

*Human Rights Council – 31<sup>st</sup> session  
Item 3 – General Debate*

*Speaker: Albert Hengelaar*

*Friday 11 March 2016*



Mr. President,

The World Evangelical Alliance wants to pay attention to the recent Marrakesh Declaration. We applaud the desire behind the declaration to fight violence and extremism. We appreciate the fact that Muslim authorities from around the world are committed to taking a stand in favor of the protection of religious minorities.

We recommend that the Marrakesh Declaration is studied by decision makers in all Muslim majority countries. Religious freedom for all groups was the foundational principle of the World Evangelical Alliance, back then 170 years ago. Not long thereafter we sent a delegation to the Turkish Sultan. The Marrakesh Declaration shows that today nothing much changed for the better and that action for putting principles into practice is laudable and urgent.

Human freedom and freedom of religion are crucial in order to keep peace within any given society, including the Muslim majority countries. We remind everybody of better records in the past, for instance during the Ottoman period.

Freedom of religion summons all humans to respect the other. Only that respect can, when grounded into the human mind, provide the de-escalation of violence and destruction. The respect and also the flourishing of minorities is the outcome of this process. For the World Evangelical Alliance this is the litmus test of a sustainable society and the building block of a state where laws are adhered, respected and maintained. May Marrakesh serve that end.

We thank you Mr. President.