

2020 Sunhak Peace Prize winners: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, President of Senegal Macky Sall and Bishop Munib A. Younan of Religions for Peace

Thomas G. Walsh
February 5, 2020



Seoul, Korea -- The 2020 Sunhak Peace Prize award ceremony was held in a grand manner during the World Summit 2020 General Assembly.

UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and Sunhak Peace Prize Committee Chair Dr. Il-shik Hong each awarded a medal and plaque, as well as a monetary prize, to the laureates.

The ceremony, which was held on February 5 in the main hall of the KINTEX Center outside Seoul, was attended by more than 5,000 people, including former and current heads of state and representatives from various governmental, academic, industrial, media, and religious organizations worldwide.

Marking the centenary of UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, a special Founders' Centenary Award was presented to former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, while the 2020 Sunhak Peace Prize was presented jointly to President Macky Sall of Senegal and Bishop Munib A. Younan, the international honorary president of Religions for Peace.

Dr. Il-shik Hong, in his welcome address, said that the awardees were selected based on the "founders' peace principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values" and that "peace for humanity can be achieved only when a peaceful global community is realized in which all nations live together in prosperity and in respect of each other."

Saying that the "Sunhak Peace Prize will continue to discover courageous and righteous people who are dedicating their lives for humanity's peace," Dr. Hong encouraged the audience, "Let us create a noble culture of peace full of grace."

In his acceptance speech, Ambassador Ban Ki-moon commended UPF for mobilizing so many peacemakers in Seoul, in spite of the coronavirus threat. He also thanked the founders for their constant commitment to peace and the unification of the Korean Peninsula.

In particular, he applauded Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for her vigorous investments into solving environmental problems. "This is exactly in line with the UN Millennium Goals," he said. Inclusive and participatory action from all global citizens, especially young people, is "absolutely essential to solving so many of the world's challenges, such as achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tackling climate change, and building peace and resolving conflicts."

Ambassador Ban stated that "there are still more than 700 million people going to bed with a hungry stomach." He said that receiving this prize gave him "much more added commitment, added motivation that I should do much more, because there are still many people who are yearning for peace, prosperity, and for their human rights to be respected and protected."

The inaugural Sunhak Peace Prize laureate H.E. Anote Tong, former president of Kiribati, attended this year's award ceremony to congratulate the former secretary-general. In his congratulatory address, he emphasized that Ambassador Ban is a leader who proposed a solution to climate change.

H.E. Anote Tong stated that when he first spoke about world climate change, he believed world leaders would not listen. However, Secretary-General Ban listened to the words of his small nation. President Tong said that Ban Ki-moon is a person with courage who has spoken on behalf of the lowest citizens and has contributed not only to the environmental field but also to women's rights.



The recipient of the 2020 Sunhak Peace Prize Macky Sall, who couldn't personally attend the award ceremony, gave his acceptance speech through a video presentation and was represented by Senegal's minister for foreign affairs.

President Macky Sall apologetically stated in his video message that "due to the emergency health issue that had made the whole world in a state of emergency, I suddenly canceled my visit to Seoul." He said that he accepts the prize "as an incentive to persevere in the culture of peace and human brotherhood." He described the prize as a "tribute to the Senegalese people" and said he would "dedicate this prize to the people of Senegal."

With the agreement of the commission of the African Union, President Sall has decided to "offer the 500,000 US dollars, representing the amount of the Sunhak Peace Prize award, to the African Union Peace Fund as a contribution to the peace effort in Africa."

In accepting this award, President Sall said he also thinks of "all those people whose peace is confiscated by violence and the vagaries of life." He said that peace is an "ideal that is always under construction through constant effort of openness, conciliation and reconciliation."

In his message, President Sall said that "peace is in danger with wars and conflicts" and that "a more optimistic Senegalese proverb insists that 'man is man's remedy,' thus exalting the sense of solidarity and human brotherhood."

In his acceptance speech, Bishop Munib A. Younan emphasized that "peace is dependent upon respect for the dignity of the other, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, religious or political affiliation. All of us are made in the image of God and are children of God. All of us are one family of God."

Bishop Younan stressed that religious leaders need to "raise their voices prophetically for peace based on justice, and to speak boldly against the wave of hatred and oppression making its way across the globe today." He vowed that he "will continue to work for peace based on justice until the last breath of my life."

Bishop Younan concluded his remarks by expressing his gratitude for receiving the "prestigious prize as an Arab Palestinian Christian Evangelical Lutheran and a Palestinian refugee." He said that "receiving this prize does not graduate me from continuing to do the holy work of interfaith dialogue and peacebuilding, but, on the contrary, it motivates me to continue to be a witness for peace, a broker of

justice, a defender of human rights, a minister of reconciliation, and an apostle of love."



Former President of Nigeria H.E. Goodluck Jonathan congratulated the two Sunhak Peace Prize winners during the award ceremony. In his remarks, he mentioned that "President Macky Sall has shown me a model of good governance through democratization and economic development in Senegal, from which I could also gain lots of inspiration." He said that "soon Africa will become a land of opportunity."

He continued, "Munib Younan has practiced interreligious dialogue in Jerusalem, one of the most intense places afflicted by religious confrontation." President Jonathan said he "strongly support[s] the practical activities of Bishop Younan through interfaith dialogue."

Past recipients of the Peace Prize who also attended the ceremony were 2015 laureate Dr. Modadugu Gupta, a fisheries scientist from India, and 2017 co-laureates Dr. Gino Strada, Italian surgeon and founder of the humanitarian NGO known as EMERGENCY, and Dr. Sakena Yacobi, refugee educator and founder of Afghan Institute of Learning.

