

60 at UPF- Ghana's celebration of Africa Day and 53rd anniversary of the OAU

Helen M. Osei
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Kumasi, Ghana — The UPF celebration of Africa Day 2016 brought together more than 60 young Ghanaians to address the challenges that Africa is facing.

The 53rd anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity was celebrated on May 25 with a program at the Sanbra Hotel in the Adum section of Kumasi, a large city in the Ashanti Region.

UPF-Ghana invited youth from diverse groups in Kumasi to address some of the challenges that Africa as a continent has been facing in recent times, such as armed conflict, climate change, and poverty. Climate change can be said to be a global problem, but conflict and poverty can be addressed as issues related to people's culture or way of life.

Kumasi is the second-largest city of Ghana and the region itself is the stronghold of the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP). Considering the fact that Ghana will be holding its election in November, it was felt that there was a need for young people not only to look into Africa's problems but also to come together and deliberate on issues that can cause conflict before, during or after Ghana's election. If they can identify such problems and resolve to avoid them, then the nation can enjoy a peaceful election.

More than 60 young men and women attended the celebration. Many media houses, such as Fox FM, Otec FM, Ashh FM, Sika FM, Trust TV and Daily Guide newspaper, covered the event. A youth group known as Invisible Force, which was said to be a youth wing of the opposition party, came in large numbers.

The program began with opening remarks from the emcee and the recognition of various youth groups that were present. Then UPF-Ghana Secretary General Dr. Helen M. Osei delivered the keynote address, "A Paradigm Change in a New Era—Challenging Our Challenges."

Dr. Osei quoted from a speech given by the UPF Founder in which he underscored the root cause of the world's problems as related to marriage and family, the root of human life. Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon had challenged world leaders that "unless marriage as the means of reproduction through love is fully aligned with a vision of peace centered on God, there is little hope that the next generation will have the tools needed to transform this world."

The secretary general pointed out that family breakdown and the decline of moral standards, especially among the youth, are extremely serious. Even if great efforts are made to solve poverty and achieve the Millennium Sustainable Goals, she remarked, there will be very limited success if we do not address fundamental issues of human character and human relationships, because human problems are rooted in the corruption of the human heart.

She concluded by saying that the world needs "a paradigm shift of leadership," which will consider a universal vision of peace based on core values, allowing us to move from a state of conflict to a state of

peace, from resentment to reconciliation, from enemy relationships to relationships of true love. This is the key to peace and prosperity, instead of conflict and poverty.



An interactive forum was opened then, giving the youth the chance to deliberate on the challenges identified. In their general view, some of the causes of conflict underlined are: injustice, intolerance, humiliation from civil authorities, maladministration and unemployment. Acknowledging the fact that there is moral decadence in the society, with human relationships as the vital key to peace, the youth urged the UPF to quickly step in and embark on peace education in the region, in order to create an enabling environment that will allow peace to prevail in Ghana during the 2016 election.

A journalist/reporter working with Ashh FM/Trust TV, Mr. Bright Ofori, was presented with an Ambassador for Peace award and was commissioned to coordinate a new branch of UPF in Kumasi. Mr. Ofori received great applause from his media colleagues, who assured him of their full support. He and his wife were said to have participated in the Interfaith Peace Blessing that was held by the Ghana chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization, in 2015.

The general manager of Mr. Ofori's radio/TV station, Mr. Armstrong Esaah, who had been invited to the event as the special guest, apologized by phone for his inability to be at the occasion, but expressed his joy that Mr. Ofori was being honored with the award. He promised that he and his entire staff would support Mr. Ofori to succeed in his new assignment from UPF. He also assured UPF of a platform to propagate the peace education in the region through his media houses.

UPF executives held a meeting soon after the event and drew up plans to carry out the following activities:

- 1-day workshop for all journalists/reporters in the Ashanti Region – July 1
- 1-day workshop for all political parties' youth leaders in the region – July 5
- 1-day workshop for all political party chairs in the region – July 7

Planning is under way for a parliamentarians' conference in the region. UPF-Ghana is trying to ascertain the dates when they will be in recess.

The workshops will be centered on principles of peacebuilding and, of course, will emphasize leadership and good governance.