



## SEA – Interreligious Manifestation in Amsterdam

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, June 17, 2018

By Wim Koetsier

A group of our members, representing UPF and WFWP, participated in an action in the Vondel-park in Amsterdam. (SEA stands for “Samen-Een-Amsterdam, meaning “Together-One-Amsterdam”). The event was organized by a committee of the Council for Religions and World Views in Amsterdam. This committee is connected to 90 different organizations. A core group of 15 people has been convening every six weeks to prepare this event, which takes place once a year. The respective groups take turns in providing their location for the respective meetings. I have been present at most of the gatherings, as the acting treasurer of the organization. Before each meeting starts, there is a short introduction about purpose and activities of the particular organization, in whose place the meeting is held. In this way all groups get to know each other on the way to holding the annual event.

Last Sunday afternoon (June 17th) there were 22 (small) tables in the park, belonging to Christian, Jewish and Muslim organizations among others. Also Asian and Far Eastern movements were included, among which UPF and WFWP. The event took place in the Vondel-park, which, for the occasion, was called,

Connecting Park. (see the flyer in the attachment). It was started by the singing of “Loka Samasta”, - a song in Sanskrit language meaning “May all people be happy”. A “dome” made of bamboo sticks to which had the logos of all participating groups were attached clearly indicated to the public where the event was taking place. At each table one could get the information about the objectives and activities of the various organizations, particularly about what each group feels its significance is for Amsterdam. Many participants visited each other’s tables, which has strengthened the connections among us all. 18 of our members, mixed “young and older”, participated wholeheartedly in the event.

At the end of the afternoon we all left our tables behind. All participants started a walk/march from the “connecting place” where we had our tables to the podium at the statue of Vondel (famous Dutch poet of the Golden age). Our march was headed by the World House Fusion band with their drums. The podium program started with the reading of a letter to the citizens of Amsterdam, written by the Amsterdam mayor Mr. Eberhardt van der Laan, with a call to take care well of the city and of each other. Miss Patricia Mensink of Alwaredness (heeft

een lokaal radio en tv programma) acted as the MC. First speaker was a Franciscan monk of the city monastery La Verna, who was the person who had conceived this event. He emphasized the meaning of religion as “to reconnect” and as source of inspiration to work together with each other despite differences of how we see the world. Next it was Christopher Davies who performed. On behalf of UPF (WFWP) he sang some songs written by himself (one of them was the “Sparkle Song”, well-known and cherished in our own circle ) The Dervish performance after him presented a harmonious dance which, at the same time radiated a prayer of Divine peace. Next a passionate lady, Miss Patricia Haveman of Mundio Younido offered a perspective for a world of interconnectedness of all people as world citizens; in her view signs of this world emerging can be found everywhere. Then there was a mantra by Hare Krishna, followed by the handing out of a painting to “Samen een Amsterdam”. It was given by the organization “Oma’s Art” as a token of appreciation for the striving and efforts towards cooperation and connectedness. The afternoon was ended by the whole group singing as one voice “Loka Samasta”.



