



UPF EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST NEWSLETTER



2023 BALKAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: BALKAN LEADERS CALL FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

From reports by Yvo Bruffaerts, Svetlana Peneva, and Christine Chevé of UPF EUME

The latest Balkan Leadership Conference took place in the North Macedonian capital, Skopje, on October 14, 2023, with the theme “Western Balkans Integration into the European Union: Perspectives and Challenges.” It was organized by the Europe-Middle East branch of UPF in partnership with the Podgorica Club, an organization founded in 2019 by former heads of state and government of Southeast Europe.

This was the third in a series of conferences jointly held by UPF and the Podgorica Club to discuss the war in Ukraine and its impact on peace and security in the Western Balkans. In response to the heightening conflict between East and West, the European Union has initiated a new dynamic for

Western Balkans integration. However, the enlargement process has stalled. Balkan leaders have been expecting bolder steps from Europe, while there is a decline of euro-enthusiasm among Balkan populations.

The Skopje conference was attended by the current president of North Macedonia and ten former heads of state and government from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovakia. The president of the National Assembly and the minister of defense of North Macedonia also attended the event, as well as youth leaders from the six Western Balkan nations.

Introduced by H.E. Filip Vujanović,

president of the Podgorica Club and former president of Montenegro, North Macedonian President Stevo Pendarovski gave the opening address. He reminded the audience that this year was the 20th anniversary of the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki, Greece, whose goal was to speed up the integration of the Balkan countries in the EU. Apart from Croatia, that has not been realized.

Now the Ukraine war has put integration back on the EU agenda. In June the European Council decided to give candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, whereas the process for Western Balkan countries is still at a standstill. Macedonian citizens are tired of staying in the waiting room of the EU, he said.



BALKAN CONFERENCE

SESSION 1: WESTERN BALKANS INTEGRATION INTO THE EU



The first session, “Perspectives on the Western Balkans’ Integration into the EU,” featured seven former heads of state and government who offered their views and recommendations. Branko Crvenkovski, a former president of North Macedonia, proposed a process of gradual integration before full membership in which new member states would not have the right of veto. The former president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mladen Ivanić, suggested that the process of integration could begin with agreements on inexpensive and uncomplicated measures, such as university accreditations or the elimination of roaming charges, or with considering a status similar to that between Switzerland and the EU. Igor Lukšić, a former prime minister of Montenegro, explained that the new EU membership policy will allow associated member states to align themselves with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, to have free movement of people, goods, services and capital, and access to EU development funds to overcome economic obstacles.

In a warning note, former Albanian President Alfred Moisiu, referring to the 24 September attack by Serb militants on police in North Kosovo, called for stronger security measures as a precondition for integration, while Fatmir Sejdiu, a former president of Kosovo, deplored the weak reconciliation processes among citizens and nations that cause problems in the Balkan region, as well as in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine.

Mikuláš Dzurinda, a former prime minister of Slovakia and president of the Brussels-based Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, acknowledged that the issue of EU enlargement is a vicious circle, but said he expected the December EU Summit to consider the accession of both Ukraine and Western Balkan countries. However, former Croatian President Stjepan Mesić expressed his concern that, instead of becoming EU members, they may end up with a kind of surrogate membership at the edge of Europe.

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dr. Katsumi Otsuka
Chairman, UPF Europe
& the Middle East



Dear Readers,

With the tragic destruction of lives in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza, and in many other areas of conflict around the world, our peacebuilding mission is facing a serious challenge. Many actors from diverse fields contribute to the peace process, but in the perspective of UPF, faith leaders play a crucial role. In August 2000, at the United Nations in New York, the UPF Founders proposed that faith leaders be invited to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding within the UN system, in concert with heads of state and diplomats. When political efforts break down, diplomatic channels are closed off, but faith leaders can continue “track two” engagements and dialogue.

In this latest issue, you will see some of the activities that have been held in the second half of 2023 by UPF Ambassadors for Peace, volunteers and partners in Europe and the Middle East – from high-level conferences with heads of state to Peace Road marches and relief activities.

I wish to thank all those who offered great efforts for peace through dialogue and mutual respect throughout 2023. May your commitment bring fruits of harmony and prosperity in the coming new year.

- 1 Balkan Leadership Conference speakers and organizers, with H.E. Stevo Pendarovski, president of North Macedonia (front center)
- 2 Session One panelists (left to right): Jacques Marion, co-chair, UPF-EUME; H.E. Filip Vujanović, president, Montenegro (2003-2018); H.E. Stevo Pendarovski, president, North Macedonia; H.E. Stjepan Mesić, president, Croatia (2000-2010); H.E. Alfred Moisiu, president, Albania (2002-2007); H.E. Branko Crvenkovski, president, North Macedonia (2004-2009); H.E. Fatmir Sejdiu, president, Kosovo (2006-2010); H.E. Mikuláš Dzurinda, prime minister, Slovakia (1998-2006); H.E. Mladen Ivanić, president, Bosnia-Herzegovina (2014-2018); and H.E. Igor Lukšić, prime minister, Montenegro (2010-2012)
- 3 H.E. Stevo Pendarovski, the president of North Macedonia, gives the opening remarks.
- 4 Hon. Slavjanka Petrovska, minister of defense, North Macedonia
- 5 Hon. Talat Xhaferi, president, North Macedonia's Assembly
- 6 H.E. Filip Vujanović, president, Montenegro (2003-2018); president, Podgorica Club

SESSION 2: PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



Session 2 (left to right): Dr. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova, former director, European Policy Institute; Hon. Slavjanka Petrovska, minister of defense, North Macedonia; Hon. Talat Xhaferi, president, North Macedonia's Assembly; H.E. Filip Vujanović, president, Montenegro (2003-2018); H.E. Rexhep Meidani, president, Albania (1997-2002); H.E. Mirko Cvetković, prime minister, Serbia (2008-2012); Hon. Werner Fasslabend, minister of defense, Austria (1987-2000)

The second session was titled “Perspectives on Peace and Reconciliation in the Western Balkans.” Talat Xhaferi, the president of North Macedonia's Assembly, emphasized that mutual parliamentary cooperation should be the stepping stone for reconciliation. But according to former Montenegrin President Filip Vujanović, coexistence and rebuilding trust should be emphasized, through economic cooperation and mutual recognition of diplomas. North Macedonian Defense Minister Slavjanka Petrovska warned that “by ignoring the sincere efforts made by our region toward integration, the EU may contribute to the rise of malicious influence from non-NATO countries.”

Former Albanian President Rexhep Meidani outlined several perspectives on EU-Western Balkan cooperation, such as NATO integration, diplomacy and mediation, or civil society organizations. Former Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković also emphasized that reconciliation will come only through greater involvement of the EU and major steps toward democratization within the region. In closing, former Austrian Defense Minister Werner Fasslabend said that the main danger in the Western Balkans is that 20 percent of the young people have left their country, and he suggested that the Podgorica Club take an active role in recommending corrective action.

SESSION 3: PROJECTS TO FOSTER REGIONAL COOPERATION IN YOUTH

The third session theme was “Policies and Projects to Foster Regional Cooperation in Youth and EU Integration.” Naumče Mojsovski, the director of the North Macedonian Agency of Youth and Sport, explained how the Berlin Process, set up in 2014 as a platform for high-level cooperation between the six Western Balkan nations, was enabling young people to take part in decision-making. Parliamentarian Fisnike Bektashi Shaqiri emphasized that the region must be made attractive and inclusive so that young people remain and take their future in their hands. Indeed, according to Aleksandar Ružin, 155,000 Western Balkan youth left their countries between 2012 and

2022. Young people are the ones who open the doors for European values to enter the Balkans, said Albert Hani. But they should look to the future rather than dwell in the past. Dona Kosturanova, from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, recommended further elaboration and financial support for youth strategies, as well as education in democratic and civic values. In conclusion, UPF senior adviser Dr. Michael Balcomb expressed his faith in the future of youth in the Western Balkans, despite the current challenges; but he emphasized that values such as dignity, integrity, kindness, or generosity should remain a priority.



Panelists (front row, left to right): Jacques Marion, co-chair, UPF-EUME; Dona Kosturanova, North Macedonia director, Westminster Foundation for Democracy; H.E. Filip Vujanović, president, Montenegro (2003-2018); Albert Hani, secretary general, Regional Youth Cooperation Office; and Aleksandar Ružin, former adviser to the prime minister of North Macedonia. Back row (left to right): Gani Rroshi, secretary general, UPF-Albania; Ejona Icka, secretary general, UPF-Kosovo; Dr. Michael Balcomb, senior advisor, UPF-EUME; Naumče Mojsovski, director, North Macedonian Agency of Youth and Sport; Hon. Fisnike Bektashi Shaqiri, member of parliament, North Macedonia; Katerina Jakimovska, senior event officer, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.

WORLD NEWS

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE CAMBODIA CELEBRATES “PEACE AND DEMOCRACY”

Written by UPF-Asia Pacific



VIPs from around the world, who came as election observers, were invited to the Prime Minister's Office on July 22. On the photo with PM Hun Sen, top UPF participants are (front row, left to right): H.E. Ahmed Al Jarwan, president, Global Council for Tolerance and Peace; Dr. Charles S. Yang, president, UPF International; Hon. Agung Laksono, former speaker of Indonesia; Sen. Mushahid Husain, Pakistan; Hon. Johari Abdul, speaker, Malaysia; H.E. Samdech Hun Sen, prime minister of Cambodia; H.E. Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, former prime minister of Pakistan; H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, former president of Sri Lanka; H.E. KP Sharma Oli, Former Prime Minister of Cambodia; H.E. Goodluck Jonathan, former president of Nigeria.

UPF was among the 61 international organizations that were invited to observe the election of members of the Cambodian National Assembly for the Seventh Legislature, which marked the 30th anniversary of the first general election held in 1993. On this occasion UPF, in cooperation with the Asian Vision Institute (AVI) and with the support of International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace, convened an International Leadership Conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from July 21 to 24, 2023. The event was organized to support practical steps toward building a culture of peace, democracy, and good governance in Cambodia.

A total of 253 participants from 50 nations, including seven current and former heads of state and government, 45 parliamentarians and 15 organizational leaders, came together in person to deliberate on the theme “Peace and Democracy” and to be observers of Cambodia's 2023 general election.

ILC Cambodia provided an ideal opportunity for UPF and AVI to further develop their partnership as they explored important projects with a special emphasis on the Asia Pacific Union initiative and Universal Peace Charter. Speakers from the EUME region included Hon. Dr. Werner Fasslabend, a former Austrian defense minister (1987-1990, 1990-2000), and Hon. Patricia Lalonde, a former member of the European Parliament (2017-2019) representing France.



1 UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon addresses the ILC by videoconference.

2 UPF International President Dr. Charles S. Yang (right) visits the Killing Fields Memorial.

3 The gallows on which the Khmer Rouge tortured prisoners by plunging their head in a water barrel and then suspending them by rope from the horizontal beam

4 The Cambodian press interviews H.E. K.P. Sharma Oli, former prime minister of Nepal (left, wearing a black cap), at a polling station on Election Day.

REGIONAL NEWS

UPF-AUSTRIA HOSTS EUROPE-BRAZIL DIALOGUE AT VIENNA UN

Written by Peter Haider, president, UPF-Austria



The event at the Vienna International Centre (the UN Office at Vienna) attracted approximately 150 participants.

Approximately 150 participants attended “Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity, Shared Values – Europe-Brazil Dialogue,” a conference that was held in the Vienna International Centre (the United Nations Office at Vienna) on November 8, 2023. UPF-Austria organized the one-day conference with the support of the Brazilian Embassy in Vienna, and in cooperation with Brazglobal, Abrasa Casa do Brasil Austria, the United Nations Correspondents’ Association-Vienna, the Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations, and Women’s Federation for World Peace, an organization that is affiliated with UPF. It was set up in connection with a two-day event titled “Industry 4.0, Renewable Energy and Green and Blue Hydrogen Energy between Brazil and European Stakeholders,” which was promoted by the Brazilian Global



Session 1 (left to right): Anderson Silva, a dancer and choreographer; Luciana Maria Santos de Souza, director, Instituto Rio Itariri; H.E. Nelson Antonio Tabajara de Oliveira, Brazilian ambassador to Austria; Benedita da Silva, a Brazilian MP and former governor of Rio de Janeiro; Queila Rosa, president, Abrasa Casa do Brasil Austria; Peter Haider, president, UPF-Austria; Elaine Antunes de Jesus, Rioca Hotel Vienna; Maria Tereza Umbelino, CEO and founder, Brasil Mata Viva

Business Network and the Larkalis Organization, based in Vienna.

H.E. Nelson Antonio Tabajara de Oliveira, the Brazilian ambassador to Austria, was the main speaker at the morning session. Queila Rosa, the president of ABRASA Casa do Brasil Austria, and Hon. Benedita da Silva, a Brazilian MP and former governor of Rio de Janeiro, were also among the morning session speakers.

LEGAL EXPERTS IN ROME DISCUSS JUSTICE & PEACE

Written by Vittorio Patanella, IMAP coordinator, UPF-Italy



1 The conference panelists and participants in the Capitular Hall of the Italian Senate



2 Left to right: Dr. Sergio De Nicola, deputy prosecutor, Public Prosecutor's Office, Cagliari Court of Appeals; Hon. Mirella Cristina, former member, Justice Commission; Dr. Maria Pia Turiello, forensic criminologist; Carlo Zonato, president, UPF-Italy; Mgr. Vincenzo Paglia, archbishop, president, Pontifical Academy for Life; Hon. Pietro Pittalis, vice chairman, Justice Commission

“Justice for Peace: An Indissoluble Pair for a Harmonious Future” was a conference held in Rome on October 24, 2023, in the Capitular Hall of the Italian Senate. Sen. Manfredi Potenti organized the event in collaboration with the Italian chapters of UPF and its International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace. The event was moderated by Maria Pia Turiello, a forensic criminologist, who affirmed that, “True peace is not just the absence of war but a state of comprehensive, stable well-being that is difficult to achieve except through extreme and concerted efforts

aimed at removing the root causes of conflict.”

Speakers included senators, MPs, the vice chair of the Justice Commission, the deputy minister of justice, the deputy prosecutor of the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Cagliari Court of Appeals, a criminal lawyer, a former first executive of the State Police, an archbishop, and members of the National Forensic Council, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute in Rome, and the United Nations Academic Impact.

REGIONAL NEWS

UKRAINIAN ROUNDTABLE: LESSONS FROM THE WAR

Written by Dr. Mykhailo Ilin, secretary general, UPF-Ukraine



Dr. Mykhailo Zgurovsky, the rector of the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, gives the opening speech at the roundtable.

UPF-Ukraine and the Ukrainian Peace Council (UPC) held a roundtable discussion on “Russia-Ukraine War: Lessons for Europe and the World” at the Drahomanov Ukrainian State University on November 3, 2023. Ukrainian scientists, educators, and journalists took part, as well as guests from several European countries. Dr. Volodymyr Lavrinenko, vice rector of the university, served as host. Former Minister of Education of Ukraine Dr. Mykhailo Zgurovsky, rector of the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute and head of the UPC, gave his analysis on the war and said that the search for an effective security architecture was the main challenge for UPF, the UPC, and other peacekeeping organizations.

Other speakers included Dr. Vasyl Kremen, also a former



Dr. Mykhailo Zgurovsky and Jacques Marion award UPF Ambassador for Peace certificates to school directors from the Peace School network.

minister of education; Dr. Oleksandr Sagan, former head of the State Religion Department; Dr. Ruslan Khalikov, an expert from the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation; Ambassador Valery Tsybukh, head of the Environmental Safety Council NGO; Tetyana Fedunova, head of the Association of Kyiv Schools; Ksenia Abramovych, a student and Youth Ambassador for Peace; and a five-member delegation from UPF.

The event was followed by a UPF Ambassador for Peace award ceremony, honoring 26 educators, school directors and teachers from the Peace School network developed by UPF-Ukraine.

PEACE PRINCIPLES SEMINARS AROUND THE REGION

UPF Peace Principles Seminars are held regularly in Europe and the Middle East for a half-day or a whole day. Here are some examples of recent events. An additional seminar was

held on 1 October in Hungary; 11 Ambassadors for Peace and four candidates attended the event at the Peace Embassy in Budapest.



Ireland: The first Irish seminar, held in the Unity House Peace Embassy in Dublin on 26 August, welcomed 28 participants.



Finland: A one-day seminar was held in Helsinki on 21 October with 33 attendees at the Cultural and Conference Hotel.



Sweden: The third Nordic Peace Seminar took place on 7 October in Stockholm at the Haymarket by Scandic hotel. Among the 60 participants from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden were religious leaders, academicians, artists, and NGO representatives.



United Kingdom: Dr David Hanna, UPF Northern Europe president, gave three presentations during a one-day seminar at UPF offices in Lancaster Gate, London, on 28 October.

REGIONAL NEWS

UPF INVITED TO ESTORIL CONFERENCES AS PARTNER

Written by Sergio Vieira, president, UPF-Portugal

UPF was invited to be a partner of the eighth edition of the Estoril Conferences, a renowned international event organized annually by the Nova School of Business & Economics with the support of the Municipality of Cascais. The conference on the theme "Re-Humanizing the World," held on September 1 and 2, 2023, was attended by over

1,000 participants. Panels on the planet, people, health, peace, and policy addressed the rapid changes taking place in the world and the need to keep humanity at the center. Speakers included a wide array of experts from around the world, including former heads of state, Nobel laureates, scientists, artists and environmental activists.



Part of the UPF delegation (left to right): Ana Paula Silva, secretary, UPF-Portugal Board; Moreno Berto, vice president, UPF-Portugal; Maria Gabriella Mieli, coordinator, UPF Southern Europe; Dr. Cristina Casas, director, Department of International Relations, Migration Policy and Attraction of Migrants of the High Commission for Migration; Jacques Marion, co-chair, UPF EUME; Dr. Sergio Vieira, president, UPF-Portugal; Sergio Neto, president, FFWPU-Portugal; Marta Maria Carvalho Rodrigues, president, WFWP-Portugal

AMBASSADORS FOR PEACE HOLD ROUNDTABLE

Written by Binod Paudel, president, UPF-Turkey



Left to right: Binod Paudel, Yoshihiro Yamazaki, Jacques Marion, David Fraser Harris, Professor Dr. Feyza Basar, Umberto Angelucci, Zuhal Mansfield, Kadir Yücelbas, Dr. Kemal Yildirim, Dr. Furkan Övündür, Tural Şahbazli, and Professor Dr. Ali Denizli

Ambassadors for Peace and friends of UPF-Turkey gathered at UPF's Peace Embassy in Istanbul on October 21, 2023, to hold a roundtable on peacebuilding. UPF-Turkey President Binod Paudel called for a minute of silence for all those in the Middle East region who recently had lost their lives to war and natural disasters. David Fraser Harris, the

UPF secretary general for the Middle East, gave a brief account of UPF's humanitarian efforts in response to the earthquakes in Syria, Turkey and Morocco and the floods in Libya. He then read UPF's Response and Call to Action on Israel and Gaza.

Following a presentation by Jacques Marion, the co-chair of UPF EUME, about UPF's recent activities, each participant offered his or her perspective and ideas on contributing to the peace process at home and abroad. Participants included a journalist who played a key role in relief efforts in February's earthquake; a lawyer active with NGOs helping refugee children; a political advisor; a lecturer on human rights and diplomacy; several authors; and international business entrepreneurs. In his closing remarks, Umberto Angelucci, the UPF co-chair for the Middle East, emphasized the role Turkey can play in bringing peace to the region.

EUME SEASIDE SEMINAR PRESENTS UPF VISION

Written by Jacques Marion, UPF co-chair, Europe and the Middle East

Forty participants from 14 nations in Europe and the Middle East attended a three-day introduction to the UPF Peace Principles from September 8 to 10, 2023, at Glory House, a hotel located in the Netherlands on the shores of the North Sea. Among the participants were current and former parliamentarians, religious leaders, entrepreneurs, and NGO representatives. The seminar offered insights into the vision and peace principles that have inspired and guided UPF and affiliated organizations established by UPF founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. In the last session, eight participants, from Austria, Denmark, Jordan, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom, were honored as Ambassadors for Peace.



The participants and organizers outside Glory House

REGIONAL NEWS

UPF-UK INVITES 'GLOBAL SOUTH' VIEWPOINTS

Written by Robin Marsh, secretary general, UPF-United Kingdom

UPF-UK convened three forums on the theme "Global South Perspectives on the Russia-Ukraine War and Consequent Geopolitical Tensions." These events, held on 18 July, 26 September, and 31 October at the UPF offices in London, aimed to foster respectful dialogue, promote mutual understanding, and address the war's widespread

impact on nations reliant on Ukraine for food supplies and global trade. They proved to be an insightful platform for promoting inclusivity and understanding in international affairs. As the world navigates complex geopolitical dynamics, such initiatives serve as vital steps toward a more harmonious and balanced global dialogue.



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1 Dr. Afzal Ashraf, a visiting fellow at the University of Nottingham's Centre for Conflict, Security and Terrorism

2 Emmanuel C. Njoku, an ambassador of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

3 Left to right: Robin Marsh, secretary general, UPF UK; Hon. Keith Best, chair, UPF UK; Lt Gen Abdul Qayyum, former three-star general and senator, Pakistan; Ishtiaq Chaudhry, chairman of Al Noor Foods and a philanthropist.

4 Hon. Keith Best, the chair of UPF-UK, addresses the audience at the UPF-UK Peace Embassy.

INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Dr. David and Patricia Earle, the leaders of UPF in the UK's Midlands area, are very active in the area of interfaith in this ethnically diverse region of England. For their 30 years of Interfaith work, they have received several awards, including from the Birmingham Council of Faiths. In May, Patricia, who also represents WFWP, received the Coronation Champions award from the King and Queen, one of 500 given out in the UK. In August, they received an award from the global leader of the Namdhari Sikhs, Sri Sat Guru Uday Singh Ji, at an event organized by the Namdhari Community. Here we describe a few of their recent activities.



David and Patricia received the Birmingham Council of Faiths award at the AGM from outgoing Chair, Shenaz Sajan.



Dr. David and Patricia Earle converse with Sri Satguru Uday Singh Ji at the event organized by the Namdhari Community.



On 19 November, as part of UK National Interfaith Week, around 120 people came together for peace in the beautiful Prayer Hall of the Al Mahdi Institute, with many faiths being represented.



Dr. David and Patricia Earle award Ambassador for Peace certificates to four individuals, including Cllr Muhammad Afzal, a former lord mayor and councillor (right).

FOUNDERS' MESSAGE

For more information visit www.eume.upf.org

A PROPOSAL FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations was launched with the splendid dream of realizing world peace. However, today it must admit its inherent limitations. As the world moved from the conflict-ridden 20th century toward a new millennium, the UPF founders, Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, offered their vision for empowering the United Nations. Recognizing that one of the primary factors contributing to the emergence of conflicts was the deep-rooted disharmony that exists among the world's religions, they proposed, in a speech given at the United Nations on August 18, 2000, the creation of an Interreligious Council that would complement and support the Security Council in dealing with conflicts in the global era.

Excerpt from the Founder's Address for the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace on August 18, 2000, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York

Proposal for a Bicameral UN Assembly

At their root, human problems are not entirely social or political, and so social and political approaches will always be of limited effectiveness. Although secular authorities rule most human societies, religion lies at the heart of most national and cultural identities. In fact, religious faith and devotion have far greater importance in most people's hearts than do political loyalties. [...]

World peace can be fully accomplished only when the wisdom and efforts of the world's religious leaders, who represent the internal concerns of the mind and conscience, work cooperatively and respectfully with national leaders who have much practical wisdom and worldly experience about the external reality or "body." In this light, it is time for us to give serious consideration even to the prospect of restructuring the United Nations. For example, perhaps it is possible to envision the United Nations as a bicameral institution.

The existing United Nations structure, composed of national representatives, may be regarded as a congress where the interests of each member nation are represented. However, I submit that serious consideration

should be given to forming a religious assembly, or council of religious representatives, within the structure of the United Nations. This assembly or council would consist of respected spiritual leaders in fields such as religion, culture, and education. Of course, the members of this interreligious assembly will need to have demonstrated an ability to transcend the limited interests of individual nations and to speak for the concerns of the entire world and humanity at large.

The two chambers, working together in mutual respect and cooperation, will be able to make great advances in ushering in a world of peace. The wisdom and vision of great religious leaders will substantially supplement the political insight, experience, and skill of the world's political leaders.

Construction of peace zones in all border areas

Even at this moment, more and more conflicts are breaking out across the world over disputed borders. As a result, the world is sustaining substantial loss of human life. [...] I propose today that the United Nations and religious leaders join their hearts and work to create peace zones in areas of conflict. [...] These zones could be governed directly by the United Nations. [...] The United Nations will be responsible for providing guidance to those living in these areas so that they come to embody the founding ideals of the United Nations and comply with its declarations for peace.



1 Dr. Sun Myung Moon reads his speech at the United Nations in New York on 18 August 2000, accompanied by his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon.

2 Conference Room 2 of the United Nations Headquarters in New York is filled to capacity for this IIFWP Assembly 2000 event.



3 Left to right: H.E. Kenneth Kaunda, president, Zambia (1964-1991); Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon; Dr. Sun Myung Moon; Hon. Makarim Wibisono, permanent representative of Indonesia to the United Nations; H.E. Edward Heath, prime minister, United Kingdom (1970-1974); H.E. Óscar Arias, president, Costa Rica (1986-1990, 2006-2010); Hon. Robert Dole, United States senator (1969-1996).

REGIONAL NEWS

CANADA-EUME WEBINAR: INSIGHTS INTO N. KOREA

Written by Dr. Franco Famularo, president, UPF-Canada

The sixth in an ongoing series of webinars held jointly by UPF-EUME and UPF-Canada on the theme “Viewing the DPRK (North Korea) from Within” took place on 7 September 2023. The panel, from Europe, North America and Korea, attracted participants from around the world.

The keynote speaker was Professor Han Park, professor emeritus of international affairs and founding director of the Center for the Study of Global Issues at the University of Georgia in the United States. A specialist on North Korea, which he has visited over 50 times, he was instrumental in aiding the visits to that country of former U.S. presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

The audience then heard from three respondents. Paul Tjia, director of GPI Consultancy in the Netherlands, a businessman with extensive experience in the DPRK since 1997, spoke of the importance of developing a relationship with the North Koreans. Dr. Thomas Ward, provost and professor of peace and development studies at HJI Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, spoke about Juche Thought and its distancing from Dialectical Materialism. Finally, UPF International Chairman Dr. Chang Shik Yang spoke about the international efforts of UPF and its founders to bring the two Koreas into a healthy and constructive dialogue.



Prof. Han Park



Dr. Chang Shik Yang



Mr. Paul Tjia



Dr. Thomas Ward

COMMEMORATING THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KOREAN WAR ARMISTICE

FRANCE

Some 20 families visited the graves of 31 soldiers of the French UN Battalion who died in Korea and were buried in their native villages all over France.



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1 Ceremony at the Korean War Memorial in Paris

2 Patrick Jouan, vice president of UPF-France, with André Datcharry, one of the few surviving Korean War veterans from France

3 Jean-Paul and Rinalda Chaudy of UPF-France visit the grave of Joannès Petit Male, a French soldier who died in the Korean War.

RUSSIA

In Russia, the head of UPF for Eastern Europe was one of the invited guests at events organized by the North Korean Embassy. The program on July 27, 2023, commenced near Moscow's Red Square, where 30 prominent figures from academia and NGOs laid flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as a tribute to the victims of the war. Following a meeting at the residence of North Korean Ambassador Shin Hong Chul, a conference took place at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences with Dr. Alexander Vorontsov, director of the institute's Korea-Mongolia Department, and Dr. Felix Kim, president of the Russian North Korean diaspora association Bomminryon. DPRK Ambassador Shin provided insights into the historical aspects of the Korean War as viewed from the North Korean side.



Konstantin Krylov, secretary general for UPF Eastern Europe, with North Korean representatives at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow, honoring soldiers who died in the Korean War

REGIONAL NEWS

YOUTH AND STUDENTS FOR PEACE LAUNCHES CHAPTER IN LEBANON

Written by Hermine Schellen, secretary general, UPF-Lebanon

UPF collaborated with the Lebanese chapter of the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP), an affiliated organization, for its launch on 28 September 2023, at a youth festival in the UNESCO Palace in Beirut. The event was officially hosted by UPF-Lebanon, as YSP is not yet registered in Lebanon and the UNESCO Palace is under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Nicolas El Osta, a famous singer whom UPF has known for many years, agreed to sing for free at the youth festival. It was very inspiring to have his contribution at the event. Mr. El Osta was awarded an Ambassador for Peace certificate during the festival.



- 1 Thomas and Hermine Schellen of UPF-Lebanon meet Lebanese Minister of Culture Dr. Wissam El Mortada (center) at his office in the Ministry of Culture to obtain his approval for IAYSP to inaugurate a chapter in Lebanon.
- 2 Sarah Ahmed, the IAYSP president for the Middle East (right), awards the first prize in a video contest to Cynthia El Sahmarani.
- 3 Bogdan Pammer, the IAYSP president for Europe and the Middle East, awards the popularity prize in a video contest to Celena Awada.

UPF DISTRIBUTES FOOD AID IN SIDON, LEBANON

Written by Hermine Schellen, secretary general, UPF-Lebanon

On Sunday, 8 October, UPF traveled to the city of Sidon to attend a big celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Thousands of people had gathered there. UPF-Lebanon President Thomas Schellen was invited to give a speech by the Sheikh, who, with his Olfah Association, was the main organizer of this event. Toward the end of the program, UPF distributed food aid that had been donated by the German chapter of the International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF), an affiliated organization. Through a lottery, 40 families were selected to receive food aid, which they really appreciated.

- 1 UPF-Lebanon leaders Thomas and Hermine Schellen (left) oversee a lottery to give donated food to 40 families at a Sidon celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.
- 2 Boxes with donated food for Lebanon

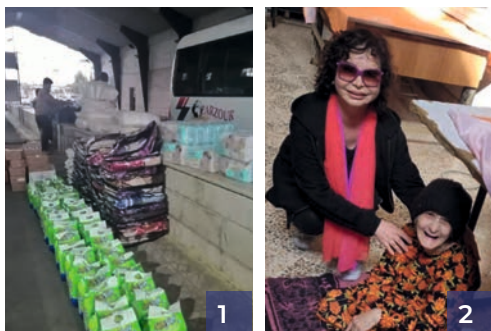


AID TO EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS IN ALEPPO, SYRIA

Written by David Fraser Harris, secretary general, UPF Middle East and North Africa

A delivery of aid was made to needy earthquake survivors in Aleppo, the city in government-held Syria that was most affected by this February's earthquake. After overcoming numerous obstacles, UPF-Lebanon Secretary General Hermine Schellen, working from a list provided by Syrian charity Nabad, was able to source medical supplies and other emergency items. Then after navigating through

a labyrinth of Syrian government requirements, UPF's dedicated Syrian Ambassador for Peace Rehab Al Bitar picked up the aid items in Lebanon on 23 October and took them to the Syrian border. The aid was finally delivered on 27 October to the Senior Home for the Care of the Elderly in the Al Mashatiyah neighborhood, where aid packages were given to the neediest.



- 1 Donated medical supplies and other emergency items go through Syrian customs checks.
- 2 Syrian Ambassador for Peace Rehab Al Bitar, who coordinated the delivery of aid to earthquake survivors, comforts an elderly lady in the Senior Home for the Care of the Elderly in Aleppo's Al Mashatiyah neighborhood.

EUME DONATIONS SENT TO LIBYA FLOODS APPEAL

Following the devastating floods in Libya in September, UPF EUME gave donations to the British Red Cross, whose Libya Floods Appeal gets aid in on the ground via the Libyan Red Crescent.



REGIONAL NEWS

“FAMILY, SOCIETY AND UNIVERSAL VALUES” CONFERENCE HELD IN ALBANIA

Written by Gani Rroshi, secretary general, UPF- Albania



Dr. Eva Çipi, chair of UPF-Albania, addresses the approximately 40 panelists and participants gathered for the conference in the UPF Peace Embassy in Tirana, Albania.

The third in a series of scientific conferences on the family was held by the Albanian chapters of UPF and its International Association of Academicians for Peace under the title “Family, Society and Universal Values.” A total of 25 researchers and professors of social sciences, from Albania and 19 other nations, have presented their research and papers at these three Conferences.

40 participants attended the third conference held on 18 November 2023, at the Peace Embassy in Tirana. The conference was moderated by Professor Dr. Lekë Sokoli, the executive director of the Albanian Institute of Sociology,

and Associate Professor Dr. Eva Allushi, a former deputy rector of Durrës University. The speakers were Gëzim Tushi, a sociologist from Albania; Dr. Jelena Tanasijević, a professor at the University of Novi Sad in Serbia; Dr. Sofija Georgievska, a professor at Saints Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia; Dr. Denis Celcima, dean of the Faculty of Psychology at the University for Business and Technology in Kosovo; Dr. Sarina Bakić from the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Gabor Vasmatics, an information technology engineer from Hungary.

ATHENS CONFERENCE SHOWS “POSITIVE MODELS THAT INSPIRE PEACE”

Written by Gani Rroshi, secretary general, UPF-Albania



On the initiative of the Saranda Regional Peace Council in Albania, under the leadership of Chairman Thoma Nika and Vice Chairman Hamdi Pervizi, on November 4, 2023, UPF-Albania organized a conference at the Novus hotel in Athens, Greece, attended by 100 participants. The event was moderated by the well-known actor Carnation Shena. The speakers were H.E. Luela Hajdaraga, the ambassador of Albania to Greece; Hon. Artemisa Malo, deputy minister for Europe and foreign affairs of Albania; Kostas Askunis, the mayor of Kallithea, and many other personalities.

1 Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, UPF co-chair for Europe and the Middle East gives an Ambassador for Peace award to Ambassador Luela Hajdaraga.

2 Dr. Giuseppe Cali, UPF president for Southern Europe, gives an Ambassador for Peace award to Hon. Artemisa Malo, Albanian deputy minister for Europe and foreign affairs.

3 H.E. Luela Hajdaraga, ambassador of Albania to Greece, addresses the audience.

REGIONAL NEWS



UPF-Ireland participants at Stormont, the site of Northern Ireland's Parliament buildings.

"Peace Road" is a global peace project that promotes the "International Peace Highway" originally proposed by Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon at the 10th International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences on 10 November 1981, in Seoul, South Korea. Peace Road was created as an educational initiative to raise public awareness of the vision of the International Peace Highway.



UPF-Estonia and the Estonian Korean Cultural Association jointly organized the One Korea peace project.



Austrians, Czechs and Germans at the hilltop border triangle with a delegation from South Korea



Participants from Austria, Hungary, and Slovakia at the three nations' border



Participants from Belgium and France gathered in the Park of the Lion in Wattreslos, France, near the border with Belgium.



UPF-Belarus volunteers went river rafting for Peace Road.



UPF-Finland at the island fortress of Suomenlinna, located at the entrance to Helsinki's harbor



UPF-Russia volunteers participated in a marathon in the Far Eastern city of Vladivostok to raise funds for cancer patients.



UPF-Iceland participants visited the newly emerged volcano at Litli-Hrútur.



UPF-Armenia participants crossed the mountains of Vayots Dzor Province.

REGIONAL NEWS

UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE 2023

International Day of Peace ("Peace Day") is observed around the world each year on 21 September. Established in 1981 by a unanimous United Nations resolution, Peace Day provides a globally shared date for all humanity to commit to peace above all differences and to contribute to building a culture of peace. The theme for 2023 is "Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals."



UPF DENMARK FOCUSES ON THE GLOBAL GOALS

Written by Karsten Nielsen, secretary general, UPF-Denmark



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1 Christian Friis Bach, a member of Parliament, was the host.

2 Peace ceremony with religious leaders

3 About 200 participants attended the event in the Christiansborg Palace.

UPF-Denmark commemorated International Day of Peace on 24 September at Christiansborg Palace, the seat of the Danish Parliament. The audience of about 200 included leaders, Ambassadors for Peace, among others. Christian Friis Bach, an MP, former undersecretary-general of the UN and chairman of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (2014-2017), hosted the celebration. In his opening speech he referred to the Sustainable Development Goals and stressed the importance of UPF's work to bring peace, which "comes from within and from beneath (from the grass roots)."

Other contributors were Yildiz Akdogan, a member of the Copenhagen City Council and a former MP, who moderated the second part; Jesper Dalgaard Pøhler, a

project manager at Aalborg University; Alexandra Hasdorf from Kaospilot leadership training, a former chair of the National Association for Eco-Communities; Anders Holst Bodin, head of the Climate Academy; and Helle Solvang, founder of the Lovesoil Learning Lab & Media Platform, Jordens Skole.

A peace ceremony was held in which seven representatives of the world's religions gathered in silence and prayer before pouring water into a common bowl to the sounds of Mozart's Ave Verum Corpus, symbolizing peace and harmony among people of all faiths. Musical interludes were provided by Søren Lee, one of Denmark's most talented jazz musicians and composers, and Jazzmosphere with Metta Carter, Søren Lee and Maciej Szymczynski.

UPF FRANCE FOCUSES ON AFGHANISTAN

Written by Patrick Jouan, vice president, UPF-France



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1 Reza Jafari, founder of Afghan Peace Dialogue

2 Hon. Patricia Lalonde, Geopragma Institute; former MEP

3 The event's speakers and special guests

To commemorate the UN International Day of Peace, UPF-France held an event on the theme "Afghanistan: Current Situation, Perspectives for Building a United and Prosperous Country." The event at the Paris Peace Embassy on 21 September was held jointly with Afghan Peace Dialogue, an organization led by a young Franco-Afghan, Reza Jafari, a UPF Ambassador for Peace who spoke about his efforts to bring Afghan political players to the dialogue table.

Patricia Lalonde from the Geopragma Institute, a former MEP, testified to her extensive work in support of Afghan

women's education since the 1990s. Dr. Ali Rastbeen, president of the Académie de Géopolitique de Paris, gave a sharp analysis of the Taliban regime in the current international context.

Other contributors included Dr. Pierre Dutertre, a psychologist, founder of Parcours d'Exil; Hon. Mohammad Alam Izdyarin, an Afghan senator (both by video); François Béchiau, a Council member of Paris' 19th District; Geneviève Garrigos, a City Hall counselor; Shabnam Salahshor, an Afghan journalist; and Jalil Shafayee, author of two books about life under the Taliban and the challenge of exile.



Norway — The event was organized in Oslo in partnership with the Central Jamaat E Ahle Sunnat mosque and the Adam's Children association.



Germany — In Düsseldorf, a UPF event under the motto "Action for Peace" included the distribution of "peace lights."



Albania — More than 150 people, including the mayor, prefect and district head, attended a UPF event in the town of Peshkopi, which featured many performances.



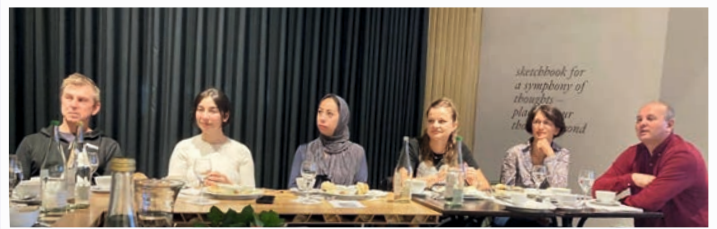
United Kingdom — Dr. Michael Balcomb and his wife, Fumiko, of UPF received a peace award from (left to right) TV presenter Dyna Fayz, Robin Marsh, Duchess Nivin El-Gamal of Lamberton, and Margaret Ali.



Georgia — Children in Tbilisi created drawings on the theme of "Peace Around Me."



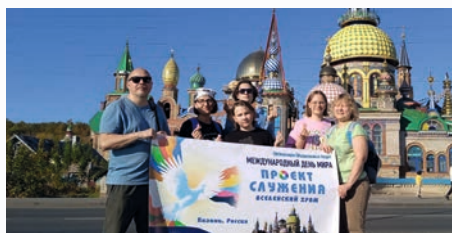
Netherlands — The participants of the event, held in the Amsterdam chapel of the Church of Scientology, included a documentary filmmaker and a Protestant minister.



Germany — In Munich, 17 representatives of five religious groups attended a prayer breakfast.



Austria — In cooperation with the Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations, UPF organized a peace conference at Schlaining Peace Castle in the Austrian state of Burgenland.



Russia — In the Ural region city of Kazan, 10 UPF volunteers conducted a service project at the international cultural center known as the Ecumenical Temple.



France — The Dialogue & Alliance interfaith circle held its monthly meeting on the theme of "Cultivating Forgiveness."



Slovakia — Dr. Afsar Rathor, president of LIOS-SOIL, an ecological NGO, spoke on the topic of "Climate Change and Desertification. A Threat to Peace?"



Italy — Representatives of various religions met in the Paradiso Missionary Community in Bergamo.

REGIONAL NEWS

PEACE CONCERT COMMEMORATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF NELSON MANDELA'S PASSING

Written by Chantal Komagata, secretary general, UPF-Switzerland

Photos by Kenneth Lam and Michel Reymond



The concert takes place at the University of Geneva.

In honor of the 10th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's passing, UPF-Switzerland on 8 December organized a concert at the University of Geneva, thanks to the support of the main sponsor, a generous foundation in Geneva, and the university. Two distinguished guests from South Africa—the Rev. Jerry Pillay, general secretary of the World Council of Churches; and H.E. Mxolisi Nkosi, South African ambassador to the UN in Geneva—thanked the initiator, UPF-Switzerland Vice President Michel Reymond. They gave profound testimonies about "Madiba," the hero of their country who, after serving 27 years in prison, was elected president and led their country beyond apartheid.

Nearly 200 people enjoyed the virtuosity of Maestro Nikolay Khozyainov, a renowned Russian pianist, who gave a spirited performance of works by Rachmaninoff, Chopin, and Sibelius, as well as his own compositions. Following the standing ovations, the "titan" returned to the stage three times to improvise tunes with breathtaking ardor and ease. The concert was followed by a buffet offered by a generous Ambassador of Peace, eager to practice the universal principle of living for the sake of others.



Rev. Jerry Pillay, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, addresses the audience.



South African Ambassador Mxolisi Nkosi offers greetings.



Russian pianist Nikolay Khozyainov applauded at the end of the concert.



Maestro Nikolay Khozyainov with the speakers and organizers.

UPF Europe & Middle East Newsletter

Visit www.eume.upf.org/nl15 for the complete reports.

Published by Universal Peace Federation Europe and Middle East, 43 Lancaster Gate, London, England, W2 3NA, United Kingdom.

Printed by Flyeralarm GmbH, Alfred-Nobel-Str. 18, 97080 Würzburg, Germany.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb. 1-7, 2024 **World Interfaith Harmony Week**
Conference with the Podgorica Club in Brussels
"No Peace Without Women" Conference in Sarajevo
Conference at the European Parliament in Brussels

See the calendar of events at www.eume.upf.org/agenda/events