

# United Nations Africa Day 2019

Karsten Nielsen

On the occasion of UN Africa Day 2019 Universal Peace Federation in Denmark organized a symposium with the topic: **“Can the African culture lead the way to peace in the world?”** It was held in the UN City in Copenhagen and was attended by over 150 guests.

The three hours long program consisted of four presentations and four groups of entertainers with a half hour break where the guests could network and enjoy homemade African snacks.



In his welcoming remarks **Thorkil Christensen**, UPF co-chair, said: “Beside its struggle for freedom and battle to leave the troubled past behind, Africa is a continent with innovative ideas and a culture that goes beyond Africa. On this Africa Day we wish that Africa will seek a universal peace and not just copy the materialistic and individualistic oriented world which often lead to narrowminded and nationalistic opinions, a trend which we especially see in the rich part of the world.

One of UPF’s core values “to

live for the sake of others” naturally solves conflicts and lead to unity. The more we spread this tradition, *to live for the sake of others*, the greater likelihood of it being accepted in all walks of life as a central value. We hope we can be inspired by the warm and joyful heart of African people as well as the insight and wisdom of our speakers today and that we can feel closer as one big family that exceeds all limits”



**H.E. Maria-Goretti Blandine Dicko/Agaleoue Adoua**, Ambassador of Burkina Faso, spoke as representative of all the African ambassadors in Denmark, who had organized another celebration of Africa Day at the same time. She said, I welcome the vision and theme of UPF and believe Africa will become a pioneer for world peace for different reasons. Africa has a large population of young people who seek true peace. Beside the rich diversity of cultures in Africa, there are also sudden similarities as the traditional respect for the aged and the authorities, the kings and chiefs. Tolerance for your neighbor, hospitality and generosity are values which are still being taught in several ways. Félix Houphouët Boigny, the founder of Ivory Coast, said “*Peace is not a word, it is a*

*behavior.*” African leaders, parliamentarians, ombudsmen, mediators, kings and chiefs, are committed to action and have established several forums where they meet, cooperate and seek ideas for peace and security. Religious leaders and interreligious dialog as well play an important role in conflict resolution. “Yes, Africa can and will become the locomotive for a sustainable and lasting world peace. The group of African ambassadors accredited to Denmark shares this vision and works for its realization.”



The second speaker was **Holger Bernt Hansen**, professor emeritus, Centre of African Studies at Copenhagen University. After becoming Doctor of Philosophy, he studied at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. He has authored several internationally recognized works of the East African country and is probably the most knowledgeable person of Africa across the Nordic region.

He mentioned that among several great challenges in Africa parallel with Africa's increasing integration into the new world order, major societal changes taking place on the African continent there is an increasing large population of young people seeking jobs. No jobs, no peace. A current political issue is: how to make the young people a dividend, an advantage rather than

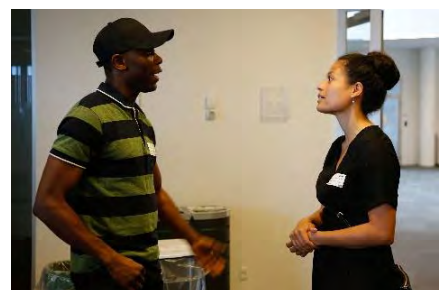
a risk factor? There is a crucial need for a triad of security, peace and development. It needs to come down to grassroot level or street level, to a platform where the African culture is expressed and given a crucial importance, for examples as seen in the uprising in Sudan during past months. There is an urgent need for leadership and better leaders.



A small woman with a big voice, **Joanita Zachariassen**, sang several songs with lots of energy, love and soul. She is an award winning and well-known artist from Uganda who recently won a talent show on national Danish TV.

It was followed by a stunning Africa Fusion dance performance by **Roots Astray**, two sisters, Maja and Esther Lindberg-Nielsen with roots in Zambia. Their dances showed stories of struggles, peace and sustainability.

In the break there were lively networking and sharing among participants of all colors . . .



After the break Thorkil Christensen briefly introduced the Sunhak Peace Prize, its founders and their vision of peace as one worldwide family under God. Then a video presentation of the African Sunhak Peace Prize recipients 2019 was shown.



The third speaker was partner coordinator for Christian-Muslim relations and theological information in Mission Afrika, **Clement S. Dacht**. He is from Nigeria but moved to Denmark in 2008 where he finished his Master of Theology. He has also worked for "Youth with a Mission" in Switzerland. To the topic "Africa being the model for global peace?" he responded by saying, Africa was a troubled region plagued by bad governance and wars casting shadows of gloom to the question of global peace. There is a broken system in the context of man and nature as well as in our social coexistence with one another. However, in our organization we search for lasting solutions through dialogue between national leaders and religious leaders, pan-African dialogue between Christians and

Muslims, to bring global issues down to the grassroots, use of diapraxis which not only brings people to talk together but to engage with one another, support economic opportunities for young people, support active, productive and ongoing diapraxis which already exist rather than bringing up new ideas. Africa has a large population of young people taking initiatives to make a difference. He concluded: "We live in a globalized world, African problems are not only African problems, they are global problems and African opportunities are global opportunities. Africa wants to be an active player and a model of peace. I believe in the youth of Africa and I believe in the future of Africa!"

At last **Anders Shagembe Joergensen** spoke about "*East African kucheza music culture creating meaning in diversity*". He travelled to and lived in Tanzania for many years. Since 1980s he studied and have in-depth knowledge about East African tribal & music culture. While music and rhythms earlier were used in connection with tribal wars and conflicts in Tanzania, the Sukuma tribe has developed a rich, peaceful culture of contests in dance, singing, rhythms and creative expressions. It includes both beginners, experienced, children, old, disabled and equilibrists, all have their place in the whole as well as their "moment of fame" - a perfect textbook example of how a community come together in unity and creates a larger entity. It is a culture which not only eliminated violent fights but had a developing influence.



Anders Shagembe had brought his Africans drums and included the whole audience in practicing African beats, outbreaks and rythmes.



The vocal emsemble **Boobab Sisters** performed South African music. The group has specialized in singing songs about universal topics like love and sorrow in local languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. They tour in Denmark and South Africa and has performed for Archbishop Desmond Tutu who has said about them: "*Baobab Sisters made a tremendous contribution to racial harmony and understanding. I hope many others will see just how you can touch the hearts of those of another race and nationality. They are such charming teachers, teaching South Africans about racial harmony and friendship, breaking down walls of misunderstanding and prejudice.*"

In his final remarks Thorkil Christensen said: “Can we build peace without God? Do we need God’s blessing to our work for peace? Where does peace start? It starts in the family and therefore God’s blessing also needs to start with the family. Therefore, UPF invite all participants to join a special Family Blessing next month”

**Moto Moto Entertainers**, a group of Ugandians performed traditional African dances and got all participants involved in a grand finale of African music, moves and dance.



TV Bella recorded the event and broadcasted the whole program on a local TV channel in Copenhagen.

Link to a 5 minutes video summary: <https://vimeo.com/342592612/1e891d091f>

Link to photo album: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/btedjVKQH5j63GDv7>