

**UPF International Peace Summit 2023: Session II-B: Elders Roundtable**

Alan Sillitoe and Mélanie Komagata  
May 3, 2023



**Seoul, South Korea** -- One of the first events of Peace Summit 2023 was the inauguration of the Elders' Roundtable.

The new initiative, called the "International Elders' Roundtable for the Realization of a Heavenly Unified World," was launched under the auspices of UPF's International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP) and Think Tank 2022.



The Elders' Roundtable will tap into the wisdom and experience of society's elders. At an exploratory program held on February 24, the project was recognized as an important instrument for peace.

The inauguration of the Elders' Roundtable took place during Session IIB of Peace Summit 2023, which

was held from May 2 to 5 in the Lotte Hotel World (Jamsil Lotte Hotel) under the title "Toward a World Culture of Peace."

The approximately 50 participants who gathered in the Emerald Room on May 3, 2023, were worldwide elder statesmen as well as local and overseas VIPs.



**Young-il Shin**, a former announcer with the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), was the session moderator. He explained that the 12 members of the Elders Roundtable will fulfill the role of "senators" who will properly lead various fields, such as politics, the economy, religion, media, and academia.

The theme of this first Elders Roundtable conference, Mr. Shin said, was solidarity among elders from each continent for the establishment of lasting peace. Through their age and wisdom, these elders aspire to a world of symbiotic coexistence in which conflicts and divisions between men and women, between generations, and between nations can be overcome.



He then welcomed UPF co-founder **Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon**, who convened and presides over the Elders



Roundtable, as she entered the room.

The first congratulatory message was given by **Hon. Ho-il Kim**, the chairman of the Korean Senior Citizens' Association representing 9 million elders in Korea, who was appointed as the chair of the Elders Roundtable.

Offering his best wishes to Dr. Moon for her role in achieving world peace, Hon. Kim expressed his fervent hope that humanity would rid itself of envy, jealousy, and strife, that there would be no more wars, and that peace would be pursued so that we might all be one and cherish and love one another. This would be possible, he said, when the spirit of Jesus' love is engraved in the hearts of all human beings around the world. He concluded by expressing his sincere hope that today's Peace Summit would be the beginning of a period in which all of us would work hard for global peace.



**H.E. Alfred Moisiu**, the president of Albania (2002-2007), thanked Dr. Moon for this new initiative and mentioned that all people, but in particular the people of the Balkan Peninsula, have a special respect for elders, because they have the experience of life and therefore can find solutions to various difficult situations.

Today the world is experiencing troubled times, President Moisiu said, mentioning the war in Ukraine and the complicated issue in Taiwan. He admitted, however, "We in the Balkans are not known for peace." Therefore, it's crucial to exchange ideas that bring peaceful solutions.

The question is how to resolve these problems without shedding blood and without destruction, while thinking of future generations. We should not leave them an awful and bitter inheritance, President Moisiu said. He emphasized that the family is the building block of society and said that he often uses the adage "Each generation grows on the shoulders of the previous one."

Among those attending the Elders Roundtable inauguration, he said, there were many former heads of state who are no longer in public office, but this doesn't mean that we cannot use our experience to benefit our countries and our societies.

**H.E. Maithripala Sirisena**, the president of Sri Lanka (2015-2019), called the Elders Roundtable a means of appreciating the talent, knowledge, experience, and commitment of experts in the fields of public service and public administration. Therefore, he said, the roundtable is more an association of distinguished diplomats and eminent statesmen than a forum for senior politicians.

President Sirisena explained that he had reached the 55th year of his political career. In the years before he became president, he was a member of parliament for 34 years and held several ministerial positions, during which time special projects were implemented.

Among the ministerial positions he held, the ones he preferred were those of minister of agriculture and irrigation and minister of health, not only because of the great public service he was able to perform but also because of the enormous challenges he faced, which were helpful for his later work as president. Therefore, he suggested that modern statesmen be trained in the ability to face multiple challenges.

Referring to Mahatma Gandhi, who once said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world," the president expressed the importance of leaders being role models for others.



**Hon. Newt Gingrich**, the speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (1995-1999), said that the Elders Roundtable would be useful if elders can be brought to think about the lessons of their long lives. One of the things elders can offer is the wisdom that grows out of seeing what has worked and what hasn't.

These insights could save younger people a lot of pain and time, the former speaker said. To achieve peace and freedom, it is necessary to possess wisdom. In a dangerous world, idealistic hope doesn't get one very far, but informed hope could create a much better future, he said.



**Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon**, the co-founder of UPF, spoke about the Apostle Paul. He was originally a citizen of the Roman Empire, and, after the crucifixion of Jesus, he arrested Christians. However, when Paul heard a voice from heaven, he became a disciple of Christ. Today we also believe that we have heard a voice from heaven.

Dr. Moon emphasized that God the Creator is our parent. Until now, we were unable to feel that



humankind are our brothers and sisters. However, with the dedication of the Cheonil Sanctum to Heavenly Parent, from now on all 8 billion human beings can become one. If we have Heavenly Parent as our parent, we will become one human family centered on Heavenly Parent, she said.

In conclusion, Dr. Moon expressed her hope that the elders making up this roundtable would share their wisdom of life and practice true love for the sake of all humanity.



**H.E. Dr. Thomas Yayi Boni**, the president of Benin (2006-2016), thanked Dr. Moon as the "Mother of Peace" for convening this summit. He explained that he is a Christian and a member of the Union of Evangelical Churches of Benin, but he understood that all confessions were welcome here.

After listening carefully to Mother Moon's speech, he completely agreed with her message, he said. To build a world of peace, development, joy, and progress, we must love God before anyone else. If we have love, the tension we experience in the world, which brings peace into question, would not exist, he said.



President Boni said that we should love God and love others, as the "Mother of Peace" expressed. He

explained that through the Human Fall cited in the Bible, Satan invaded the heart of humans, preventing a peaceful world from coming about, and that it was up to us to choose either the side of good or the side of evil.

He emphasized that, in his religion, Jesus died on the cross to save us and that we can go to the Father only through him.

Africa is undergoing a spiritual revival, the president said. Potentially the richest in terms of its surface area, being bigger than China, India, and Brazil, Africa has immense natural resources, but has a lot of poverty due to poor governance.

In conclusion, he applauded the work of "Mother Moon." He said we can solve the crises in the world through spiritual work, because the "spiritual takes precedence over the real."

**Hon. Sang-hoon Lee**, the 26th South Korean minister of national defense (1988-1990) and chair of the National Elders' Roundtable, alluded to the current situation in Ukraine. He expressed his sincere hope that this organization, led by the "Mother of Peace," would work vigorously to bring the war in Ukraine to an end as soon as possible, so that peace can return to the world.



**H.E. Anote Tong**, the president of Kiribati (2003-2016) and a laureate of the Sunhak Peace Prize (2015), explained that although the Elders Roundtable seems like a new initiative, "This is our tradition [in Kiribati]; we have elders who rule and guide our society, and they are more effective than the police!"

In addition to the war in Ukraine, there recently has been a lot more tension in the Asia-Pacific region, he said.

President Tong emphasized that in order to convey the message of peace, we have to give each other a lot more respect; then we might succeed on the wider global scale.

In conclusion, he invoked the philosophy of the late UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon by saying, "Let us not be so selfish. Let us live for the sake of others."