

International Day of Peace Observed in Russia

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Moscow, Russia—The 2015 UN International Day of Peace was celebrated by young and old citizens in towns and cities across Russia.



Moscow

Two events were held in Moscow in honor of the International Day of Peace. In the first, on September 19, Ambassadors for Peace as well as representatives of public and veterans' organizations, educational institutions and other partner organizations attended a meeting with the UN theme of "Partnership for Peace—Dignity for All."

Dmitry Samko, the secretary general of the UPF Moscow chapter, served as the master of ceremonies, drawing attention to the message sent by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who emphasized that in the era of global crises "instead of despair, we must take a collective responsibility and demand to put an end to the domineering violence and impunity in the world."

In his speech, Professor Andrei Volkov explained about the history of the founding of the United Nations and the harmonizing and balancing role it has played and still plays. However, he suggested that these efforts are not enough, and urged that an Interreligious Council be created within the structure of the UN. This council would further contribute to the dialogue on a number of highly sensitive issues which cannot be solved through purely diplomatic efforts, Professor Volkov said.

The brilliant and important activities of the Women's Federation for World Peace, an international organization that is affiliated with UPF, were described by Elena Popova, who reported about peace projects implemented in different regions and countries in 2015.

Regional Secretary General of UPF-Eurasia Konstantin Krylov concluded the meeting by reminding the audience that now is a very important time when humanity must realize that we live in an interdependent world and that the prosperity of one country cannot be realized by infringing upon the interests of other nations. He also expressed hope that the upcoming 70th UN General Assembly will make a significant step toward sustainable development, based not on some beautiful discourse, but on values that can be considered universal for all.

Participants of the meeting agreed that the institutions of civil society and international organizations, and even governments, should be urged to work together; it is equally important to apply common minimum standards of human development and human security, in accordance with UN standards, to situations in the regions of conflict. The participants also discussed future projects of 2015, and possible proposals to the task force of the UN system to develop an agenda for development beyond 2015.

In the course of the meeting, the youth roundtable on "Youth and the UN: Time for Global Action" was held. Youth Ambassadors for Peace, students from different universities, gathered to discuss the probability of their voices being heard, and how to support the United Nations in implementing the road map that has been formed for the next 15 years. The participants of the roundtable took part in the survey which was conducted by the Analytical Department of the United Nations on priority areas of sustainable development.



During the discussion, the young people moved from global and theoretical considerations to practical actions, outlining the next projects. They welcomed the offer of a roundtable participant from Suzdal, Pavel Malkov, who supervises the ecological project "Clean Suzdal." However, all approved the idea to continue such meetings, particularly in view of the fact that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his International Day of Peace message, said: "At the present time, it is the young people, to a greater extent than anyone else, who are willing to promote realization of the dreams about peace. They belong to the most numerous youth generation in the history of humankind, which is ever more conscious and cohesive. I urge all governments to increase investment so that the young peacemakers could significantly contribute to the achievement of peace."

On September 21, UPF-Russia leaders participated in the United Nations' main event honoring the International Day of Peace, which took place at Moscow's Poklonnaya Gora Memorial to World War II. Major peacemaker NGO leaders in Russia, UN officials and Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives attended the ceremony.

Meanwhile, on September 20, also in Moscow, UPF activists organized a "flash mob" of children releasing colorful balloons into the skies in honor of the International Day of Peace.

The children wrote good wishes for peace and goodness on colored sheets of paper. Then one group of children made applications in the form of the globe, and the other group of children made a symbolic dove of peace. Both groups simultaneously launched into the sky their creations which were tied to balloons. To the delight of all those present the stream of balloons floated into the sky.

Though this activity the children and their parents expressed their solidarity with the efforts that the United Nations is making toward a conflict-free and secure world.

To continue the action, some children with their parents took part in a small sports "flash mob" titled "Sports for Peace." This action, related to the annual celebration of the International Day of Peace, was held in different cities of Russia. This year the participants were not only running but also riding bicycles, scooters and "run-cycles." The participants mostly were children.

Volgograd

In the southern city of Volgograd a group of Girls Scouts of Russia held a meeting under the slogan "Peace Bell" on September 19 in the framework of the International Day of Peace.

Russian Girl Scouts have been celebrating the International Day of Peace with various actions and events since 2006. The celebrations have been held in partnership with the Universal Peace Federation of Russia. A year ago, the Russian Girl Scouts launched the "Bell of Peace" action. UPF in Volgograd started receiving parcels containing bells made by children from different cities of Russia (Ufa, Volgograd, Moscow, St. Petersburg and others), as well as from other countries (Singapore, the United States, the United Kingdom, etc.). More than 100 bells of various shapes and patterns! Some had the painted contours of the continents of our planet, others were decorated with patterns of the warm sun, or a white dove—the symbol of peace.

"Our 'Peace Bell' is like a small Earth. We have pictured all countries and continents, seas and oceans. The whole world!" said the girls from the "Apropos" group of the "Space" youth club and the "Forum" group from Volgograd. "And on the tongue of the bell we painted two emblems: the emblem of the Girl Scouts' Association—a golden shamrock with three snowdrops—and the 'Motherland' statue, the symbol of Volgograd."

"The 'Peace Bell' action became a really international event," said Ekaterina Mechik, national commissioner of the interregional children's public organization Association of Girl Scouts. "We are happy that it was attended not only by Scouts from different countries but also by students and even children from kindergartens and other educational institutions. All the bells look amazing; they are made in different techniques. Paper, wood, metal, wire. ... There are even knitted items!"

On September 19, a number of these bells went to the Autumn Festival of the Last Fire, the program closing the hiking season—a landmark event for the Scouts in Volgograd. On the International Day of Peace the exposition of bells was presented in the main library of the Volgograd region.



Urals Region

In the Urals Region the tournament "Play Soccer for Peace" was held on September 21 to honor the UN International Day of Peace. The project takes place on this very day annually in a number of regions.

Everyone loves football because through playing it in unity, one can overcome racial, age, ethnic, gender and religious barriers, which often become the causes of world conflict. For the younger generation, who eventually will be in charge, it is very useful to start practicing these principles of peace, bringing them into everyday life. Football, which often resembles the model of our life, is a great way to realize the ideals of mutual cooperation, unity, respect, forgiveness, tolerance, common goals, etc.

The project was implemented under the supervision of Youth Ambassadors for Peace M.Y. Sokolova and the leader of the "Assistant" association I.Y. Kulikova, with support of Mother Lyudmila and Father Eugene Kosenkov of the Church of the Holy Virgin, representatives of the "Health" structural unit and the "Assistant" Parents' Council.

The event was attended by about 60 people. The game started after the solemn memoranda were signed, with the pledge to keep a healthy lifestyle and to practice the principles of peace during the game (not to speak evil, respect each other, achieve the goal of unity with a spirit of healthy competition, etc.). In an old but reliable stadium with three fields, games were conducted simultaneously between teams of

different ages. The highly professional board of judges included Dmitry Korolenko, Yuri Sokolov and Ivan Kosenkov, all of whom are quite enthusiastic about sports, especially football.

Throughout the match, hot tea and biscuits were served at the stadium. Volunteers poured out the tea, kept order in the stadium, and showed their enthusiasm. There were no winners and losers in the tournament. Each of the nine teams was victorious in a particular category. The boys were happy. At the closing ceremony the participants sang songs and received diplomas and pennants as awards. We hope this event will become a tradition in Baykalovsky District and all of the Urals.



Novosibirsk

On the eve of the International Day of Peace, which is celebrated annually on September 21, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all warring parties around the world to lay down their arms for a day and comply with a universal cease-fire.

"I call to stop killing and destruction and create conditions conducive to lasting peace," said Secretary-General Ban. He emphasized that this year the International Day of Peace is being observed against a background of brutal violence and destabilizing conflicts. If war and violence in the world would stop for at least one day, 1,400 people would stay alive. That is the average number of people who die every day as a result of hostilities and acts of violence.

The meeting in Novosibirsk of the Siberian Peace Council began with the reading of the UN secretary-general's message, followed by a minute of silence. On this day the members of the Siberian Peace Council, representatives of socially relevant non-governmental organizations, gathered at the regional office of the Cossack Party in the Siberian capital to discuss various peacemaking and patriotic projects.

Dmitry Oficerov, the secretary general of the Siberian chapter of UPF, spoke about the global Peace Road 2015 campaign, which also was held in Russia during the preceding summer. In his speech, he paid special attention to interdependence as an integral precondition for successful partnership in achieving the Sustainable Peace Development Goals, including the widespread elimination of poverty and hunger in all their forms, improving food security, promoting sustainable agricultural development, promoting a healthy lifestyle and prosperity for all people, and more.

Thematic projects of the Cossack Party's Regional Office were presented by Dana Pronina, the secretary of the branch. Participants talked about the contest of "Lessons on Patriotism" teaching materials and the party's Mutual Assistance Club.

Quite impressive was the initiative of the Cossack Party in response to numerous requests from low-income families in Novosibirsk. On the International Day of Peace, the party initiated a collection of humanitarian aid (primarily food). All participants joined in the action. In the coming days the collected articles will be distributed to needy families.