

## UPF Balkans Peace Initiative Consultation: Toward Lasting Peace in the Balkans

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Seoul, Korea -- Building on the successful Southeast Europe Peace Summit held last October in Tirana, Albania, the Balkans Peace Initiative Consultation took place on February 5, 2020, in Seoul's KINTEX Center. It was one of the 11 concurrent meetings held during World Summit 2020.

Ambassador Christopher Hill, the chief global adviser to the University of Denver, was the moderator. Referring to his many years in the U.S. foreign service, in particular as ambassador to Macedonia (1996-1999) and Korea (2004-2005), he joked, "I'm a recovering diplomat!"

Ambassador Hill said that after the Cold War there was some unfinished business in the Balkan region. Two Balkan Wars were fought in 1912 and 1913. World War I was, in a sense, the third Balkan War. World War II had a big effect on the Balkans.

"The Cold War in a funny way created civility," Ambassador Hill said. "Yugoslavia was under a communist system, and all of it seemed to hold together until the end of communism. [At that point] a number of nations decided they did not want to stay in Yugoslavia."

A number of wars took place in the Balkan region in the years following the breakup of Yugoslavia. "The European Union worked with the United States to create a calming situation," he said.

However, even though the EU celebrated success, "there is still unfinished business from the 19th century," Ambassador Hill said.

"The goal seemed to be: Let's get these nations into Atlantic-European systems. The EU and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] reached out to Russia so that this [region] could become part of a New Europe," he said.

"There are better relations than before, but there are still problems," he said, mentioning North Macedonia.

The speakers were Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, the chair of UPF for Europe and the Middle East; H.E. Alfred Moisiu, the president of Albania (2002 to 2007); H.E. Anders Rasmussen, the prime minister of Denmark (2001 to 2009) and the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (2009 to 2014); H.E. Filip Vujanović, the president of Montenegro (2003 to 2018) and president of the Podgorica Club; and Dr. Neven Cvetičanin, president of the Forum for Strategic Studies, Belgrade, Serbia.

The respondents were H.E. Vilson Ahmeti, the president of Albania (1991 to 1992); and Dr. Emmanuel Dupuy, the president of the Forum for European Prospective Studies, France.

Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, the chair of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, said, "This session is especially designed for Balkan peacebuilding -- Balkan experts and scholars."

Dr. Otsuka remarked: "I was very impressed by the Balkan beauty and the diversity of its culture. The people must be one of the most attractive parts of this region."

He noted that the Balkan nations combine elements of both Asia and Europe.

"Challenges and difficulties have been discussed. I feel that we need a new dialogue," he said. "[UPF co-founder] Mother Moon is encouraging us to bring unity between the Balkan countries."

H.E. Alfred Moisiu, the former president of Albania, began by thanking UPF for organizing "such a summit on such a scale as has never been seen before."

He noted, "The centenary of Reverend Moon is an opportunity to testify to his great legacy of peace.

"Last year I attended some UPF summits. Then I had the privilege to be the co-chair of the Southeast Europe Peace Summit on Peace, Security and Human Development [held in Tirana, Albania, from October 25 to 27, 2019]. It believe it was a great summit. Many of you contributed to its success. The Albanian government supported the summit. Many important issues were discussed."



President Moisiu said that at the Albania Summit he "had the honor" to be part of the International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP). "In the Albania Summit I was selected to be on the steering committee. I determined to do my best."

All of the Balkans' problems came out during the Albania Summit, he said. These "hot issues" will be discussed at a meeting later this year in Turkey, he said.

President Moisiu quoted Winston Churchill: "The Balkans produce more history than they can consume."

"The hope of the Western Balkans is to join the European Union," he said. "In 2020 we hope that the EU leadership will look favorably on the Western Balkans."

People want peace and tranquility in order to lead a normal life, he said. Politicians must address the problems in a fair way, he said.

He recommended that UPF strengthen its partnership with the Podgorica Club to more quickly find solutions to the Balkan issues.

Introducing the next speaker, H.E. Anders Rasmussen, the former prime minister of Denmark and former secretary general of NATO, Ambassador Hill said, "One can't look at the history of the Balkans without seeing Denmark. One of Mr. Rasmussen's legacies is the integration of the Balkans."

Prime Minister Rasmussen asked: "How can we ensure lasting peace in the Balkans? By integrating the nations of the Balkans.

"NATO achieves peace through collective strength. The EU has delivered reconciliation through governments, people and markets."

He said, "In my position I argued that the benefits of NATO and EU should be extended to those nations that want them. I believe we must now begin EU accession talks with North Macedonia and Kosovo."

He said that 25 years after joining NATO and the EU, Slovenia and Croatia have boomed.

"We must not forget how far we have come," he said. "Peace and reconciliation have taken real courage. Politicians should show courage too. Opening membership negotiations is the tool to keep reforms moving forward.

"Membership is not a single event or a treaty signing. It is a process that brings freedom and rule of law."

Prime Minister Rasmussen warned that other powers that do not share our values -- China and Russia -- are positioning themselves to expand their influence. If Western nations reject the Balkan nations, those powers will fill the vacuum.



"Civil society has an important role to play," he said. "I welcome the Southeast Europe Peace Initiative. We need civil society to make governments make good on their promises for reform."

He suggested that the Balkan nations could bond together to form a "mini-Schengen."

H.E. Filip Vujanović, the former president of Montenegro, said: "Twenty years ago it was impossible to discuss this topic at all. Our region was mostly familiar for war -- two Balkan Wars, two World Wars, and two wars during the disintegration."

He said: "I met [Ambassador Christopher] Hill and [NATO Secretary General Anders] Rasmussen in Podgorica. Hill believed in a very clear way that he could persuade [Slobodan] Milošević [the president of Serbia from 1989 to 1997] to break the crisis of Kosovo."

President Vujanović said: "North Macedonia and Kosovo hopefully will be members of NATO. For the first time in recent history we can say that war in the Western Balkans is not possible.

"Our work is not finished," he said. However, he expressed hope for the future.

"World Summit 2020 is the best model to realize interdependence, co-prosperity and universal values," President Vujanović said.

Dr. Neven Cvetičanin, president of the Forum for Strategic Studies, said: "When you speak about peace in the Balkans, it looks like Heaven on earth, regarding our history, regarding problems."

He said there are two theses. "Any Balkan leader and some future leaders will solve always the same problem in the Balkans. The Balkans is a geopolitical crossroads. We have to establish peace in an area in which big powers come.

"The first condition will be that Balkan leaders really want peace, and the second condition is that the big powers want peace," he said.

"Is it possible to have a consensus of the big powers? The rule of law in Balkans – all states are not states in the sense of democratic states in Europe.

"Another thesis is that the Balkans will produce another generation of (communist) leaders and a corrupt government. I hope that the next leaders will be the ones who will solve the problems and bring peace to the Balkans," he said.

When it came time for the respondents to speak, Ambassador Hill, the session moderator, said that former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt (1991 to 1994), who had been a mediator in the Yugoslav Wars, had to leave the session early in order to catch an airplane. Ambassador Hill said of Prime Minister Bildt, "He played a crucial role in the peaceful Balkans."



Ambassador Hill introduced H.E. Vilson Ahmeti, saying that the former Albanian president "completely took Albania through the critical month before the election."

President Ahmeti said that the former conflicts of the Balkan region are "finished now. Now the nations respect each other."

However, he said, "The stand of some Balkan nations to not recognize Kosovo endangers peace in the region."

Some nations have a mix of populations. This mix normally is a positive factor for cooperation, but they need to respect each other's cultures, he said.

The former president said that growth in import-export has expanded, but the help of government is needed.

"In the Balkans, each country has an interest in gas," he said.

President Ahmeti said, "I'm sure that the new generation with new knowledge will be good for cooperation between countries."

The final respondent was Dr. Emmanuel Dupuy from France, the president of the Forum for European Prospective Studies.

"The future of the Balkans is in the European Union," he said. Dr. Dupuy pointed out that Croatia took over the presidency of the European Council in January. Its term will end in June. He expressed his appreciation that Croatia is taking on an increasingly leading role and is working together with the European Union to build a strong Europe, particularly to deal with serious challenges such as poverty and development and to ensure regional stability.

Ambassador Hill said that H.E. Albin Kurti could not be present at the World Summit because he had just become the prime minister of Kosovo on February 3, two days earlier.

Hon. Hydajet Hyseni, a former member of parliament of Kosovo, commented from the audience: "We have a very dedicated young generation -- educated, very mature."

Speaking of the new prime minister, Hon. Hyseni said that Albin Kurti is a former leader of a student movement and a peace movement and represents a new generation. His coalition is called the Generation of Hope.

Prime Minister Kurti sent a message of congratulations to the meeting in which he praised UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon for his peacemaking efforts.

The session concluded with members of the audience offering questions and comments.