

UPF International: The Human Foundations of Sustainable Development

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When a child can study after sunset because reliable electricity has reached the home; when a school has access to safe drinking water; when neighbors work together to protect a public space, sustainable development becomes tangible. It may be measured through policies, systems and indicators, but it is ultimately experienced in families, schools, neighborhoods and local communities.

As the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development ([HLPF](#)) convenes at United Nations Headquarters in New York from July 7-15, 2026, governments are reviewing progress toward the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development. This year's forum conducts in-depth reviews of Sustainable Development Goals related to clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, industry, innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, and partnerships.

These goals are often discussed in technical and policy terms, yet their impact is felt in daily life. Water systems depend not only on engineering but also on accountability, responsible management and local stewardship. Access to reliable energy shapes family life, education and economic opportunity. Infrastructure and innovation invite a deeper question: does technology truly serve the whole person and the common good? Cities become sustainable when residents can rely on safe housing, accessible services, public security and trusted local institutions. Partnerships endure when they are strengthened by honesty, service and mutual respect.

An important feature of HLPF 2026 is the presentation of Voluntary National Reviews ([VNRs](#)), through which countries report on their progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. These reviews demonstrate that while sustainable development is global in vision, it is implemented locally. Every country faces different circumstances, yet all share the same fundamental challenge: how can public commitments become measurable improvements in the lives of individuals, families and communities?

The Universal Peace Federation welcomes HLPF 2026 as an important United Nations process that promotes review, accountability, shared learning and international cooperation. We believe that lasting development grows from people, families and communities that practice responsibility toward one another and toward future generations.

[Sustainable Development Goal 6](#) calls for clean water and sanitation. This is fundamentally a question of human dignity, health, the protection of children and reducing the daily burdens carried by families.

[Sustainable Development Goal 7](#) promotes affordable and clean energy. Reliable energy transforms family life by expanding opportunities for education, productive work and fuller participation in society.

[Sustainable Development Goal 9](#) encourages resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and innovation. Innovation serves society best when guided by ethical purpose and when it expands opportunity for all rather than for only a few.

[Sustainable Development Goal 11](#) seeks inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities. A city is more than buildings and transportation networks. It is a living community of families, neighbors, schools, religious communities, local businesses, public institutions and civic organizations. Its sustainability depends upon whether children are protected, older persons remain connected, migrants are treated with dignity, families receive support, and public institutions earn the trust of those they serve.

[Sustainable Development Goal 17](#), Partnerships for the Goals, is central to the entire development agenda. Effective partnerships require trust among governments, civil society, faith communities, the private sector, educators, youth and local leaders. Such trust is cultivated through consistent cooperation, transparent communication, ethical leadership and practical service. Through its worldwide network of UPF Ambassadors for Peace, UPF brings together leaders from diverse sectors to advance human dignity, civic responsibility and a culture of peace.

Although [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#), Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, is not among this year's goals under in-depth review, its principles are indispensable to the success of the entire 2030 Agenda. Clean water systems, reliable energy, resilient infrastructure, sustainable cities and effective partnerships all depend upon institutions that are trusted, transparent, accountable and responsive to the people they serve.

Sustainable development flourishes where the rule of law is respected, integrity is upheld, public institutions are accountable, and leaders place the common good above narrow or partisan interests. Peaceful, just and inclusive societies provide the environment in which every other Sustainable Development Goal can take root and endure.

For UPF, the family is the first school of responsibility, cooperation and care. It is where children first learn whether promises are kept, whether elders are respected, whether conflicts can be resolved with wisdom rather than humiliation, and whether freedom is balanced by responsibility. Strong families contribute directly to children's education, care for older generations, resilience during hardship and active participation in community life. Public policy and international cooperation remain indispensable, but their impact is greatest when they are rooted in relationships characterized by respect, self-discipline, service and genuine concern for others.

The founders of UPF, [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and the late [Rev. Sun Myung Moon](#), have consistently emphasized the moral kinship of the entire human family and the responsibility that flows from it. Their vision invites nations, institutions and communities to view development as a shared responsibility, protecting human dignity, strengthening families, caring for the natural environment and expanding opportunities for all.

As HLPF 2026 proceeds, UPF encourages governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, faith communities, educators, youth leaders and UPF [Ambassadors for Peace](#) to deepen cooperation around the human foundations of sustainable development. This commitment is also reflected in UPF Summer Events 2026, held under the public theme, "Restoring Trust: What Can Be Done for Peace Now?" The series invites UPF regions and partners to share practical examples from local communities and demonstrate how UPF's vision of peace contributes to the global conversation in preparation for the opening of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Water, energy, infrastructure, sustainable cities and effective partnerships advance most securely when they are supported by families that teach responsibility, communities that practice service, leaders who demonstrate integrity and institutions that recognize the inherent dignity of every human being. In this way, the practical goals of sustainable development are reinforced by a culture of peace, ethical leadership, strong institutions and public trust, enabling lasting progress for present and future generations.

In this spirit, the Universal Peace Federation remains committed to working in partnership with the United Nations and with all people of goodwill to build a more peaceful, just and sustainable future.



DR. HAK JA HAN

Dr. Hak Ja Han, widow of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon [1920-2012], is the co-founder of the Universal Peace Federation. Together with her husband, she has devoted her life to peace, founding many organizations and initiatives in a wide range of fields.

Childhood and Family Life



Hak Ja Han was born in Anju, South Pyong-an Province, now in North Korea, on the 6th day of the first lunar month (February 10) in 1943. Her mother, Soon-ae Hong, was an earnest Christian and her father, Seung-un Han, was the disciple of a famous preacher, Rev. Young-do Lee. The North Korean Communists were bent on suppressing religion, and in 1948, when she was five years old, her mother and grandmother were arrested by Communist police and jailed for 11 days.

After their release, Hak Ja Han, her mother, and her grandmother fled their village in the middle of the night. They went to Seoul, later moving further south to Taegu, where they lived through the Korean War. The family later moved to Chuncheon, where Hak Ja Han's uncle was living, and she soon graduated from elementary school in that city.

During this period, she, along with her mother, joined the newly formed Unification Church. Five years after joining, on April 11, 1960, the young Hak Ja Han married the church's founder, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. She stands as co-founder of the Unification Church, now known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. Since the passing of her husband, she has taken full responsibility for the affairs of the worldwide movement the two worked tirelessly to establish.

Devoted Wife, Mother, and Grandmother



Dr. Han is a devoted wife, the mother of 14 children and the grandmother of more than 40 grandchildren. She is known for her extraordinary compassion, capability, grace and charm. Above all, she is exemplary as a woman who has created a God-centered marriage and family of three generations.

Leadership to Strengthen Families

The heart and soul of Rev. Moon and Dr. Han's lifelong ministry is the re-establishment of God's ideal of the family as the foundation for harmonious societies and the cornerstone of world peace. The Marriage Blessing movement, which began with the marriage of three couples in 1960, has reached millions of couples worldwide. Dr. Han and her husband presided over marriage blessings in Madison Square Garden in New York in 1982, in Seoul's Olympic Stadium in 1992, in RFK Stadium in Washington, D.C. in 1997, and other venues over many years.



[Right: Marriage Blessing at RFK Stadium, Washington, DC]

A Woman of International Peace and Good Will

In 1968, Rev. Moon established the Professors World Peace Academy in Korea, and in 1972 the first International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences was held. These and similar organizations have attracted the participation of scholars, scientists, and leaders in the fields of religion, the media, government, and the arts, including numerous Nobel Laureates. Dr. Han played a crucial role in all of these developments, where her compassion and kindness complemented her husband's vision and drive.

By addressing informal gatherings of women at these activities, Dr. Han became more visible in the public sphere. Her speeches included the Address to the Women of the World Media Conference (October 1981) and the Address to the Women of the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (November 1981). She moved forward on the world stage for the promotion of God-centered values in 1989, when an interview with Soviet media appeared in the Religion and Society section of Za Rubezhom (June 12, 1989).

Meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and President Kim Il Sung in North Korea



The following year, Rev. Moon and Dr. Han met with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. This extraordinary event, which took place in the Kremlin on their 30th wedding anniversary, April 11, 1990, initiated an educational exchange that brought hundreds of Russian students to study in the United States.

Then, in December of 1991, Dr. Han put her life on the line when she and her husband traveled to North Korea to meet with President Kim Il Sung for the purpose of uniting the two Koreas. That meeting led to ongoing projects to facilitate the peaceful union of North and South Korea.

Founding the Women's Federation for World Peace and Universal Peace Federation

In 1992, Dr. Han, together with her husband, founded the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), of which she became international chairwoman. She invested all her energy into developing a global base for the new organization, giving the federation's inaugural speech in 113 cities in 12 countries and in three different languages within an eight-month period.

Her first world tour in 1993 took her to 44 cities in the United States, 27 cities in Japan, 40 university campuses in Korea, and 41 nations around the world. She spoke in such notable venues as Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., the United Nations in New York City, the Kremlin, the Great Hall in Beijing, and congressional buildings in Japan, Korea, and Canada.

A further turning point came with the inauguration of the Universal Peace Federation on September 12, 2005. The years that followed were a period of intensive joint outreach and institution building. Dr. Han accompanied Rev. Moon on a world speaking tour of 100 international cities in 100 days.

The following year, accompanied by her adult children and grandchildren, she undertook two world tours for peace at the incredible pace of one country per day. She and her family spoke to enthusiastic audiences in 120 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Oceania and Latin America. She was received as a dignitary and met with many heads of states, prominent religious leaders and political leaders.

Perhaps no other woman leader has addressed so many large audiences in as many countries as Dr. Han. Today, after years of intense international work, she is recognized as one of the most effective woman leaders in the world.





[Above left: Dr. Moon speaks in the Tokyo Dome and right: United Nations.]

In July of 1993, after speaking throughout America, Dr. Moon's tour culminated with addresses on the US Capitol Hill and at the United Nations, delivering a message of peace and interreligious reconciliation.

Taking on the Mantle of Leadership



After Rev. Moon's passing in September 2012, Dr. Hak Ja Han assumed full responsibility for the worldwide movement and entered a new phase of leadership marked by consolidation, modernization, and the creation of international platforms designed to outlast any single generation.

The Sunhak Peace Prize

In February 2013, she proposed the [Sunhak Peace Prize](#) in memory of Dr. Sun Myung Moon, framing it as a public instrument to recognize leadership for peace and human development. A preparatory committee was formed in January 2014, the first laureates were announced in June 2015, and the inaugural award ceremony was held in Seoul on August 28, 2015. The first laureates were former President Anote Tong of Kiribati and Indian aquaculture pioneer Dr. Modadugu Vijay Gupta. The same year, Dr. Han visited India and Nepal in November 2015, where she met government leaders and addressed public meetings, reflecting her emphasis on peacebuilding that combines high level dialogue with grounded community development.

The Sunhak Peace Prize continued on a two-year cycle, with the second award ceremony in February 2017, honoring Italian humanitarian surgeon Dr. Gino Strada and Dr. Fatema Hameed. The third award ceremony, in February 2019, honored women's rights activist Ms. Waris Dirie and African development leader Hon. Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina. These choices reflected the prize's stated focus on sustainable human development, conflict resolution, and ecological conservation, and they placed women's leadership and social solidarity at the center of peacebuilding.

UPF's Primary Associations and the World Summit

From 2016 onward, her leadership included the establishment of UPF's primary associations as standing platforms for sector specific cooperation. The [International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace](#) was inaugurated in February 2016, and in November 2017, UPF launched the [Interreligious Association for Peace and Development](#), offering a structured framework for interfaith cooperation that has particular relevance in societies shaped by migration and religious diversity.

World Summit 2019 in Seoul was another milestone, convening current and former heads of state and government, parliamentarians, and civic leaders. In that context, UPF also established the [International Summit Council for Peace](#), a platform intended to sustain dialogue among national leaders beyond electoral cycles and regional divides.

In February 2020, UPF convened World Summit 2020, an expanded framework for high-level dialogue that also served as a launch point for additional sector platforms including the [International Association of Academicians for Peace](#), the [International Association for Peace and Economic Development](#), the [International Media Association for Peace](#), and the [International Association of Arts and Culture for Peace](#). During the COVID-19 years, UPF adapted its convening model through initiatives such as the global online Rally of Hope series, and in May 2021 launched Think Tank 2022 to generate practical policy proposals through cross-sector collaboration.

[World Summit 2022](#) in Seoul was an international gathering hosted by Dr. Hak Ja Han that combined in-person participation with global virtual engagement. Within that summit framework, the Sunhak Peace Prize Award Ceremony honored Professor Dame Sarah Catherine Gilbert of the University of Oxford and [Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance](#) for contributions linked to vaccine development and equitable immunization. In May 2023, UPF convened [Peace Summit 2023](#), where Dr. Han addressed global participants and continued to frame peace as a long-term, values-based project that requires leaders, institutions, and citizens to cooperate across dividing lines of nation, religion, and ideology.

Dedication of the Cheon Won Gung

Since the 1970s, Rev. Moon and Dr. Han have worked to establish a permanent base for the Unification community in the district of Gapyeong in South Korea. They purchased land and built numerous buildings, including a training center, a hospital, a middle and high school, a graduate school and Korean language academy, a retirement home, residential apartments, and a world-class stadium. After her husband's passing, Dr. Han directed the construction of an office complex and the imposing Cheon Won Gung, or Peace Palace. On April 13, 2025, Dr. Han dedicated this beautiful building to God, as a place where people, including world leaders, can come to meet their Heavenly Parent and join together in seeking pathways to peace.

Through the decades of Dr. Han's public life, the core narrative has been continuity in building families dedicated to the public good, as well as partnerships among individuals and groups striving for harmony and peace. Since her husband's passing in 2012, she has focused on institution building to ensure these efforts endure. She continues to advance a vision of peace grounded in the dignity of the person, the strength of the family, and the belief that humanity is one family under God.



Universal Peace Federation

Universal Peace Federation is an NGO in General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

We support and promote the work of the United Nations and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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