

EPP PRESIDENT WILFRIED MARTENS IN FAVOR OF AN INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AT ALL LEVELS

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EPP President **Wilfried MARTENS** attended the European interfaith dialogue organized by the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in Rome on 22nd March 2007. EPP Group President in the CoR, **Isidoro GOTTARDO**, welcomed Wilfried MARTENS underlining the importance for the EPP to get local and regional authorities involved in the dialogue between religions on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

EPP/CoR members, representing regional and local levels from 27 Member States, and candidate countries exchanged their experience with five representatives of churches in Europe: Riccardo Di Segni, Chief Rabbi of Rome, Coskun Beyazgül, President of the Muslims' executive in Belgium, Eminence Emmanuil, Greek Orthodox Bishop of France, Vincent Legrand from COMECE representing Catholic church, and Pavel Fried, President of the Jewish Community of Brno, Czech Republic.

They all stressed the need for strengthening dialogue between cultures and religions in Europe for a peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding.

Concluding the interfaith dialogue, the EPP President, **Wilfried MARTENS**, announced that the EPP will support the launching of a European charter for interfaith dialogue aiming to set up a European platform for this dialogue: *"We see in society a revival of religions and of religious identity. It will be important to connect in an intelligent way, identity and openness to each other at the moment that there is a call for a stronger affirmation of the own identity of all religions."*

"Tensions that rise in a lot of towns and regions between different populations with people of different faiths often occur because of a lack of knowledge and information on each other. More than ever we have to invest in dialogue between religions and cultures on all levels. It is a challenging exercise. An interfaith dialogue has chances to be successful, only if the participants consider each other as equal. It is of outmost importance that all participants express their points of view in a climate of trust and confidence."

President Wilfried MARTENS echoed the initiative of the EPP/CoR Group at the Summit of the EPP leaders meeting in Berlin taking place before the extraordinary European Summit on the 25th March.

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