

Paris Conference Clarifies the Essence of Education for Sustainable Peace

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Paris, France – The United Nations has designated January 24 as International Day of Education, and the theme for 2024 was "Learning for Sustainable Peace." On this occasion, UNESCO, highlighting the crucial role of education systems, called on teachers to "unite to combat hate speech and encourage tolerance and mutual understanding."

To contribute to this goal, the French chapters of the Universal Peace Federation and its affiliated Women's Federation for World Peace organized a conference on January 25, 2024, on the theme "Education for Lasting Peace." The aim was to present the recent "Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development" put forth by UNESCO at its 42nd session in September 2023.

The Espace Barrault, headquarters of UPF-France, welcomed some forty participants, including several peace ambassadors and leaders from different sectors of society. Some twenty participants followed the event via videoconference. **Ms. Soraya Ayouch**, a professor of psychology at the University of Paris and member of the Al Moultqa Foundation, moderated the event, and three speakers gave their recommendations.



H.E. Doudou Diène, former U.N. Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, shared his views on the UNESCO recommendation. Dr. Diène explained that education should not be limited to the teaching of technical knowledge, in preparation for professional life, but should also include the teaching of universal values that can strengthen the social fabric, promoting tolerance and living together. As the initiator of the Silk Roads project at UNESCO, he campaigned for many years within this institution and the United Nations for

building a culture of peace, highlighting the three dimensions - aesthetic, ethical and spiritual - of culture, which are essential to bringing peoples closer together. He insisted on individual responsibility and the practice in daily life of the values of respect, altruism, and generosity as the foundation of a harmonious and open society.



The second speaker was **H.E. Ny Toky Andriamanjato**, former deputy permanent delegate and chargé d'affaires of the Madagascar delegation to UNESCO. He is currently secretary general of the Peace and Harmony Development Association, and he emphasized the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Different spiritual traditions come together 80% of the time, often differing only on minor points, he said. It is therefore necessary for them to overcome their differences and actively collaborate in the realization of their common ideals. In this way, they will naturally contribute to a more harmonious and peaceful world.

The presentations were followed by question-and-answer sessions, highlighting the difficulty of achieving the vision of peace promoted by UNESCO at a time of tragic conflicts on a global scale. The debates enabled the speakers to reaffirm the importance of individual responsibility in influencing the destiny of the world and ensuring the triumph of the ideals of peace. They also underscored the urgent need to redouble efforts to defend these ideals, which are deeply rooted in the education offered within families and the organizations in charge of education in every nation.



Mr. Jacques Marion, co-chair of UPF-Europe and the Middle East, concluded the evening by sharing some key points of UPF's vision of peace education. He explained that education of the heart and of values was the basis of education for peace, human rights and sustainable development, and that from this point of view the family unit played a most important role. This role, all too often overshadowed in public debates, deserves to be taken into account and given greater prominence in government projects.