

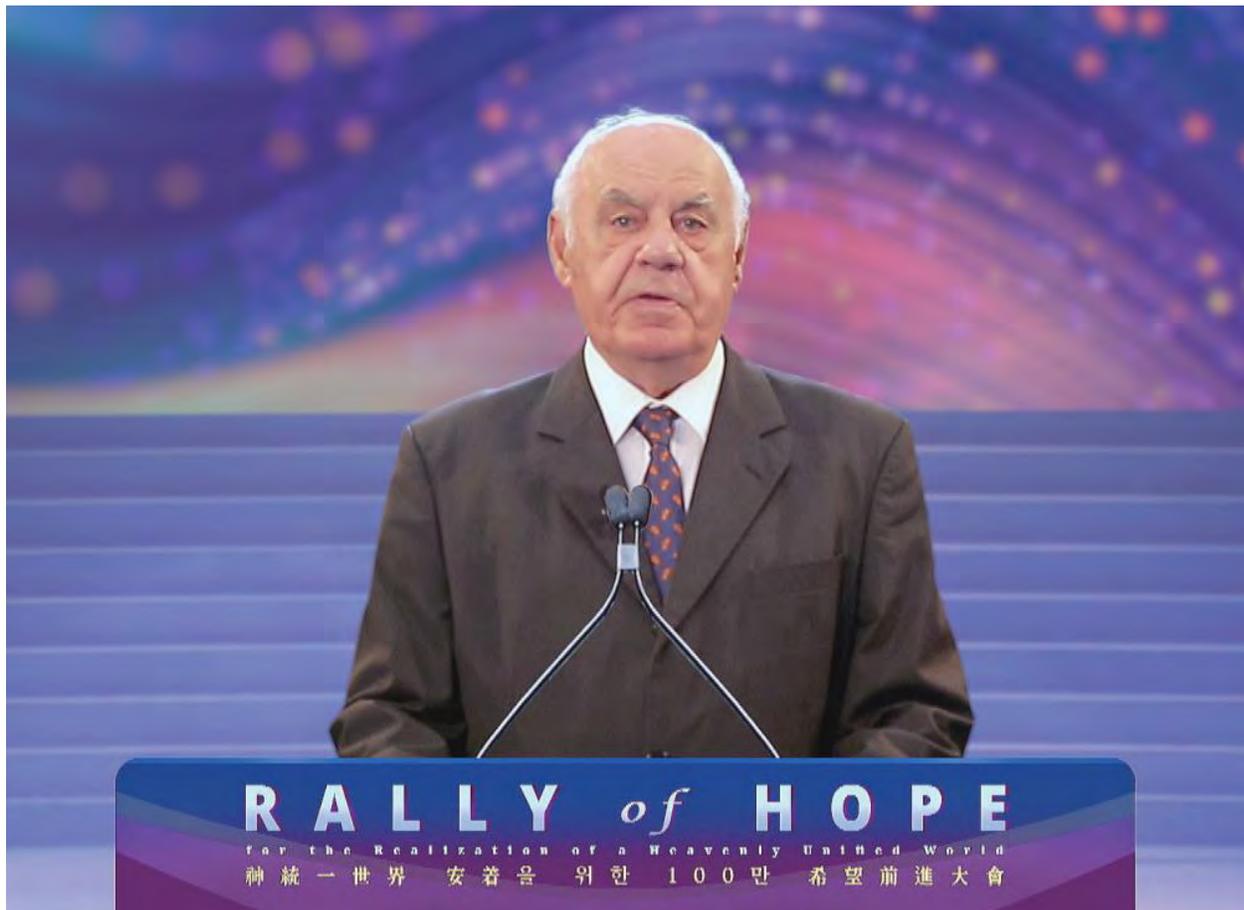
We Need to Improve Good Governance at the National and Global Levels

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Albania's president 2002–2007

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I greet you at this important event wishing that you are all doing well. We are living in a unique time of crises, like never seen before, and it is a time for the world's leaders to reflect deeply and build together a global strategy on how to move forward as a global family. We are proud that UPF, under Dr. Moon's leadership, has initiated a series of Peace Talk Webinars to provide a platform for leading figures from the worlds of politics, religion, academia, business and the media to contribute to the process of outlining the kind of world that needs to emerge from the current health crisis, by highlighting the values of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

As we are still in the middle of the pandemic. We have seen that the world was entirely unprepared for this phenomenon, which should serve as a strong lesson for leaders in the world that they need to think differently. We should work together cooperatively and constructively for the sake of mutual prosperity and peace, by moving beyond the COVID-19 crisis and reaching a state of preparedness for future crises. There are nations and corporations however that are trying to use the pandemic for their own agenda and benefits, forgetting that we are one interdependent human family and that we should live and work together, respectfully and cooperatively. Otherwise more serious problems will arise.

More than ever, we need to improve good governance at the national, regional and global levels as essential elements for peace and development. As we see, the COVID-19 crisis is having a broad influence on the geopolitical balance of power as well as on the global economy. It is affecting all sectors of government, academia and education, business and economy, religion, the family, women and youth, the media, and the environment.

It is necessary to emphasize that, among other things, we need to teach people to maintain discipline in the implementation of medical requirements and advice during this time of pandemic.

We need also to strengthen human solidarity, because the disease does not ask if you are rich or poor, while the consequences suffered are the same for all. The Western Balkans Region as we know, is at a crucial moment in its integration process into European Union.

The current crisis has brought enormous financial and economic problems in our region, however, we see that some political leaders in the Balkans are not focused totally on overcoming this crisis, but are investing a lot of energy in order to bring forward their existing selfish agendas, supported by big powers.

Transformation is still possible

I would like to emphasize this point: The Balkan Peninsula could be Europe's treasure. Historically, it has been the place of confrontation between civilizations, religions, cultures and ideologies. It has been the confrontation line between East and West, but it could be the bridge between East and West. We know that much potential resides in that possibility. In order for the Balkans to manifest its true potential, we now need a special focus on bringing about deep reconciliation. Making this happen is Europe's responsibility especially.

European policymakers must be more careful in their judgments and decisions in relation to the problems in the Balkans, so that true justice prevails. Otherwise, if we do not act responsibly now, the Balkans will continue to "produce more history than it can consume."

The Universal Peace Federation deserves appreciation and applause for its unchanging, steadfast efforts to support the peace processes in the Balkans and as ambassadors for peace we will work harder to bring forward the reconciliation process. However, in order for all of us to leave behind a legacy of peace and cooperation for future generations, all parties should work together, including governments, academicians and youth. Thank you once again for allowing me to address this important event and God bless you!