

UNESCO's Samarkand Conference: Reflections from Universal Peace Federation

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The role of intercultural dialogue, ethical education, and responsible innovation in shaping humanity's future

UNESCO's [43rd General Conference](#) in Samarkand, held from October 30 to November 13, 2025, marks a moment for global dialogue on education, culture, and ethics in the digital age. Gathering representatives of 195 member states for the first time outside Paris in nearly four decades, the conference underscores the value of intercultural understanding at a time when technology is reshaping societies faster than human consciousness can adapt.

Samarkand, a historic crossroads on the [Silk Roads](#), serves as a fitting venue for exploring the interconnections of knowledge, ethics, and identity in humanity's journey toward the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4 ([SDG 4](#)) on quality education and Sustainable Development Goal 16 ([SDG 16](#)) on peace, justice and strong institutions.

The Universal Peace Federation ([UPF](#)) commends this emphasis on the ethical dimensions of progress. Since its founding in 2005, UPF has convened leaders, scholars, and faith communities in addressing the cultural roots of conflict and building frameworks of cooperation beyond religion, ethnicity, and ideology. Founded by [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and [Dr. Sun Myung Moon](#), UPF's vision is rooted in the principle that humanity is one family under God. The organization affirms that education, the family, and cultural exchange are inseparable from peacebuilding, because they nurture empathy and reveal the common spiritual heritage within every civilization.

This core principle, embodied in UPF's initiatives aligns with UNESCO's constitutional mission to build peace in the minds of men and women. This spirit of cooperation has historical depth: in 2009, UPF hosted a conference at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, affirming shared goals of peace through education and cultural understanding. Among the distinguished participants was former UN Secretary-General [Boutros Boutros-Ghali](#), whose presence underscored the link between UNESCO's mission and the vision of UPF to build bridges of dialogue and partnership among nations.

This spirit of engagement continued in 2012, when UPF held its [European Leadership Conference](#) at UNESCO HQ under the patronage of the Permanent Delegations of Oman and Kenya. The conference brought together diplomats, scholars, and faith leaders to address themes of human security, the role of the family, and education as foundations for peace, further deepening UPF's ongoing collaboration with UNESCO.

UPF's initiatives, such as those led by the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development ([IAPD](#)) and the International Association of Arts and Culture for Peace ([IAACP](#)), demonstrate that human relationships, rather than automation, form the bedrock of peace. As communities collaborate across cultural and religious divides in service to others, technology serves as a connector rather than a divider. These efforts show how this ethical framework, grounded in discernment, knowledge, and service, can guide advancement toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and safeguard human dignity.

As UNESCO addresses the future of education and cultural heritage, UPF advocates for enhanced focus on ethical and cultural education that integrates intellectual and character development, rooted in family-centered values and intergenerational responsibility. UPF extends an invitation to governments, educational institutions, and [Ambassadors for Peace](#) of the Universal Peace Federation to partner in initiatives that strengthen ethical standards and intercultural dialogue in the digital landscape. Through dialogue that respects diverse traditions, humanity can forge technologies and institutions aligned with its aspirations.

The Universal Peace Federation continues its dedication to partnering with stakeholders across regions to cultivate a world where culture, conscience, and creativity converge in pursuit of enduring peace and mutual prosperity.

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