

Ruder Finn and the Global Compact, 2004

Ruder Finn has a deep commitment to peace-building in areas of conflict and post-conflict and believes that business can be a strong force for positive exchange between communities where there has been tension. Ruder Finn also strongly supports efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and, as the only large public relations agency that is majority owned by women, has long encouraged the achievement of MDG 3, leadership opportunities for women. For these reasons, Ruder Finn supported a peace-building conference in the Middle East between Israeli and Palestinian women called “Toward Justice and Reconciliation.”

“Toward Justice and Reconciliation,” took place at the Dead Sea in Jordan in December 2004. It brought together 240 women -- Israeli, Palestinian, and members of the international community -- from the fields of government, business, the media, education, religion, and the NGO community. The premise of the conference was that women have a special role to play in healing and bringing about reconciliation between the two communities. The conference was the result of nearly 3 years of dialogue between the two groups. The initiative, which was launched in Oslo, Norway at the Nobel Peace Academy in 2002, was designed to mobilize women to take greater leadership in opening dialogue and building understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. Launched at the height of the intifada, it took great courage from both sides to break ranks with their communities and take steps to reach out to the “other.” Ruder Finn was instrumental in organizing the initiative and provided logistical support.

The outcome of the conference was the agreement to initiate a process of reconciliation by matching Israeli and Palestinian women and to provide these teams with reconciliation training. The goal is to train many sets of reconciliation leaders who would become active in the community, building dialogue at the grassroots level. A follow-up conference is planned for Gaza in 2006 to assess the process. A second outcome is the agreement to provide a special focus on young Israelis and Palestinians – people between the ages of 20 and 30 – and to organize a special forum where a network of young peace-builders could be cultivated. Ruder Finn will support both of these efforts.

The concept behind this initiative is that civil society must play a greater role in building collaboration between conflicting parties. Business, which provides common benefit, can be a unifying factor, having as its goal the economic wellbeing of both communities. Therefore, business should not only stimulate economic activity in such regions, but should also take the lead in bringing people together around shared objectives. Involvement in the “Toward Justice and Reconciliation” conference has confirmed for Ruder Finn the positive impact it can have by implementing the concepts of social responsibility and good global citizenship.