

FEDERATION OF ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA
(FEZANA)

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Zoroastrians Participate in the United Nations NGO Conference

August 28, 2003, New York - North America's Zoroastrian religious community, poised for international celebrations of the "3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture," will send a delegation to the United Nations' Fifty-sixth Annual Conference For Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Zoroastrian culture has historically embraced the promotion of social justice and peace. As such, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) will send eleven representatives to the NGO conference, "**Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations**". Taking place at the UN in New York City **from September 8 - 10, 2003**, the conference explores diverse sources of human security, focusing on policies and programmes that emphasize economic and social development, human rights and environmental protection. The UN's foremost annual NGO event, in 2002, the NGO conference drew 2,000 people from 70 countries, representing 760 NGOs. FEZANA's participation at the conference for the second consecutive year marks a new frontier for the Zoroastrian community as it pursues Zoroastrian philanthropic and social traditions in a global arena. The FEZANA delegation seeks to further UN humanitarian initiatives and forge ties with other NGOs, in order to strengthen the organization's continuing commitment to promoting peace, social justice and dignity for all communities. Their objective is to also learn how to translate the individual achievements of Zoroastrians, in the promotion of human security and dignity, into more systematic and unified efforts by the organization and the larger Zoroastrian community.

About FEZANA: FEZANA, the umbrella organization for North American Zoroastrian associations, has been a registered non-profit, religious and charitable organization since 1987. It is dedicated to the task of promoting the study, understanding and practice of the Zoroastrian faith and the welfare of its followers. It also coordinates programs promoting public awareness of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism (also known as the *Zarathushti* religion or *Zarathushtrianism*) is acknowledged as one of the world's oldest surviving monotheistic religions. Once the state religion of the ancient Persian empires (including modern-day Iran), Zoroastrianism embraces the worship of one God (*Ahura Mazda*) and is based on the revelations and teachings of the prophet Zoroaster (*Zarathushtra*) (circa 1400 B.C.E). The Zoroastrian faith calls upon its followers to pursue an ethical life through a three-fold path of "Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds". The Zoroastrian community primarily encompasses those of South Asian background (known as "Parsis"), and those of Iranian origin. In the past half-century, Zoroastrians have emigrated around the world, but the largest concentrations of Zoroastrians remain in Iran and India.

Celebrations to Mark the 3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture: Recently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated 2003 as the "3000th Anniversary of Zoroastrian Culture". This celebration was initiated by the nation of Tajikistan to honour Zoroastrianism as their ancestral religion. Zoroastrian communities worldwide (coordinated in North America by FEZANA) are planning celebrations marking this milestone anniversary. Some planned events commemorating Zoroastrian heritage and culture include conferences in Tajikistan, a Zoroastrian cultural exhibition in Mumbai, India, and a music festival in Vancouver, Canada.

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For additional fact sheets regarding the above information and for profiles of the FEZANA delegation, please contact Homi D. Gandhi as noted above.