

# European Leadership Conference - Human Rights and the Protection of the Un-empowered and Dispossessed

Yong Cheon Song

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Houses of Parliament and Royal National Hotel, London, United Kingdom

## INTRODUCTION

Since UPF and WFWP Europe launched their initiative to engage Europe's decision takers and opinion leaders in their own environment by holding regular "Leadership Conferences" at key decision making bodies across Europe, the most frequently utilised theme has been Human Rights. Europe has been a major engine in advancing the global struggle for Human Rights and this is considered an immensely important topic in Europe as a whole and one that people feel deeply about and easily engage with.



*The first panel left to right: Baroness, Sandip Verma, UK Government Spokesperson for Business, Innovation and Skills, Women and Equalities, Prof. Akiko Yamanaka, former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs in Japan, Dr. Yong Cheon Song, Chair UPF Europe, Rt. Hon. Tom Brake MP, spokesperson on London for the Liberal Democrat Party, Prof. Siddharth Saxena and UPF UK Patron Lord Tarsem King*

This first day of this most recent E.L.C. (June 15th) was held in the 'House of Commons' which has, for centuries, been at the centre of the battle for Human Rights not only for UK citizens but for those around the entire world. Its halls and corridors exude history and gravitas and seem to demand free speech. All the participants could feel comfortable within the unique environment which creates such a fitting venue for cutting edge debate.

## The Conference

The first conference day included six very impressive sessions which required us to simultaneously use the largest Committee Room in the House of Commons and a smaller room in the House of Lords to host in excess of 250 participants from around Europe, the United Kingdom and the wider world.

**The Opening Plenary Session** was hosted by Rt. Hon. Tom Brake MP, spokesperson on London for the Liberal Democrat Party, who has a strong interest in Human Rights issues and the UPF UK Patron Lord Tarsem King of West Bromwich. Speakers included:



**Prof. Akiko Yamanaka**, former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs in Japan is currently By-Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge and an expert in Human Security. She has been very supportive of our ELCs and has spoken in London in December, UNESCO Paris in April and now again in London. She reflected that political dynamics in the international arena have changed radically since the end of the cold war and, as a result, it becomes important to examine where we are today in the tide of history. If we are to change the past dependence upon war to resolve disputes, it becomes very important for us to introduce the concept and value of “preventive diplomacy”.

**Prof. Siddharth Saxena**, expressed concern about the division of human rights from their essential partner, human values. When we forget that rights and duty are connected, solutions cannot be sustained. Prof. Saxena questioned, “do we personally believe human rights are useful or are they just something we accept?”. He suggested that we should ask this question because religion and politics have had a tendency to devalue individual human rights. Prof. Saxena also proposed practical steps that the international community can take to allow people to uphold their rights in times of crisis. Natural disasters can, and will, happen suddenly. War can be waged anywhere in the world in 6 hours, but it takes days to get food to people

affected by natural disasters. Standing funds, pooled by all nations, should be kept at hand in order to provide relief to victims of disaster, along with political expertise, military might and medical aid.



**Baroness Sandip Verma**, UK Government Spokesperson for Business, Innovation and Skills, Women and Equalities, addressed a European Leadership Conference for the first time and she spoke with great honesty over matters in which she has a passionate interest.

She shared that her interest in public life was awoken when a woman facing terrible domestic violence poured out her troubles on the young Sandip Verma's doorstep and commented that, we must change the people immediately around us. She also shared her conviction that, unless women have land rights and property rights they will not gain their human rights.

**Dr. Yong Cheon Song**, European Chair of the Universal Peace Federation, testified that the driving passion behind UPF's concern with human rights and dignity comes from the Founder, Father Moon, a person who has suffered from serious human rights abuses and experienced for himself what it means to be un-empowered and dispossessed. Where he is truly unique and exceptional is in his ability to rise from such experiences, to not be embittered or disempowered by them but rather to turn them into positive energy directed at ensuring others do not suffer such things in the future. He advocates and practices the importance of forgiveness towards one's persecutors.

Dr Song encouraged us to; Search within the realms of morality, spirituality and religion, to find answers and suggested that the long term solution is to be found in three main areas, namely the religious sphere, the family and our education systems. For example The UN Human Rights Council should establish an "Inter-Religious Advisory Committee on Human Rights and Human Responsibilities" to bring the wisdom of the world's religions to bear on this whole area.



*Group photo in Westminster Hall inside the UK Parliament  
 Lady Fiona Hodgson CBE, Hon. Vice Pres. Conservative Women's Organisation, Pres. National Conservative Convention receiving the Ambassador for Peace award from Robin Marsh, Secretary General UPF UK  
 Panel of the second session*

**A further eleven sessions took place over the two days of the conference.** They are referred to below with photographs of the speakers and links to their presentations or summaries of the session .

**SESSION II A - Religious Freedom: Religious Minorities, Majorities and the State**



**Chair: Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke**, President of World Congress of Faiths

**Mr. Willy Fautre**: Director, Human Rights Without Frontiers International

**Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid JP**, Chair Task-force European year of Inter-cultural Dialogue, President Religions for Peace UK

**Mrs. Katharina Grieb**, President of the International Society for Human Rights Austria Sheikh Rahman, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

**SESSION II B - Human Rights, Torture and Sexual Violence**



Chair: **Lord Tarsem King of West Bromwich** and Margaret Ali, Director UPF – UK

**Mr. Keith Best**, CEO of Torture Care –

**Ms. Charlotte Simon Bongumba**, Trustee TG Foundation (supporting rape victims in Congo DRC)

**Dr Antonio Stango**, SG Helsinki Comm. For Human Rights& UPF’s Global Peace Council

**SESSION III A - Youth Unemployment a Threat to Dignity**



Chair: **Adam Nazar** , CEO VIP Minds UK and UPF Youth Committee  
**Ms. Kanchan Jadeja**, Chair National Council for Voluntary Youth Services UK  
**Ms. Maja Micic**, Director Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia  
**Ms. Carly Ward**, Founder and CEO Young Entrepreneur Society  
**Mr. Keldon Alleyne**, Youth A.I.D. Lewisham and UPF Youth Committee  
**Mr. Matthew Huish**, Youth UPF UK

**SESSION III B - Europe’s Role in Global Human Rights Issues**



Chair: **Robin Marsh**, Secretary General UPF UK

**Professor Dr. Maurits S. Berger**, Chair Islam in the Contemporary West at the Institute for Religious Studies at Leiden University, Sen. Research Assoc. Clingendael Inst. for International Relations

**Ms. Sonia Ramzi**, former Head of Promotion for Cultural Heritage UNESCO, representing **Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali**, United Nations Secretary General (1992-1996)

**Ms. Saoussen Ben Cheikh**, Head of Mission Assistant for Doctors without Borders in Yemen

#### **SESSION IV - Women's Empowerment and Human Rights**



Chair: **Mitty Tohma**, President, Women's Federation for World Peace UK

**Lady Fiona Hodgson CBE**, Hon. Vice Pres. Conservative Women's Organisation, Pres. National Conservative Convention

**Dr. Krishna Ahoojapatel**, President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Chair Displaced Women Committee, UN Geneva

**Ms. Aisha Abdul Latif**, Consultant for Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC)

**Mrs. Carolyn Handschin**, President, WFWPI- Europe

Day Two of the Conference at the Royal National Hotel, Russell Square

#### **SESSION V A - Human Rights Education and Religious Freedom Issues**



Chair: **Mr. Heiner Handschin**, Secretary General UPF Europe 2  
**Mr. Peter Zoehrer**, Sec. Gen. FOREF Austria and Human Rights journalist  
**Mrs. Katharina Grieb**, President of the International Society for Human Rights Austria

**SESSION V B - Human Rights Education and Gender Equality**



Chair: **Mrs. Louise Rawlence**  
**Ms. Manuela Mesa Peinado**, Director Center for Education and Research for Peace (CEIPAZ) within the Foundation for a Culture of Peace, President of the Spanish Association for the Research of Peace (AIPAZ)  
**Mrs. Martina Coombs**, Adviser WFWPI-Europe

**SESSION VI A - Human Rights in a Multicultural Society**



Chair: **Mr. Jonathan Fryer**, Liberal Democrat politician, writer and journalist  
**Dr. Amiira Neff**, Director Terre des Femmes, Switzerland, integration expert  
**Ms. Madi Sharma**, UK Representative, European Economic and Social Council: Domestic Violence

**SESSION VI B - Human Rights and Global Citizenship**



Chair: **Mrs. Margaret Ali**, Director UPF – United Kingdom  
**Sheikh Dr. Hojjat Ramzy**, Chair of Education Committee, Muslim Council of Britain  
**Mr. Bogdan Pammer**, European UPF Youth Director

**SESSION VII - Human Value and Dignity**



**Chair : Mrs. Cecilie Fortune**  
**Mr. Jack Corley**, Chair UPF United Kingdom  
**Dr. Antonio Stango** SG, Helsinki Comm. for Human Rights, Italy & UPF's Global Peace Council  
**Mr. Timothy Miller**, Vice-Chair UPF Europe

**SESSION VIII - Vision, Projects and Recent Activities**



**Chair: Mr. Robin Marsh**, Secretary General UPF United Kingdom  
**Mrs. Taeko Duckworth** Vice-President WFP United Kingdom (15 minutes)  
**Mr. Mark Brann**, Secretary General UPF Europe (25 minutes)



*Left: Congratulatory remarks by Ambassador for Peace Dr. Joy Philippou*  
*Middle: Ms. Maja Micic, Director Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia, receives the Ambassador for Peace award*  
*Right: group picture with Ambassador for Peace awardees.*

June 17th Youth Training Day ‘Real Rights: Let’s Make Dignity A Reality’ The Youth Training Day is an additional day of the ELC targeted at young conference participants (age 18-27) to develop their own ideas and their capacity to run initiatives. For more information please contact us.

On Sunday about 40 young conference participants gathered for the Youth Training Day. These young activists wanted to develop their own ideas and the capacity to run initiatives.





*Group pictures of the UPF Europe Youth Committee members with Dr. Yong Cheon Song, Chair UPF Europe, Baroness Sandip Verma, UK Government Spokesperson for Business, Innovation and Skills, Women and Equalities, Mrs. Margaret Ali, Director UPF UK and Ms. Kanchan Jadeja, Chair National Council for Voluntary Youth Services UK*

Committee Members, Keldon Alleyne and Bandana Upadhya, started the day with an engaging ice-breaker and led throughout the day. Three activists shared: why they are involved in their respective causes, which challenges they had to overcome and some of the lessons they have learnt through “living a life for the sake for others.”

Maja Micic, Director for the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Serbia shared about her engagement for a more open Serbian society and how this demands her total personal involvement.

Lotifa Begum, from Islamic Relief UK, works as Development Education Officer for her organisation and brings the message of Global Citizenship and Human Rights into schools.

Corinna Pummer, a PhD student from Austria, shared about her experience setting up and developing her own NGO in the Peruvian Andes.

Next, Ilaria Esposito, member of the Council of Europe's Youth Council, introduced the participants to the history and practice of Human Rights Education. Her colourful presentation balanced input and non-formal learning well, leaving the participants with a better understanding of how Human Rights Education can be implemented in their work.

This session was followed by two very interactive sessions on project management and funding. In total five presenters (Adam Nazar, Shabnam Khan, Narraser Gordon, Iran Arif, Muhammad Tahir) offered an interactive mix of group activities, short exercises, practical experience and management background. Participants were challenged to develop a marketing strategy for an imaginary NGO, train for their elevator pitch and reflect on their approach to funding.

The training day closed with a moving call by Haesul Fagcang (UPF UK Youth Director) for people to step beyond the walls of their minds and take practical action to secure each other's dignity. In their reflections participants expressed their sense of empowerment and their desire to work closely together with UPF to make dignity a reality.