

UPF Europe and the Middle East's Second Webinar on Global Peace Post COVID

Yvo Bruffaerts
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The second "Peace Talk" organized by UPF for the Europe/Middle East region focused on "Reflecting on 75 years since WWII: Towards a vision for Global Peace and Development Post Covid-19" took place on Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

The panelists were:

Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, former President of the Parliament, Luxembourg; Co-Chair, International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP)-Europe

Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini, Senator, former President of the National Assembly, Italy

Hon. Gadzhimurad Zairbekovich Omarov, Member of the State Duma, Russian Federation

Hon. Keith Best, former Member of Parliament; Chair of the Board of Trustees, UPF-UK, United Kingdom

Mr Peter Haider, the secretary-general of UPF Austria, hosted the webinar.



Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, former President of the Parliament, Luxembourg; Co-Chair, International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP)-Europe

Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges said that this year's celebration of the end of WWII reminded her of May 10, 1940, when soldiers invaded and occupied Luxembourg for 5 years. This year, the borders to Germany were closed on May 9 because of the virus. It was a sad memory of what happened 80 years

ago.

The creation of the United Nations in 1945, the Council of Europe in 1949, and the European Coal and Steel Community, in 1952, to prevent Germany from rearmament, may all be regarded as peace initiatives. NATO and the Warsaw Pact, established in 1949 and 1955 respectively, were defence organizations.

They did not prohibit, however, further militarization and huge investment in armament. Now that coronavirus has hit and destabilized the whole world and its economy, investment in the military should be questioned as this is not an answer to the pandemic, she said. She wonders where the voices claiming peace keeping without weapons are?

The European Union has shown limitations in tackling this crisis, she said. Each EU member state applied its own rules, as health policy is still a national policy. However, the virus made a mock of our borders.

UPF is preparing a resolution to address this point, by establishing a global network for cooperation and early warning within the legislative bodies. This is a very useful initiative, she said, and should be put into practice in cooperation with the WHO.

The virus has shown the weakness of political constructions in democracies. The provision of healthcare material, for instance, has demonstrated national egocentric behavior, a tremendous lack of co-ordination, as well as the poor financing of health organizations.

Parliamentarians should claim better healthcare systems in their countries. Information extended to the public should be based on science. Fake news should be checked for.

Mrs. Schoepges hopes that the coronavirus will help our world to become really global and that we will not forget about the deep diseases of our society, such as poverty and lack of education. This crisis should remind us of our fragility and teach us humility.



Author: Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges

Former President of the Parliament of Luxembourg and Co-chair of IAPP Europe

Mrs. Hennicot-Schoepges, after a career as a concert pianist and a professor at the Luxembourg Conservatory, stepped into politics. She became the first woman president of the Luxembourg Parliament and held several government portfolios including Culture, Religions, Education, Higher Education, Research and Public Works. As a member of the European Parliament she was appointed Rapporteur to the EP on the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. She was the founder of the University of Luxembourg and is currently the Vice President of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin.

Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini said that freedom, progress and democracy were ensured thanks to NATO and European integration. However, WWII also gave rise to the Cold War period, in which international relations were polarized even beyond Europe.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 deluded us into thinking that the world would be without problems, he said. In reality we have been faced with new challenges, such as international terrorism, migration, global warming, financial crises.

Globalization has challenged the old balance of power. Severe conflicts, instability, terrorism, poverty and social division are symptomatic of a multipolar rather than multilateral world. And yet, multilateralism, increasing interdependence and integration, beyond national and even continental borders is the only possible approach, as the Covid-19 crisis has shown.

Mr Casini said that the weakness of international organizations has been revealed. The WHO should be a strong, independent and authoritative medical and scientific voice.

In recent years, and also in this crisis, nationalist forces have complained about a lack of solidarity in the EU. Still, the European institutions did certain things, such as the financial support provided by the ECB.



Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini, Senator, former President of the National Assembly, Italy

Mr Casini said that the real challenge for the next few decades is to curb nationalist tendencies on both sides of the Atlantic. Prosperity will depend on global trade and the movement of people. International institutions protect the people, especially in times of great difficulty.



*Author: Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini
Member of the Senate of the Republic of Italy*

Hon. Pier Ferdinando Casini was a member of the Chamber of Deputies in Italy from 1983 to 2013. Since 2013, he has been a member of the Senate of the Republic. He was also Member of the European Parliament from 1994 to 2001. On 31st May 2001 he was elected President of Italy's Chamber of Deputies and stayed in office until 27th April 2006. During the 17th Parliament he served as Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Emigration of the Senate. He resigned on 27th September 2001, as he was elected Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into the banking and financial system. He is Honorary President of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU), which is based in Geneva. He was President of the organisation from 2005 to 2008. On 2nd August 2018 he was elected unanimously Chairperson of the Italian Group to the Interparliamentary Union for the 18th Parliament. He is Honorary President of the Christian Democrat International (CDI). He was President of the organisation from 2006 to 2015.



*Author: Hon. Gadzhimurad Zairbekovich Omarov
Member of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation*

Hon. Gadzhimurad Zairbekovich Omarov said It is estimated that 50-80 million people lost their lives during WWII, almost half of whom were citizens of the former Soviet Union.

Today, when humanity is facing new global challenges, we must remember the valuable experience of international co-operation through the alliance of the Soviet Union, the USA and the United Kingdom during WWII.

Today we are facing a world crisis that is often compared to the times of WWII. However, it is too early to speak of the establishment of a new world order, since this crisis is not so destructive that a new order will need to be built on the ruins of the old. The need of self-sacrifice and mutual co-operation to overcome this crisis, is something these times have in common with the times of WWII. Today most problems are on a global scale. They have no national or even regional solutions. International co-operation is needed, there is no room for ideological prejudice or historical resentment.



Hon. Gadzhimurad Zairbekovich Omarov, Member of the State Duma, Russian Federation

Mr Omarov believes that interparliamentary co-operation can boost understanding among countries, as parliaments represent the people, who have shown great altruism in this crisis. Governments ought to take their example.

God, he said, seeks to save all people without distinction. Humanity is one family under God. Crises should help set aside disagreement and focus on the common cause of saving people.

Hon. Gadzhimurad Zairbekovich Omarov is a Member of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, and member of the Committee on Security and Anti-Corruption. He is also Deputy Head of the faction "The Just Russia" – a parliamentary political party. As a Russian politician, he was a member of the 3rd convocation of the State Duma (2000-2003), and is now a member of the present, 7th convocation. Mr. Omarov is a member of the European Association of Muslims. Previously, he was the leader of the regional branch of "The Just Russia" in the Republic of Dagestan (2012 -- 2015). He is currently a member of the Central Auditing Commission of "The Just Russia".



Author: Mr Keith Best

Chair of the Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust charity and of Charity 2020

Hon. Keith Best said that in times of global crisis, the world usually comes together to find a common solution. This was the case after WWII. Today, however, political institutions seem to be caught in a time-warp, such as the UN Security Council – with its five permanent members holding the veto representing the victorious powers in 1945 – and not the realpolitik of today.

The 1960s and 70s saw an outpouring of a global sense of community, especially among the youth,

perhaps in response to the Cold War and the nuclear threat. Global values were based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. World leaders, such as J.F. Kennedy understood that nations could not solve global problems on their own.

Mr Keith quoted Mikhail Gorbachev, who said in 1992: "On today's agenda is not just a union of democratic states, but also a democratically organized world community... An awareness of the need for some kind of global government is gaining ground, on in which all members of the world community would take part."



Hon. Keith Best, former Member of Parliament; Chair of the Board of Trustees, UPF-UK, United Kingdom

That sense of common global endeavor seems very different today. International co-operation is deteriorating at a time it is most needed. Trust in the WTO and WHO is down.

Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, he said, has pleaded for the creation of a temporary form of global government to tackle the medical and economic crises. Mr Keith added that any organ of global government not only needs the kind of legitimacy given to the UN, but also a democratic accountability through not only states, but also representatives of the people. A Parliamentary Assembly could be created to scrutinize, in perhaps a series of Select Committees, the different organs of the UN. We must free our international institutions through evolution rather than revolution, he said.

We should embrace both China, a totalitarian state, and Russia, which has an understandable sense of paranoia about the loss of its hegemony over former Warsaw Pact states. Co-operation between the West and these nations is of mutual interest.



Hon. Keith Best was a Conservative Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom (UK) from 1979 to 1987. In 1987, he became the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the World Federalist Movement. He was Director of Prisoners Abroad from 1989–93. He was Chief Executive of the Immigration

Advisory Service from 1993–2009. He was Chairman of the Council of the Electoral Reform Society from 1998–2003. He was Chairman of Electoral Reform International Services Ltd. from 2004-14. In 2003, he was named by The Guardian as one of the 100 most influential people in public services in the UK. In April 2010, he took up the post of Chief Executive of Freedom from Torture where he remained until 2014. He was the first Chief Executive of Survivors UK from 2014 – 2017. He is currently Chair of the Wyndham Place Charlemagne Trust charity and of Charity 2020, as well as Secretary of both the European Movement and the Parliamentary Outreach Trust. He is the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Universal Peace Federation - UK.

After the individual presentations, Mr. Heiner Handschin, Director and Permanent Representative, UPF Office for UN Relations, Geneva, Switzerland, addressed questions from the audience to the panel.



Mr. Jacques Marion, President of UPF Europe and the Middle East

Mr. Jacques Marion, President of UPF Europe and the Middle East, in his closing remarks said that UPF, with its ideals of interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universal values, is convinced that nations need to keep in place a strong multilateral system of engagement and that parliamentarians should put into practice this ideal.

Today neither the UN nor the EU truly fulfil the world's expectation for peace, because of the rise of self-interest at the expense of the common good – whether in the form of nationalism, religious interest, or ethnic exclusivism.

One conviction that led to the founding of the EU, he said, was that the self-interest of nations would be better fulfilled when they served a greater cause.

This principle of peacebuilding prompted our Founders, Dr and Mrs. Moon in 2000, to propose the revival of the UN through the creation of an interreligious council. The proposal was introduced to the UN through the Philippines delegation to the UN.

In the same way, he said, if we are to rebuild the world after COVID 19, we need institutions that maintain core spiritual values as the foundation for Peace.

Recently, our Founder, Dr Hak Ja Han Moon, said that UPF, together with partnering organizations in the fields of politics, religion, business, or the media, should form "one community under God", hereby emphasizing that unless the world unites centering on the higher principle of living for the common good, trends towards division, separation and breakdown will not be overcome.

UPF and its affiliated associations, such as IAPP, IAPD and others, are ideally placed to encourage leaders to take such a stance. We have serious issues to resolve, but we also have common roots. These will allow us to move forward with the spirit of cooperation beyond nation, religion, and political ideology.

A recording of the webinar can be found on Vimeo at: vimeo.com/423226189423226189 and on YouTube at: youtu.be/9xF5cuqjcZI and the podcast at: soundcloud.com/upf-europe/upf-europe-middle-east-peace-talk-26-5-2020