

## Middle East Ambassadors for Peace Attend Peace Principles Seminar in Rome

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Rome, Italy—Ambassadors for Peace from across the Middle East and North Africa gathered in Rome in July for UPF-Middle East’s second advanced seminar on UPF’s peace principles.

Among the Ambassadors for Peace who participated in the program were members of parliament, city councilors, mayors and doctors. Some have been involved in international youth and voluntary work, supporting the peace process in Syria and women’s initiatives for peace in the Persian Gulf region. Also in attendance were representatives of the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) from the region and young UPF staff. The program, which kept the same theme as the first advanced seminar, “Applying the Principle: Practical Solutions for the Middle East,” took place from July 11 to 14, 2016 at UPF’s Peace Embassy in Colle Mattia outside Rome.



### An Opportunity for Ambassadors for Peace to Share

July is a hot month in Rome but UPF’s Peace Embassy is located high enough above the city to attract a cool breeze which makes for a relaxing environment. The program began with a welcome dinner on the Embassy’s patio surrounded by vines, and was followed by a session in which the participants introduced themselves.

The next morning, the participants had the opportunity to share more fully about their experiences working with UPF as well as WFWP and any expectations they had for this seminar. It was clear that those present understood well the focus of the seminar and were seeking deep and substantial cooperation.

## A Different Structure

In addition to presentations, many of which were similar to those given during the first advanced seminar in November 2015, this seminar featured a new session called “Your Time,” in which every participant had the chance to speak about the highlights of his or her experience as an Ambassador for Peace.

The first full day began with presentations that focused on the essence of healthy relationships—with nature, within the family, in society and on a global level. After a session on the regional and global work of UPF and WFP, the participants convened for “Your Time.” The following is what some of them shared:

A participant from Yemen explained how a Religious Youth Service (RYS) project she attended 28 years ago had changed her life and values, and that this year she had sent her son to an RYS project in Nepal.

A professor from Israel spoke of the very real obstacles to peaceful coexistence that exist in the Middle East and the need for religious leadership to find solutions together.

A Syrian participant spoke of her childhood memories attending a mosque where Sunni and Shia Muslims would sit together with Christians, and listen to the Grand Mufti of Syria speak. She travels every month to Geneva, Switzerland to help the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, in whose eyes she can see a real desire to bring peace in Syria.

A Jordanian parliamentarian, herself from a poor background, spoke of her commitment to helping refugees in her country.

A Lebanese doctor shared how his house has been bombed ten times by the Israeli army, and yet he refuses to hold this against the Israeli people. “There is no hatred in my heart,” he said. As a cardiologist, he offers free consultations to poor people in his country. “Let’s do what our conscience and heart tell us. Let’s live for others.”

The next day began with a moving account by Middle East Regional President, Mr. Umberto Angelucci, of UPF Founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon’s life. Then, Mr. Giuseppe Cali, president of UPF-Italy, spoke about UPF’s and WFP’s activities in Italy and Europe. “Italy has 5 million immigrants: our work is important to bring these cultures together and make peace. We are one family under God.” Mr. Cali highlighted the Peace Road and Monza Peace Cup (a soccer tournament) as initiatives that focus on this. “We don’t want to do conferences; we want to change the world and [help raise awareness of] the real issues.” Afterwards, Lebanese and Syrian Ambassadors for Peace spoke of their experiences welcoming refugees in their countries (Iraqis in Syria 12 years ago, and Syrians in Lebanon now), and about the valuable contribution refugees can make to and the great benefit that comes to all when refugees can apply their skills and talents in the host country.

The participant’s reflections confirmed much of what the organizers had seen during the seminar. For more than one participant, the highlight of the program was “networking and sharing ideas” or “sharing best practices from others coming from the Middle East.” One Jewish participant shared that “it was very heartwarming to discover Rev. and Mrs. Moon as loving persons dedicated to peace and positive relationships between all human beings.”

