

Taj Hamad, UPF Director of UN Relations and the Chairman of WANGO at UTS

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The third and last of the semester's Guest Lecture series was held on Wednesday, April 26 at the 4W43rd Street campus of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) in Manhattan.

Dr. Taj Hamad, Director of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Office of United Nations Relations and the Chairman of WANGO (World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations), spoke to a roomful of students and guests about the purpose, value and recent proliferation of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in the

world today.

Since he first began working with the United Nations (UN) 21 years ago, Dr. Hamad has witnessed the extraordinary growth and impact NGOs have had all around the world in helping solve such problems as hunger, disease, terrorism and human trafficking.

"NGOs have become a powerhouse in the past 10 years," said Dr. Hamad. "The former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzi, once said that his country had been invaded by three different groups: the Russians, the Taliban and the NGOs."

When the laughter in the room had subsided, Dr. Hamad dazzled the group with a series of numbers that very few, if any, expected to hear. He said there were now more than 3.7 million NGOs active in the world today, with more starting up every day. On the national level there are more than 2 million in India and more than a million in the United States, while half of all existing NGOs in Europe were created in the past decade. Interestingly, Dr. Hamad pointed out, there are only about 5,000 NGOs officially affiliated with the UN.

"The value of NGOs," explained Dr. Hamad, "is that they see a need and they take responsibility. The other value they have - and this is very important - are not established by governments, which makes them more independent. Nevertheless, they do the work that governments are unable to do." Another reason, however, is simply that people place a great deal more trust in NGOs than their own government, especially when it comes to environmental, human rights and health issues. Generally, and simply, NGOs serve people "with a heart of a parent and a shoes of a servant" beyond and across all boundries of religion, race, ethnicity and nationality.

He was also quick to point out that a large number of phony and disreputable NGOs have sprung up, making it harder for the honest NGO to raise the necessary funds needed to continue and expand their work. He introduced the room to some of those NGOs:

A screenshot of the WANGO website. The header features the WANGO logo and a navigation menu with items: About WANGO, Join WANGO, Activities, Awards, Code of Ethics, NGO Resources, Publications, and NGO Handbook. The main content area is titled "Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs" and includes a table of contents on the left with sections: Preface, I. Guiding Principles, II. NGO Integrity, III. Mission and Activities, IV. Governance, and V. Human Resources. On the right, there is a section for "Supporters of the Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs" listing the "Romanian Roma Youth and Students Association" with details: Country: Romania, City: Iasi, and Web site: http://. Below this, there are links: "Click here to view complete list of supporters" and "Add your organization, click here".

BRINGO (Briefcase NGOs), BONGO (Business oriented NGOs), PONGO (Political oriented NGOs) and more.

NGOs also work hard to limit their expenses, and rely on volunteers for much of their work, allowing for the greatest amount of money to be targeted for its intended purpose. Depending on the organization, anywhere from 4% to 37% is allocated for expenses; according to Dr. Hamad, WANGO's estimates that for NGOs overhead is approximately 20% of their overall budget.

Dr. Hamad explained the purpose of WANGO:

“The World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations is a global organization whose mission is to serve its member organizations, strengthen and encourage the non-governmental sector as a whole, increase public understanding of the non-governmental community, and provide the mechanism and support needed for NGOs to connect, partner, and multiply their contributions to solve humanity's basic problems.”

One of WANGO's defining projects which started back in 2004 has been Play Soccer Make Peace, a program that gives support and impetus to NGOs dedicated to serving and uplifting their community with the goal of encouraging, developing and training youth soccer players.

Dr. Hamad spoke about the similarities that NGOs share with soccer. The first of these is teamwork. In order to win a soccer game, the players need to cooperate together as a team. In order for an NGO to work successfully, the members need teamwork within their organization, and need to work harmoniously with others in their community.

A second is fair play. The highest ideal in sports is to play fair. The same element is necessary for an NGO to operate in an ethical manner in order to be trusted and to establish peace and justice within the society.

Endurance is a third similarity between soccer and NGOs. In order to play well, soccer players need endurance, perseverance, and the spirit to never give up.



Play Soccer Make Peace emphasized adherence to ethical principles and codes of behavior in order to help guide the players, build cooperation within the team and encourage respect between the teams. Dr. Hamad encouraged the audience to discover more about the latest developments in the soccer initiative by contacting PEACE CLUB and learning of their 2017 activities.

Interestingly, Dr. Hamad also spoke of another valuable WANGO initiative, the Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs which was launched in its final version in March, 2005. The Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs is a set of fundamental principles and operational principles and standards

developed by the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO) to help guide nonprofit and non-governmental organizations worldwide to ethically and transparently govern their operations. The need for universal principles and values is paramount to help solve the problems facing the world, especially as the UN works toward the fulfillment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) by 2030.

The work of the UN cannot be done alone. The UN widely uses NGOs to implement its plans and projects. Dr. Hamad emphasized that the NGOs are a vital part of a team approach to answering the pervasive problems which face the world: the partnership of NGOs, businesses and governments. NGOs are often on-the-ground undertaking the implementation of programs and projects, but they need the financial and moral support of the other two groups.