

UPF Eurasian Peace Council launched - regime and private sector leaders attend

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Moscow, Russia—Prominent representatives of NGOs, science, and government attended the inaugural meeting of the UPF Eurasian Peace Council.

The conference "Eurasian Peace Council: Interethnic Cooperation and Interfaith Dialogue for Sustainable Development" was held on April 9, 2016, in Moscow at the historic National Hotel across the street from the Kremlin.



The meeting was opened by Vladimir Petrovsky, an expert of the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs and a doctor of political sciences. He emphasized that the conference theme was connected with the Sustainable Development Goals that the UN General Assembly approved in September 2015. Seventeen goals and 169 tasks for sustainable development were declared, replacing the eight Millennium

Development Goals that the United Nations proclaimed in 2000. The new targets cover the whole spectrum of human life, including issues of national and personal security, socio-economic development, and the environment.

Dr. Petrovsky noted that UPF promotes the achievement of these objectives by practically doing the same as before: developing the activities of the Ambassadors for Peace, especially since UPF's daily work contributes to the achievement of the stated objectives. This is especially true for the goals of a healthy way of life, quality education, gender equality, reduction of inequality within nations, a peaceful and open society, and a global partnership to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr. Petrovsky reminded the audience about the projects that UPF has implemented over the years, in particular the Peace Initiative in the North Caucasus in which UPF, in collaboration with community organizations, religious leaders, and ombudspersons, sought to ensure personal protection of civilians caught up in the center of conflicts. Now it's time to think about restoring neighborly relations between Russia and Turkey, he said. Ambassadors for Peace from Azerbaijan could act as peacemakers and help to mend the human ties. Likewise, it is time to think about peace initiatives for the rapprochement of Russia and Ukraine, the two fraternal peoples. We should start from restoring the human contacts, he said.



Another important area of UPF-Eurasia's activities is strengthening traditional family values. UPF already has done much to promote family values at the international level. This work is much the same as that of the Russian leadership's.

UPF-Eurasia Regional Chair Dr. Katsumi Otsuka said that the conference was timed to the anniversary of the first visit to Moscow in 1990 of the UPF co-founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. The fact that in the capital of the Soviet Union an international media conference welcomed the famous religious leader Rev. Dr. Moon was a historic event. The visit showed the real changes taking place in the Soviet Union.

"I had the honor to visit Moscow together with Dr. Moon at the time, and I remember how warmly the city dwellers welcomed us," Dr. Otsuka said.

Mr. Rahim Huseynov, former prime minister of Azerbaijan and president of the Association of Scientific and Engineering Workers of Azerbaijan, said that each meeting with colleagues at UPF raises his spirit and willingness to work in the direction indicated by Rev. Dr. Moon. He told the audience about the recent conflict between ethnic Armenians and Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh; there again blood is being shed and people are dying. In such a situation, he said, the peace initiatives carried out by UPF and other organizations are particularly important.

"We must do everything for the sake of world peace," Mr. Huseynov said. "I hope that the decisions of this conference will be communicated to our citizens, our leaders, academics, government officials, and that the necessary conclusions will be drawn for the benefit of the common cause."

Dr. Stanislav Shushkevich, the former head of state of Belarus, expressed his hope that the world will follow the direction outlined by UPF. There will be people, even low-ranking, who will be able to communicate with those on whom the future of nations and the world depends, and help them to act for the benefit of all humankind. He cited an example of interaction between people of different nationalities and religions in his home country. More than 600 years ago, Tatars invaded Belarus and settled in the town of Lyntupy. Since then, for hundreds of years people of different faiths—Muslims, Christians of three denominations, and Jews—have lived in peace and mutual respect.

“In their religions they found the moments that allow them to coexist peacefully,” said Dr. Shushkevich. “I am convinced that there are such places in Russia and in other countries too. This is a great example for humanity, and such examples should be more and more frequent. Here, someone said that we were following the United Nations. However, in some areas the UN is following Dr. Moon. What was generated all over the world was generated by Dr. Moon. Let us be true to those principles of humanity and justice.”

Professor Efim Malitikov, president of the Knowledge international association, paid particular attention to one of the objectives of sustainable development: education for adults. He explained that basic knowledge in the ever-changing world is updated by 20 to 25 percent per year, and adults need to constantly update their skills to keep them and pass them to the next generation. This would be one of the important factors of sustainable development proclaimed by the United Nations. “Education is the construction of the world, and also the most effective way to protect the world,” said Professor Malitikov.



Professor Irina Aksenova, rector of the Upper Volga Institute and a vice president of Sun Moon University, told about her work at the Professors World Peace Academy, an organization founded by Dr. Moon, and about the new initiative of Sun Moon University: the “Glocal” (global + local) Community.

“It is human activities on the ground,” she explained. “If your organization is going to do something for the community, it will be a factor for sustainable development that will change the world.”

Professor Valeria Porokhova, an academician at the Academy of Natural Sciences at the International UN Academy who is known for her translation of the Koran, said in her speech that people could be divided into believers and non-believers, but it is impossible to divide people on religious affiliation. People choose their faith according to the Scriptures, rather than on grounds of ethnicity or national traditions, or those of their parents. But extremism is rooted in the ignorance of people who try to classify themselves as one religion or another, having nothing to do with Islam, Christianity, or Judaism, she said.

“Education and once again education—here's a solution to all the issues of extremism,” Professor Porokhova summed up.

Igor Filkevich, Ph.D., director of the MUM Institute for International Integration and Cooperation and president of the Eurasian Association of Economic Cooperation of Entrepreneurs and Public Organizations, stressed the importance of economic stability in society. According to him, many

economic problems and crises have led to international conflicts, and almost every war since the 18th century was generated by economic problems brought up to the level of an international conflict.

Dr. Filkevich said that our time is a period of economic instability accompanied by growth of poverty and social stratification. With poverty, the number of uneducated people is growing, and as a consequence there has appeared a myth about religions opposing each other and diverse views leading to conflicts on religious and ethnic grounds.

“In fact, our Eurasian world has always been based on the fact that the general principles for normal economic life and peaceful coexistence remain, regardless of our skin color and creed,” said Dr. Filkevich, adding that the mission of UPF is precisely to show how people themselves can bring about peace. “And no solution from above can ensure sustainable development, if I am in conflict with my neighbor or do not like some nation. It is important to understand that peace begins with each of us, and each of us has to realize the mission of the Ambassador for Peace.”

Zeydula Yuzbekov, assistant head of the Russian Republic of Dagestan and a doctor of economics, said that the climate of human relations in the large regions of Eurasia is determined by the climate of small regions, such as the Republic of Dagestan. There 39 nations and nationalities, many religions and denominations coexist and live in peace and friendship. The city of Derbent, where Orthodox churches function side by side with Jewish synagogues and Armenian churches, is a good example. Here, at all times, people have lived who desire tolerance and peace.

“The president of the Republic of Dagestan, Ramazan Abdulatipov, strives to overcome ignorance and raise the level of development of the republic through culture,” said Dr. Yuzbekov. “He approaches the economy issue through culture, politics — through culture, and for several years has done a lot in Dagestan.”

Felix Kim, president of the interregional public organization Bomminryon, which promotes the peaceful reunification of Korea, began by quoting the Russian philosopher and writer Ivan Ilyin: During its thousand-year history Russia has taken in a lot of people and hasn't lost a single one.

“Perhaps that is why in the Soviet Union we highly valued internationalism. We did not know anything about interethnic strife,” said Mr. Kim. “To achieve peace, it is necessary to raise the people's consciousness, revive their belief in ideals, honor, dignity, and justice; but the most important thing is to return to humankind their belief in love.”

Deputy Chair of the Assembly of Peoples of Russia Nikolai Bukhonin spoke about the work of his organization, which was founded 18 years ago. He reminded the audience that the Soviet Union's victory over Germany, the 70th anniversary of which was celebrated in 2015, was the result of the joint efforts of all nations of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Bukhonin said that friendship and mutual understanding should be taught from childhood. If a child understands the culture of his peers of other nationalities, he will find his path to peace and harmony, Mr. Bukhonin said.

“My youngest son goes to kindergarten. In their group there are Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Ukrainians. At the New Year's celebration the children presented different cultures in national costumes. It was so touching,” said Mr. Bukhonin. “I'd love it if UPF would find a common ground with the Assembly of Peoples of Russia. I am making a proposal to develop a draft agreement on cooperation in the field of peace and friendship between peoples.”

Theodore Yannitsi, director of the Hellenic Cultural Center and a candidate of historical sciences, spoke about the common pages of the history of the Russian and Greek peoples. She mentioned the spiritual community, which is the key to the two peoples' lasting friendship, including at the level of ordinary people. She quoted Russian travelers who visited Greece and testified to the warm welcome on the part of the local population. One of them met a Greek shepherd who said, "Russians are our brothers." These words of 1857 in the best way characterize the relationships of affinity between the two peoples, regardless of the political situation, said Ms. Yannitsi.

Summing up the conference, Yakov Mesenzhnik, a professor and winner of national and international awards in the fields of science, health, education and culture, emphasized that, until we achieve peace in the world, it is difficult to talk about sustainable development and development in general. He said that we should involve young people in altruistic work.

“Our movement is altruistic; we offer something for the sake of a higher goal,” Professor Mesenzhnik said. I would like to see such enthusiasm kept for many years. In conclusion, I would like to say that our conference is an important and significant event in the chain of activities aimed at establishing world peace.”