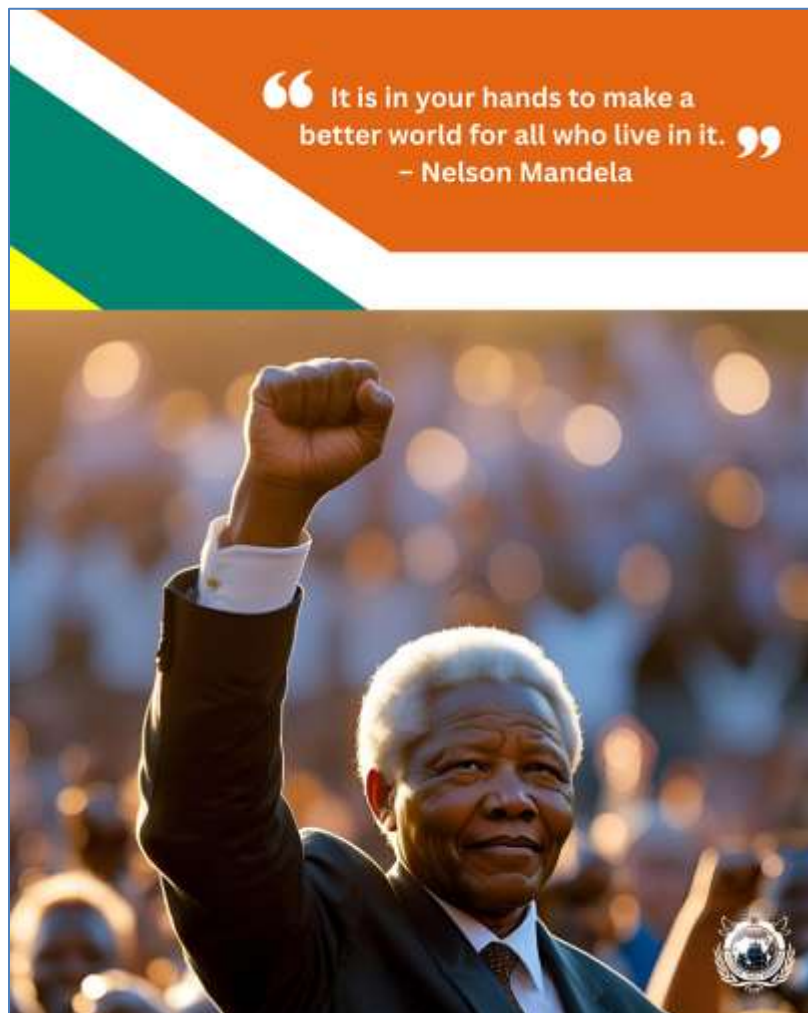


UPF International: On Nelson Mandela International Day UPF Honors His Legacy

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On Nelson Mandela International Day, UPF joins the global community in honoring the life and legacy of a leader whose commitment to justice, reconciliation, and human dignity continues to shape both national and international efforts for peace.

First proclaimed by the United Nations in 2009 and observed annually on July 18 - the day on which Nelson Mandela was born in 1918 - this day serves as a global call to action. It reminds us of our shared responsibility to build a more just, inclusive, and compassionate world.



The South African patriot spent 27 years in prison for his anti-apartheid activities. Not long after his release, he became the nation's first democratically elected president. His unwavering dedication to reconciliation, institutional reform, and respect for human dignity remains a guiding example for societies working to overcome division and inequality. After so many years in prison, Mandela emerged not with a message of retribution, but one of national unity and forgiveness.

His leadership in South Africa's transition to democracy continues to inspire models of governance, peacebuilding, and dialogue-based conflict resolution around the world.

UPF's Commitment to His Vision

The UPF network of Ambassadors for Peace in Africa remains deeply engaged in this legacy - fostering education, civic engagement, and community partnerships, particularly focused on youth leadership and social cohesion.

In 2018, UPF convened the Africa Summit in South Africa under the theme: "Honoring the Legacy of President Nelson Mandela." The event brought together leaders from across Africa and beyond to address pressing issues of governance, development, and interfaith cooperation.

Nelson Mandela's vision for African unity also influenced the broader institutional evolution of the continent. Although he held no formal role in the African Union (AU), which was established after his presidency, his legacy deeply informed its foundational values.

As part of its regional outreach, UPF has partnered with the AU on various initiatives, including Africa Day celebrations and a memorandum of understanding supporting sustainable development goals. Through its Interreligious Association for Peace and Development - Africa (IAPD-Africa), UPF has formalized cooperation with the African Union's Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) to promote interfaith and intersectoral dialogue.

As an NGO in general consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, UPF strongly affirms the values highlighted by this observance: ethical leadership, service to others, and conflict resolution through dialogue.

The United Nations' 2025 theme for Nelson Mandela International Day - "It's still in our hands to combat poverty and inequality" - underscores the importance of daily choices and collective action. Mandela once said, "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived - it is what difference we have made to the lives of others."

This message holds special significance during the International Year of Peace and Trust, aligning closely with UPF's 100-Day Campaign leading up to the International Day of Peace. This global initiative promotes cooperation through shared values, civic responsibility, and practical service.

A Call to Action

In his 2025 message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres reminded us: "Mandela believed in the power of collective, grassroots action. He knew that ordinary people could bend the arc of history."

On this Nelson Mandela International Day, UPF calls on leaders, institutions, and citizens to reflect on this legacy and to take meaningful steps that advance peace, justice, and inclusive development in their communities and beyond.