

## **Sustainable Peace Is Key to Nepal's Progress**

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Kathmandu, Nepal -- Since its launch in Lumbini, Nepal in 2005, the South Asian Peace Initiative has been organizing programs not only in Nepal but also in countries such as India and Afghanistan. The most recent program took place two weeks before the annual summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in Nepal Nov. 26-27, 2014. Heads of state from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indian, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will be meeting to address the social and economic challenges in the region.

UPF's 15th South Asia Peace Initiative conference on Nov. 8, 2014, was attended by UPF leaders in Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Myanmar, Malaysia and India. A group of participants coming from India was led by Hon. Udit Raj, member of Indian parliament. Around 220 participants coming from the sectors of politics, academia, security, business, NGOs and others gathered to discuss the theme "Sustainable Peace in South Asia: New Strategies for a Better Tomorrow."

The program consisted of an opening session, middle session and closing session, each with ten minutes allotted to questions and answers. There were three or four speakers per session. New Ambassadors for Peace were appointed after the opening and closing sessions.

The chief guest was former Prime Minister of Nepal H.E. Madhav Kumar Nepal. On the same day he had a Central Committee Meeting with his own political party. Although there were urgent issues to be dealt with, he left that meeting to attend the UPF program. The special guest was former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary of Nepal H.E. Sujata Koirala. She was sick the night before, and that morning her doctors asked her to stay home and rest. She said that no matter what she would attend!

At this event there were 260 people in attendance, including: 16 members of parliament from ten political parties, 15 police and army officers (including 4 generals), 14 professional educators, 32 district peace council members (from UPF-Nepal outside Kathmandu), nine high-level government bureaucrats (led by the secretary of the Parliament), 22 international guests, four prominent artists, six well-known business leaders, 23 media representatives, and ten well-known politicians. Eleven Ambassadors for Peace certificates were presented.

A resolution was presented at the end of the program by a professor from India. The conference concluded with six-point resolution calling upon the countries and people of South Asia to prioritize sustainable peace, human development, interfaith harmony and character education, non-violent means of conflict resolution, and socio-ecological well being as new strategies for a better tomorrow.

Resolutions of the 15th South Asia Peace Initiative meeting to secure peace, cooperation and prosperity for the people of South Asia through responsive leadership and good governance with accommodative approaches towards social and cultural diversities. to promote and initiate programs and field-based activities (local, national and international) centering on eradicating poverty and socio-economic inequalities in the region. to initiate and develop a common curriculum to ensure character education and interfaith harmony among young students and the public at large in the region. to advocate and initiate committed programs for rebuilding trust and reconciliation in the region for enduring peace. to foster and initiate an atmosphere for peaceful resolution of conflicts through non-violent means and strategies with an inclusive mechanism. to address environmental concerns and ensure socio-ecological well-being for upcoming generations in the region for a better tomorrow.