International Day of Peace Observed by UPF-Ethiopia

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—UPF-Ethiopia marked the UN International Day of Peace with a forum under the UN theme "Partnerships for Peace—Dignity for All."

Eighteen Ambassadors for Peace plus three guests, mainly Youth Ambassadors for Peace, participated in the forum, which was held at the UPF offices in the capital, Addis Ababa, on September 19, 2015.

The participants came from various sectors, such as education, peace and security, women's and children's affairs, information and development and even from the private sector.

The program started with the presentation "Promoting a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World" by Mr. Simon Amare Tekeba, secretary general of UPF-Ethiopia.

This presentation was designed as a resource on the UPF website for the UN International Day of Peace. The participants found the presentation very useful because it associates the statements of both the UN and UPF, encouraging all people to practice the culture of peace and nonviolence for a peaceful world.

In particular, one of the last slides invited the viewer to reflect upon the question "What are we doing for peace?"

The participants found the presentation very inspiring, and some noted that UPF is not only a useful NGO but fundamentally practices the culture of peace.

The second part of the day featured a discussion of the following questions:

What is true peace?

Is there true peace in this world?

Peace starts from whom or where?

Who is the first entity responsible for peace?

What is my contribution as a partner for peace (as an Ambassador for Peace)?

What is my contribution so there is dignity for all?

What resolutions should I make to make peace happen?

The discussion forum was interactive. First, the secretary general asked all the participants to briefly introduce themselves in order to break the ice. Then the participants started sharing their ideas and answers about peace.

Here are a few selected reflections:

Mr. Asaye Nigussie from the field of development of art and information: "In my opinion, true peace is an ideal peace or heavenly peace that had been planned by God. A heavenly peace is a world in which everything is harmonized. So, for me this kind of peace does not exist in this world as it is now. Therefore, we have a lot to do in order to, at least, come closer to this ideal."

Mr. Belayneh Mengistu, lawyer: "I don't think we can all agree there is no peace in this world. I think peace is relative. Some people think there is peace in this world somehow, and some don't. Of course, there are conflicts somewhere in this world, especially when we think of Syria and some other parts of the world, but I guess if those conflicts are not affecting us directly, then we tend to think that there is peace around us. For me, it is difficult to define peace, because there are a lot of explanations about peace. Of course, I agree that peace exists when there is no conflict between two parts."

Ms. Bezawit Worku, information technology development and lawyer: "I think even if we're not affected directly, somehow our heart might feel troubled to see a world full of conflicts as often portrayed by the media. If we take the case of the little child who died while crossing the sea, which we watched on TV, surely no one can stay untouched in front of this kind of shocking image. We are humans, and I think we are sharing the same feelings. There are many awful images that the media are showing us daily. We can't say we are not concerned. Those are our brothers and sisters. I think peace is delicate and sensitive. We don't have peace within us because of the Fall of our first ancestors, so it is important to really restore this broken world."

Ms. Emebet Habte, human resources manager: "I think true peace requires us to follow our conscience and do what is right, rather than do what is wrong. For me, it is that simple. If we do good, then we get peace. If we do bad, surely we don't have peace; instead, our mind or conscience is disturbing us. I believe in God, but one of the most important factors of many conflicts is the diverse religions. I noticed there is a lot of self-centeredness in the religious sphere. We've got to admit that we all belong to one God. This will definitely resolve many problems. That's why the culture of peace is very important."

At the end of the discussion forum, the secretary general read some excerpts from the book The Philosophy of Peace of Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, explaining that peace starts within oneself with the unification of the mind and the body. This is a crucial step toward peace. The harmony of the mind and body will bring peace to the individual, who will bring peace to the family, the society and so on. A culture of peace and nonviolence helps to strengthen our mind and attitude so that we can overcome all attractions of our body. A culture of peace is a culture of heart. Heart is the motivator of true love. We need to be living for the sake of others to practice true love. Only then can we bequeath a culture of peace or heart by living for the sake of others to the future generations. In so doing, we can break down our barriers and differences to bring about the hope of all ages: a unified world of peace.

The participants finally concluded that one needs to use all the technological opportunities in this globalized era, such as social media, the Internet, etc., in order to make peace happen.

From this perspective, on the actual International Day of Peace, September 21, the participants used their cell phones to send a text message to all their friends and siblings.

Mrs. Happiness Amare, wife of the secretary general, suggested that we use Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's words and guidance about forgiveness: "Forgive, love, unite."

Hence, the shared text message was the following: "Let's make today our special day: Forgive, love, unite, reconcile, pray, smile, use [social media] … to make peace happen. Peace and love!"