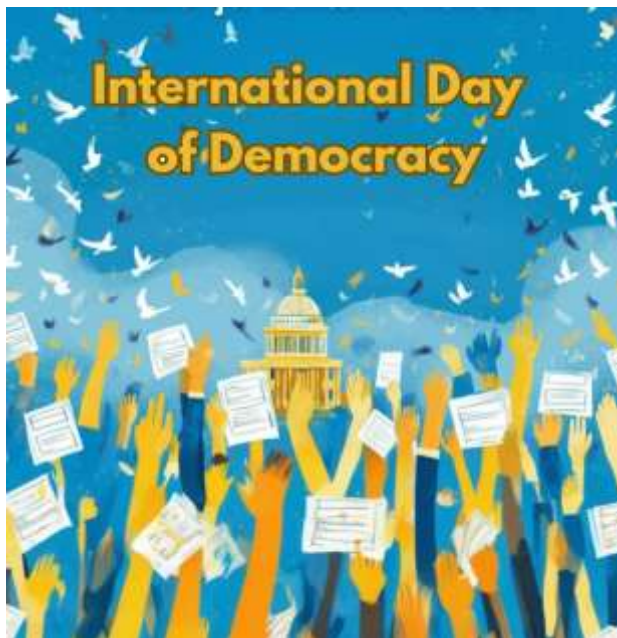


## UPF International: Freedom with Responsibility - A Vision for Democratic Renewal

Tageldin Hamad  
September 15, 2025



As the United Nations marks the International Day of Democracy on September 15, 2025, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) reaffirms its commitment to the principles of participatory governance, ethical leadership, and the inherent dignity of every individual. In this 20th anniversary year of our founding, we are guided by the vision that inspired UPF's creation: a world where leadership is grounded in conscience and service, and where humanity is united as one global family.

This year's observance takes place against a backdrop of eroding trust in institutions, deepening social divisions, and the widespread challenge of disinformation. In response, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, particularly Goal 16, emphasizes inclusive, accountable, and transparent governance. Foundational texts such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights, and relevant Human Rights Council resolutions affirm that freedom of thought, expression, assembly, and participation are essential for just and resilient societies.

UPF was founded on the conviction that democracy provides a vital framework for human flourishing. Its founders, Dr. Hak Ja Han and the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon, both endured religious persecution under authoritarian and democratic systems. Even today, Dr. Hak Ja Han continues to face religious discrimination. These experiences deepened their commitment to the belief that freedom of conscience and belief is not a privilege, but a universal right and a cornerstone of any authentic democracy. Their teachings affirm that democracy must not only protect civil rights but also nurture the inner moral capacity of citizens and leaders alike.

Democracy guided by ethical principles fosters resilience and cohesion. When conscience, empathy, and mutual respect shape public life, democratic institutions become instruments of peace and progress. As Rev. Moon warned, freedom without responsibility leads to fragmentation. Paired with integrity and a spirit of reconciliation, democracy becomes a path toward unity and renewal.

In this spirit, UPF fosters a culture of dialogue and ethical leadership through action. Our global programs, including inter-religious peace councils, youth civic education, and track II diplomacy initiatives, complement UN efforts by building bridges across divides and promoting a shared ethical foundation. These contributions align with the principles affirmed at the Summit of the Future, the Vienna Declaration, and the UN Global Compact, all of which underscore the interdependence of democracy, human rights, and development.

We therefore affirm that democratic renewal is inextricably linked to effective multilateral cooperation. Initiatives such as the UN Youth 2030 Strategy and the Alliance of Civilizations highlight the importance of intergenerational solidarity and shared responsibility in shaping inclusive futures. In this context, democracy must adapt to meet evolving global challenges such as climate disruption, digital governance, and rising inequality, while maintaining its moral compass.

UPF calls on all people of goodwill, citizens, governments, educators, and community leaders, to renew their commitment to dialogue, transparency, and mutual respect. Democracy is not sustained by procedure alone. It must be lived daily through active participation, informed decision-making, and a willingness to uphold the rights of others as we would our own.

On this day, let us remember that we are citizens of distinct nations, yet members of one human family, united by a shared destiny. Together, we must ensure that democracy remains not merely a form of governance but a living pledge to the common good and a peaceful future for all.