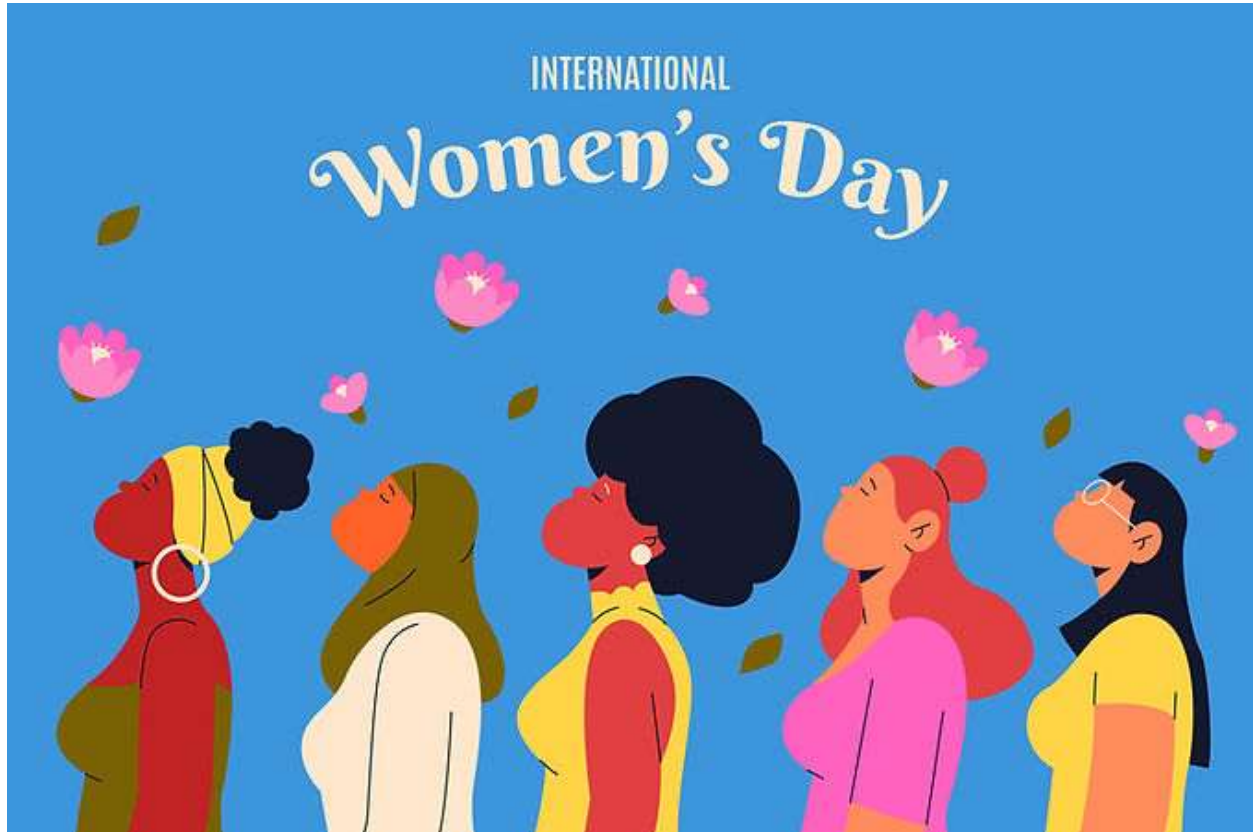


## UPF International: Women's Day - Dignity, Justice and Peace for All Women

Tageldin Ibrahim Hamad  
March 8, 2026



On [International Women's Day](#), observed in 2026 under the theme "[Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls.](#)" the Universal Peace Federation honors women whose qualities and service strengthen families, communities, and nations.

As the international community prepares for the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women ([CSW70](#)) - whose priority theme is ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers - and as the United Nations marks the [International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026](#), designated by the General Assembly, and the [International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development](#), this day calls for respect, seriousness, and practical partnership with women who sustain peace in their work and daily life.

The modern international meaning of March 8 did not begin as a seasonal custom. It grew from women's long effort to secure fairer conditions, fuller civic participation, and respect for their equal dignity. When the United Nations began observing the day in 1975, and in 1977 called on member states to proclaim a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, the date gained a wider and more universal framework.

For UPF, this history points not to ideological division, but to a simple and durable truth: peace becomes stronger when the rights, conscience, gifts, and contributions of women are taken seriously.

With deep respect, we recognize [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#), whose public life has been marked by perseverance and by the patient building of institutions that outlast individual lifetimes. Together with her husband, the late [Rev. Sun Myung Moon](#), she helped shape a broad vision of peace grounded in human dignity, the moral strength of the family, and the demands of public service. She stood beside him in difficult moments of public mission, and in later years carried that work forward with discipline and clarity.

In April 1992, they founded the [Women's Federation for World Peace](#), an older sister organization to UPF. In the eight months that followed, she delivered inaugural addresses in 113 cities in 12 countries and in three languages. During her 1993 world tour, she spoke at the United Nations in New York, the Kremlin in Moscow, and the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, highlighting women as peacebuilders and moral voices in public life, while affirming peace among nations and the ethical role of the family. WFWP also helped prepare the ground for the later [International Association of First Ladies for Peace](#), which UPF developed as a framework for women in public leadership.

Dr. Han's later work expanded this institutional foundation. In 2013, she proposed the [Sunhak Peace Prize](#), whose first award ceremony was held in 2015. From 2016 onward, she also helped initiate and shape UPF's primary associations. These included the [International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace](#), the [Interreligious Association for Peace and Development](#), and the [International Association of First Ladies for Peace](#). They also included the [International Association of Academicians for Peace](#), the [International Media Association for Peace](#), the [International Association for Peace and Economic Development](#), and the [International Association of Arts and Culture for Peace](#). Through these platforms, UPF widened its work through summit diplomacy, parliamentary engagement, interreligious cooperation, academic exchange, media responsibility, cultural dialogue, and development oriented partnership.

UPF also extends warm congratulations to the leaders and activists of the Women's Federation for World Peace. WFWP remains closely aligned with UPF, and its record of service has been especially meaningful in vulnerable settings. We express particular admiration for the many WFWP activists from Japan who have served in conflict affected regions. Their devoted work has fostered dialogue, education, and humanitarian action in the Middle East and across Africa and Asia. Their investments illustrate the principle of living for the sake of others as a daily practice of care, where trust is scarce and needs are urgent. Their example shows that peace is built not only in summit halls, but also in families, schools, local partnerships, and steady service to vulnerable communities.

We also express regret that Dr. Hak Ja Han continues to face ongoing legal proceedings in the Republic of Korea and intense public attacks related to her public mission. We hope these matters reach, appropriately, a fair and impartial conclusion consistent with the rule of law and human dignity. This concern is especially meaningful as the United Nations and civil society prepare for CSW70, where access to justice for women and girls, through inclusive and equitable legal systems, stands at the center of discussion. It is also timely during UPF's [100 Days of Serving Community](#) campaign, launched on February 20 and running through June 1, 2026, with March focused on partnerships that strengthen trust, service and family life at the local level.

This conviction reflects the teaching of our founders that humanity is one family under God. They affirm that peace begins in the family as the first school of love, responsibility, and conscience, and grows outward into the community, the nation and the wider world.

In that spirit, we see International Women's Day as a fitting occasion for governments, civil society, faith communities, and citizens to deepen their cooperation with and appreciation of women whose steady work keeps reconciliation possible.



## DR. HAK JA HAN

Dr. Hak Ja Han, widow of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon [1920-2012], is the co-founder of the Universal Peace Federation. Together with her husband, she has devoted her life to peace, founding many organizations and initiatives in a wide range of fields.

### Childhood and Family Life



Hak Ja Han was born in Anju, South Pyong-an Province, now in North Korea, on the 6th day of the first lunar month (February 10) in 1943. Her mother, Soon-ae Hong, was an earnest Christian and her father, Seung-un Han, was the disciple of a famous preacher, Rev. Young-do Lee. The North Korean Communists were bent on suppressing religion, and in 1948, when she was five years old, her mother and grandmother were arrested by Communist police and jailed for 11 days.

After their release, Hak Ja Han, her mother, and her grandmother fled their village in the middle of the night. They went to Seoul, later moving further south to Taegu, where they lived through the Korean War. The family later moved to Chuncheon, where Hak Ja Han's uncle was living, and she soon graduated from elementary school in that city.

During this period, she, along with her mother, joined the newly formed Unification Church. Five years after joining, on April 11, 1960, the young Hak Ja Han married the church's founder, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. She stands as co-founder of the Unification Church, now known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Since the passing of her husband, she has taken full responsibility for the affairs of the worldwide movement the two worked tirelessly to establish.

### Devoted Wife, Mother, and Grandmother



Dr. Han is a devoted wife, the mother of 14 children and the grandmother of more than 40 grandchildren. She is known for her extraordinary compassion, capability, grace and charm. Above all, she is exemplary as a woman who has created a God-centered marriage and family of three generations.

### Leadership to Strengthen Families

The heart and soul of Rev. Moon and Dr. Han's lifelong ministry is the re-establishment of God's ideal of the family as the foundation for harmonious societies and the cornerstone of world peace. The Marriage Blessing movement, which began with the marriage of three couples in 1960, has reached millions of couples worldwide. Dr. Han and her husband presided over marriage blessings in Madison Square Garden in New York in 1982, in Seoul's Olympic Stadium in 1992, in RFK Stadium in Washington, D.C. in 1997, and other venues over many years.



[Right: Marriage Blessing at RFK Stadium, Washington, DC]

### A Woman of International Peace and Good Will

In 1968, Rev. Moon established the Professors World Peace Academy in Korea, and in 1972 the first International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences was held. These and similar organizations have attracted the participation of scholars, scientists, and leaders in the fields of religion, the media, government, and the arts, including numerous Nobel Laureates. Dr. Han played a crucial role in all of these developments, where her compassion and kindness complemented her husband's vision and drive.

By addressing informal gatherings of women at these activities, Dr. Han became more visible in the public sphere. Her speeches included the Address to the Women of the World Media Conference (October 1981) and the Address to the Women of the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (November 1981). She moved forward on the world stage for the promotion of God-centered values in 1989, when an interview with Soviet media appeared in the Religion and Society section of Za Rubezhom (June 12, 1989).

### Meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and President Kim Il Sung in North Korea



The following year, [Rev. Moon and Dr. Han met with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev](#). This extraordinary event, which took place in the Kremlin on their 30th wedding anniversary, April 11, 1990, initiated an educational exchange that brought hundreds of Russian students to study in the United States.

Then, in December of 1991, Dr. Han put her life on the line when she and her husband traveled to North Korea to meet with President Kim Il Sung for the purpose of uniting the two Koreas. That meeting led to ongoing projects to facilitate the peaceful union of North and South Korea.

### Founding the Women's Federation for World Peace and Universal Peace Federation

In 1992, Dr. Han, together with her husband, founded the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), of which she became international chairwoman. She invested all her energy into developing a global base for the new organization, giving the federation's inaugural speech in 113 cities in 12 countries and in three different languages within an eight-month period.

Her first world tour in 1993 took her to 44 cities in the United States, 27 cities in Japan, 40 university campuses in Korea, and 41 nations around the world. She spoke in such notable venues as Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., the United Nations in New York City, the Kremlin, the Great Hall in Beijing, and congressional buildings in Japan, Korea, and Canada.

A further turning point came with the inauguration of the [Universal Peace Federation](#) on September 12, 2005. The years that followed were a period of intensive joint outreach and institution building. Dr. Han accompanied Rev. Moon on a world speaking tour of 100 international cities in 100 days.

The following year, accompanied by her adult children and grandchildren, she undertook two world tours for peace at the incredible pace of one country per day. She and her family spoke to enthusiastic audiences in 120 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Oceania and Latin America. She was received as a dignitary and met with many heads of states, prominent religious leaders and

political leaders.

Perhaps no other woman leader has addressed so many large audiences in as many countries as Dr. Han. Today, after years of intense international work, she is recognized as one of the most effective woman leaders in the world.



[Above left: Dr. Moon speaks in the Tokyo Dome and right: United Nations.]

In July of 1993, after speaking throughout America, Dr. Moon's tour culminated with addresses on the US Capitol Hill and at the United Nations, delivering a message of peace and interreligious reconciliation.

### Taking on the Mantle of Leadership



After Rev. Moon's passing in September 2012, Dr. Hak Ja Han assumed full responsibility for the worldwide movement and entered a new phase of leadership marked by consolidation, modernization, and the creation of international platforms designed to outlast any single generation.

### The Sunhak Peace Prize

In February 2013, she proposed the [Sunhak Peace Prize](#) in memory of Dr. Sun Myung Moon, framing it as a public instrument to recognize leadership for peace and human development. A preparatory committee was formed in January 2014, the first laureates were announced in June 2015, and the inaugural award ceremony was held in Seoul on August 28, 2015. The first laureates were former President Anote Tong of Kiribati and Indian aquaculture pioneer Dr. Modadugu Vijay Gupta. The same year, Dr. Han visited India and Nepal in November 2015, where she met government leaders and addressed public meetings, reflecting her emphasis on peacebuilding that combines high level dialogue with grounded community development.

The Sunhak Peace Prize continued on a two-year cycle, with the second award ceremony in February 2017, honoring Italian humanitarian surgeon Dr. Gino Strada and Dr. Fatema Hameed. The third award ceremony, in February 2019, honored women's rights activist Ms. Waris Dirie and African development leader Hon. Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina. These choices reflected the prize's stated focus on sustainable human development, conflict resolution, and ecological conservation, and they placed women's leadership and social solidarity at the center of peacebuilding.

### UPF's Primary Associations and the World Summit

From 2016 onward, her leadership included the establishment of UPF's primary associations as standing platforms for sector specific cooperation. The [International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace](#) was inaugurated in February 2016, and in November 2017, UPF launched the [Interreligious Association for Peace and Development](#), offering a structured framework for interfaith cooperation that has particular relevance in societies shaped by migration and religious diversity.

World Summit 2019 in Seoul was another milestone, convening current and former heads of state and government, parliamentarians, and civic leaders. In that context, UPF also established the [International Summit Council for Peace](#), a platform intended to sustain dialogue among national leaders beyond electoral cycles and regional divides.

In February 2020, UPF convened World Summit 2020, an expanded framework for high-level dialogue that also served as a launch point for additional sector platforms including the [International Association of Academicians for Peace](#), the [International Association for Peace and Economic Development](#), the [International Media Association for Peace](#), and the [International Association of Arts and Culture for Peace](#). During the COVID-19 years, UPF adapted its convening model through initiatives such as the global online Rally of Hope series, and in May 2021 launched Think Tank 2022 to generate practical policy proposals through cross-sector collaboration.

[World Summit 2022](#) in Seoul was an international gathering hosted by Dr. Hak Ja Han that combined in-person participation with global virtual engagement. Within that summit framework, the Sunhak Peace Prize Award Ceremony honored Professor Dame Sarah Catherine Gilbert of the University of Oxford and [Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance](#) for contributions linked to vaccine development and equitable immunization. In May 2023, UPF convened [Peace Summit 2023](#), where Dr. Han addressed global participants and continued to frame peace as a long-term, values-based project that requires leaders, institutions, and citizens to cooperate across dividing lines of nation, religion, and ideology.

### Dedication of the Cheon Won Gung

Since the 1970s, Rev. Moon and Dr. Han have worked to establish a permanent base for the Unification community in the district of Gapyeong in South Korea. They purchased land and built numerous buildings, including a training center, a hospital, a middle and high school, a graduate school and Korean language academy, a retirement home, residential apartments, and a world-class stadium. After her husband's passing, Dr. Han directed the construction of an office complex and the imposing Cheon Won Gung, or Peace Palace. On April 13, 2025, Dr. Han dedicated this beautiful building to God, as a place where people, including world leaders, can come to meet their Heavenly Parent and join together in seeking pathways to peace.

Through the decades of Dr. Han's public life, the core narrative has been continuity in building families dedicated to the public good, as well as partnerships among individuals and groups striving for harmony and peace. Since her husband's passing in 2012, she has focused on institution building to ensure these efforts endure. She continues to advance a vision of peace grounded in the dignity of the person, the strength of the family, and the belief that humanity is one family under God.



## Universal Peace Federation

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