

Food for the Soul on the Road to Peace

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"Racism, religious intolerance, the destruction of nature and other disasters that occur in our world come about as a result of the serious problems in the human heart. This is where we have to look for the solution of world problems. Hatred in the human heart must be replaced by love."

With these wise and heartfelt words from Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, let me express my consideration for this spiritual leader of the Universal Peace Federation. It's a marvel how she tries to keep the lantern lit on the path to peace, many years after her husband Father Moon, passed away. Together they had built the theme and the motif of their lives. Regardless, Reverend Moon was a visionary religious leader, capable of foreseeing future challenges and of developing innovative strategies to ensure that we would walk toward true peace.

It is my pleasure and honor to be present at this World Peace Summit, which is taking place in Albania, where racism finds no foothold; where religious intolerance is replaced by religious harmony -- an identifying characteristic unmatched anywhere else in the world. Albanians regard religious tolerance as a fundamental value, more deeply rooted in their moral and social tradition and values than experienced as social practice, belief or policy. As a matter of fact, even in the *Qanun*, the old Albanian common law, it is written that the house of an Albanian belongs to God and to guests. I believe Albanians incarnated this high principle.

Although Albanians greatly appreciate the role of religious community leaders and of the clerics that promote religious tolerance in the country, the key instruments that enable tolerance are related to values, such as respect for individual freedoms and the prevalence of national traditions and awareness beyond religious beliefs; these are the factors enabling religious tolerance. Together, people of all faiths regardless of their religion are interconnected by the universalism that faith grants, which is love, as Mother Moon underscores in all her speeches.

Social cohesion despite differences

Bearing in mind the religious diversity of Albanian society, maintaining social cohesion and tolerance and religious harmony even in turbulent times has been a remarkable achievement. Religious tolerance is an Albanian trait, or a social and cultural model, that can be "exported" to places with other national and cultural contexts. In view of the above logic, a claim arises internally to try to find ways to create a better world -- a better world, not as an expression of the egoism of "only for myself" but a better world as a

legacy for the generations to come.

We can also recall the precious stories of protection of Jews during the Second World War. This was a rare case in those times, perhaps not only in Europe but throughout the world, when an entire community alongside their representatives, political entities and authorities refused to carry out orders, criminal orders, to give up the Jews....

The Universal Peace Federation has done this at its best by holding regular International Leadership Conferences, which are naturally bringing together leaders around a common vision of peace. To this end, on February 8, on the occasion of the 2019 World Summit in Seoul, South Korea, at the initiative of UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the International Peace Summit Council (ISCP) convened.

It's an international network of heads of state or governments who explore solutions and make recommendations, through dialogue and cooperation, to address critical world problems, including climate change and environmental issues, religious conflicts, poverty, war, corruption and family issues. The ISCP is committed to building a world of peace in which everyone can live in freedom, harmony, cooperation and prosperity. The ISCP upholds the essential principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values and acts as a facilitator and adviser for achieving peace and development.



From Left: Mr. Alfred Moisiu, president of Albania, 2002–2007; Hashim Thaçi, president of Kosovo; True Mother, co-founder, Universal Peace Federation; Stevo Pendarovski, president of North Macedonia; and Elisa Spiropali, Minister of State for Relations with the Albanian Parliament.

Persist on the path to peace

What we all need to understand and feel is the importance of having patience -- patience to obtain peace for all. Regardless of how difficult the path toward peace may be, that path will open through persistence, through better policies, through more equality in society. Not only justice but justice within social relations, with the participation of important sectors, such as politics, business, media, religion (definitely) and civil society to find better ways to promote peace and development, not only at the national level but at the regional level, which in the Balkans is of pivotal importance, considering our not-so-distant past. But also at the global level.

The most important thing is how we receive this message and learn through ordinary people from different countries and how we involve them in movements. It is remarkable how UPF operates, tackling issues that are pivotal and also involving people that the superstructure often marginalizes when it comes to decision-making.

In this peace summit being conducted today in Tirana, with its ongoing mission to promote universal values so needed now in these turbulent times, when oftentimes, with a cause or without a cause, we shut ourselves out in dark spaces, we erect walls, create barriers, even from countries that seek cooperation.

Albanian national maturity

So we are impressed by the fact that we are creatures of God and therefore seek goodness and altruism and struggle against harmful habits or vices and need to avoid shortcuts to success, which is an idiotic path. This is how policies work and how they relate to particular individuals -- their good or bad will, their good or bad intent. So it is important to cultivate not only in the individual but also in society this good will that the Universal Peace Federation also expresses through its ethos.

Therefore, in order for us not fall into a trap, the learning process must be continuous, food for the soul, such as the example of this summit, which brings together people who can share their experiences to embody and facilitate empowerment on a path that is not at all easy, but accessible, such as peace! Our country has gone through many challenges, through multiple tunnels of sometimes hallucinatory and at other times illuminating contrasts, from the country -- once the most isolated place on the globe -- to today's country, so closely integrated into the European family. To say it in a descriptive sentence is easy, but this has involved years of hard work, trials, struggles and dreams that were shaped precisely by good wishes, by the inner energy of ordinary people.

From yesterday to today, the changes are radical. But does that make us complacent? No! Not at all! We think the opposite. For as long as we breathe, for that long the problems will remain, according to an old proverb. The essence is what we can change, so that rather than receiving, we should give, and rather than complaining, we should work harder. The topics we will discuss in this summit are current, reflecting the need to be together indiscriminately, such as "Towards Peace in Southeast Europe," "Peace Education and Human Development," "Family Values, Peace Values," etcetera.

A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, when they have the skills to resolve conflicts constructively, when they recognize and live up to international standards of human rights, gender equality and racial equality, when they appreciate cultural diversity and when they respect the integrity of the Earth. Such lessons cannot be learned without self-sufficient and systematic education for global peace.

With this part of the Hague Appeal for Peace Statement, I conclude my speech by thanking you for your attention and for wishing this summit success.

When Elisa Spiropali graduated high school, she was one of the top five students in Albania. She won a place in and graduated from the Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific on Vancouver Island, Canada. She then enrolled in Mount Holyoke College in the US State of Massachusetts, where she earned degrees in Politics and in Economics. Today, she is politician serving as minister of state for relations with the Albanian Parliament.