

UN Day of Peace 2014

Stuttgart, Germany, 20. September 2014



A group of about 20 people met together in the premises of the Universal Peace Federation to express our hope for peace in this time of armed conflict. We came together to consolidate our strength in prayer, to voice important impulses for peace and to reflect on what we can concretely contribute.

To open the meeting, our moderator and Stuttgart UPF chairman read out Ban Ki Moon's statement on this year's International Day of Peace:

Today is the International Day of Peace.

Each year, on this day, the United Nations calls for a global ceasefire. We ask combatants to put down their arms so all can breathe the air of peace. Armed conflict causes untold grief to families, communities and entire countries. Too many are suffering today at the brutal hands of warmongers and terrorists. Let us stand with them in solidarity.

Peace and security are essential foundations for social progress and sustainable development. That is why, three decades ago, the United Nations affirmed the right of peoples to peace. Throughout the coming year, we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.

Our organisation is founded on the pledge to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

We have made much progress.

But much remains to be done. We must douse the fires of extremism and tackle the root causes of conflict.

Peace is a long road that we must travel together – step by step, beginning today.

Let us all observe a minute of silence, at noon. Let us all reflect on peace – and what it means for our human family.

Let us hold it in our hearts and minds and tenderly nurture it so it may grow and blossom.

Following this, several deeply moving prayers for peace were offered. After each prayer, a candle was lit and was set to float in a bowl of water.

Here are two excerpts from words of religious leaders.

'What a powerful contribution each of us can make to world peace when we recognize Christ in everything and everybody-when we embody the individual true unity with God.'

'World peace is possible. And when we consider our connection to what is Godly, it is natural to say: it is inevitable! The love of God speaks to the human heart in a way that is universally comprehensible. And that is surely a powerful prayer! And it alludes to a powerful spiritual fact:

'It should be thoroughly understood that all men have one Mind, one God and Father, one Life, one Truth, and Love. Mankind will become perfect in proportion as this fact becomes apparent; war will cease and the true brotherhood of man will be established'. (Mary Baker Eddy, Science and health with key to the scriptures, page 467)

'We are living in a time when a mutual understanding between religions and reconciliation between believers is more important and urgent for world peace than ever before. The priceless teachings of religion are sources of wisdom that have enlightened the history of mankind. But believers of all religions must first of all know and overcome three possible weaknesses:

First, the tendency to be too focused on the hereafter and to be unrealistic;

Second, the danger of being too narrow and inward thinking;

And third, the possibility that faith moves in the direction of fanaticism.

Religious leaders must have the ability to embrace all people with a loving heart. It is the central responsibility of religious people to overcome the numerous separations between the people of this world and to tear down the walls that stand between different religions. A religion does not exist for itself and for the salvation of its followers. It exists to fulfill the Will of God. Many people hope that the United Nations will solve the world's problems and build a world of peace. It is correct that the United Nations must work with so many limitations. However, we need to understand that when the UNO does not recognize the meaning of religion and spirituality, it will go down a path that will gradually lead to a loss of influence. The UNO, in its efforts to analyse and solve the current problems, is too set in one direction. If it continues in this way, it will not be able to fulfill the purpose for which it was grounded and its meaning will diminish more and more.

To tackle the establishment of a peaceful world fundamentally and comprehensively, I, as I have done before advocate that the UNO creates an establishment where all the world religions are represented. These representatives must be able to put into practice the central idea of their founder. They must live the truth and they must, by their

example, open the way for others. I hope that you take this proposal seriously and strive to establish such a facility in the UNO.'

Rev SM Moon: World Summit for the Development of a Culture of Peace

Mrs. Hendrich, representing 'religions for peace', then read excerpts from different prayers, commenting that these prayers had been collected and put together by the Catholic Dioceses of Germany and Austria. The following is from a prayer by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1901):

'Almighty God, creator of Heaven and Earth, who carries the world with love, help us to be aware of our responsibility for your creation.....we pray for peace between religions and cultures, for peace for the entire fallen groaning creation. Lord, make us an instrument of your peace! Fill us with wisdom and strength and give us the courage to begin this task today. May all the earth's inhabitants recognize the full truth; that we are in this world not for the purpose of quarrel and conflict-we are in this world to respect and praise you. May you be forever praised.

Afterwards Hubert Arnoldi sang 'Father Sun and Sister Moon' from Francis of Assisi.

Our main speaker Karl Christian Hausmann, chairman of UPF Germany, encouraged us with new impulses for peace and quoted, amongst others Dr Martin Luther King. He stressed the fact that we should neither tolerate nor encourage inter-religious fighting, but that we should direct our main focus to the will of God, which is 'one world family'. While religious leaders are beginning to understand the path that leads to freedom, the UN has for too long been delaying the establishment of an interreligious advisory board or council. In view of the fact that in the Middle East, it is not, as it seems all about oil. More fundamentally, Jerusalem is a place where three world religions have common roots and points of similarity as well as the potential for conflict solving. This must at last be realized!

After our traditional keepsake photo, we had a lively discussion over coffee and cake. We are determined to recognize and shoulder our responsibility and no longer to be silent and look on from the sidelines.

May God be with us!

Hubert Arnoldi