

Marathon Runners Bring a Banner of Friendship from Moscow to Paris

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UPF - Russia



Paris, France – The Russia-France Peace and Friendship Marathon finished in Paris on August 1. A multiethnic team of 30 runners overcame all difficulties and brought a banner of friendship from Moscow to Paris, thanks to the efforts of the athletes and the support of partner organizations and individuals. The July 14-August 1 relay race was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the first French-Russian run between Paris and Moscow and in memory of the founder and first president of the International Super-marathon Association, Eduard Yakovlev.



The marathon route began in Moscow and included Maloyaroslavec, Juhnov, Roslavl, Mogilev, Brest, Warsaw, Prague, Nurnberg, Manheim, Saarbrucken, Metz, Verdun, and Paris, a distance of 3100 km. In each city on the way the marathoners held cultural events promoting interethnic friendship. The athletes came from Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Czech Republic.



Upon the completion of the project at a meeting at UNESCO in Paris, Amb. Eleonora Mitrofanova, the Permanent Delegate of the Russian Federation to UNESCO, greeted the sportsmen. "This project is much in line with UNESCO's agendas on the culture of peace and education of youth in the spirit of friendship and a healthy lifestyle," she said. Mrs. Mitrofanova also suggested that marathoners cooperate more closely with UNESCO because their agenda is closely aligned with main UNESCO themes. Mrs. Natalya Volkova, the Cultural Attachée for the embassy of Russia to France, conveyed congratulations on behalf of the Russian Ambassador, Alexander Orlov.



Mr. Patrick Jouan from UPF-France, who emceed the event, also read congratulations from the Ambassadors of Peace of France conveyed by Mr. Chansamone Voravong, President OLREC (Organisation Laotienne des Ressources Edifiées pour la Coopération). Mr. Jacques Rao, the Director of International Organizations at the sector for External Relations and Public Information of UNESCO, and Mr. Simon Chin-Yee, from the Sports and Anti-Doping section at UNESCO, spoke about the significance of sports programs in UNESCO's framework.



"These marathon runners are true messengers of peace who brought the banner of friendship from Russia to France," announced Mr. Konstantin Krylov, Secretary General of UPF-Eurasia. "This project is an important step for establishing bridges of the culture of peace between Russia and France, between all the nations of the former Soviet Union and the European Union." Mr. Jean-Baptiste Protais, a marathon organizer in France who won the second Paris Marathon in 1990 and finished in eighth place at the New York Marathon in 1991, represented French sportsmen at the meeting.



Mr. Sergey Suprunyuk, President of the International Super Marathon Association and the main organizer of the project, explained that the Moscow-Paris Friendship Marathon had four goals: (1) to show the desire and commitment of the peoples of Russia to live in peace, friendship, agreement, and cooperation with the peoples of the whole world; (2) to reduce the tensions in the attitudes of European peoples towards Russia and its peoples; (3) to create a favorable climate in relations between peoples of different nationalities and religions, by using a combined team of runners from Russia, Eurasia, and the European Union to show the international community's commitment to peace and friendship between different nationalities in various types of activities; and (4) to show the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and healthy relations between peoples and countries. "The youngest participant in the marathon was 18 years old, and the two oldest runners were 78 and 79," he said.



The marathon team composed of representatives of various nationalities and faiths running a long distance together for a higher goal created an incredible unity. Even more important, this team and the Moscow-Paris friendship marathon stimulated people to establish friendships beyond borders and appreciate the culture of neighboring people. UPF considers team sports to be an important factor for the establishment of a culture of peace. Friendly sports competitions among people of diverse backgrounds have great potential as instruments for peace.



In addition to UPF-Eurasia, sponsors included the Modern Humanitarian Academy based in Moscow, the organization “Marathons Without Borders,” and the Tremblay Athletic Club in France. It is both a founding principle of UPF and an assertion in the preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO that world peace starts from peace in the nation, peace among families and communities, and, fundamentally, peace in the mind of each person.

