

UPF Copenhagen, Denmark's International Day of Peace at The Danish Parliament

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Copenhagen, Denmark -- The Danish parliament was the setting for the UPF commemoration of International Day of Peace 2022.

Over 200 leaders, Ambassadors for Peace, and peace activists attended the event on October 9, which was held under the 2022 theme, "End Racism. Build Peace."

In her welcoming remarks, **Karen Ellemann**, deputy speaker of parliament and host of the event, said, "We are gathered for peace, and it is our obligation to work for peace regardless of affiliation, gender, race, age or whatever, not only in Denmark or Europe, but in the world."



Acting as the event moderator, **Yildiz Akdogan**, a former member of parliament and an Ambassador for

Peace, said, "In a world with turmoil and scary things happening, we cannot take peace and freedom for granted, and we need to find ways to accommodate each other's differences."

Lotte Heise, a popular radio host and speaker, spoke on the topic "Fight Racism in Your Own Everyday Life. ... Create Peace Close to You." It is important to raise our children and grandchildren to be Ambassadors for Peace and teach them to pay attention to others, she said. A smile is the shortest distance between two people, she said.



Peter Thisted Dinesen, a professor at the Department of Political Science of University College London and University of Copenhagen, spoke on "Social Trust: Denmark's Raw Material -- But Is It Threatened by Immigration?" He spoke of the importance of immigration for social cohesion. The Nordic countries have a high degree of social trust, he said, which disposes them toward cooperation, which then leads to a well-functioning society. Studies show that immigrants take over the level of trust in the country they come to.

Isabel Bramsen, the deputy director of peace and conflict studies at the Department of Political Science at Lund University in Sweden and a member of Nordic Women Mediators, spoke on "Peace and Structural Violence from a Micro-Sociological Perspective" from her book recently published by Cambridge University Press (open access). We need to seek a positive peace, she said, which includes the presence of righteousness, equality and balance. We need to actively create micro-moments with peace; this can consist of listening, practice, symbolic acts, dialogue, solidarity, an extended hand, reconciliation rituals, or all possible ways in which we stretch ourselves to reach out to others. Such universal peace can then spread to our environment and society. Peace is not the absence of conflicts, peace is "no enmity."

Danish vocalist, rapper and songwriter **Isam Bachiri**, formerly of the famous hip-hop group Outlandish, gave a performance. He is a Muslim of Riffian descent, whose father came to Denmark from Morocco as a factory worker in the 1960s. During his school and youth years he experienced racism firsthand. His father resigned himself to it and said: "You did not come here to show your religion; you came here to work a few years and then we go back again." His father was from the silent "guest worker generation" – considered as useful workers but not as people with feelings and experiences. Therefore, Isam B decided to publish his father's biography and tell his and his family's story.

After the break **Helle Thun**, a professional singer, called the audience together again using *Kulning*, a domestic Scandinavian music form which originally was a herding call. In our setting, however, it was a call to the wind and our original nature.

Dr. Thorkil Christensen, the co-chair of UPF-Denmark, introduced the Peace Ceremony, saying: "We live in a world with division, conflicts and uncertainty; the climate and nature agonize. Therefore, more than ever we need a united UN with strength to solve problems; this will only be possible when we experience and feel as one big human family. Such feelings come to us when we contact nature and the forces of Heaven which influence us to open our hearts and aspire to a life for all living creatures."

During the Peace Ceremony, as music of J.S. Bach was played, nine representatives from religions of the world gathered their hearts and prayers before each one poured water into a common bowl.

Peter Hervik, a professor of anthropology, docent in international migration and ethnic relations with an international carrier where he researched and taught abroad for many years, spoke on the topic "That's Just It - Anthropological Perspectives on Combating Strategic Ignorance of Racism." Requests for professional knowledge about racism are rare, he said. Intentional or strategic ignorance is used to obscure, obstruct or remove attention from factual knowledge about racism.



Already in 1846 the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard expressed that "the country is characterized by nihilism; life is without objective meaning, purpose or intrinsic value; the serious, the existential is met with skepticism. ... a limited identity rather than a universal pure human base of identity. We must move from de-humanization to re-humanization."

The last musical performance was by **Metta Carter and Jazzmosphere**, with **Søren Lee**, a legendary Danish jazz guitarist and composer, and **Maciej Szymczynski**, a leading jazz bassist from Sweden.

Ms. Carter, whose parents were Korean and African-American, was adopted by a Danish family in 1969. In her youth, she didn't meet anybody similar to herself and suffered because of alienation and racism. During a time in the United States, though she also experienced racism, she found freedom in a multicultural society. In moments of song and dance, we feel each other's hearts and melt together, she said; there we find joy and togetherness.

The program ended with all the participants singing the John Lennon song "Imagine."

Many participants said that this was the best International Day of Peace event so far, with an atmosphere of peace and belonging to a common human family.



