

UPF Europe and the Middle East Event at Geneva UN Exalts Parents

Heiner W. Handschin
June 1, 2023



Left to right: Heiner W. Handschin, Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, Jacques Marion

Geneva, Switzerland - UPF and affiliated organizations held a conference at the United Nations to promote the importance of parents.

"The Role of Parents in Creating a Peaceful and More Secure Society and World" was held on June 1, 2023 - Global Day of Parents - in the United Nations' Palace of Nations.



The conference was organized jointly by the UN offices in Geneva of UPF and Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWP-I), with support from the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP). The Fribourg Peace Forum was a sponsor.

The conference was held to raise awareness about the important role that parents assume as key educators of their children. The speakers were experts from UN agencies, civil society, academia, religion and NGOs.

Session 1: "The Empowerment of Parents as Key Educators of Children and Youth"



[Heiner Handschin, Coordinator of IAPD for Europe and the Middle East](#) Heiner W. Handschin, the UPF director for UN relations in the Europe-Middle East region, was the moderator of the first session.



[Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, Chair, UPF Europe and Middle East](#)The first speaker was Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, the UPF co-chair for Europe and the Middle East. He reminded everyone that the loving heart of parents toward their children is the most important factor for good parenting. Our parents were the first influence that strongly shaped our lives, he said.

[Click here for the full speech of Dr. Katsumi Otsuka](#)



[Ms. Frederique Seidel, WCC-UNICEF Partnership Manager](#)Frederique Seidel, program executive at the World Council of Churches, suggested programs that could raise awareness among young people and families about caring for our natural habitat. It is not enough for these issues to be addressed in schools, she said; they should be addressed already in the family, so as to create within the younger generation a foundation of understanding and a respectful stewardship of our natural environment.



[Dr. Adrian Holderegger, Professor Emeritus of theological ethics, University of Fribourg, Switzerland](#)The well-known expert in ethics Dr. Adrian Holderegger, professor emeritus at the University of Fribourg, called for compassion and flexibility in the consideration of parenthood. Due to recent social developments and great challenges in our society, it isn't easy to create an ideal environment for good parenthood and raising children effectively, he said.

[Click here for the full speech of Dr. Adrian Holderegger \(in French\)](#)



[Mrs. Jimin Millet Park, businesswoman based in Geneva](#)The Session 1 panel included a young businesswoman and mother, Jimin Park-Millet, who testified to the precious, life-changing experience of motherhood. Becoming a parent gave her a new purpose in life and helped her to understand and grasp the true meaning of life, she said. The audience was visibly touched by her self-analysis.

[Click here for the full speech of Mrs. Jimin Millet Park](#)



[Mr. Jacques Marion, Co-chair, UPF Europe and Middle East, France](#) To end the first session, Jacques Marion, the UPF co-chair for Europe and the Middle East, raised the question: "Why is parental love so closely connected to peace?" The answer, he said, is because parents can embrace equally all children with unconditional and sacrificial love. Besides, they take responsibility for the environment in which their family lives.

Mr. Marion referred to the UPF founders, who stated that the fullest and most mature expression of true love is parental love, namely, the love that focuses on the common good and guides us to live for the sake of others.

[Click here for the full speech of Mr. Jacques Marion](#)



Session 2: "UN SDGs, Human Rights Advocacy in the Family, Schools, and Society"



[Mrs. Chantal Chételat Komagata, Coordinator, UPF Europe](#) The second session was moderated by Chantal Chételat Komagata, the UPF coordinator for Europe.



[Mr. Marco Respinti, journalist, author and lecturer, CESNUR, Bitter Winter](#) Addressing the conference remotely, the well-known Italian journalist and author Dr. Marco Respinti spoke about offering tools for parenting based on promoting human rights. The family is the place where people first learn human rights, and where they fully discover their human nature, he said. Human nature has existed since the conception of the human being, but humans learn it, with all its implications, step by step.



[Dr. Wadih Maalouf, Global Program Manager, UNODC, Vienna, Austria](#)Dr. Whadi Maalouf, program manager for prevention treatment and rehabilitation at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna, also addressed the conference remotely. His presentation, and that of Sabine Rakotomalala, head of the Violence Prevention Unit of the World Health Organization, Geneva, demonstrated the great wealth of skills, understanding and tools that these important UN agencies can provide to parents to help them accomplish their complex tasks.

It became clear that more and more UN agencies and international organizations are increasing their efforts to work with families. They realized that there is a great need to support parents' efforts to teach children and youth to adopt a healthy lifestyle and avoid violent behavior.

These programs could be made available to governments in order to support parents around the globe in teaching children and youth good character and working toward a peaceful global citizenship.



[Ms. Sabine Rakotomalala, Technical Officer, World Health Organization](#)



[Carolyn Handschin, coordinator, IAFLP, Europe and the Middle East](#)

These points were echoed by Carolyn Handschin, the president of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and vice president of Women's Federation for World Peace International. She explained about grass-roots projects in parenting education in South America. These WFPW projects have resulted in substantial changes in behavioral patterns in parenting among large populations.

Ms. Handschin suggested a shift in paradigm in parental behaviors from patriarchy and matriarchy to a new concept of "family-archy." This implies a more balanced approach between the father's and mother's perspectives in the family structure, which will have a good effect on parenting as well. She also called for a design contest to create a logo for the Global Day of Parents, which so far doesn't exist.



The two session chairs, Mr. Handschin and Mrs. Komagata, closed the meeting by asking the audience to determine some of the outcomes of the conference. It became obvious that the message about parents' role as key educators was well heard and understood.

Furthermore, it was recognized that to work with parents and families to address current global issues is absolutely mandatory. In this sense, it would be important for parents and families to receive educational support in key issues, such as: understanding about peacefully living together in diverse and multicultural environments, the concepts of justice for peace, respect for the rights of others and one's own duties, understanding about a respectful and mature stewardship of our natural habitat, and the state's protection of the essential unit of the family.





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Opening Remarks by Dr. Katsumi Otsuka at the Global Day of Parents event on 1 June 2023

Written by: [Dr. Katsumi Otsuka](#), Chair, UPF Europe & Middle East

01 June 2023

Thank you very much for your kind introduction.

Excellencies, distinguished speakers, and friends,

Let me first express my deep thanks to the organizers and supporters of this conference held in the United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland.

It is my great honor to speak today at this precious commemoration of the Global Day of Parents, representing the Universal Peace Federation Europe and the Middle East.

The simple truth and reality we know is that we are all born of parents. There are some, unfortunately, who do not know their parents, but there is no human being who was born without parents. Children grow under the care and influence of their parents, both on a genetic level and in their education after birth. It is a very beautiful thing to see parents nurture their children in a loving embrace.



Viewed from another angle, it can be said that the child makes the couple who gave birth to him or her PARENTS. Without a child, no couple can be called parents. A couple gives life to a child, and thanks to the child, they become parents. The parent-child relationship, therefore, is inseparable.

There is no relationship more intimate than the parent-child relationship, and it is no exaggeration to say that the essential base of all human relationships lies in this relationship. No one can deny that the parent-child relationship provides the fundamental framework for the child to establish successful human relationships in the future. A child will learn from his or her parents, mutual-trust, mutual-respect, and interdependence, and above all "Love."

Another essential reality is that children are born from the love relationship between husband and wife. This teaches us the simple truth that Love and Life are inseparable. And since the continuity of the parent-child relationship is called lineage, the 3 L's, Love, Life and Lineage, are inseparable too.

From this perspective, we arrive at the simple conclusion that the parent-child relationship is the foundation of all human happiness and world peace. No parent would want their children to die on a battlefield far from home.

What my parents taught me was very simple: to live for the sake of others and for the sake of the greater goodness. I have tried to do so, but I always find that I have a long way to go to reach the goal. I cannot thank my parents enough for teaching me this. They were both born in the countryside of NIIGATA prefecture, Japan, and have led a very simple life there.

The founders of UPF, who experienced the terrible Korean war and the resulting separation of family and tribes, strongly believed that the unchanging foundation for world peace lies in the parental heart and family unity. The family is the school of love. In this regard, we at UPF would like to express our deep appreciation to the United Nations for creating the Global Day of Parents.

I want to finish here my opening remarks by expressing my appreciation to all of you present here at the UN and those following us on Zoom. May you have a fruitful time today in this session.



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Intervention by Mrs. Jimin Millet Park at the Global Day of Parents event on 1 June 2023

Written by: Mrs. Jimin Millet Park, businesswoman based in Geneva

01 June 2023



Hello, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly an honor to be able to participate in this important event commemorating Global Parents Day. My name is Jimin Park, from South Korea. I'm a graduate of international business management at the Haut Ecole de Gestion, Geneva, and also the mother of a little boy of 18 months who gifted me with a miraculous opportunity to experience parenthood and be able to share it with you today.

Thanks to the birth of my baby, I finally found a purpose in my life. He offered me the true meaning of life and I finally understand why we say "I can give my life for my child". As a mother, my biggest happiness is to see my little one smile and laugh. It's my biggest joy and I would never exchange it with anything else. Even at a sacrifice of myself, I can gladly give up anything for the wellness of my little one. Once I became a mother, I discovered I could be selfless and sacrificing and be truly happy about it.

For my little boy, I'm his shelter, caregiver, protector, guide, provider, and simply put in one word, his whole world. Starting from breastfeeding him from month zero to teaching him how to take his first step at year one and to helping him to enter into society in the future where rules and regulations abide, to accompanying him from childhood to adulthood, to the day he can fully be independent on his own, I am determined and happy to be the one who will love, care, protect, guide, help, teach good and bad, and be his biggest support, all with motherly love and mother nature.

This commitment does not come from discipline, but is a natural desire to do so, as natural as we breathe. It is our nature to care for our child's well-being since the moment this little human is created. My husband often tells me that he feels finally complete when he enters home where our little boy and his partner await. Family is the most basic unit of society where we learn and experience every basic of the cosmos. So, we can't deny the fact that families, parents and caregivers play an essential role in the most natural way in our child's well-being and development. Having them grow up in a happy, caring, and loving family environment is what all parents wish for. Being a parent is indeed the most important job in the world. We are on 24/7 as a key educator, as a nurse, a cook, an entertainer, a teacher, a doctor, a judge, a caregiver, whoever we call it, we are able to transform into anything to ensure the best nurturing and their healthy development. Family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children.

We all have our own duty to work or study in this society and it's often times not easy to navigate through our life in the world we live in, but each one of us holds on and keeps growing thanks to our own family which supports us from behind. It's the biggest source of energy that keeps us going like an oasis in a desert. That is why I think parenthood merits to be commemorated on a set day like today to mark the importance of its critical role, which encourages the safe and healthy development of humanity and further reinforces a peaceful, respectful and secure society and world.

Thank you for your attention.



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Written by: Mr. Jacques Marion, Co-chair, UPF Europe & Middle East, France

01 June 2023

Commemorating the Global Day of Parents “The Role of Parents in Creating a Peaceful and More Secure Society and World”

The empowerment of parents as key educators of children and youth



Respected panelists, dear participants

Thank you for inviting me to share some reflections on this important topic. I will share with you some thoughts based on life experience in the Universal Peace Federation.

It is significant that the UN is celebrating a Global Day of Parents because, as the theme suggests, the role of parents is central to building peaceful families and societies, and to building a peaceful world.

When he founded the Universal Peace Federation in 2005 in New York, our Founder Dr. Moon, who was a master calligrapher, wrote the following words in Chinese characters to celebrate the birth of this new organization: “True Love is the fundamental philosophy and principle of the Universal Peace Federation”. Indeed, the most mature expression of True Love is parental Love, namely, the love that focuses on the common good, and guides us to live for the sake of others.

Why is parental love so closely connected to peace? Because, simply speaking, parents can embrace equally all children with unconditional and sacrificial love. Besides, they take responsibility for the environment in which their family lives.

In the family, people go through a process of moral development, cultivating their hearts and capacity to love. Thus, family life becomes a “school of love”, where people’s hearts grow from the immaturity of children to the unconditional love of parents, who care for their families with a great sense of responsibility.

Indeed, parents not only love their children; they are also their first teachers. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its Article 26-3, states that “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.” This principle is essential, because, more than anyone else, parents have the deepest concern for their children’s future. With love, they teach them the values that will guide them throughout their lives.

Parents also invest sincerely and creatively to make sure their children succeed in life and in turn become responsible parents and successful achievers. They want their children to become better, and reach higher, than themselves. Parental leadership is based on love, but it really is servant leadership.

Certainly, not everyone has a successful family life. There are many unhappy families, and many unworthy parents. But we can agree that the desire for loving parents and happy families is deeply rooted in the hearts of all human beings. I believe that Tolstoy, who was greatly influential as a writer and peace advocate in the last century, pointed to this when he wrote the famous opening of his great novel Anna Karenina: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” In other words, we share a common ideal, but to reach the top of the mountain, individuals have their own path and challenges to overcome.

We share in UPF the view that parental love, parental education, and parental leadership, are fundamental conditions for building peaceful families, peaceful societies, and a peaceful world.

The 20th century was a century of war. But the great peacemakers, who stood out and profoundly influenced societies, including politically, were those who acted with a parental heart. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther

King, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and many others who are less well-known, were people who transcended the conflicts of race, ideology, religion, or ethnicity. They not only embraced their people with a parental heart, but they educated them, and they led them to transform an environment of conflict into a more peaceful one.

Today, we are surrounded again by intense conflict. The war in Ukraine is causing tens of thousands of deaths, which we can see on our screens every day – and there are many other conflicts that we don't see on our screens, but we know they are there, causing immense suffering.

Therefore, shall we not consider this Global Day of Parents as a day to be dedicated to peacebuilding, to peace education, and to peace responsibility? It is a day that reminds us about the heart of parents who do not want their children to die in war. Leaders with parental hearts can never hear lightly the daily news reports that hundreds have died from a bomb, or from a terrorist attack, and they are restless in finding solutions to the world's problems.

We have deep respect for the UPF Founders, Dr. and Mrs. Moon, because even as they went through a very challenging and suffering course, they always strove to live, to educate, and to lead with a parental heart. And they always called on leaders, particularly religious leaders and political leaders, to stand on the front line with a mindset of parental leadership.

Such is the motivation behind their project of creating an Interreligious Council at the United Nations, which they proposed in a speech at the UN building in New York in 2000. That council would bring together, in the United Nations, ambassadors from the fields of religion, culture and education, so that they collaborate with political leaders representing member states at the Security Council, and together apply a vision transcending narrow religious and national interests. Wouldn't such a system empower the UN to prevent many of the conflicts that gravely damage our world today? It would certainly empower the UN with a supplement of soul, which is so badly needed in this time of conflict and moral confusion.

We cannot solve problems in the long term with the logic of power based on pure reason. We need to learn the logic of love and cooperation, based on heart, which is the only way to create sustainable development and sustainable peace in our societies where all religions and ethnic groups intermingle today. And where do we learn this logic of love? Isn't that meant to be in the family?

Maybe the word "love" is not much in use at the United Nations and in geopolitical discussions. Yet I thought it is appropriate to honor this principle on the Global Day of Parents. Thank you.

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