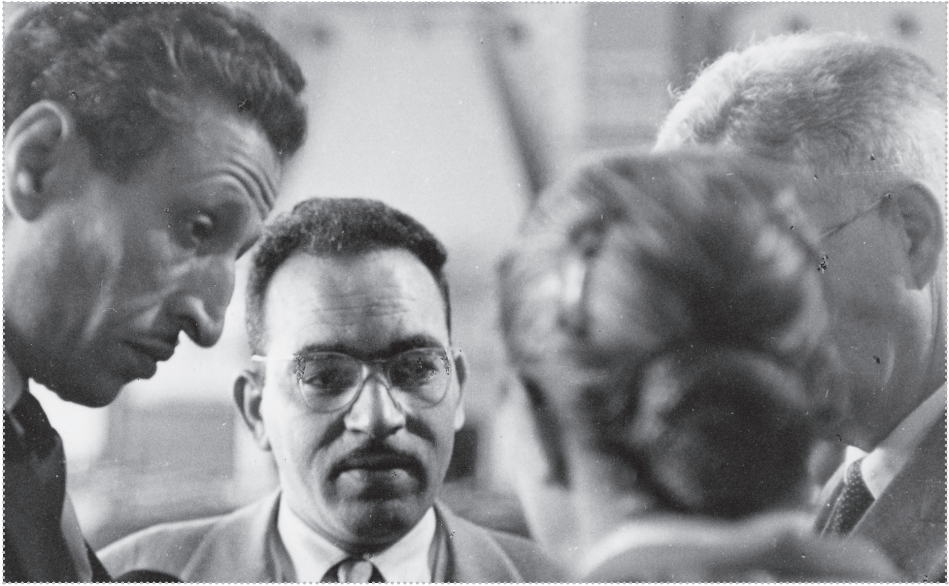


*The Japanese delegation to Caux in 1950.*

At a reception in the American Senate, the personal representative of the Japanese Prime Minister apologized for "Japan's mistakes", causing a sensation in the American press.

In 1957, parliamentarians influenced by MRA inspired Prime Minister Nobosuke Kishi to make public apologies in nine Pacific countries.





*(l. to rt.) Moroccan and Tunisian nationalists Si Bekkai and Mohamed Masmoudi meet French industrialist Robert Carmichael and Irène Laure, resistant and socialist.*

## Tunisian independence

In 1953, a young Tunisian nationalist, Mohamed Masmoudi, came to Caux. His country was still a colony of France. At Caux, he lost there his hatred of the French. He went back to Paris and, at the *lofC* centre there, met Jean Basdevant, then responsible for Tunisian affairs at the French foreign ministry. They developed a relationship of trust.

Basdevant and Masmoudi were key members of the delegations that negotiated independence and, whenever deadlock threatened, the two of them would retire to the garden of the ministry for a private talk. In 1956, while leading the first post-independence Tunisian delegation to the United Nations in New York, President Bourguiba declared, "The world must be told what Moral Re-Armament has done for our country." Robert Schuman also wrote to Buchman, "There can be no doubt that the history of Tunisia and Morocco would have been different if it had not been for Moral Re-Armament." Masmoudi, by then a member of the Tunisian government, said, "Without Moral Re-Armament, we would be involved today in Tunisia in a war to the death against France ... Tunisia would now be a second Indo-China."



*Kim Beazley with his wife Betty in Caux 1992.*

## Dignity for Australia's Aborigines

In 1953 Kim Beazley, then the youngest member of the Australian parliament, spent seven weeks in Caux. His experience there nurtured his conviction to work for "the rehabilitation of the Australian Aboriginal race". Before he left Parliament 24 years later as "father of the house", the Australian National University awarded him an honorary Doctorate, citing his contribution to education and Aboriginal affairs.

The citation said: "Over the last half century few people have done as much, and none have done more, than Kim Beazley to recognize the injustices done to the Aboriginal people." His State Funeral in 2007 was attended by three former Prime Ministers of Australia.



*A delegation from South Tyrol/Alto Adige in Caux.*

## Minority Rights in South Tyrol

In the Austrian province of South Tyrol, annexed by Italy in 1919 as Alto Adige, tension between the German-speaking minority and the Italian administration increased in the 1950s.

After 300 terrorist attacks by local extremists, Austria took the issue to the United Nations. An all-party delegation arrived in Caux in 1968, followed by six more in the next 18 months. After the dispute was finally settled, years later, an Italian newspaper wrote: "It is well to remember that our province has close links with Moral Re-Armament in view of the assistance given by the movement to politicians from both sides through the conferences in Caux. The result was a new attitude making possible a solution to the problems of Alto Adige when the Italians put forward their proposals."

The agreement finally signed by Italy and Austria in 1992 is recognized as a model for handling minority rights and healing history.

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## Somali Peace Initiative

Following a visit to Caux, Somali guerrilla fighter Ahmed Egal, in exile in Europe, got in touch with his former military chief who had put him in prison for a year. "I realized change had to begin with myself," he recounted. "I am free from fear and bitterness. This is a new weapon in the fight for my country." He then gathered representatives of the various tribes in exile in different countries. Sharing his own experience of reconciliation, he began to win their confidence. They decided to assemble a group of intellectuals from the different tribes in an effort to end tribal war by each encouraging a change of attitude in their own side. This work continues today, both on the ground in Somalia, and in many countries among the diaspora.

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## Bridging Communities in Libanon

Lebanese from the Maronite, Orthodox, Melchite, Sunnite, Shiite and Druze communities have regularly attended conferences in Caux, and shared there and elsewhere their experiences of reconciliation, without which all efforts to rebuild the country are at risk. At the forefront of this work are two former militia leaders, one Muslim, one Christian. A short film *Two men, one war, 33 years on*, made by *Initiatives of Change*, has been shown widely. It shows the courage and great forgiving power of Muhieddine Chehab and Assaad Chaftari, one Muslim, one Christian, who were former enemies in Lebanon's civil war. "Having fought on opposing sides during the Lebanese civil war, two men reconcile openly with their violent history," said CNN's website.



## Some lofC current programmes: Peacebuilding in Burundi

Since 2000, *Initiatives of Change* has been working towards peace in the Great Lakes region of Africa, in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. The goal is not negotiations but to prepare minds and hearts so that peace agreements can be signed and implemented. Since 2003, the work has focused on Burundi, at the request of Burundians. This long and on-going process of “accompagnement” (walking alongside) the politicians, the military, the former guerrillas and civil society, is financed by the Swiss foreign ministry, and has had many of its meetings in Caux.



A Burundi round table in Caux.

## Creators of Peace

**The Creators of Peace (CoP)** initiative was launched at a conference in Caux in 1991 by Anna Abdallah Msekwa, a respected politician and leader of Tanzania's women's organizations. **CoP** is now a global network of women working on different continents through Peace Circles, workshops, personal encounters, community building activities and international conferences – in Caux in 1991 and 1994, India 2001, Uganda 2005 and Australia 2009. A delegation attended the UN Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995.

Peace Circles bring women of different backgrounds together in small groups to explore their peace-building potential, and have taken place in more than 30 countries.



*A peace circle in Kenya.*



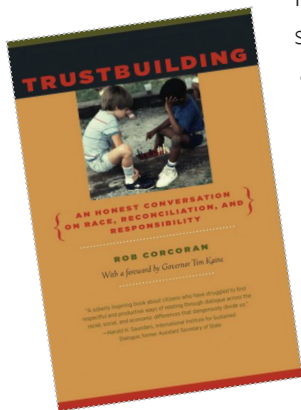
*Pastor James Wuye & Imam Muhammad Ashafa.*

## Muslim-Christian reconcilers in Africa

At a time when many wonder whether peace is possible between Muslims and Christians, an award-winning documentary film produced by *lofC*, *The Imam and the Pastor*, gives hope. In the 1990s, as violence broke out in northern Nigeria, Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa led opposing militias dedicated to defending their communities. In pitched battles, Pastor James lost his hand and two close relatives of Imam Ashafa, as well as his spiritual mentor, were killed. Now the two men are co-directors of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre in Kaduna, leading task-forces to resolve conflicts across Nigeria. They have shared their experience in many countries, notably in Kenya, where their work to defuse post-election violence is portrayed in a second documentary film by *Initiatives of Change* called *An African Answer*. Kofi Annan says: "This is a very important film. We must learn, indeed, from Pastor James and Imam Ashafa and multiply in a thousand places their experience of healing and reconciliation."

## Hope in the Cities

In 1990, in response to the need for racial healing in the USA, *lofC's Hope in the Cities (HIC)* programme was launched, following a conference in Caux attended by more than 500 participants from 79 cities in 53 countries. For over two decades, *HIC* has helped transform Richmond, Virginia, capital of the slave-owning southern states during the Civil War, from a symbol of racial division to a model for reconciliation. Through acknowledgement of history, honest conversation and skills-building workshops, *HIC* has empowered community leaders and built up a network of leaders in non-profit and business sectors, local government, media and education.



The programme engages people across the political spectrum and of all cultural and religious backgrounds, and has provided a model for cities all over the United States and abroad. In the foreword to Rob Corcoran's book, *Trustbuilding: an honest conversation on race*, reconciliation, and responsibility that documents this work, Governor Tim Kaine of Virginia (now US Senator) says "*Hope in the Cities* has moved what looked like an immovable barricade. The job is not done, but *Hope in the Cities* has provided a map for the future."

## Ethical Leadership in India

Nestling in the western hills of India and overlooking the Krishna Valley lies Asia Plateau, an *lofC* centre. Over the past four decades ordinary men and women of all classes, races and religions have experienced here a change in attitude, motivation and behaviour causing ripples in their personal lives, families, workplaces, communities, and sometimes much beyond. A leading Indian newspaper called it “a beacon of hope”.

*The Centre for Training in Ethical Leadership (CENTREL)* was established here to highlight the importance of using ethics and values in business.

The objectives of *CENTREL* are:

- To demonstrate that the ethical environment in an organization can only be improved with ethical leadership;
- To demonstrate that ethical and value-based business can and is competitive;
- To make employees of business organizations, at all levels, aware of the importance of conducting their affairs within the framework of business values and ethical practices;
- To develop today's youth into tomorrow's ethical leaders.

Current events in the world underline the need for continuing dialogue and reflection to trigger new strategies, new ways and a new determination to act. The struggle for democracy in North Africa led *Initiatives of Change* to host the first *Making Democracy Real Dialogue* in January 2012 at Asia Plateau, with the objective of creating a non-partisan space for dialogues on democracy and on what it takes to make it work. A second Dialogue took place in Asia Plateau in January 2014. An estimated 2,500 people participated in programmes in Asia Plateau in 2013.





*A foundations for Freedom visiting course.*

## Foundations for Freedom

*Foundations for Freedom* is an international NGO registered in Ukraine. The programme was initiated in 1993 by *lofC* UK, working mainly in Eastern Europe. It aims to foster the development of truly free, democratic and just societies, where people live a commitment to the values that allow freedom, honesty and personal responsibility to thrive.

*Foundations for Freedom* supports the development of responsible leadership; enhances social involvement of youth; initiates and supports public dialogues; develops mutual understanding and cooperation between various ethnic and social groups; establishes honest and transparent relations between citizens and governmental structures. It promotes and organizes reconciliation projects, public dialogues, trust-building activities; offers access to international networks and experience exchange programmes; leads round-tables, forums and conferences, and conducts training and educational programmes.

## Asia-Pacific Youth Conferences

The first *lofC Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC)* took place in 1990 in Taiwan. Its aim was to bring together youth from around the Asia Pacific region to learn from others' experiences of overcoming conflict and confronting corruption. Since then, conferences have been held in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines, Japan, India, Cambodia, Indonesia and Korea, hosted by Initiatives of Change together with representatives of other organizations.

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## Conclusion

Initiatives of Change is a network with a proven track record, united in a belief that a better world starts with a change in ourselves – and that such change is possible. This is the experience of thousands of people on every continent, over many decades, working for tolerance and mutual understanding through personal change.

- For more information about the Swiss foundation, see : [www.caux.ch](http://www.caux.ch)
- For more on *lofC International's* programmes, see : [www.iofc.org](http://www.iofc.org)
- Or write to: Initiatives of Change, 1824 Caux, Switzerland

The facts and quotations in this document can be found and consulted in *lofC's* archives in the Vaud Cantonal Archives, in Lausanne, and in the UK, in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

