



## Celebration of UN International Day of Families

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*By Dolores Read*

The family is a union woven together through love, companionship, kindness, compassion and support” – these words eloquently spoken by Dr Zohra Zaidi perfectly articulated why we should celebrate the family in a special commemoration of the UN International Day of Families. Nearly 50 participants gathered at the Peace Embassy, Thornton Heath, London on 20 May 2023 to join an event co-hosted by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP). The two featured speakers, Dr Zaidi and Dr Nicola Bailey, offered their deep insights on the importance of key values that enable families to thrive and prosper amid the modern challenges of materialism and all-pervasive technology that impact so many areas of our lives.

Dr Bailey stated that our jobs as parents are about providing opportunities for our children to grow and learn so that they become confident, well-rounded, sociable individuals making healthy, happy relationships with others, and to do that they need connectedness, empathy and self-confidence. The vast amounts of time spent on-screen threatens the balance versus face-to-face and physical contact which is needed for children to develop these qualities. She posed a series of questions related to the degrees of on-screen time, face-to-face interaction with friends, engagement with other hobbies, and time spent with family that can be used to evaluate whether this balance should be adjusted for individual families.

Dr Zaidi emphasized that the foundation for family life should be respect, love and care between husband and wife, and that they should navigate the ups and downs as if riding the waves of the sea. Patience, compromise and

self-sacrifice are vital in achieving harmony and setting a good example for children. She warned against the prevalence of materialistic values, saying that such a way of life will “not take you to heaven”, and asserted that the nuclear family should be the central institution that can bring all nations together in peace.

The participants had the chance to break into small discussion groups and reflect on the themes of the talks given by the speakers, addressing topics including bridging the divide between the older and younger generations, and managing the impact of technology on communication within the family. The group leaders summarized the contributions from their members in short reports, especially highlighting the importance of celebrating special occasions together, open and honest communication within a framework of mutual respect, making each family member feel valued, and passing on wisdom down through the generations.

Several awards were presented to individuals for their dedicated and selfless efforts in various fields. Ambassador for Peace awards were presented by Lance Gardiner (UPF South London coordinator) to Sally Becker for her humanitarian work in helping to save the lives of children in numerous conflicts, and to Tony Rucinski for his active efforts with the Coalition for Marriage organisation. Dolores Read (WFWP South London chairperson) recognised Frederick Clarke for his work with Mighty Men of Valour with a special Appreciation Award in commemoration of the 31st Anniversary of the Women’s Federation’s founding.

The programme was very ably coordinated by the Master of Ceremonies, Adrian Lee, who introduced the background behind the UN day and the official 2023 theme of “Demographic Trends and the Family” designated by the United Nations. An architect by profession, he noted that multi-generational living is a positive trend that provides significant opportunities for

UK house builders. He closed the proceedings by dedicating a toast in celebration of the family as the school of love and cornerstone of peace in our communities, nations and world. After the formal programme concluded, the participants heartily enjoyed each other’s company with sandwiches and refreshments.

