



PRESS RELEASE

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CEJI – *A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe*
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European Conference Celebrates Local Jewish-Muslim Dialogue Initiatives

Brussels, 10 April 2007 – While relations between Jewish and Muslim communities have been greatly affected by the volatile political situation of recent years, there are many successful Jewish-Muslim dialogue initiatives taking place in local communities. An upcoming three-day conference will celebrate these initiatives and provide an opportunity to share experiences and good practice for Jewish and Muslim participants from five European countries.

Organised by Brussels-based Jewish anti-racism organisation CEJI with guidance from a Jewish-Muslim Steering Group, the European Conference on Jewish-Muslim Dialogue welcomes fifty Jews and Muslims from Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK and France who are involved in or interested in dialogue at a community level. The conference, which will take place in Brussels from 15 – 17 April, aims to promote dialogue, co-operation and partnership between Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe. During the event there will be an exchange of experiences and best practice with a view to stimulating, strengthening and encouraging new actions at a local level and facilitating understanding of Jewish and Muslim values. The conference also hopes to raise public awareness of these initiatives.

Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid, Chairman of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK and the National Association of British Pakistanis and Conference Steering Group member states of the initiative: 'The European Conference comes at a crucial time in Jewish-Muslim relations. In bringing together people working to increase religious harmony and tolerance within their own communities, it provides a much-needed focus on their achievements and is an important step towards tackling animosity and misunderstanding between Jews and Muslims.'

As CEJI Director Robin Sclafani explains, Jewish-Muslim dialogue initiatives are valuable not only for creating respect and understanding between communities but also as 'a source of inspiration for intercultural relations as a whole and a demonstration of solidarity in the fight against all forms of racism'.

The conference will see the release of 'mapping reports' compiling information on partnerships, initiatives and best practice in the field of Jewish-Muslim dialogue in Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK and France. It will also include a panel discussion on 'Maximising the Potential of

Jewish-Muslim dialogue' and a number of workshops for participants. Topics will include the influence of the Middle East conflict and the peace movement on Jewish-Muslim dialogue, the role of the media, the contribution of national religious leadership, women's role in dialogue and the promotion of dialogue in education. Participants will also have the opportunity to take part in 'Dialogue in the Dark', an interactive exhibition in which small groups explore a range of activities in the dark, led by blind guides.

Speakers will include Rabbi Michel Serfaty (Founder & President of Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France), Dutch Member of Parliament Samira Bouchibti, European Commission Culture, Communication & Multilingualism Director Vladimir Sucha, *De Standaard* diplomatic editor Baroness Mia Doornaert, Dr Richard Stone (Founder & President of Alif-Aleph UK), Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet (former Principal of Leo Baeck College London), Halima Krausen (Founder & Director of the Initiative for Islamic Studies, Hamburg) and Ronny Naftaniel (Director of the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel and CEJI Executive Vice-Chairman). Kenza Braïga and Olivia Cattan, authors of *Deux femmes en colère*, will be speaking at the Gala Dinner on Monday night. Guests will also enjoy a performance by Anwar Abudragh and Anja Naucler who use cello, voice, luth and Arab violin to creating a musical soundscape which, while overcoming traditional cultural boundaries, retains a strong basis in Arab culture.

Notes for editors:

- 'Dialogue in the Dark' is an interactive and dynamic exhibition involving a visit to a specially-constructed darkened room. Led by blind guides, small groups explore a range of activities in the dark. The exhibition has toured internationally and has welcomed over 5 million visitors. More information can be found at www.dialog-im-dunkeln.de
- *Deux femmes en colère – juive ou musulmane, citoyennes et libres* was written by Olivia Cattan and Kenza Braïga. Published in 2006, the book takes the form of a dialogue between the two authors, one Jewish, the other Muslim. For more information: www.evene.fr/livres/livre/kenza-braiga-et-olivia-cattan-deux-femmes-en-colere-19174.php.
- Launched in late 2005, CEJI's Jewish-Muslim Dialogue initiative is supported by the Ford Foundation and received co-financing from the European Commission. Further information can be found at www.ceji.org/dialogue.

About CEJI:

CEJI – *A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe* stands with individuals and organisations of all religions, cultures and backgrounds to promote a diverse and inclusive Europe. CEJI works to combat prejudice and discrimination and to promote social cohesion through training and education, dialogue initiatives and advocacy at a European level.

For additional information or to arrange an interview please contact:

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