



FCAPP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

A Fragmented World in Search of Spirituality: Freedom and Pluralism from Within the Social Doctrine of the Church

29 May 2026 – New Synod Hall, Vatican City

Parallel Session 2 - Report

PS 2. Peacebuilding in Europe: Political Integration as a Way to Peace

Keynote Speakers: **H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata** (President COMECE), **Gen. CA Salvatore Cuoci** (Italian Army).

Organizer: **Christophe Deage** (FCAPP Luxemburg Chapter).

Speakers: **Sergio Arzeni** (INSME, European League for Economic Cooperation), **Paolo Cancelli** (Professor, Antonianum Pontifical University, Rome), **Francesco Clementi** (Law Professor, University La Sapienza, Rome), **Michele Coduri** (former Swiss Diplomat, Rome), **Ody-Marc Duclos** (Fondation Coeur Vert, Abidjan, Ivory Coast), **Jean-Pierre Darnis** (Professor, Université Côte d'Azur, Nice), **Alessandro Politi** (FCAPP Luxembourg Chapter), **Silke Schmitt** (Director, Hans Seidel Foundation, Rome), **Alessandro Simoneschi** (FCAPP Lugano Chapter), **Umberto Triulzi** (University La Sapienza, Rome), **Fr. Oleh Zymak CSsR** (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Redemptorist priest, Kiev, Ukraine).

Executive Summary

This session explored the contribution of European political integration to peacebuilding in an increasingly fragmented world marked by geopolitical tensions, social polarization, technological disruption and weakening multilateralism. Participants affirmed that peace cannot be reduced to the absence of war but must be understood as a multidimensional process rooted in human dignity, justice, solidarity, dialogue, responsibility and the common good.

The discussions highlighted that the European project, born from the determination to prevent future wars, remains a unique model of reconciliation and cooperation. Faced with renewed instability, stronger European unity was identified as essential for preserving peace, safeguarding democratic freedoms and protecting national identities through solidarity and



subsidiarity. At the same time, participants emphasized that lasting peace requires both dialogue and credible security capabilities, recognizing that peace and security are complementary rather than opposing objectives.

A central conclusion of the session was that human dignity constitutes the indispensable foundation of peace. Authentic freedom, understood in relation to responsibility, truth and solidarity, must guide political, economic and social choices. Dialogue, trust, civic participation and multilateral cooperation were recognized as strategic resources for overcoming fragmentation and polarization.

Drawing on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, participants reaffirmed the importance of promoting integral human development, social cohesion, ecological responsibility and a culture of encounter. Ultimately, the session concluded that Europe's future capacity to build peace will depend on its ability to combine political integration, strategic foresight and security with a renewed commitment to human dignity, the common good and a civilization of peace grounded in solidarity and hope.

SESSION OUTCOME REPORT

Introduction

Within the framework of the 2026 FCAPP International Conference dedicated to the theme “A Fragmented World in Search of Spirituality: Freedom and Pluralism through the Social Doctrine of the Church”, **Parallel Session 2 explored the contribution of European political integration to peacebuilding in an increasingly fragmented world marked by geopolitical tensions, social polarization, technological disruption and weakening multilateralism.**

Bringing together academics, diplomats, military experts, representatives of civil society, development practitioners and Church-related institutions, the session examined peace not merely as the absence of war, but as a multidimensional reality rooted in human dignity, justice, solidarity, dialogue, participation and shared responsibility.

The discussions reflected both the concerns expressed in the Conference Concept Note and the appeal later formulated by Pope Leo XIV to respond to today's fragmentation through a renewed commitment to human dignity, authentic freedom, dialogue and the common good.

The session also sought to continue the reflections initiated during the European Conference held in Luxembourg in January 2026 on “Peace Building in Europe: What Role for Catholic Social Thought and Universal Values?”. Participants approached the question of peace through a broad and interdisciplinary lens, recognising **the interconnected nature of contemporary challenges: geopolitical instability, migration, technological transformation, social fragmentation, weakening trust and the erosion of multilateral frameworks.**



In this spirit, **peace was understood not only as a political objective but also as a human, relational and spiritual process requiring shared discernment, dialogue and responsibility.**

The **keynote addresses delivered by H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata and Lieutenant- General Salvatore Cuoci** provided a particularly valuable framework for the discussions. Together, they highlighted **two inseparable dimensions of peacebuilding: the need for stronger European unity and the responsibility to ensure the security conditions necessary for peace to endure.**

The contributions of the speakers converged around a common conviction: **peace cannot be sustained solely through institutions, economic arrangements or military balances. It ultimately depends upon the quality of relationships among persons, communities and nations, and upon the capacity of societies to cultivate trust, solidarity, justice and hope.**

EUROPE'S VOCATION: UNITY IN THE SERVICE OF PEACE

In his keynote address, H.Exc. Mgr. Mariano Crociata, President of COMECE, provided the overarching framework for the session's reflections.

Recalling the origins of the European project, H. Exc. emphasized that European integration emerged from the devastation of the Second World War and from the shared determination to make future wars impossible. The pursuit of peace generated a process of cooperation and unity that progressively transformed former enemies into partners and laid the foundations for decades of stability and prosperity.

Mgr. Crociata observed, however, that the unprecedented period of peace experienced by Europe has also created a dangerous illusion: the belief that war could no longer return to the continent. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shattered this assumption and revealed the insufficient level of political unity achieved by the European Union.

According to the analysis of H. Exc., Europe now faces a paradoxical situation. At the very moment when greater cohesion is required to respond to geopolitical instability, economic uncertainty and the weakening of multilateralism, centrifugal forces, national particularisms and populist movements increasingly challenge the pursuit of a common European vision.

Mgr. Crociata stressed that **no European nation, acting alone, possesses the capacity to address the challenges of the current international environment. Genuine sovereignty and the protection of national identities can only be secured through stronger European unity, inspired by the founding principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and the motto United in Diversity.**



The intervention of His Exc. highlighted that political integration should not be understood as a limitation of national identities but rather as the most effective means of protecting them. In this perspective, the development of a stronger common foreign and security policy appears not only desirable but increasingly necessary.

Finally, Mgr. Crociata reaffirmed the unique contribution of the Church in promoting peace through justice, truth, dialogue and reconciliation. He concluded that the twin objectives of unity and peace remain inseparable and continue to define Europe's historical vocation.

SECURITY, DEFENCE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESERVE PEACE

The reflections introduced by **Lieutenant-General Salvatore Cuoci** brought an important complementary perspective to the discussions.

While military institutions are often associated with the conduct of war, it was recalled that soldiers are among those most directly confronted with its human, social and political consequences. For this very reason, they are also among those who most profoundly desire the preservation of peace.

The discussions highlighted that **peace** cannot be reduced to goodwill alone. It also **requires the capacity to protect populations, preserve stability and deter aggression**. In a strategic environment marked by the return of high-intensity conflict on the European continent, peace and security increasingly depend on credible defence capabilities and effective collective security arrangements.

Participants underlined that strengthening European defence should not be interpreted as a militarisation of Europe, but rather as a necessary condition for preserving peace, protecting democratic freedoms and safeguarding the sovereignty of European nations.

Participants also stressed the importance of anticipating future crises rather than merely reacting to them. **Building resilience in the fields of security, energy, food systems, information integrity and civil preparedness emerged as an important component of responsible governance and peace preservation**. Societies capable of foresight and preparedness are better equipped to protect both human dignity and social cohesion in times of uncertainty.

In this perspective, a stronger European pillar within the transatlantic alliance, enhanced cooperation among Member States, improved interoperability and greater strategic coordination appear essential to ensuring that Europe remains capable of preventing conflict while maintaining its commitment to peace, dialogue and international law.



The discussion also addressed the progressive erosion of the cooperative security architecture that contributed to stability in Europe in the decades following the end of the Cold War. Participants observed that this framework was sustained not only by institutions and agreements, but also by a sufficient degree of shared values, mutual trust and confidence-building measures.

The war in Ukraine has revealed the fragility of these foundations and raised fundamental questions about how a stable security order can be rebuilt when trust has deteriorated, values are increasingly interpreted differently, and some actors challenge both integration and cooperative approaches to security.

Against this backdrop, participants underscored the importance of restoring dialogue, rebuilding confidence and renewing a common understanding of the principles and values that have historically underpinned peace and stability in Europe. They emphasised that **sustainable security cannot be achieved solely through deterrence, but also requires political engagement, mutual understanding and a willingness to maintain channels of communication even in periods of profound disagreement.**

The session therefore reaffirmed that peace and security are not opposing objectives. On the contrary, a just and lasting peace requires both the willingness to pursue dialogue and the capacity to ensure collective security. Far from being competing approaches, dialogue and security constitute mutually reinforcing dimensions of a stable, resilient and peaceful European order.

HUMAN DIGNITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF PEACE

A central outcome of the discussions was the reaffirmation that the dignity of every human person constitutes the indispensable foundation of any lasting peace.

Participants repeatedly stressed that **peace cannot be built solely through balances of power, economic interests or legal arrangements. It requires the recognition of the intrinsic worth of every person and the creation of social, political and economic conditions that allow human flourishing.**

Particular attention was given to the concept of ontological dignity and to the vision of **Europe as a “symphony of diversities”**, where unity is achieved not through uniformity but through the harmonious coexistence of different cultures, traditions, languages and identities.

Europe’s strength lies precisely in its capacity to reconcile diversity with unity and freedom with solidarity.



The session also highlighted the remarkable capacity of individuals and communities to **transform adversity into opportunities for growth, solidarity and hope**. Human dignity remains present even in situations of vulnerability, disability, displacement or conflict.

This understanding reflects a central insight of Catholic Social Teaching: unity does not require the suppression of diversity, and diversity need not generate division when rooted in a shared recognition of human dignity.

FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY AND THE COMMON GOOD

The session strongly echoed the message later articulated by Pope Leo XIV regarding the authentic meaning of freedom.

Participants emphasized that freedom cannot be reduced to individual autonomy or the unrestricted pursuit of personal interests. Authentic freedom reaches its fulfilment through responsibility, solidarity, self-giving and openness to others.

The current crisis affecting many democratic societies was frequently described as a crisis of meaning and belonging, resulting from an understanding of freedom detached from truth, responsibility and the common good.

Several speakers highlighted the need for renewed discernment in a world saturated with information, technological acceleration and competing narratives. Beyond technical expertise, societies require the wisdom to distinguish short-term interests from long-term responsibilities and to orient political choices toward the common good.

Echoing reflections previously developed within FCAPP and notably those raised by H. Em. Msr. Jean-Claude Cardinal Hollerich, participants also examined **the growing tensions between freedom and truth in contemporary societies**. The acceleration of technological change, the expansion of digital ecosystems and the multiplication of competing narratives challenge both individual judgement and democratic deliberation. In such a context, **discernment becomes an essential civic and spiritual virtue, enabling persons and communities to orient freedom towards truth, responsibility and the common good**.

Political integration therefore cannot be understood merely as a technical or administrative process. It must remain a human and ethical project capable of fostering civic participation, social responsibility and a renewed sense of belonging.

In this perspective, freedom and solidarity are not opposing principles but complementary dimensions of human flourishing.



DIALOGUE AND TRUST AS STRATEGIC RESOURCES FOR PEACE

A recurring theme throughout the session was the central importance of dialogue and trust.

Participants observed that contemporary conflicts often destroy not only infrastructures and economies but also the trust necessary for peaceful coexistence. Rebuilding trust between peoples, institutions and communities therefore becomes an essential dimension of peacebuilding.

Several speakers observed that the weakening of multilateralism and the growing polarization of public debate constitute major obstacles to peaceful coexistence. **Rebuilding trust therefore requires not only institutional reforms but also renewed spaces for encounter, listening and shared reflection among citizens, cultures, religions and nations.**

The European experience demonstrates that dialogue is not a sign of weakness but a strategic instrument for overcoming conflict and preserving peace.

Particular **emphasis was placed on the role of education, cultural exchanges, civil society, academic cooperation and interreligious dialogue** as means of strengthening social cohesion and fostering mutual understanding.

The session reaffirmed that peace requires not only agreements between governments but also a culture of encounter capable of sustaining relationships across political, cultural and ideological differences.

INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Participants also highlighted the economic, social and ecological dimensions of peace. Social cohesion, inclusion, meaningful work, intergenerational solidarity and **the promotion of a spirit of service** were identified as essential conditions for peaceful and resilient societies.

The contribution from the Green Heart Foundation, illustrated how ecological action can become a powerful instrument of peacebuilding. Through reforestation projects linked to the Great Green Wall initiative, thousands of young people from Africa, Europe and beyond have worked together in regions affected by poverty, environmental degradation and social tensions. **Beyond environmental restoration, these initiatives foster intercultural dialogue, mutual trust, civic responsibility and a lived experience of solidarity across national, cultural and religious boundaries.**

Participants emphasized that common environmental projects can strengthen local communities, promote social cohesion and help transform relationships marked by division into relationships of cooperation.



By working together for a shared objective, communities develop greater resilience, a stronger sense of responsibility and a deeper awareness of their common destiny.

The discussions also highlighted the close links between environmental degradation, food insecurity, migration and social instability. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires cooperation, solidarity and a commitment to the common good.

These reflections echoed the vision of integral human development promoted by Catholic Social Teaching, in which human dignity, social justice, economic inclusion, environmental responsibility and peace are inseparably linked. Caring for our common home was therefore presented not only as an ecological imperative but also as a concrete pathway toward reconciliation, solidarity and lasting peace among peoples.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Throughout the session, Catholic Social Teaching emerged as a coherent framework for addressing the challenges of a fragmented world. Grounded in the principles of **human dignity, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity**, and expressed through **participation and shared responsibility**, it offers practical guidance for political action, economic development, social cohesion and international cooperation.

Participants agreed that Catholic Social Teaching remains particularly relevant in a context marked by polarization, weakening multilateralism and growing uncertainty about the future.

Far from proposing ideological solutions, it offers a vision centred on the human person and oriented towards dialogue, justice and peace.

TOWARD A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

In continuity with the reflections proposed by Pope Leo XIV and the social teaching of Saint John Paul II, the session highlighted the need to move **beyond conflict management toward the construction of a genuine civilization of love**.

Peace cannot be secured solely through institutions, regulations or security arrangements. It also depends upon countless acts of responsibility, solidarity, service and fidelity to the dignity of every human person.

The discussions repeatedly showed that lasting peace is sustained by countless acts of service, generosity and commitment to others. A culture of peace grows whenever individuals place their talents and responsibilities at the service of the wider community.



The synodal method of “Conversation in the Spirit”, which inspired the format of the session itself, illustrated the importance of attentive listening, mutual respect and shared discernment in addressing complex challenges.

Participants recognized that peacebuilding requires not only technical solutions but also **processes capable of generating trust, understanding and collective wisdom.**

Against the forces of fragmentation, indifference and polarization, participants emphasized the importance of cultivating a culture of encounter, mutual respect and shared responsibility.

The construction of peace therefore begins not only in institutions but also in consciences, communities and everyday relationships.

KEY OUTCOMES

1. European political integration was born from the pursuit of peace and remains the most credible framework for preserving peace, sovereignty and stability in Europe today.
2. Stronger European unity is necessary to address current geopolitical, economic and security challenges while safeguarding national identities through solidarity and subsidiarity.
3. Peace and security are complementary objectives. A just and lasting peace requires both dialogue and credible capacities for collective security, resilience and preparedness.
4. Many contemporary conflicts reveal a deeper anthropological and cultural crisis rooted in the weakening of social bonds, shared values, trust and the recognition of human dignity.
5. Human dignity constitutes the indispensable foundation of peace, democracy, freedom and social cohesion.
6. Authentic freedom is fulfilled through responsibility, solidarity and openness to others, rather than through individualism and self-interest.
7. Dialogue, trust, participation and multilateral cooperation are strategic resources for peace and indispensable conditions for overcoming fragmentation and polarization.
8. Integral human development, ecological responsibility and a spirit of service contribute to social cohesion, strengthen communities and support a culture of peace.
9. The universal principles embodied in Catholic Social Teaching provide a valuable framework for promoting integral human development, strengthening the common good and fostering a civilization of love.



CONCLUSION

The discussions confirmed that peacebuilding in Europe cannot be reduced to institutional arrangements, economic integration or security policies alone.

The European project remains credible and sustainable only insofar as it continues to be rooted in the dignity of the human person, the pursuit of the common good, and the cultivation of trust, solidarity and dialogue.

Participants repeatedly emphasized that **the current geopolitical, social and cultural challenges facing Europe are interconnected and require responses that are at once political, economic, social, ethical and spiritual**. The weakening of multilateralism, the rise of polarization, the acceleration of technological transformations and the return of war on the European continent all call for renewed forms of cooperation, discernment and responsibility.

Ultimately, the participants affirmed that the preservation of peace requires not only strong institutions and sound policies, but also a culture of responsibility, preparedness, solidarity and hope. **The future of Europe will depend on its ability to unite strategic foresight with moral wisdom, technological innovation with ethical discernment, and political action with a renewed commitment to the dignity of every human person and the preservation of our environment.**

The discussions repeatedly demonstrated that peace cannot be reduced to the absence of conflict. It is the fruit of justice, responsibility, truth, dialogue, solidarity and love lived in relationships, institutions and societies.

In a fragmented world searching for meaning, Europe remains called to cultivate unity in diversity, strengthen trust among peoples, and contribute to a civilization founded on human dignity, freedom rightly understood, and the sustainable common good.

Rapporteur: Christophe Déage
