

UPF-Russia: Role of Public Organizations in the Information Agenda of Russia

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Moscow, Russia—Neighborliness, mutual respect and partnerships were the main topics at a roundtable attended by parliamentarians and other distinguished speakers.

"The Role of Public Organizations in the New Cultural and Information Agenda of Russia" was initiated by UPF-Russia together with the international diplomatic club "Amicability" and was held at the Hotel National on April 8, 2017.

Participants discussed effective creative initiatives that could support the ideas of neighborliness and mutual respect, and contribute to the establishment of partnerships at global, regional and local levels. Further projects and initiatives in support of the Year of Ecology in Russia, proclaimed by the Russian president's Decree No. 7 of January 5, 2016, were also discussed.

The event followed a roundtable held in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly on March 24, 2017, on the initiative of the international diplomatic club "Amicability" with support of the Committee on Information Policy, Information Technologies and Communications.

State Duma Deputy Andrei Svintsov, who participated in the UPF World Summit in Seoul, South Korea, in February 2017, greeted the participants in a video address. He spoke about the importance of the International Association of Parliamentarians for World Peace, which was founded by UPF Co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon.

Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, the Eurasian regional chair of UPF, recalled his first visit to Moscow on April 8, 1990. It was then that the UPF Founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, met USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev.

The importance of dialogue and the overall reduction of tension between North Korea and South Korea was emphasized in a speech by Professor Vladimir Petrovskiy, representing the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He also noted that Russia and its NGOs can serve as an important catalyst for promoting peace processes on the Korean Peninsula.

People's diplomacy was mentioned by several speakers. A vivid example of this was a video sketch of the "Vote for Peace" project and the speech of its author, Lucky Lee, who recently returned from a peacemaking performance in New York, where he conducted a colorful flash-mob "Russian Tanks in Manhattan." The goal was to leave stereotypes about warlike Russians in the past; meanwhile the present and the future are an open Russian soul and beauty calling for peace and neighborliness.

An important component of the event was a group of academic speeches by those working in the fields of science and education. Professor Engel Tagirov, rector of the Institute for a Culture of Peace (UNESCO), arrived especially for the roundtable from the city of Kazan. Beginning with an intriguing question, "For whom does the history bell toll?" he touched on the importance of programs within the framework of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He invited the audience to participate in preparations for the international humanitarian forum on "Global Environmental Crisis: The Spiritual and Anthropological Context. Strategy of Self-Preservation and Sustainable Development of Humankind" within the framework of the UN program "Contribution of Scientific Communities to National and World Development."

Professor Sofya Arzumanyan, the director of the Noosphere educational foundation, spoke about the foundation's intercultural communication. The adolescent interactive educational project "The Suitcase for Creativity 'I Am a Russian'" and the youth educational project "Religious Cultures of the World" through creative tasks introduce children to the main religions and cultures of Russia and the world. This contributes to the formation of Russian civil identity and civil solidarity, she said.

One of the central presentations was the report by Konstantin Krylov, the Eurasian secretary general of UPF. He spoke about the federation's wide activity in the country and worldwide, about its history and peace initiatives, as well as about practical matters, including events regularly held by the activists of the federation and its partners.

In the concluding part, much was said in support of the dialogue between the authorities and public organizations. Modern realities are clearly pushing us toward mutually beneficial interaction between civil society and various governmental bodies that have financial resources, without which many NGO projects would not achieve high results. In this respect, a pool of socially oriented public organizations forming the National Union of NGOs is very timely. Its president, Alexander Aigistov, in his speech called on the audience to closer cooperation. Here, to avoid typical mistakes, the National Union of NGOs can provide both positive expertise and assistance.

The bright final speech was delivered by a member of the State Duma, Yevgeny Fedorov. He added traditional patriotic notes to his speech and offered specific proposals to NGO leaders: take the initiative in establishing a dialogue with the authorities and speak at specialized venues as an expert in the field of his or her competence.

The high level of the participants in the event, the ideas they voiced, concrete plans—all these helped to determine the range of tasks that must be solved in the near future in a constant dialogue at all social strata.