

## UPF Paris, France's *Peace Starts with Me* - the latest interfaith scripture discussion

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Paris, France -- "Peace Starts with Me" was the theme of the latest interfaith scripture discussion organized by UPF and its Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD).

The online meeting -- the seventh in a series -- took place on September 19, 2021, in recognition of the United Nations' International Day of Peace and the Global Week to #Act4SDGs.

Excerpts of scriptural texts on this theme were sent to the more than 200 people who registered; finally, about 100 people from several French-speaking countries participated in the meeting on Zoom, with others viewing it on Facebook.



The moderator was **Séline Raymond**, a member of the Swiss chapter of Youth and Students for Peace, an organization that is affiliated with UPF.

The program began with a short introduction by **Venerable Michel Thao Chan**, the founding president of the *Cercle de Réflexion des Nations* and a member of the sponsoring committee of the Dialogue and Alliance interfaith forum. Reflecting on two key words, "peace" and "spirituality," he spoke of the situation of the world twenty years after 9/11 and encouraged the study of sacred texts to help us improve the situation.

After each sacred text was read, a representative of that faith offered a comment.

**Judaism:** The text, taken from Genesis 29:1-6, was read by **Noémie Komagata-Nguyen** from Switzerland and commented on by **Philippe Haddad**, rabbi of the synagogue on rue Copernic in Paris, from the *Union Libérale Israélite de France*. He explained in detail the meaning of the word *shalom* used by the people of Israel to greet each other since ancient times. *Shalom* is more than a simple "hello," he said. It encompasses the totality of existence in space and time, the project of existence and also the biblical utopia of a fraternal and peaceful world.



**Islam:** Verses 9 to 13 of Sura 49 of the Quran were very pleasantly chanted. **Sheikh Khaled Bentounes**, a spiritual leader recognized throughout the world and the initiator of the International Day of Living Together in Peace, then offered several reflections on education for a culture of peace: a general definition of peace; peace as energy and a state of being; the economy of peace and the economy of nature.

**Unificationism:** The text was an excerpt from a speech given by UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon in 2017 at a "Peace Starts With Me" rally in the United States. **Rafael Guignard**, a family coach, commented on the passage, describing several personal experiences. He related that the motto "Peace Starts with Me" had touched and transformed him, leading him to become more active in his life of faith. He told about several of his activities, in particular the "Lifebook" project, which made him reflect on the essence of religions (unity, contribution, inner peace, self-realization or fulfillment).

There was a question-and-answer session coordinated by **Dorian Gravrand**. Then **Jean-François and Hisako Moulinet**, coordinators of the Dialogue and Alliance Forum, offered some closing words, in particular to thank the new partner, United Religions Initiative ([www.uri.org](http://www.uri.org)), and to propose some ideas for materials to help create local interfaith groups.



The next online meeting is planned for early October 2021.

Recording of the event "Peace Starts with Me": [youtu.be/FqWQlcpqaiE](https://youtu.be/FqWQlcpqaiE).