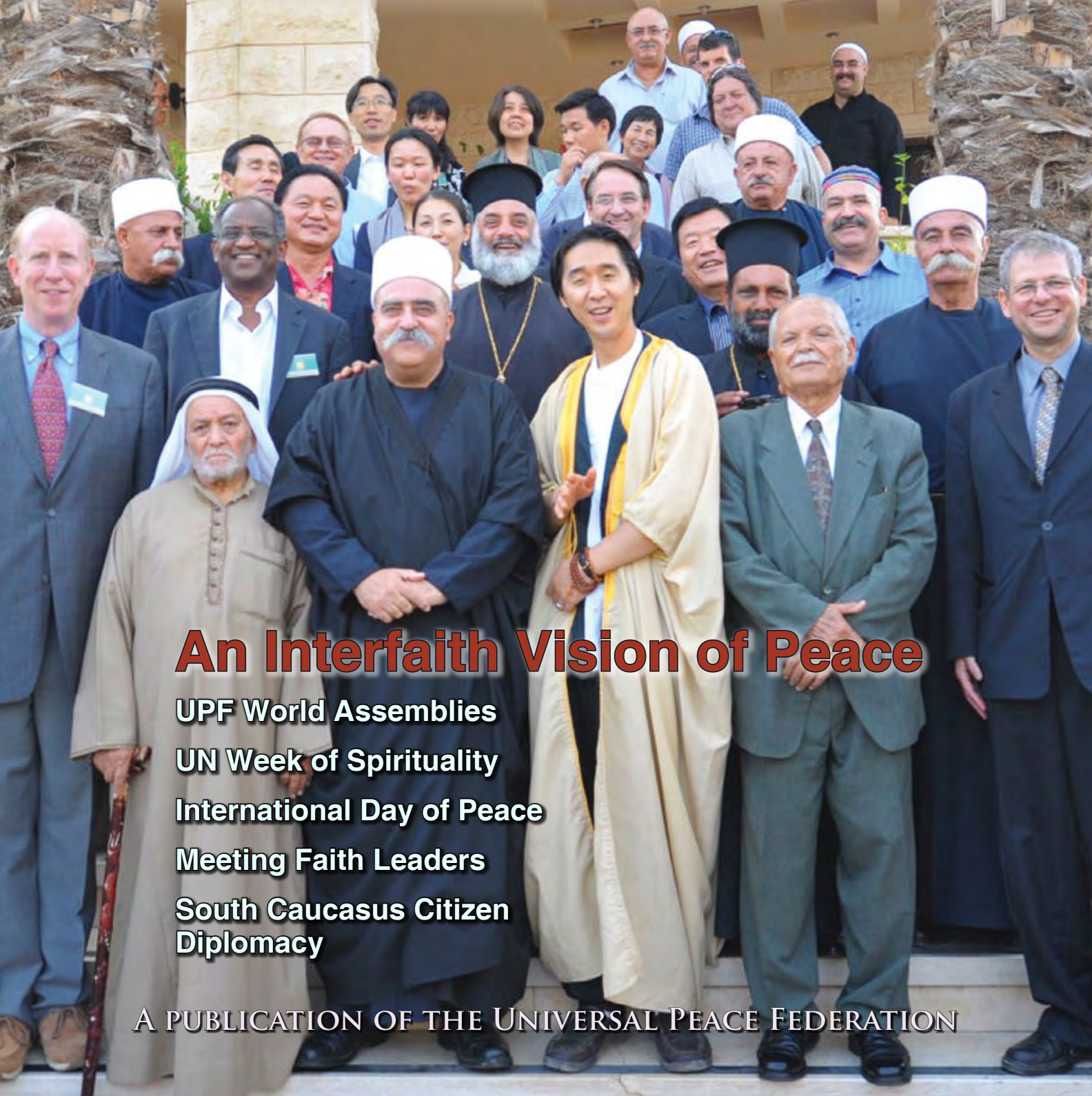


FEBRUARY 2011

UPF TODAY

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PEACE



An Interfaith Vision of Peace

UPF World Assemblies

UN Week of Spirituality

International Day of Peace

Meeting Faith Leaders

**South Caucasus Citizen
Diplomacy**

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Looking back on 2010, I feel that it has been a year of great development and progress for the Universal Peace Federation. More than 80 nations sent reports of activities and programs, and more than 150 chapters have their own page on the UPF website, www.upf.org.

Fifty of our chapters celebrated the United Nations International Day of Peace, expanding on the vision that there be at least one day in the year when conflicts can be set aside and dialogue and action for peace can take their place. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the UN Communications offices.

In this issue of *UPF Today* we also catch up on the work of UPF volunteers in Cap-Haitien and Cache Cache Douge, Haiti, working to ameliorate the impact of the disastrous earthquake in January which left much of the country in ruins. UPF chapters and Ambassadors for Peace also raised funds for water and medical resources, which were contributed through the UN Food Programme

UPF hosted an Interfaith Assembly in Korea in early October together with a concurrent International Leadership Conference and the World Peace Blessing. The gathering took place in the Cheon Bok Goong, the new Unification facility in Seoul's Yeongsan district. Later in October, UPF joined the celebrations in New York hosted by the Committee for the UN Week of Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns.

In November and December UPF and its founder, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, held a series of three "World Assemblies" in New York, Las Vegas and Seoul to discuss the future of an "Abel" or Peace UN where the insights of the world's religious and spiritual leaders would have an equal voice with those of politicians, diplomats, economists and military strategists.

These Assemblies also drew to a close the series of special consultations convened to discuss next steps for the integration of an interfaith council at the United Nations. 2010 marks the 10th Anniversary of Dr. Moon's groundbreaking proposal, made shortly before the UN Millennium Summit in the summer of 2000. Consultations and discussions were held in Switzerland, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Peru, Sierra Leone and several other nations.



Dr. Thomas G. Walsh
President, UPF



UPF TODAY

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PEACE

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UPF Today is the membership magazine of the Universal Peace Federation, founded by Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon. Envisioning peace as a state of harmonious interdependence among individuals, families, nations and peoples, UPF advocates constructive and original practices that contribute to achieving a unified world of peace, the hope of all ages. The magazine offers a forum for Ambassadors for Peace fostering human development, good governance, public service, and collaborative peace efforts involving religions, nations and nongovernmental organizations.

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COVER:
An interreligious gathering in Israel during the August Middle East Peace Initiative.

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UPF World Assemblies

By Joy Pople

Despite the sudden outbreak of renewed hostilities between the two Koreas, UPF Founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon has again reiterated his firm belief that a new era of lasting peace is close at hand. His confident prediction came at the conclusion of the UPF World Assembly 2010, which drew a crowd of over 3,000 at the Manhattan Center in New York on November 22.

“We are living in a historic time of great transition,” Dr. Moon said. “It is a time for a great revolution to change history, to unite the spiritual and physical worlds and to create the ideal kingdom of heaven that God has longed for since the beginning of time.”

Back in April, when the South Korean navy ship *Cheonan* was sunk by an alleged North Korean torpedo attack, Rev. Moon called for restraint in a tour of major Korean cities, and held special *seunghwa* ascension services for the 46 South Korean sailors killed in that attack, saying that peace must begin from within the human heart.

“The problems afflicting humanity can only be resolved through an ideology based on the true love of God,” he said. “At the same time, we must be concerned to liberate the grieving heart of God, the heavenly parent who lost his beloved children. How many of you have shed tears, yearning to comfort our Father in Heaven?”



UPF founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon.

More than 30 Ambassadors and diplomatic representatives from the United Nations and from embassies in Washington DC were in attendance. “I believe the principles we heard tonight could help our nation, and I want to invite the UPF to come and hold a leadership program,” said H.E. Dr. Mory Kaba, Ambassador of Guinea to the US. “We should all become Ambassadors of Peace,” said Dr. Mahamoud Adam Bechir, Ambassador of Chad to the US.



Representatives from over 190 nations attended the World Assembly in New York.

An Interfaith Vision of Peace

Rev. In Jin Moon, President and CEO of the Unification Church of America, opened the program by urging those gathered to become a new “peace generation.” Georgia State Senator Donzella James called for a return to traditional values and affirmed UPF’s commitment to marriage and family.

UPF Chair Rev. Hyung Jin Moon spoke not only of the need for interfaith dialogue and cooperation, but insisted that spiritual values must serve as the foundation for good governance and harmonious international relations, referring to his father’s call for an interfaith council at the UN.

The evening also featured prayers and the lighting of peace candles by representatives of seven major world religions, and an uplifting musical interlude from the *Lovin’ Life* Band.

Dr. Hussein Hassouna, the Ambassador of the League of Arab States to the United States, was a featured speaker. He commented on the importance of the UPF’s Middle East Peace Initiative, (MEPI), launched in 2003 to work for reconciliation despite deep historic resentments.

“I know that resolving the situation in Palestine with justice, equality and fairness, to the betterment of both sides, has long been a goal of the UPF, as it is of us all,” he said. “Yet such an outcome cannot come solely through political, diplomatic, and economic efforts. It will need the application of universal principles that help all the parties go beyond the artificial barriers and boundaries that have been created by race, religion and nationality.”

Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, a former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations, applauded the UPF’s vision of UN renewal. “Tonight’s gathering, with representatives of more than 190 nations seated in conference, supported by the prayers of religious leaders of every major

faith and watched over by thousands of observers, is truly a model of what a Peace UN could be,” he said. Amb. Chowdhury promotes the Culture of Peace and has been urging effective implementation of the International Decade for the Culture of Peace.

A second assembly was held in Las Vegas on November 27 and a third in Korea December 4. All three assemblies promoted the concept of an “Abel United Nations.” Drawing from the biblical story of the first family, the idea is to support the UN and the international community in identifying universal principles of peace that incorporate spiritual values centered on a belief in God.

During his nearly two-hour speech in Seoul Dr. Moon, 91, clearly identified the fundamental obstacle to peace. “In every field you observe, from the individual to the collective level—whether religion, politics, education, culture, or ideology—people are mired in the swamp of self-centered egoism,” he said.

“Ultimately, the problems afflicting humanity can only be resolved through the worldview of One Family Under God, in other words, the ideology based on true love.” The model of love Dr. Moon uses to clarify this vision is of the parent who continually and unhesitatingly sacrifices for the sake of his or her children.

Prior to the Founder’s Address, special introductory remarks were made by Hon. Soo Sung Lee, Former Prime Minister of South Korea; Hon. Ju Sun Park, member of the Korean National Assembly; Hon. Kessai Note, Senator and Former President of the Marshall Islands and Dr. Kook Jin Moon, Chairman of the Tongil Group, Korea.

Other sessions in the conference were designed to explore how UPF along with its worldwide network of Ambassadors for Peace and affiliated organizations could bring spiritual and moral renewal in governing processes at every level of society.

UPF Peace Campaign

The “Abel UN” Peace Campaign launched at these assemblies focuses on interfaith, relief, conflict prevention, marriage and family, and care for the environment. UPF chapters participating in the initial phase of this campaign include Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Canada, Cote d’Ivoire, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Moldova, Peru, Russia, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, St. Lucia, Suriname, Taiwan, and Washington, DC.



UPF Secretary General Taj Hamad, Executive Vice-Chair Sun-jo Hwang, and President Thomas Walsh greet Sir Lloyd Sandiford of Barbados.



Rev. Hyung Jin Moon,
International Chairman,
Universal Peace Federation.

The Significance of Interfaith for Peace and Development

Excerpts of the keynote address to the UPF Interfaith Assembly, October 9, 2010, Seoul, South Korea

Dear distinguished spiritual leaders from around the world! I was moved by the recitation of sacred words from the scriptures of your traditions, and your prayers, bringing God's blessing to our endeavors. Thank you for gracing this occasion with your presence, and for your lifelong commitment in service to God, humanity and global peace.

This morning, it is my distinct honor and privilege to share with you a few words on behalf of my parents, Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, Father and Mother Moon, about the vision for the establishment of an interreligious council at the United Nations.

Almost exactly 60 years ago, on October 14, 1950, my father was about to be executed in the North Korean prison camp at Heung Nam. He had been imprisoned there for almost three years by the communist authorities, who viewed his bold ministry and strong faith as a threat to their atheistic regime. On that very day, miraculously, the United Nations forces liberated my father from Heung Nam concentration camp. Throughout his life, my father has been grateful to the United Nations and has wanted to help it fulfill its lofty mission to bring about a lasting world peace.

It was just over ten years ago, August 2000, that my father outlined his vision for the interreligious council, in a speech he delivered at the United Nations just prior to the Millennium General Assembly. He explained that the UN would not be able to fulfill its mission without creating a council that would uphold the spiritual wisdom and heritage of humanity, representing God's guidance for all of us, in a way functioning as a spiritual compass and 'conscience.' This council would include exemplary and mature representatives and learned advocates of the world's spiritual traditions.

Last month, I spoke about this proposal at the House of Commons in London. I was encouraged to learn that in Great Britain, where Sikhs and Jains,

Muslims and Jews, Hindus and Buddhists, Protestants and Catholics all live in close proximity, there are already interfaith councils in many cities.

In Israel I had the opportunity to meet with leaders of Judaism, Islam, Christianity and the Druze tradition. Everyone expressed a strong desire for peace. At our UPF Consultation in Jerusalem, all the delegates affirmed wholeheartedly the importance of Father Moon's vision for the interfaith council.

I also met with Hindu leaders in Kathmandu, Nepal, and Buddhist leaders in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha. Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains fully appreciate and understand that lasting solutions to our global problems and a comprehensive peace cannot be realized without a spiritual awakening and the full participation of those who affirm and practice spiritual principles.

We all realize that peace is not simply the cessation of conflict. Rather, as we have learned from the great teachers and prophets of the ages, peace is much more than a political, economic or military accomplishment. Peace is rooted in our relationship with God.

When we are lacking in spiritual discipline and wisdom, peace is not possible. Peace arises when we are in a right relationship with God, when our mind and body are united. If we are people of internal struggle, selfishness and sin, then all our efforts in this world will bear no good fruit, and will only lead to struggle and conflict.

There is no better way to create a world of peace than by strengthening marriages and building God-centered families. Father Moon teaches us that peace is rooted in the family; the family is rooted in God; and God's essence is true love.

In this way, on the foundation of the individual and family centered on God, we can expand the realm of peace to other levels, to the tribe, society, nation and world.

An Interfaith Assembly on Religion and Peace

By Michael Balcomb

The UPF Interfaith Assembly opened in Seoul on October 9 at the Cheon Bok Gung, the Unification community's inspiring new sanctuary in the up-and-coming district of Yongsan. Around 1200 people came early on a Saturday morning to participate in a moving ceremony of prayers and readings from seven different faith traditions: Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Druze, Shinto, Christianity, and Buddhism. One by one, faith leaders from around the world came to the microphone to call upon God to bestow His grace.

First was Sheikh Samir Assi, the Imam of Acco, who sang in Arabic the hauntingly beautiful words of the *Al-Fatihah* sura that begins the Qur'an:

*In the name of Allah,
Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
The Beneficent, the Merciful.*

Imam Assi hosted Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, the UPF International Chairman, and his wife Yeon Ah Lee, during their August visit to the Holy Land for the Middle East Peace Initiative. This was a pleasant opportunity to return the favor to Imam Assi and several other religious leaders who participated in the MEPI program, including Father Demetri Mussa from the Greek Catholic Church and Sheikh Gaber Mansur from the Druze Community.



Ceremony of prayers and readings from seven different faith traditions: Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Druze, Shinto, Christianity, and Buddhism.

An Interfaith Vision of Peace



A multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious audience filled Cheon Bok Gung sanctuary, Seoul, Korea on October 9, 2010.

Other religious leaders included Prithpal Singh Khalsa, a Sikh from Switzerland; Thakur Prasad Baral, a Hindu from Nepal; Pastor Rolando Hernandez from Panama; Rev. Sarah Abimbola Sobo from Nigeria; and two Buddhists: the Ven. Jisho Shizuka from Japan and the Ven. Yong Wha Na, the Supreme Patriarch of the Korean Buddhist Imje Order.

Following the ceremony, congratulatory remarks were offered by Dr. Hamdi Murad, a member of the UPF Presiding Council and a leading Islamic scholar from Jordan; Dr. Po Ya Chang, President of UPF-Taiwan; and the Rt. Hon. Parmanada Jha, the Vice President of Nepal.

“Religion has the solution for each and every problem of the human being,” said Nepal’s Vice-President, “but it has to be understood nicely and implemented properly in life. Religion does not teach us to fight amongst ourselves. All the religions of this world and all the religious scriptures teach us only one thing, to love our neighbor.”

In his keynote speech, Rev. Hyung Jin Moon took the opportunity to elaborate on the vision of his father and UPF Founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon for an interfaith council to be incorporated into the structure of the United Nations.

Peace cannot come through institutions alone, the UPF Chairman noted. “When we are lacking in spiritual discipline and wisdom, peace is not

possible,” he said. “Peace arises when we are in a right relationship with God, when our mind and body are united. If we are people of internal struggle, selfishness, and sin, then all our efforts in this world will bear no good fruit, and will only lead to struggle and conflict.”

Following the World Peace Blessing on October 10, the Interfaith Assembly delegates turned their attention to the UPF proposal for an interreligious council at the United Nations. A distinguished panel gathered in the International Conference Center at Sun Moon University, a room which is laid out in a style reminiscent of United Nations meeting halls.

The presenters included Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, UPF Deputy-Director of UN Relations based in Geneva; Rev. Thorhallur Heimisson, from the National Church of Iceland; H.E. Asda Jayanama, former Ambassador of Thailand to the UN; H.E. Akira Matsui, former Ambassador of Japan to Kazakhstan; and Dr. Concepcion Pinos, from the UNESCO College of Peace in Spain.

The commitment of today’s ethical reform movement, in the United Nations and elsewhere, should focus on re-establishing religious civilization and replacing the secular ‘lifestyles’ with sacred, divine ideals, said Dr. Golam Dastagir, visiting professor at the University of Toronto. “This is the best hope for sustainable world peace, happiness, and prosperity.”

Highlights from the Interfaith Assembly



Panel from left: Concepcion Pinos, Akira Matsui, Thorhallur Heimisson, Taj Hamad, Carolyn Handschin, Asda Jayanama, Golam Dastiggir.



Vice President Parmananda Jha congratulates Dr. Moon and invites everyone to visit Nepal.



UPF International Chairman Hyung Jin Moon greets Pastor Rolando Hernandez, President, Christian Alliance of Panama.



Dr. Sun Jo Hwang introduces the “Food Is Love” campaign.



Pledges of financial aid and food support for North Korea.



Bhai Sukhbir Singh Bimrah (left, Sikhism) and Dr. Hamdi Murad (Islam) during a session on principles of reconciliation.



The Ven. Shi De Chao exhibits a 5000-character scroll of the Diamond Sutra, a calligraphy he completed for the conference.

UPF Chairman Engages With Faith Leaders

By UPF International

The international chair of UPF, Rev. Hyung Jin Moon and his wife Yeon Ah Lee visited several nations in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe in 2010 to connect with sacred and historic sites of various religions and meet with faith leaders and Ambassadors for Peace.

KATHMANDU, NEPAL

The international delegation was welcomed to Kathmandu by Members of Parliament and Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian leaders.

Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal received the delegation and spoke fondly of Rev. Sun Myung Moon's visits to Nepal. At the Presidential Palace, President Ram Baran Yadav talked about Nepal's religious heritage, mentioning that Nepal was the birthplace of Lord Buddha and Sita, the most faithful woman in Hindu mythology.

After beginning the day with 3:00 am devotions, they flew to Lumbini and offered prayers at the site marking Lord Buddha's birth, the pond where he was given his first bath, and the tree under which his mother placed him as she offered prayers.

Rev. Hyung Jin Moon addressed gatherings of young Nepalis and Ambassadors for Peace from throughout South Asia.

BANGKOK, THAILAND

The next stop was Thailand, the seat of Theravada Buddhism worldwide. The international delegation engaged in discussion with Buddhist monks and visited the temples of the Emerald Buddha and Golden Buddha.

They went to the home of a Thai-Japanese family, Akkapong and Kaori Aransri, for dinner. During the course of the evening, Rev. Moon asked Mr. Aransri to describe his wife's character and point out three good things he sees in her. Each member of the family was invited to reflect similarly on the other members of the family. Such home visits are typical in Rev. Moon's travels.

The following day he talked about the exemplary lives of Jesus, Buddha, and other religious leaders and expounded on the Lord's Prayer as a formula for



The Prime Minister of Nepal, Madhav Kumar Nepal and UPF International Chairman Hyung Jin Moon.



Participants of the Middle East Peace Initiative.

building a relationship with God. Guests at a banquet included 30 Buddhist monks from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

Speaking to participants in the Middle East Peace Initiative program, Rev. Moon shared some thoughts about the significance of prayer as an instrument of peace. Then the delegation visited many holy sites, including the Garden of Gethsemane and a nearby holy ground dedicated by his father during a visit to Jerusalem in 1965.

The group also travelled north to a gathering of faith leaders at the home of the Druze leader, Sheikh Mowafaq Tariq. From there they went to travelled to

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the Crusaders' Citadel in Acre and El Gazar Mosque, where they were welcomed by the Imam Sheik Samir Asi. After a tour they shared an *iftar* meal that broke the Ramadan fast.

ROME, ITALY

After visiting the churches of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John and praying at St. Peter's Square, Rev. Moon spoke to a gathering at the "Better World" Catholic Center about inheriting the true love of God and testified to the example of his father. Afterwards, he and his wife took photos taken with each of the families present.

To connect with the faith and love of Jesus, Hyung Jin Moon led a small group in climbing the Santa Scala, or "holy staircase," on their knees, a tradition of penitents expressing repentance for one's sins and seeking God's forgiveness. These 28 marble stairs, said to be the very stairs Jesus trod on the way to Pilate's hall, were transported from Jerusalem long ago.

"When we feel pain," Rev. Moon commented afterwards, "we understand what Jesus and people such as our parents have gone through. So we understand that we cannot complain or stop because of this."

PARIS, FRANCE

In France they went to visit the grieving family of Tony Yuen, who died in a bus accident while returning home with a group of young people from a spiritual training program in the Netherlands. Rev. Moon shared his personal experience of loss, describing how the passing to the spiritual world of his elder brother Young Jin changed his life completely. He explained that the moments a child will remember the most are the moments that are spent individually with his or her parents. So he asked the parents to spend at least one hour per the week personally with each child.

They also went a hospital to visit Tiffanie Maldonado, who was injured in the same accident.

They held hands and prayed with her and afterwards spoke in depth with her parents in the waiting room. Returning to Paris, they prayed near the Eiffel Tower.

WARTBURG, GERMANY

In Germany, they visited religious and historic sites, starting with Wartburg. At the castle, Elisabeth of Thuringia invested her life and wealth totally for the poor and the sick. She died young and was canonized by the Catholic Church. There also, Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German. The UPF Chairman observed that Wartburg, in a sense, is an early place of ecumenism, since a Catholic saint as well as the founder of Protestantism lived under the same roof and are both remembered there.

The group went to the former Concentration Camp of Buchenwald, where some 56,000 inmates died of overwork and malnutrition. The group formed a semicircle and prayed earnestly for the many people who suffered and died at the hands of the SS.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

The proposal for an interreligious council at the United Nations was emphasized during a consultation at the House of Commons. "I am reminded that the first General Assembly of the United Nations was convened here in London in 1946 at the Central Hall of the Methodist Church," Rev. Moon said, "I also note that the first meeting of the British parliament took place in Westminster Abbey. I believe England has always understood the necessary link between spiritual principles and values, on the one hand, and the public sphere of social, political and economic institutions, on the other hand."

His contribution was well received, and his religious background and knowledge provide much hope for UPF and the development of an interreligious council at the UN.





Toward an Interreligious Council at the UN

by Carolyn Handschin
Office of UPF-UN Relations, Geneva

Three consultations about UPF's proposal for an interreligious council at the United Nations took place during August and September in Geneva and Bern, Switzerland.

Participants included religious leaders representing Buddhism, Christianity (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant), Hinduism, Islam, and Unificationism, as well as representatives of government missions at the UN, academic institutions, and international NGOs. The structure of the new UN Human Rights Council and the World Council of Churches, both based in Geneva, were discussed as possible models for the proposed council, with expert input from members of both.

There was consensus that while the overall goal is tremendously important, a series of incremental gains might be the best course, with "interreligious" being considered a means, not an end.

While notions of spirituality and ethics are embedded in the UN Charter and other normative documents, they are rarely referred to. The depth of personal commitment associated with religion could be harnessed to support the fundamental rights and freedoms that are pillars of the UN's work.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

What difference could a Council make? Could an interreligious council address the real needs in countries whose needs are often not fully met by the current UN programs?

Would it mainly seek to prevent or reduce bloodshed or focus instead on long-term confidence-building and development? Ideally, it would be both. There is a strong negative correlation between conflict and development. Solving—or better preventing—conflict and injustices leaves the door open for full development and prosperity. Church elders, especially

in Africa, often help bridge tribal differences and promote communal development. There have been positive examples in the cantons in Switzerland and in the provinces of the former Yugoslavia.

An interreligious advisory committee could provide local knowledge about human needs. For instance, religious representatives might have access to early warning signals of unrest or the existence of vulnerable groups before an outbreak of violence. There is often a gap between resolutions and implementations and impartial mediators are needed. It was noted that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, while not perfect, grew out of the traditions of African indigenous religion.

HEADQUARTERS

The council is to focus on the life-affirming aspects of the UN mandate—which include development, humanitarian programs, trade, disarmament, and education in core values/human rights and responsibilities—and European cities host UN agencies related to these areas. The UN Human Rights Council, UN Conference on Trade and Development, World Health Organization, and UN High Commissioner for Refugees have headquarters in Geneva. UNESCO is based in Paris and the World Food Programme in Rome. As a humanitarian capital—some say the heart of the UN—Geneva could be a good setting to pioneer an innovative structure such as an interreligious council.

MODELS

The Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance has a Model UN "Interreligious Council" Program. This provides opportunities for youth representatives of religions to role-play delegates of a potential interreligious council. The five sessions held so far

Toward an Interreligious Council at the UN

exhibited wisdom, solidarity, and goodwill. The youth delegates demonstrated that the voices of religion in concord resonate very well with the work of the UN.

The Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council ensures that the best possible expertise is made available to the Human Rights Council. Its 18 members are elected by states and by regions, but they represent their area of expertise and not their governments.

Other possible models include the World Council of Churches (which considers both theological and demographic criteria), the House of Lords in Great Britain (whose members include religious leaders), some aspects of the European Union's structure, and the Swiss Council of Religions.

COVENANT/CHARTER

A covenant or charter would be needed to define the work of the council, to set standards for membership, and to guide the work of the council. Delegates should demonstrate their personal integrity and commitment to world peace and development beyond their duties to their own faith communities.

An important question is "How can the moral authority of religions be consolidated and focused into an implementation-oriented agenda?" Religion can bring to the fore compassion, sacrifice, ideals, solidarity, motivation, and good will. It was noted that most people involved in UN work personally hold these qualities in great esteem in their private lives, but may experience a disconnect in their official role. They could benefit from an interreligious council where these aspects of life are given priority.

It was felt that there should be no discussion of dogma within such a council. Upholding a tradition of broadly-accepted values and inclusive language would be very important for the debates, recommendations, and outcomes of the council. Ideally, decisions should be reached by consensus.

It would be advisable that delegates have a broad understanding of and experience with religions and cultures other than their own. The book *World Scripture: An Anthology of Sacred Texts*, produced at the

request of UPF Founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon, was recommended as a resource for preliminary research on values and virtues common to religious traditions.

STRUCTURE AND REPRESENTATION

How to include those religious traditions—possibly small, local, or unrecognized—who have gained local expertise in the area of conflict resolution, reconciliation, human development, etc.? How to ensure that people would identify this council as a real "voice of and for the people," possibly bridging the gap felt currently by many in developing countries toward the United Nations? How to include both the hotbeds of conflict and the seats of development in local tribal, ethnic, and religious communities?

Several options were discussed:

1) The charter would not necessarily allocate one vote per state, but possibly a certain number of delegates per regional grouping. It should also take into consideration, for instance, that Muslims in Jordan may have different concerns than those in Indonesia. The size of the religious communities would figure

importantly, but consideration would be given to successes in the field. A certain number of seats could be assigned to smaller communities, with rotating membership. Regarding individual delegates, being a leader in a religious community would not be sufficient as a criterion for membership. Delegates would have to present personal credentials that meet the council's standards.

2) Perhaps the delegates would be tasked to promote the voice of religious values and not religions themselves. In other words, delegates would be nominated because of the core values that they embody rather than their denominational or religious affiliation.

3) The UN Secretary-General could convene a group of interreligious advisors when their advice and positions might be helpful. If this group has constructive outcomes, it would demonstrate religious potential to prevent or resolve conflict, promote development and social cohesion, etc. Such precedents could fuel longer-term institutional changes.

The UN Charter defines its purposes:

- *to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind*
- *to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small*
- *to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained*
- *to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom*

This can be seen as a sacred and spiritual covenant. Both external development and internal/spiritual development are needed to achieve humankind's common goals of peace, dignity, justice, and shared prosperity.

Worldwide Consultations on the Interreligious Council Initiative



Sun Moon University, Cheonan, Korea



House of Commons, London, United Kingdom



St. Paul's University, Ottawa, Canada



Lima, Peru



Daliat el Carmel, Israel



Tokyo, Japan

UN Week of Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns

By Genie Kagawa



The Week of Spirituality began on October 22 with an interfaith gathering.

The Committee of Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns honored the UN's designation of 2010 as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures in a week-long program of events created to explore the United Nations' commitment to peaceful resolutions of international issues. The week included a series of focused meditations, workshops, panel discussions, group interchanges, and cultural performances. In addition, it honored the final year of the Decade of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010).

The Universal Peace Federation has been a member of the Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns at the United Nations since 2006, and is an active member of the Working Groups and the Executive Council of the Committee. In order to fulfill the promise of the United Nations to create a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world, the Committee promotes spirituality and adherence to universal values as key factors in addressing global concerns. The Committee aims to integrate spirituality and values into all areas of the United Nations agenda and make the week a part of the UN Calendar.

The Week of Spirituality began on October 22 in the UN Meditation Room, where participants explored the essence of "Rapprochement" as a way of advancing mutual understanding of all peoples. The Opening Ceremony marked the awarding of the "Spirit of the UN" Awards 2010, honoring exemplary individuals within the Diplomatic Corps, the UN staff, and the NGO community whose professional careers have been an expression of the principles upon which the United Nations was founded. This year's honorees were H.E. Hamid Al Bayati, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations; Rev. Tse Wei Zoe, former President of the UN Women's Guild; and Mr. Hiro Sakurai, President of the NGO Committee for Disarmament.

On October 28, the Spiritual Dimensions of Science and Consciousness Working Group, led by Mr. Danilo Parmegiani, put together a panel discussion at the UN Foundation called "The Imperative Need for a Transformation of Consciousness." Philippe Kridelka,

THE CULTURE OF PEACE WORKING GROUP, LED BY ANNE CRETER AND IRIS SPELLINGS, BROUGHT TOGETHER OUTSTANDING YOUTH LEADERS IN A PROGRAM ENTITLED “THE POWER OF YOUTH TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF PEACE.” TO BEGIN, AMBASSADOR ANWARUL K.CHOWDHURY, FORMER UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL, GAVE AN OVERVIEW ABOUT THE UN’S ADOPTION OF THE RESOLUTION ON THE CULTURE OF PEACE IN 1999.

UNESCO Representative to the UN, gave the keynote speech. People in other countries contributed to the discussion via the Internet, and an interactive session followed.

The Health, Transformation and Spirituality Working Group, led by Dr. Ani Kalayjian, organized a panel on October 29 entitled “Ancestral Healing: Transforming Generational Pain into Meaning-Making.” Speakers included Yael Pettreti from the Compassionate Listening Project in Israel, Mr. Takeshi Furomoto from Japan Perspectives, and Joni Rose from Healing Arts. They spoke about transformational moments in their own lives or the lives of others that helped them deal with the pain of war. In each case, the spirit of forgiveness and compassion brought about positive change in their lives.

The Culture of Peace Working Group, led by Anne Creter and Iris Spellings, brought together outstanding youth leaders in a program entitled “The Power of Youth to Promote a Culture of Peace.” To begin, Ambassador Anwarul K.Chowdhury, former UN Under-Secretary-General, gave an overview about the UN’s adoption of the Resolution on the Culture of Peace in 1999.

The significance of the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on the Culture of Peace was further examined by Dr. David Adams from the Foundation for a Culture of Peace. He summarized the progress reports of a thousand NGOs, including the Universal Peace Federation. The NGO report on the Decade of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World had recently been presented to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Finally, youth leaders Jennifer Ichiji and Oliver R. Carlson gave impressive reports about what they have been doing to promote a culture of peace among youth. Many youth leaders responded with their views about ways to advance peace.

The chair of the organizing committee, Sharon Hamilton-Getz, closed the Week of Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns with an expression of appreciation to all contributors. The week ended with a spirit of excitement, as a cultural band with beating drums led the audience in song, dance, and exuberant celebration.



In the background is the “Peace Window,” a stained-glass panel designed by Russian-born artist Marc Chagall.

International Day of Peace in Cooperation with UN Offices

Contributed by UPF National Chapters

KATHMANDU, NEPAL

The Universal Peace Federation of Nepal partnered with UNICEF, UNESCO, Peace Education Network of Nepal (PENN), Nepal's Ministry of Education, and Save the Children in a week of activities called "Peace Week." From September 14 to 21, events were held throughout the Kathmandu Valley, the capital region of Nepal.

Activities included talk show programs, service projects, street theater, oratory competition, an interactive program, and peace song program, culminating with a celebration at the City Hall on September 21. Dr. B.N. Sharma, President of PENN, was the main organizer.

The State Minister of Peace and Reconstruction, Mr. Dilli Bahadur Mahat, emphasized the importance of children receiving character and moral education, saying, "Education is incomplete without peace and civic education."

QUITO, ECUADOR

A delegate of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Miss Gaia Pallecchi, addressed a round-table discussion on September 18 at the Ecuador Municipal Association Hall. She described the fund's work to promote a peaceful environment by empowering women and promoting gender equality. An official from the Ministry for the Environment explained the government's plan for promoting a culture of peace among young people.

The audience included an advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and delegates from the ministries of Justice, Sports, and the Environment. There were also people from political and academic fields as well as representatives of UN peacekeepers.

In keeping with the UN's emphasis this year on the role of youth in peacebuilding, young people from various religious backgrounds talked

about their experiences and activities promoting peace, and young musicians from different religions expressed their heart of peace with excellent performances.

CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA

The St. Lucia National Commission for UNESCO joined with other local organizations to issue a joint declaration for the International Day of Peace. These included RISE St. Lucia, CAPS, the National Youth Council, FAITH, and UPF-St. Lucia. They urged the people of St. Lucia and the rest of the world not to give into hate and violence.

"Violence is a symptom of a moral and spiritual failure," the proclamation read. "If we have to eliminate violence and crime, we must commit ourselves to a moral and spiritual awakening. We need to recognize that we are brothers and sisters who share a common spiritual and moral heritage under one God." The proclamation was published in the two main newspapers, and excerpts were read on the radio.

OSLO, NORWAY

The information secretary from the UN Communication Office in Norway spoke about the importance of investing in young people at a celebration of the UN International Day of Peace at the Islamic Cultural Center in Oslo. It was noted that 2010 is the International Year of Youth. The secretary general of the mosque talked about the important role of the UN in benefiting the people of the world.

A panel of four young students from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, and Sikh traditions commented on the best points in their faiths concerning peace. They covered ideas such as the importance of our thoughts, equal treatment of all people, kindness among people, and the need for spirituality.

International Day of Peace Celebrations

ORSHA, BELARUS

The District Executive Committee, the Belarus Peace Foundation, the UN Representative, and UPF-Belarus initiated celebrations of peace and brother-cities from September 19-21 in Orsha, one of the biggest cities of Belarus. Guests of honor included mayors from Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, and Russia. The program included exhibitions, receptions, and children's drawing competitions.

On September 21, Marat Yegorov, leader of the Belarus Peace Foundation, reported on peacemaking programs in Belarus. Well-known public figures joined students in planting trees to create a Peace Lane in Orsha. About 10,000 people joined in a peace walk and rally, where the head of the UN Public Information Office in Belarus, Victor Radivinovski, read a welcoming address on behalf of the UN. The evening entertainment featured children's groups from Belarus, Moscow and St. Petersburg.

TBILISI, GEORGIA

UPF-Georgia and the Association of Russian-Speaking Journalists of Georgia held a "Brain Ring" intellectual competition on September 20 at the Einung House of the German Community. High school and university students of different nationalities living in Georgia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Assyria, Hebrew, Ossetia, Germany, Russia and Ukraine) took part in the event, funded by the UN office in Georgia.

The Einung House of the German Community accommodated some 50 participants and guests. The questions for the contest were connected to peacebuilding from the spheres of sociology, political science, culture, sports, history, literature, geography, and natural science.

UPF-Georgia gave lectures on "Culture of Peace: Patriotism" to 200 students in schools #136 and #98, and students received pens and cups with the UN International Day of Peace logo, prepared by the UN office in Georgia.

BRAZZAVILLE, CONGO

UPF-Congo organized a commemoration of the International Day of Peace on September 21 in the Congressional Palace. The meeting opened with invocations by a Christian pastor and a Muslim leader. After words of welcome by UPF-Congo chair Gen. Blaise Adoua, Col. François Bouesse, the Deputy High Commissioner for the Reintegration of Ex-combatants, read the message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Then the Project Coordinator for the Consolidation of Peace, Mr. Ameth Diouf, explained the role of youth in his project.

Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced in the 1997-99 civil war between partisans of two presidential candidates. As in other countries rebuilding after civil war, UN representatives play a special role in efforts to reintegrate ex-combatants. Ongoing challenges include assisting internally displaced persons, refugees, and victims of violence, offering support to families and communities.



Congo



Belarus



Ecuador



Norway



Nepal



St. Lucia

Promoting Peace through Sports

By Fosayo Irikora in Jordan and UPF-Africa

As part of the worldwide celebrations of the International Day of Peace, the Universal Peace Federation designed a one-day Sports for Peace program that integrates sports and education in order to promote peaceful communities. The sports component involves teams playing a popular sport such as football (soccer), basketball, or racing. An optional additional component is playing or demonstrating a traditional game.

UPF believes that sports are a great potential instrument for peace. The educational component of the UPF program is thus aligned with the UN's effort to promote peace and development through sports, while increasing the awareness of how sports can contribute to personal development, community harmony, and a healthy lifestyle. Coaches and officials can also take this opportunity to encourage good sportsmanship during competitions.

AMMAN, JORDAN

A peace football tournament under the patronage of former Prime Minister H.E. Faisal Fayeze commemorated the International Day of Peace on September 21. Disadvantaged Jordanian youth and Iraqis living in Jordan were selected to play, and said they felt honored to compete before such a distinguished audience.

An estimated 700,000 displaced Iraqis have been living in and around Amman since fleeing violence in their country between 2004 and 2008. For several years, Fosayo Irikora has been developing activities for unaccompanied young men, some living in dire circumstances. Like youth around the world, many are passionate about sports.

This project focused on bringing together youth from different national origins in an effort to facilitate communication, cooperation, and friendship across boundaries. Fosayo and her dedicated Iraqi colleagues have expanded the program to six teams and are continuing to develop athletic activities, with the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees office.



The day opened with the national songs of Jordan and Iraq and speeches by representatives of the sponsoring organizations. Dr. Ghazi Tayyeb, president of the Jordanian-Iraqi Brotherhood Association, spoke on behalf of H.E. Fayeze, followed by Mr. Arafat Jamal, Deputy Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Jordan.

The final match was played between Jordanians and Iraqis before an audience of 500. A fireworks display followed the award ceremony.

OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

Celebrations of the Week of Peace and Security in Africa included sports, a blood donation drive, and youth character education with an emphasis on AIDS prevention. His Majesty Kamsongho Naaba Sanem encouraged the young people to make peace a daily behavior.

Football is very popular in Burkina Faso, played both professionally and informally in towns and villages across the country. Other popular sports include basketball, cycling, rugby union, handball, tennis, boxing, and martial arts.

N'DJAMENA, CHAD

The Week of Peace and Security in Africa opened with a September 15 conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, and International Cooperation. Speakers included

International Day of Peace Celebrations



Members of the civilian team and Chad army veterans team face each other to begin play.



A baseball game in Zimbabwe.



Football players stand in attention for their national anthem in a match between Jordanians and Iraqis in Amman.



Audience members watch the football match between the Jordanians and Iraqis.

Prime Minister H.E. Emmanuel Ndingar and the Ambassador of the African Union, Ki Doulaye Coentrin.

On September 21, the International Day of Peace, a Caravan of Peace set out at 10:00 am, ending at the Idriss Mahamat Ouya Stadium for a Football for Peace match between army veterans and civilian soccer teams. This large stadium was named after the great athlete from Chad, Idriss Mahamat Ouya. A high jumper, he won the French national championships in 1960 and 1961.

Chadians are great sports lovers, with football being especially popular. The friendly match between these two teams was especially meaningful on the Day of Peace.

HARARE, ZIMBABWE

Under the theme of Youth for Peace and Development, students from 12 schools participated in a sports tournament in various disciplines. The Minister of Education, Sport and

Culture was the Guest of Honor at the event, which was organized in cooperation with the UN Information Centre, the Zimbabwe Olympic Committee, and other organizations.

Zimbabweans have endured political, economic, and humanitarian crises. Recovery requires not only government efforts but also the engagement of civil society. To support this, UPF-Zimbabwe invited young people from diverse backgrounds to engage in sports competitions to help build respect and goodwill.

This was a special opportunity for students from the 12 schools to compete. UPF-Zimbabwe was able to organize this sport tournament because its secretary general, Bosako Iyolangomo, works with many other stakeholders as the Chairman of the Committee on Dialogue Among Religion, Culture and Tradition to promote peace. Through that committee, they were able to bring together many stakeholders who are happy to contribute to a day of peace.

Summer Youth Camp

By Ana M. Cobiella-Olson
Religious Youth Service Educational Advisor

One of the bright hopes emerging from the rubble of the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti was a vision to offer a joy-filled, educationally creative, character building, memorable week to almost 90 Haitian girls ages 9-16. It transformed the lives of these young girls and equally the lives of the 14 volunteer staff, who generously offered their talents, artistic gifts, compassion, and unconditional love.

United Initiatives for Peace, founded by Diesa Seidel, took on this ambitious challenge in collaboration with Religious Youth Service and The Haitian Academy in the village of Cache Cache Douge near Port-au-Prince.

The camp hosted a wide range of daily activities—arts and crafts, music, dancing, sports, educational exercises, movies, and beach outings—in an effort to offer affirmation and provide some healing to these young survivors in a country that is struggling to rebuild itself and achieve its vast potential.

One evening we held a bonfire and sang camp songs. One couldn't help but admire the majestic mountains surrounding the sparkling city lights of Port-au-Prince at a distance, with the moonlit ocean not far from the camp, and deeply appreciate the beauty Haiti offers in spite of its most recent tragedy.

These young campers so naturally and unintentionally taught us, the staff, many lessons about the strength of Haitians in their capacity to continuously transcend profound difficulties that would cripple most

of us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Following morning meditation, we began each day surrounded by young spirits possessing an intense curiosity to learn, experience, and expand their boundaries to continue their journey of becoming strong, capable, courageous, and productive women.

At the closing program on our last day together, Dr. Marie Rene, the founding Director of the Haitian Academy, accompanied by her extended family and staff, reminded us that any challenge that does not defeat us will ultimately strengthen us.

Furthermore, we understood that the short time we dedicated to these young campers was a sustaining experience for all who were a part of this enrichment camp. An awareness prevailed that women are key to changing the nature of power and progress in any community. United Initiatives for Peace and Religious Youth Service in partnership with Dr. Rene are committed to keep on encouraging and inspiring the youth of Haiti, its most resilient and precious resource.

*“To laugh often and much;
to win the respect of intelligent
people and the affection of
children ... to leave the world a
better place ... to know even
one life has breathed easier
because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded.”*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, American poet





Helping Relocated People in Northern Haiti

By Evelyne Drake and Manasa Kanithe

Cap-Haitien on Haiti's northern coast is normally a city of 190,000, but an additional 150,000 relocated there after the January earthquake and the human need is great. The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and International Relief Friendship Foundation sent five volunteers from the US to work with 15 Haitian volunteers from June 21 to 30.

After meeting with Mayor Fritz Joseph, we went to a local gymnasium, the Champs de Mars, to set up our first medical project, in collaboration with Dr. Jean-Marie Colin and Dr. Monique Jean, the president and secretary of Alhmeda, a volunteer doctors organization. Sixty men, women, and children registered for care. Each spoke with a doctor and received free medication donated by WFWP. Many of the adults as well as the children were malnourished and suffering with numerous infections; some had malaria.

Leaders from women's groups spoke to us about the problems their communities are facing and what they are trying to do to help their people. These leaders are very strong women, and they are quite determined to ensure that progress will be made. They expressed concerns about health, education, technical schooling, and sanitation.

They wanted to explore how we could work together.

We also went to Lafossette, where many earthquake victims have relocated. People cannot afford to buy medicine and were grateful to be treated by doctors and receive vitamins and medicine. Dr. Colin and Dr. Jean consulted with more than 100 people there.

Meanwhile, the students on our team distributed small gifts to the children, played with them, and shared stories, songs, and dances. It was a precious time for interaction that nourishes minds and souls as well as meeting physical needs.

Fifty-two women attended a seminar on Disaster Response: Earthquake, Flood and Fire given by Mrs. Peggy Brewster and Ms. Manasa Kanithe. The women learned ways to anticipate and cope with natural disasters and how to respond to different types of disasters. There was an animated discussion about their situation and what kind of help is most needed. We could sense a desire to work together.

Two young team members were disgusted by the litter behind the gymnasium and began picking it up. Children who were watching began to join in. Soon more than 20 people, some as young as five years old, were moving trash to an area where it

could be burned. This showed that Cap-Haitien has the manpower and the capacity to improve their community. It takes people to lead the way.

At an orphanage in Nan Banann, there were more than 800 children. The doctors saw 115 children before they ran out of medication and vitamins. Mayor Joseph hastily arranged for more supplies, and the doctors continued working.

In addition to playing games with the children and handing out candy, we took them to Rival Beach and gave them swimming lessons. One of our team demonstrated to the children how to survive in the water in case of hurricanes and floods. We also met with 80 women leaders for further discussions about their situation.

In Milot, a beautiful historic town 12 miles south of Cap-Haitien, we worked with Ms. Lunise Perard to plant seeds of moringa trees. She is teaching the people how to care for the trees and use the leaves and pods of this nutritious tree.

UPF wishes to thank all those who donated to UPF's "Water of Life" appeal in conjunction with the World Food Programme.



Russia-Georgia Citizen Diplomacy

By Konstantin Krylov, UPF-Russia, and
Vitaly Maksimov, UPF-Georgia

On the morning of December 7, 2008, Dr. Eduard Yakovlev set out on a “Peace Run” in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, together with about 150 sportsmen and students. Little did the Russian Ambassador for Peace know that he would be giving his final breaths that day in the effort to bring together neighboring nations.

A medical doctor and President of the International Super Marathon Association, Dr. Yakovlev passionately believed in the power of sports to bring people together across political and ethnic divides. That morning, Dr. Yakovlev had said that he did not feel very well and would run only one mile with the runners. However, after running two blocks, he collapsed with a heart attack and soon passed away.

The event was part of UPF’s South Caucasus Peace Initiative, a citizen diplomacy initiative between the people of neighboring countries. It was organized by UPF-Georgia and local sponsors: the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Abkhazia; PSP Pharmacy; and Georgian Glass and Mineral Water Co.

As a Russian who came for peace to Georgia—he was wearing a T-shirt with both the Russian and Georgian flags—his death became the center of media attention. Georgian officials said that if his family agreed to have him buried in Georgia, he would be interred with honor in the Pantheon of Georgian Heroes.

However, his relatives naturally asked that his body be returned to Russia, and Georgian local authorities supported the process of repatriating his body to Moscow through Armenia, since there was no direct communication between Georgia and Russia.

Dr. Yakovlev’s citizen diplomacy is being continued through exchanges of letters and presents between school children in Russia and Georgia, facilitated by UPF Ambassadors for Peace from both nations.

The UPF-Ural chapter contacted UPF-Georgia and planned activities to advance people-to-people diplomacy with the support of government and public organizations. On the International Day of Peace, September 21, 2009, UPF launched the “Ural-Georgia, We Shall Be Friends” project.

In Russia, representatives of UPF and the Women’s Federation for World Peace joined the Sverdlovsk regional department of the Children’s Foundation of Russia to



The late Dr. Eduard Yakovlev.



Dr. Oleg Mironov (right), former Ombudsman of Russia, in conversation with the current Georgian Ombudsman, George Tugushi (left), at a meeting hosted by the UPF.

organize activities at a school for children with special needs. In Pervouralsk, City Congress Deputy Vorobyova Natalya Vladimirovna helped organize activities at school #10. First-year students prepared different handmade items with symbols of peace, and some of them were sent to the children in Caucasus region.

In Georgia’s capital, Tbilisi, children in school #136 were surprised to receive gifts in honor of the International Day of Peace 2009. With the help of Ambassadors for Peace in Georgia, they prepared responses.

At UPF-Georgia’s International Day of Peace program, Dalila Khorava the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Abkhazia, and Konstantin Krylov, Secretary General of UPF-Russia, lit torches of peace symbolizing the exchange of hearts between the people of Georgia and Russia. The Russian torch was brought from the Russian Urals region.

South Caucasus Peace Initiative

In March 2010, children from the Urals made more than 200 paper doves as symbols of peace and friendship, writing expressions of goodwill on them. The doves were distributed at a school in Tbilisi, where the children and teachers were deeply touched. In response, they wrote about their life, studies, hobbies, and the beauty of their land. They sent photos and drawings, which were distributed to students in the Urals.

On the International Day of Peace 2010 at school #14 in Serov, Darya Ganina read a letter from a student in Tbilisi: "We share one common idea: all of us desire peace and friendship. Let us together make a good foundation for future generations!" One student, Elena Levina, wrote in response: "White is the symbol of peace; that's why we wrote letters and folded them in the shape of white doves. I would be happy to receive a letter in return, because it's so wonderful to have a friend in a different nation!"

L.V. Turanova, deputy director of the school, said: "The faces were shining with delight, happiness and joy. Bright childhood impressions remain in children's minds for a long time. I wish our children to be kind, peaceful, and beautiful. May they always strive for concord, friendship, and peace!"

Through these exchanges, students are learning to understand and empathize with people of other nations and building bridges of friendship. Older students are becoming interested in the project as well. At the Sverdlovsk Regional Medical College in Yekaterinburg, there was a symbolic exchange of torches between Yekaterinburg and Tbilisi.

The following month, as a part of the ongoing "Ural-Georgia, We Shall Be Friends" project, Georgian high school students from the National Youth Palace took part in the International Youth Festival "Gift." They won first prize in the photo competition and received two diplomas in the video contest.



Russian students wrote messages on white papers and folded them in the shape of a dove to send to students in Georgia.



During the 18th century, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia vied for control over the strategically important Caucasus, the mountainous region where their zones of influence overlapped.

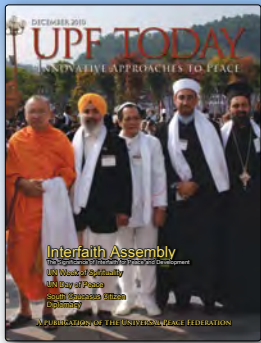
Eventually Russia conquered Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. They became part of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the secession from Azerbaijan of the ethnically Armenian territory of Nagorny Karabakh provoked a bloody conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia that ended only with a ceasefire in 1994. At the same time Abkhazia and South Ossetia began fighting for independence from Georgia. After the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, the two provinces declared their independence under the protection of Russia.

Georgians feel pain over the loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to Russia. Russian Ambassadors for Peace encounter strong emotions when meeting Georgian officials and have to choose their words with wisdom. Just a few months after the August 2008 war, Russian Ambassadors for Peace, including Dr. Yakovlev, went to Georgia for informal meetings. Also present were representatives of neighboring Azerbaijan and Armenia, who cannot meet in each others' nations. In May 2010, Oleg Mironov, former Ombudsman of Russia, traveled to Georgia to meet with Georgian Ambassadors for Peace and held informal meetings with the Ombudsman of Georgia, the Vice Minister of Integration, and the Representative for South Ossetia in Georgia.

Launched in 2008, UPF's South Caucasus Peace Initiative seeks to address these tensions through building grassroots relationships, such as exchanges among students, and informal face-to-face discussions between high-level officials. As in all territorial conflicts, people feel deep pain and resentment. Still, they say they long to normalize relations because they once were part of a common nation and still share to some degree a common culture and language.

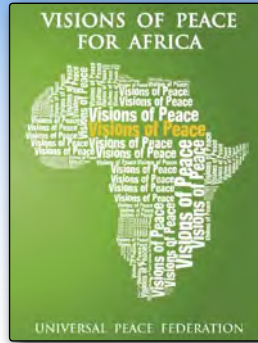
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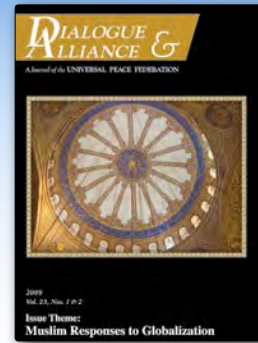
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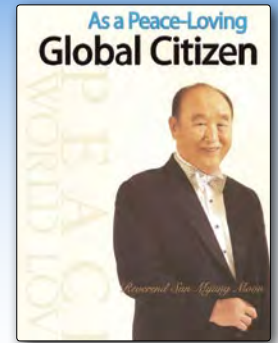
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