

UPF New York, USA's NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values & Global Concerns

Genie Kagawa
March 26, 2019



New York, United States -- From 2017 to 2018, UPF chaired the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-NY, a consultative member of the Conference of NGOs at the United Nations. Members of the Executive Council included various faith-based organizations at the United Nations, which adhered to the Mission Statement of CSVGC-NY.

The committee is resolved to help bring about a culture in which the peoples of the world can address together our common global concerns in a holistic, positive and transforming way and "live together in peace with one another" -- thus realizing the core objectives and universal principles stated in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Members of the Executive Council (2017-2018)

Chair: Genie Kagawa, Universal Peace Federation
Vice chair: Rabbi Roger Ross, United Religions Initiative at the United Nations (URI UN)
Vice chair: Swami Parmeshananda, Bharat Sevashram Sangha
Recording secretary: Cynthia Shibuya, Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP)
Corresponding secretary: Cathy Towle, International Association for the Advancement of Innovative Approaches to Global Challenges (IAAI-Glocha)
Treasurer: John Digilio, Knights Templar International
Council members: Robert Takagi, Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development; David Kirshbaum, Nonviolence International
Elaine Shao, International Relief Friendship Foundation
Dr. Kurt Johnson, National Ethical Service
Chair emerita: Sharon Hamilton, Institute of International Social Development
Founding chair: Diane Williams, Tribal Link

Members of the UN community and the public are invited to participate in activities such as panel discussions, group meditations, symposia, and interactive workshops. A highlight of the committee's events is the Week of Spirituality Award Ceremony at which the Spirit of the United Nations Award is presented to members of the UN community -- distinguished ambassadors, UN staff, NGO and youth

representatives -- who uphold the founding spirit of the United Nations. The Executive Council meets monthly, and various working groups of the committee organize monthly events.

The following is a brief summary of the CSVGC-NY general monthly meetings of 2017-2018 for the UN community:



January 19, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, New York
"Visioning the Future: Consistency in the Midst of Change"

Dr. Andrew Vidich of the Science of Spirituality Meditation Center gave a presentation.

In recent times there have been calls for better ways to manage the multifaceted and complex changes in every segment of human existence. Whether social, political, philosophical or religious, changes impact our lives and how we view the work at the United Nations.

Dynamic and interactive discussion and strategic planning took place on spirituality and the impact and realistic goals that are at play in the determination of policy and action at the United Nations. The Visioning Meeting was the time to set priorities. The following council members conducted sessions concerning the guiding principles and three areas of focus of the committee: spirituality, values and global concerns – Genie Kagawa, Sharon Hamilton-Getz, Rabbi Roger Ross, David Kirshbaum and Cathy Towle.

February 23, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, New York
"Refugees and the Culture of Peace: What Spirituality Has to Offer"

Global challenges of alarming famine, poverty and forced displacement have resulted in refugee programs on an unimaginable scale and potentially will lead to a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, resulting in untold suffering and instability.

The CSVGC-NY Culture of Peace Working Group organized the program to highlight the role of faith and spirituality in bringing solutions to the problem of refugees. With John Digilio of Knights Templar as moderator, the speakers were David Kirshbaum of Nonviolence International; Colin and Latifa Woodhouse of Unitarian Universalists; and Juliana Taimorazy, founder and president, Iraqi Christian Relief Council. The speakers shared moving tributes to volunteers who raised their own money to personally demonstrate the best practice of direct assistance, based on the philosophy "We are them," to effect dramatic results by going directly to the people.

March 16, 2017, 4 West 43rd St., New York
"Women's Global Leadership, Spirituality and Ethics"

The Women Rising Working Group of CSVGC-NY organized a parallel event during the week of the UN Commission on the Status of Women 61, co-sponsored by UPF, WFP and Lalitamba Mandiram.

The difficulties, complexity and unique perspective that women bring to politics, business and culture were highlighted, along with the emphasis on values and ethics that enhances capacities for a successful outcome. It was emphasized that women's exceptional capability of holding things together can be channeled into the peacemaking process, forging communities, creating lasting networks and ensuring that goals are met.

Co-chaired by Genie Kagawa and Cathy Towle, the program brought many of these issues to the forefront. The speakers were Swamini Sri Lalitambika Devi; Yvonne Lodico, founder and president,

Grace Initiative; Rev. Tsu-Wei Chang, former president of the UN Women's Guild; and Gunjan Goel, president of the Global Chamber of Commerce and consulate officer of Liberia.

April 27, 2017, the African Union, New York
"Caring for Our Forests: Reforestation and Stewardship"

The CSVGC-NY Eco-Spirituality Working Group put together an important panel discussion to highlight that the loss of forests worldwide has called into question the way we use our planet's resources. Discussion centered on stewardship, in which all of nature is sacred and we become protectors of natural resources, rather than plunderers.

The speakers reported on projects to save forests, improve policies and engage governments and civil society to work together to preserve the lungs of the world. The meeting was chaired by Cathy Towle, and the speakers were H.E. Tete Antonio, African Union ambassador; Ken Kitatani, Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development; Betty Lyons, executive director, American Indian Law Alliance; Dr. Tageldin Hamad of the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO).

The respondents were Rick Clugston, a fellow at the Center for Earth Ethics, Union Theological Seminary; and Juan Chebly, the lead adviser to the United Nations Environment Programme.



May 9, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, New York
"A Whole Worldview: Transforming Emergency to Emergence"

CSVGC-NY co-sponsored an event with the Source of Synergy Foundation, United Religions Initiative, New Innergy, the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, World Peace Prayer Society, UN Enlightenment Society, and We, the World. Keynote speaker Jude Currivan presented the shift to a "Whole World View" as the formula for increasing the effectiveness of efforts to implement the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event was moderated by Monica Willard and Deborah Moldow, and the respondents were Ambassador Anwarul Chowdury, Myra Jackson of the Common Cluster of NGOs, and Dr. Kurt Johnson of National Ethical Service, along with performers Kristin Hoffman, Biswadeb Chakraborty of India and Rachel Baird.

May 25, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, Boss Room, New York
"The Impact of Dag Hammarskjöld on the UN of Today"

The working group on the Spiritual History of the UN organized a panel on the contributions of former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld (1953-1961) in building a firm foundation on which we may unite our strengths, live together in peace, and mutually address today's global problems. The panel was co-chaired by Genie Kagawa and Rabbi Roger Ross. The featured speakers were Lisa Orrenius, head of the UN Office of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation; Richard Jordan, UN representative of the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT) Foundation; and Rabbi Ross, a URI UN representative. Additionally, the panel highlighted the role of the secretary general in the early founding history of the United Nations, bringing to light his dedication and brilliance in pursuing the UN ideals and his heritage in addressing our common challenges in a holistic and transformative way.

June 14, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, Boss Room, New York
"Entering the Heart of Oneness: Addressing Alienation"

Retreat facilitator Andrew Vidich of the Science of Spirituality Meditation Center led the program. One message shared by all religions, Mr. Vidich said, is that our lives flounder unless we focus on the divine, as alienation is not from social institutions but "from the ground under our feet."

According to Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, "Divine-seekers do not look for help in disruptions -- just the opposite. The turn to the divine is toward unity: with the divine, with ourselves, and with others." Rich

reflections and insights were offered regarding the complexities of our work with and for the UN community, accompanied by a renewed understanding of our mutual mission toward global peace.

**September 21, 2017, The Episcopal Church, New York
International Day of Peace and Interfaith Climate Week**

CSVGC-NY co-sponsored a celebration of the International Day of Peace with the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations on September 21, including a reception in celebration of Interfaith Climate Week. It was an informal gathering for faith-based organizations to exchange information about their climate-change programs and activities.

Speakers from the Committee of Religious NGOs were Swami Parameshananda, Dr. Kusumita P. Pedersen, Rev. Doyeon Park, and Lynnaia Main. Other sponsors were the Episcopal Church, Greenfaith, the Parliament of the World's Religions, Religions for Peace, RIEL Network, the Temple of Understanding, United Religions Initiative, the World Council of Churches, and the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology.



**October 23-25, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, New York
Week of Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns**

In honor of the establishment of the United Nations, which was founded on universal principles, the Week of Spirituality was created to demonstrate how the spiritual dimension ensures adherence to the values expressed in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Below is the weekly schedule, which lists the unique programs of interest at the UN taken from a holistic perspective.

The Week of Spirituality was held on the theme "SDG Success: The Spiritual Indicators and a Universal Push to Transform the World." The 2017 Spirit of the United Nations Award Ceremony began with meditation in the Chapel of the Church Center. The awards ceremony, on the second floor of 777 UN Plaza, honored the following distinguished honorees before an audience of 250 from the UN:

Diplomats Award: H.E. Katalin Annamaria Bogyay, ambassador of Hungary to the United Nations

UN System Award: Simona Cruciani, political affairs, Office of the Special Adviser on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect

NGO Award: Richard Jordan, UN representative of the RASIT Foundation

Youth Award: Danilo Parmegiani, Legion of Goodwill

Special Award: H.E. Isaiah Z. Chabala, former ambassador of Zambia to the United Nations

Musical presentations were offered by the MS 433 New Voices Choir, the Camargo Guarnieri Youth Philharmonic, and Steve Honey, a tenor vocalist. After opening remarks by CSVGC-NY Chair Genie Kagawa, congratulatory remarks were given by Daniel Perell, a global organizing partner of the NGO Major Group, by a representative of the Holy See, and by Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury of Bangladesh. The awards ceremony ended with a cake-cutting ceremony in honor of the 72nd anniversary of the United Nations.

Week of Spirituality 2017 Statement: "SDG Success -- The Spiritual Indicators and a Universal Push to Transform the World"

In a message delivered on September 24, 2015, at a meeting of faith-based organizations for sustainable

development, with a focus on "The Moral Imperative to End Extreme Poverty," former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon affirmed: "There are moments in history when our humanity fills us with hope and courage; when we discover our common spirituality and values and build a shared vision of where the future must lead. We are at such a moment today – and we must seize it."

The 2016 UN General Assembly adopted the following theme for its historic meeting which discussed the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: "A Universal Push to Transform the World." In an interview with UN Insider, referring to the work at the United Nations, outgoing UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson emphasized that it is important "to realize that there is an element of spirituality needed in what we do." In his transformative vision, H.E. Jan Eliasson urged world leaders to stop the trend of dividing humanity into "us" and "them" and identifying oneself in contrast to others rather than together with others.



"Whether it is your religious belonging, or your ethnic group, or your tribe in some countries, that trend means that you are actually undermining the equal worth of all human beings, because you easily consider the 'us' superior to the 'them.'" Thus, he stated that the most important word in today's world is "together," because it counters the polarization and division that blocks advancement.

The NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-NY (CSVGC-NY) affirms the message of universality and oneness as a key factor and essential component in the implementation and accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the spiritual indicators of sustainability are vital. In order to "leave no one behind," the values reflecting social well-being and ecological integrity will advance the individual and collective choices and behavior necessary to achieve sustainability. By promoting inclusive, peaceful societies with access to justice for all, some of the factors that contribute to conflict and instability which impede sustainability will be resolved.

Spirituality illuminates the path toward universal, unifying values and ethics and creates the conditions for a sustainable way of life. It has the potential to motivate all beings to work together harmoniously and dynamically. CSVGC-NY urges all to weigh in on the major international processes by applying universality, inclusiveness and shared spiritual values as we join together as partners to successfully implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

Various working groups had programs during the Week of Spirituality as follows:

**October 23, 2017, Spiritual History of the UN Working Group
"United Nations: The Sacred and Its Origins"**

This event traced the early history of the United Nations and the role of former U.S. first lady Eleanor Roosevelt and that of the Temple of Understanding, the first interfaith organization during that historic setting.

The beginning history of the United Nations was deeply rooted in discussions of spiritual and universal principles, which were incorporated in the UN Charter. Contemporary history also was brought out in order to clearly demonstrate the religiously based work in the Open Working Group that led to the current Sustainable Development Goals.

Rabbi Roger Ross was the moderator, and the presenters were Alison Van Dyk, chair of the board and executive director of the Temple of Understanding, and Grove Harris, main UN representative of the Temple of Understanding and former program director of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in 2009.

**October 25, 2017, UN Foundation
"The Role of Spirituality in Youth Empowerment for Agenda 2030"**

With a focus on youth, the Spiritual Council for Global Challenges Working Group explored the potentials of spirituality in guiding young people toward pro-social behavior in their local and global communities. A particular emphasis was given to the role of spirituality in youth engagement for Sustainable Development Goal 16, which calls for peaceful and just societies with well-functioning institutions. The program discussed how to integrate spirituality as a means to connect with young people and to harness their potential for the United Nations.

Co-chairs were Sharon Hamilton-Getz and Genie Kagawa, with the following speakers: Miroslav Polzer, IAAI (video); Christina Stevens, IAAI UN adviser; Elizabeth Dabney Hochman, founder, Kid Spirit UN Foundation; Daniel Perell, UN representative of Baha'i International Community; Professor Kevin Brabazon, Generations United.



**October 26, 2017, Meditation Room, UN Headquarters, New York
"We Are One SDG Meditation"**

Every year during the Week of Spirituality, a meditation on certain Sustainable Development Goals is held from noon to 1 p.m. in the Meditation Room at UN Headquarters. Led by Sharon Deep of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, this year's meditation included the presentation of the SDGs, a silent meditation in the Meditation Room, and the discussion of reflections and impressions about the SDGs and spirituality.

**October 26, 2017, 777 UN Plaza, New York
"Education of the Youth of the World: Nurturing Conscientious Leaders"**

The Health, Transformation and Spirituality Working Group presented a program focused on youth empowerment and various ways of supporting and engaging youth. A variety of educational tools for healing, transforming and educating children around the globe were discussed, as well as experiential models for health, education and partnership for peacebuilding and peacekeeping. There were also research findings which demonstrated the link between education, self-healing, nurturing inner peace, and the promotion of peace around the world.

The presenters were Sephany Nwanmah, Tehilla Women and Youth Empowerment Foundation of Nigeria; Dr. Robert Levine, professor emeritus of Harvard University; Ameer Le of HeartMath Institute; and Dr. Sara Levine as discussant.

**December 12, 2017, Salvation Army Function Room, New York
Annual Celebration of Solstice: "Solstice and the SDGs: Respect for the Environment Rooted in Ancient Traditions"**

The CSVGC-NY Annual Celebration of Solstice was meant to reflect on the spirit of ancient times and traditions. The committee emphasized the true meaning of stewardship of ecosystems, which requires an intimate relationship with nature, based on all things being sacred. The wisdom of solstice engages and inspires all of us in our work to bring solutions to ecosystem imbalance in our environment. There was a call for all to return to a spirit of respect and cooperation with nature, rather than ownership of nature. The speakers were Cathy Towle of IAAI; Ken Kitatani, Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development; and Mindahi Bastida, an indigenous spiritual leader.

**February 1, 2018, 4 West 43rd Street, New York
"Spirituality as the Driver for a People-Focused Perspective on the 2030 Agenda"**

The 72nd UN General Assembly adopted the theme "Focusing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet." The February CSVGC-NY meeting focused on higher values, which opens us to a space where the people come first and human dignity is honored and respected. Justice, love

and kindness generate equality and a spirit of oneness, overcoming polarization and division that block advancement, thus giving way to development.

Presenters gave their views on the role of spirituality in discussing the people's perspective. Richard Jordan, UN representative of the RASIT Foundation, led the discussions on the impact of holding the space at the UN through our presence and values-centered work. David Kirshbaum of Nonviolence International emphasized that inner peace is the anchor for the promotion of a culture of peace.

H.E. Isaiah Chabala, former ambassador of Zambia to the United Nations, recounted his life-course as a diplomat and the precious discovery of spirituality after his retirement. He emphasized the importance of spirituality in solving all present-day crises.

The following council members conducted visioning sessions concerning the guiding principles and three areas of focus for the CSVGC-NY, including strategy planning: Chair of session Genie Kagawa; Cathy Towle, Keeper of the Sacred; John Digilio, Visioning Infrastructure; and Cynthia Shibuya, Guiding Principles.



**February 1-7, 2018, African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
"U DAY 2018 Ethiopia: Land of Origins"**

CSVGC-NY co-sponsored the U DAY Festival in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, bringing spiritual, traditional and religious leaders together with international change-makers and musical artists to celebrate and advance global unity, as part of the growing importance of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The initiative included a special gathering to advance the universal values of peace, compassion and unity. Indigenous leaders, Buddhist monks, Sikhs, Baha'i, Sufis, Tibetan Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Christians and Muslims attended the event. Dr. Kurt Johnson and Ken Kitatani joined many of our UN partners in Ethiopia for this celebration.

**February 7, 2018, 777 UN Plaza, New York
World Interfaith Harmony Week**

The celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week at the United Nations was celebrated by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Religious NGOs Committee, co-partnering with CSVGC-NY. The unique gathering of 200 interfaith leaders took place with humanity as the common denominator and in the name of unity of intentions in order to overcome the boundaries that divide us, which is actually the only hope for a peaceful world in the future.

The event featured eminent speakers from the United Nations, as well as member states, civil society and religious organizations, such as keynote speaker H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, high representative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC); H.E. Katalin Annamaria Bogyay, the ambassador of Hungary to the United Nations; Msgr. Hilary Franco of the Holy See; Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. Levi Bautista, and Richard Jordan of the RASIT Foundation.

Several members of the CSVGC-NY were invited to recite meditations, prayers or sing hymns in honor of World Interfaith Harmony Week: founder Audrey Kitagawa, Rev. Cathy Towle, Rabbi Roger Ross, David Kirshbaum, Martha Gallahue, Ken Kitatani and Denise Scotto.

**February 24, 2018, 777 UN Plaza, Boss Room, NY
"Accomplishments of the Culture of Peace since Resolution 52/243A"**

The CSVGC-NY Culture of Peace Working Group, co-sponsored by Sovereign Military Order Temple Jerusalem Knights Templar, Nonviolence International and the United Religions Initiative at the United Nations, organized a panel that integrated different approaches to peace work to create a single movement with diverse approaches to peace. The panel talked about culture studies which measure the scientific indicators of a peaceful society and the progress needed to reach the goal of peace in our nations and regions. The meeting was chaired by John Digilio of Knights Templar International, and the speakers were Hiro Sakurai, Soka Gakkai International; Iris Spellings, Peace Through Unity; and David Kirshbaum, Nonviolence International.



March 19, 2018, 4 West 43rd Street, NY
"Focus on Women: The Impact of Spirituality on Sustainable Peace"

During the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 62), the CSVGC-NY Women Rising Working Group co-sponsored this event with the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Universal Peace Federation, and IAAI. The panel presentation referenced the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, with a lens to women and children and the impact that spirituality plays in enhancing development and creating an environment for sustainable peace and development. Women's exceptional quality of holding things together can be channeled into the peacemaking process, forging communities, creating lasting networks and ensuring fulfillment of goals.

Chaired by Genie Kagawa and Cathy Towle, the meeting had the following inspirational speakers: Simona Cruciani, Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide; Annalisa Jackson, Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers; and Dr. Anuita Kapur, president, Livingston Medical Groups.

April 26, 2018, 4 West 43rd Street, NY
"Equal Partnership with Youth Guarantees Sustainable Peace"

A roster of inspirational youth speakers was brought together by the Spiritual Council for Global Challenges Working Group, co-sponsored by the Institute of International Social Development, UPF, Legion of Goodwill, and International Association for the Advancement of Innovative Approaches to Global Challenges (IAAI-Glocha) for a panel presentation based on universal, unifying ethics. It was noted that youth are a driving force for development, as well as for sustainable peace. When youth are engaged, their voice and lived experience add a valuable perspective toward accountability for outcomes. Therefore youth development directly links to sustainable development and peace.

The youth presenters were Catherina Rojas, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Danilo Parmegiani, Legion of Goodwill; Venessa Stone, Institute for Emerging Visionaries; Patras Dewan, Global Healing Initiative, Pakistan; Christopher Salata and Susanna Choe, Peace Accelerators; Shivani St.

George, Four Worlds International Institute; Patrick Nickisch, IAAI-Glocha; and Brandon Perdomo, World Peace Prayer Society.

May 24, 2018, 4 West 43rd Street, NY
"World Environment Day and the Emerging Discussion on Spirituality, Innovation and the Protection of the Environment"

The Eco-Spirituality Working Group of CSVGC-NY, sponsored by IAAI, Forum 21, the Bhumi Project and Bio-Nutrient Association, organized a panel on how innovation, inspiration and commitment each play a role in reinventing how we look at manufacturing, distribution, consumption and trade systems for plastic. All these aspects are supported by spirituality. Innovation takes spiritual courage to challenge the status quo; inspiration is a gift from the divine; and commitment is at the heart of stewardship, responsibility and accountability. All three elements are vital for the idea of a circular economy to flourish.

Chaired by Cathy Towle, the meeting had the following speakers: Geraldine Ann Patrick Encina, Center for Earth Ethics; Juan Chebly, lead advisor of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and Gopal Patel of the Bhumi Project.



June 8, 2018, 777 UN Plaza, Boss Room, NY
"How a Flourishing Spiritual Life Can Impact World Peace"

The CSVGC-NY Annual Retreat was co-sponsored by National Ethical Service; Women's Federation for World Peace; and Nonviolence International. Recalling the words of the second UN secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld -- "Unless there is a spiritual renaissance, the world will know no peace" -- CSVGC-NY put together an afternoon of keynote talks and discussions on how to strengthen and support the work of the United Nations. The meeting was chaired by Genie Kagawa, and the three main presenters were: John Digilio, Knights Templar; Dr. Anthony Sayegh, spiritual practitioner; and Dr. Kurt Johnson, Forum 21. The retreat was followed by the installment of the Executive Council members of 2018-2020 with presentation of Certificates of Membership.

October 23-25, 2018, 777 UN Plaza, NY
Week of Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns

In honor of the establishment of the United Nations, which was founded on universal principles, the Week of Spirituality was created to demonstrate how the spiritual dimension ensures adherence to the values expressed in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Below is the weekly schedule, which has unique programs of interest at the UN taken from a holistic perspective.

From October 23-25, the Week of Spirituality was held on the theme "United Nations and Civil Society Partnerships: Innovations for Sustainable Peace." The 2018 Spirit of the UN began with meditation in the 777 Chapel of the Church Center. The Spirit of the United Nations Award Ceremony, on the second floor of the Church Center, honored the following distinguished honorees before an audience of 250 from the UN:

UN System Award: Adam Taylor, former leader, Faith Initiative, World Bank

NGO Award: Bani Dugal, Baha'i International Community

Youth Award: Xiye Bastida Patrick, Otomi Regional Council of Mexico State

Musical presentations were offered by Olivia Harris and the Luminous Trio. After opening remarks by the CSVGC-NY chair, Ken Kitatani, congratulatory remarks were given by H.E. Katalin Annamaria Bogyay, ambassador of Hungary to the United Nations, and H.E. Isaiah Chabala, former ambassador of Zambia to the United Nations. Rabbi Roger Ross delivered a speech on the spiritual history of the United Nations. The award ceremony ended with a cake-cutting ceremony in honor of the 73rd anniversary of the United Nations.

A working group had a program during the Week of Spirituality as follows:



October 23, 2018, 777 UN Plaza, NY

"Samanvaya: Tapping into the Harmony Within to Regain Earth Balance"

The CSVGC-NY Eco-Spirituality Working Group, co-sponsored by IAAI, Forum 21 Institute, Sukyo Mahikari Centers for Spiritual Development, and Sequoia Samanvaya, presented a program about the earth and the environment. The event described the structural and functional challenges that governments have in shifting away from paradigms of development that are not yet reconciled to sustainable development. The panel of speakers touched upon the best practices of "transformed" government institutions that engaged with the local level. It delved into the Indian concept of Samanvaya, defined as "harmony," and what it offers to those engaged in actualizing the SDGs. Moderated by Scott Wolcott, founder and director of Sequoia Samanvaya, the meeting had the following speakers: Ramasubramanian Balasubramanian Oruganti, director, Sustainable Livelihood Institute (SLI), India; and Mindahi Crescencio Bastida Munoz, director of the Original Caretakers Program, Mexico.

Week of Spirituality 2018 Statement

"United Nations and Civil Society Partnerships: Innovations for Sustainable Peace"

"We looked toward a future in which sustaining peace is not a task for one department or office of the UN – but rather a core objective of this entire organization."

– March 21, 2018, H.E. Miroslav Lajčák, president of the U.N. General Assembly

We support the vision of the secretary-general, and the president of the General Assembly, to revitalize the UN system's efforts to create conditions for sustainable peace. The first condition is to recognize that the United Nations is a spiritual center for promoting the core values of the Charter. The core values serve as a foundation for making choices regarding justice, development, peace and security, and human rights. Nevertheless, these value-based choices emerge from a forgotten place of silence. Years ago, the second secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, established the Meditation Room, dedicated to silence, in the middle of the UN. He said, "We want to bring back, in this room, the stillness which we have lost in our streets, and in our conference rooms, and to bring it back in a setting in which no noise would impinge on our imagination." Inspiration and imagination represent the catalyst for change in an interconnected world. From that place of silence, a collective vision based on the values of the Charter can emerge in a concrete way.

The UN Charter reminds us "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," and we declared ourselves to work for peace. The root of war is fear, an emotion that lurks deep in hearts and spills over into the world. It is only when fear is converted into friendship and love, and choices are guided by value, that there is a chance for sustainable peace. The Agenda 2030 is a concrete path and way of proceeding toward resilience, strength, and hope that are needed to create optimism in the face of challenges and hardships.

The NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns-NY (CSVGC-NY) affirms and desires to collaborate in the creation of a culture in which universal principles, friendship, and silent reflection are recognized as essential components of the conditions for sustainable peace. This committee, which desires to put people and planet first, challenges everyone and every member state to recommit itself to the core values of the Charter and the Agenda 2030 as the first step in renewal. Let us enter into that space of serenity and together discover new approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Civil society's partnership with the UN will take on a new vitality, making peace a possibility.

