Woolf Institute Statement on the Death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

It is with great sadness that the Woolf Institute learned today of the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

Prince Philip took a personal interest in the relationship between the Abrahamic Faiths, by establishing The Interfaith Foundation and hosting numerous interfaith events, illustrated by this photograph of a meeting in the late 1990s at St George’s, Windsor. The Duke was always keen to foster dialogue between religions, especially among Jews, Christians and Muslims.

HRH also expressed interest in the work of the Woolf Institute, epitomised by the number of letters, which Dr Ed Kessler, founder of the Woolf Institute, received from him over many years, expressing support for its work, as well as his willingness to invite Dr Kessler to speak at St George’s.

Two highlights stand out: firstly, attending and speaking on interfaith dialogue at a major Woolf Institute gathering at the Middle Temple in 2001 and secondly initiating the Interfaith Declaration: a Code of Ethics on International Business for Christians, Muslims and Jews.

Ed Kessler tells of a discussion he had with Prince Philip about the meaning and limits of empathy during a talk by Prof Peter Lipton at a Woolf Institute event. “HRH”, Ed recounts, “recognised the need to understand the ‘other’, the importance of which Peter emphasised
but the Duke was also immoveable if, in his opinion, the ‘other’ crossed certain lines. Prince Philip enjoyed debating what was acceptable and unacceptable as well as challenging the views of one and all. I will remember with fondness all these conversations.”

Lord Woolf said “HRH the Duke of Edinburgh was a remarkable man, deeply committed to fostering better understanding between religions, which is what the Woolf Institute seeks to achieve. We were grateful to regularly receive his notes of encouragement and will miss him. We send our condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and all the Royal Family.”

Shabir Randeree, Chair of the Woolf Institute board of Trustees said “We will remember fondly the Duke’s candour and steadfast support. We mourn his loss along with the country.”