

Navigating the Dangerous Waters Ahead

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To His Majesty, the well-loved Norodom Shihamoni and Her Royal Highness, the Queen Mother, Norodom Monineath, and we must especially thank and commend the indefatigable, His Excellence Prime Minister Hun Sen, the architect of the Cambodian model of peace and reconciliation, [emerging] out of the Cambodian modernization, and the royal government of Cambodia for co-hosting, with our Universal Peace Federation, Asia Pacific Summit 2019 here in this historic Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. We congratulate Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founder of the Universal Peace Federation, for founding the celebrated Sun Hak Peace Prize and with the late, great Sun Myung Moon for her and the late Rev. Moon's trail blazing initiatives in the United States in Europa, in Latin America, in Asia and in Africa and for their unswerving commitment and tireless efforts in promoting peace and reconciliation, promoting unity, interfaith dialog and the strength of marriage and the family.

Notable participants

May we also greet our old friends former president and former prime minister José Ramos-Horta, of Timor Leste, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, himself, former president, former prime minister Xanana Gusmão [Timor Leste] former president Andrés Pastrana of Colombia; former vice-president Jusuf Kalla of Indonesia, vice-president Van Thio of Myanmar, vice-president Raynold B. Oilouch of Palau and of course the distinguished members of ICAPP [International Conference of Asian Political Parties] like Senator Mushahid, Vice President Farokh of Iran, deputy speaker Khuon Sudary of Cambodia, Vijay Jolly of India and Sujara of Cambodia and many other great leaders from all over the world are here today. Finally, we thank the outstanding chairman of the Universal Peace Federation International, Dr. Thomas Walsh. Let's give him a big hand. UPF regional group chairman Dr. Chung-sik Yong. UPF chairman Ek Nath Dhakal of Nepal and the UPF family based in New York, based in Washington DC and based in Seoul for their leadership and their many courtesies.

What Cambodians overcame

Dear friends, our UPF conference here in this great capital by the banks of Mekong River is a fitting tribute to the Cambodian people whose indomitable spirit surmounted decades of armed, violent conflict and the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime which murdered more than two million Cambodians. I know because I was here as a young correspondent at the age of twenty.

Despite the past tragedies and the current challenges faced by the Cambodian people -- which in a sense is also besetting some other countries in our region -- Cambodia, under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen, has been enjoying sustained economic growth and infrastructure development. We also pay homage to the late great king and our friend King Norodom Sihanouk, whose leadership and sacrifices gained independence for Cambodia and created the beginnings of the country's modernization and whose son, our colleague in the earlier Asian conferences, Prince Norodom Ranariddh--our old friend -- was his excellency Hun Sen's co-prime minister, and later, president of the National Assembly.

Protection from our vulnerabilities

Excellencies, friends, over this last decade, the Asia-Pacific groupings clustered around ASEAN have contributed to reducing tensions in our home region. But, looking forward to the next fifteen to twenty years, the Asia-Pacific still seems the hemisphere with the greatest risk of major armed conflict. And the only real solution -- indeed the only lasting solution -- to these tensions is to embed all our countries in a network of economic, political, and moral relationships in an Asia-Pacific community where consent comes through a sustained dialogue among the great religions and great civilizations of Asia and the world. This is perhaps the formula -- the only formula -- for building regional and global peace that will endure.

Community, then, seems the wave of the future, not only for ASEAN but for the whole of East Asia and the Asia-Pacific. And it will be our generation's burden -- and glory -- to lay the foundations on which these communal and moral structures are to be erected, so that those who come after us can turn then without distraction to the work of delivering our people from their bondage to poverty, ignorance, ill-health; to the ever-increasing threats of conflict, war, terrorism and extremism and the new frightening challenges of climate change and environmental degradation.



Facing the downsides of globalization

Excellencies, friends, we live in a world where every aspect of ordinary life is being contested, is being challenged -- our security by extremist terrorism, our accustomed politics by a great wave of populist rebellion, and conventional economics by the unintended consequences of globalization. Thus, our globalizing world needs to develop a system of ideas and ideals that will make globalization work for all our peoples. Particularly the nations and states just joining the global economy need practical lessons in late industrialization, which is achieved by learning from earlier modernizers.

In my view, the East Asian idea of the market and the state not as competing but as complementary operating systems can become the basis of a new economic model -- particularly for poor countries entering the global economy for the first time. And I believe such a model should combine the best elements of both capitalism and socialism.

Before the Heritage Foundation [a US think tank] in Washington, DC in 2009, at the United Nations University in Barcelona, and at the earlier conferences of ICAPP [International Conference of Asian Political Parties], UPF, and other international organizations, we proposed a review of the global political and economic systems in the aftermath of the Wall Street meltdown at the time. We suggested that there might be merit in bringing together the best elements of capitalism and the best elements of socialism.

Complications to be solved

Excellencies, friends, we in the UPF and ICAPP campaigned in the UN General Assembly, in the UN Security Council, in the halls of the United Nations for an interfaith, intercultural, and inter-civilizational dialogue with our proposal to create an interfaith council in the United Nations at a time when it was still taboo to introduce religious issues into the UN system, but we pointed out that if creating a new council is overly difficult -- as some legalists had warned -- perhaps we could write an interfaith mandate in the mission order of the Trusteeship Council of the UN which has anyway run out of trust territories to supervise. We proposed as an interim concession that at least a focal point in the Office of the UN Secretary General be created and indeed the UN approved it.

On the raging Sunni-Shiite issues, we cannot discount the magnitude of the barriers that intense doctrinal separation has raised between these two great schools of Islam. In my many letters to Saudi Arabia's late

King Abdullah [1924–2015] and Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, I said it would be a great relief to our region, to Asia and to the world, if the two leaders of Islam, representing the Sunnis and Shiites (respectively) of the Muslim world, could perhaps meet in Mecca or Medina and create the beginnings of reconciliation and the end of violence in the lands of Islam. It is most difficult but more than ever before, this urgent, absolutely necessary meeting between the two leaders of Islam must be set and undertaken and we pray that to some extent if it ever happens, it will succeed for the peace of the region and the world.

Avoiding ideological conflict

Excellencies, friends, as the balance of global power shifts from West to East, we'll also strive to help prevent the outbreak of a new cold war in the Asia Pacific -- by encouraging the peaceful rise of every emerging great power in the nations of the G-20 and in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa); and by supporting popular movements that advocate peaceful co-existence among the East Asian states.

For between Moscow and Washington -- and between Washington and Beijing -- mutual accommodation must be found that gives the parties strategic reassurances and maintains respect for their core interests. Ironically, the hard peace between the earlier cold war principals -- the United States and the Soviet Union -- has enabled the smaller countries to enjoy well over a generation of political stability and economic growth.

For us in Asia, at least for a long while, the age of ideological conflict is (and should be) over. We declare that we want no new cold war in the Asia Pacific. It has been said that the Pacific Ocean is large enough for the great powers. And we see no reason the relationships between the great powers should be adversarial. We see no differences between them that sustained diplomacy, understanding and realpolitik cannot resolve.

Before I close, excellencies, dear friends, fellow delegates, with the multiple violent conflicts and outbursts of extremism in some of the areas of the Middle East and Africa, South Asia, Eurasia and the terrible tolls on human life, more than ever, I say, we in the Universal Peace Federation, we in ICAPP, we in governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society organizations, -- indeed all sectors -- must get our act together and work to promote peace and reconciliation, cooperation and dialogue and urge tolerance among our nations and among our peoples. We must understand the diversity of our cultures and religious beliefs, for indeed, in the final analysis, you and I, we all belong to one great human family under God.

Jose De Venecia was Speaker of the Philippines' House of Representatives 1992–1998 and 2001–2008. While speaker, he was instrumental in forming the once dominant, now defunct, Christian Muslim Democrat Party. As President Ramos' peace envoy, he successfully negotiated with Muslim secessionists and rebellious Philippine military personnel.