

UPF France: 5th Anniversary of First Africa Summit for Peace in Dakar, Senegal

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Dakar, Senegal -- From January 15 to 24, 2023, I visited Senegal on the anniversary of the 1st Africa Summit for Peace, Unity and Human Sustainable Development, which took place in Dakar from January 17 to 20, 2018.

The Summit was organized by UPF in cooperation with the state and government of Senegal under the presidency of H.E. Macky Sall. There were approximately 1,200 participants, including numerous government officials and religious leaders.

UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, also known as Mother Moon, delivered the Keynote Address at the Africa Summit. During her visit, Mother Moon made a visit to Gorée Island off the coast of Senegal and offered a tearful prayer for the many thousands of Africans who were loaded onto ships, never to return, during the years of the slave trade.



Background of the visit

In June 2022, at the Africa Week at UNESCO, together with Mr. **Doudou Diène**, a Senegalese jurist and former UN special rapporteur on racism and xenophobia, we met with the assistant to the mayor of Nantes who invited us to participate in a ceremony on October 15 in Nantes, connected with the slavery memorial on Gorée Island. On November 11 in Lyon I attended another event commemorating the

Senegalese soldiers who fought with the French army during the Second World War.

At the end of the year, during their visit to France, I had the opportunity to introduce the UPF Peace Principles to Mrs. **Mbeugué Dieng**, president of the Muslim Women's Federation for Peace in Senegal, and to Mr. **Pape Ibrahima Ndongue**, a Senegalese journalist and advisor for religious affairs to President Macky Sall. Mr. Ndongue is also an assistant mayor in Cambéréne, a town in the suburbs of Dakar.



Mr. Robin Graham, the international director of Play Football Make Peace, a project initiated by the UPF founders, proposed that we launch the Football for Peace project Champions in Life in Senegal, together with the mayor of Gorée, Mr. **Augustin Senghor**, who is the president of the Senegal Football Federation.

Therefore, in coordination with Mr. **Abdou Gaye**, who oversees UPF activities in Senegal, we planned for a celebration on January 19 on Gorée Island, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Africa Summit.

Informed of our plans, Mr. Ndongue sent me an official invitation letter from the presidential office.



Highlights of the visit to Senegal

On the first day in Senegal, together with Abdou Gaye, we met with Mr. Ndongue at the city hall of Cambérène, where we were welcomed by the mayor. Cambérène is a holy site of the Layne brotherhood. We introduced UPF's activities and vision, explained about Africa's role for peace in the world, and spoke about future activities in their city.

On January 17 we went to Gorée to visit the mayor and his staff. We were welcomed by the population, who remembered the boat "Victoria" that Mother Moon had offered to the island to help bring people in need of urgent medical assistance to Dakar on the mainland.



On January 19, together with UPF volunteers and friends, and with the local imam and a Catholic nun, we prayed at the House of Slaves on Gorée Island, where Mother Moon had offered her prayer in 2018. We met at the square where a plaque commemorates the visit of the "Mother of Peace." We then celebrated with the people at a reception in the city hall.

In the following days, we met four prominent spiritual leaders of the country: **Sheikh Mansour Diouf**, who was the key organizer of the Dakar Summit; the **Grand Serigne of Dakar Mokhtar Diop**, to whom we offered the book *World Scripture: An Anthology of Sacred Texts*; **Sheikh Saliou Mbacke**, a third-generation descendant of Prophet Bamba, the Mouride brotherhood founder; and **Sheikh Daouda Sidibé**. In Senegal, interreligious dialogue is a way of life. Léopold Sédar Senghor, the Catholic president of Senegal from 1960 to 1980, was very supportive of Muslim brotherhoods and of their holy sites and mosques.

On January 22 we returned to Gorée to introduce the Football for Peace project, and a football game was organized.

On January 23, the last day, with the support of the mayor of Gorée and Football Federation President Augustin Senghor, the Champions in Life project of Football for Peace was launched. After a video introducing Football for Peace, two young people explained how the project is meant to guide youth to develop their personality and virtues, and to become successful through sports and in life.

Before departing, Abdou Gaye and I visited Sheikh Saliou Mbacke, a leader of the Mouride brotherhood, who is active internationally in interfaith work. We offered him the *World Scripture* book and had some meaningful discussion about building peace through interfaith dialogue.

I left Senegal with gratitude, aware that the cooperation between our countries is very significant as we need to reconcile with the past and build a better future, with hope.