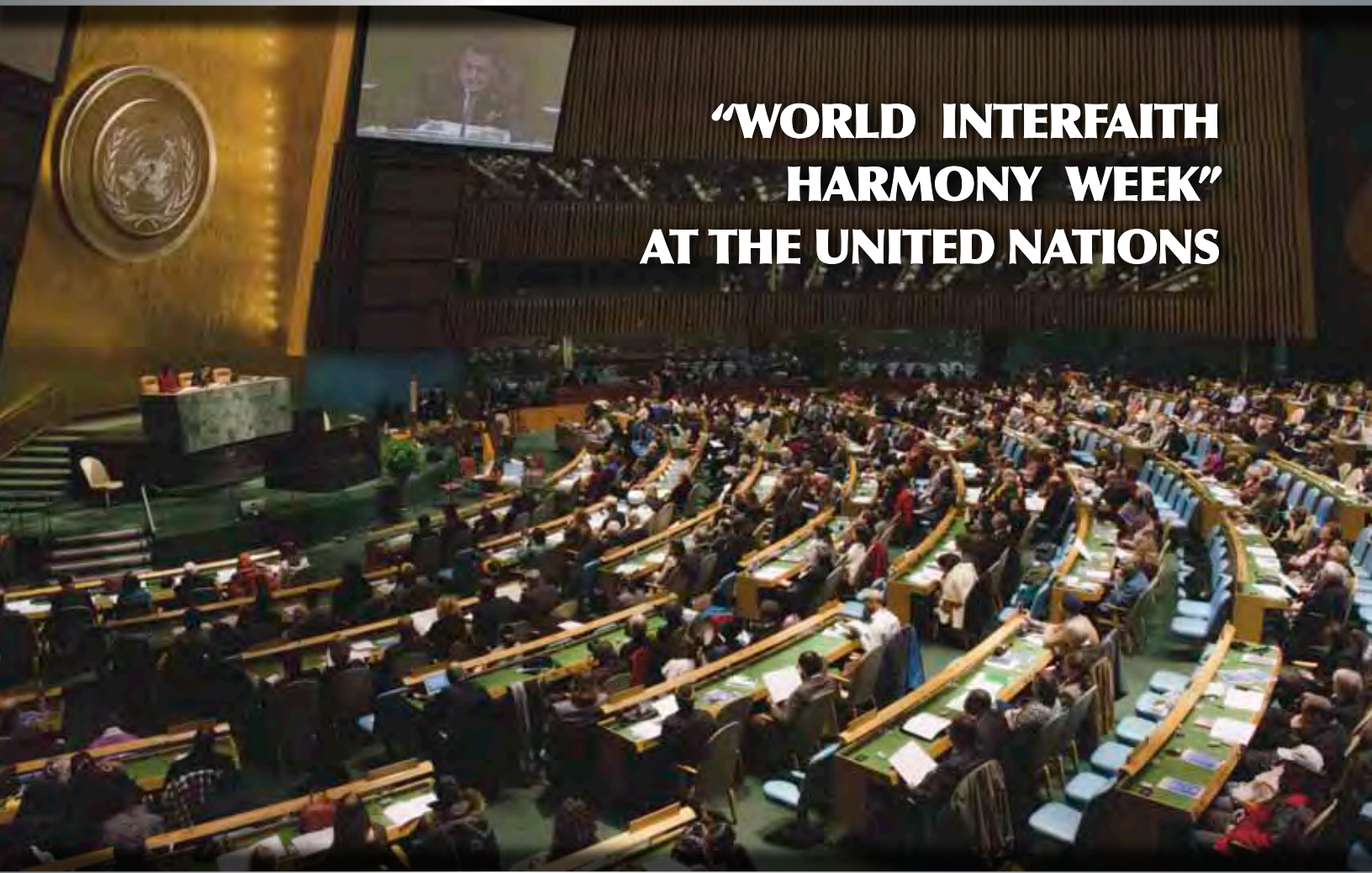


VOL. 6, NO. 1, 2012

UPF TODAY

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PEACE



**“WORLD INTERFAITH
HARMONY WEEK”
AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

Indonesia: Coloring Contest



Japan: Interfaith Ceremony



Zambia: Interfaith Dialogue



FROM THE PUBLISHER



UPF TODAY

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PEACE

THIS issue of UPF Today focuses on observances of the World Interfaith Harmony Week both at the General Assembly of the United Nations and in 34 nations around the world. The New York program, a first of its kind, featured both the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who served as the host, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Asha-Rose Migiro, along with a wide range of very distinguished interfaith and faith-based representatives who addressed the theme “Common Ground for the Common Good.” UPF was very pleased to join a number of prominent religious NGOs, including Religions for Peace, the United Religions Initiative, and the World Peace Prayer Society in marking this important day. Meanwhile, many of our UPF national chapters took the initiative to hold programs of their own.



Dr. Thomas G. Walsh
President, UPF

Another early highlight of 2012 was the International Leadership Conference held in Seoul at the time of the festivities for the Lunar New Year and our Founders’ birthdays. With the impact of the December 2011 passing of long-time North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, and accession of his son, Kim Jong-un, still being strongly felt around the region, the conference examined peace and security issues from both a “hard power” and “soft power” perspective.

The rest of our magazine reflects the ongoing work of our chapters in UPF’s four main areas of focus: interfaith peacebuilding, strengthening of marriage and family, education, and service. Our thanks and best wishes go out to all our hard working representatives, volunteers and Ambassadors for Peace.

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Michael Balcomb

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UPF Today is the membership magazine of the Universal Peace Federation, founded by Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon. Envisioning peace as a state of harmonious interdependence among individuals, families, nations and peoples, UPF advocates constructive and original practices that contribute to achieving a unified world of peace, the hope of all ages. The magazine offers a forum for Ambassadors for Peace fostering human development, good governance, public service, and collaborative peace efforts involving religions, nations and nongovernmental organizations.

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CHAPTERS FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Albania	Colombia	Italy	Panama	Sri Lanka
Argentina	Czech Rep	Japan	Peru	St. Lucia
Australia	Ecuador	Kazakhstan	Philippines	Taiwan
Austria	Georgia	Latvia	Russia	Thailand
Azerbaijan	Germany	Lithuania	Rwanda	UK
Bangladesh	Ghana	Malaysia	San Marino	Uruguay
Brazil	Honduras	Malta	Scotland	US
Burkina Faso	Hungary	Moldova	Sierra Leone	Zambia
Cambodia	India	Nepal	Slovakia	
Canada	Indonesia	Netherlands	Solomon Is.	
Chile	Israel	Norway	South Korea	

COVER:

The World Interfaith Harmony Week observed in the General Assembly of the United Nations.



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK AT THE UNITED NATIONS

By Taj Hamad & Genie Kagawa, UPF-International

UPF celebrations of the 2012 World Interfaith Harmony Week included a dramatic and moving program at the United Nations General Assembly hosted by the President, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and attended by high-level representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, Member States, religious leaders, and the United Nations NGO community.

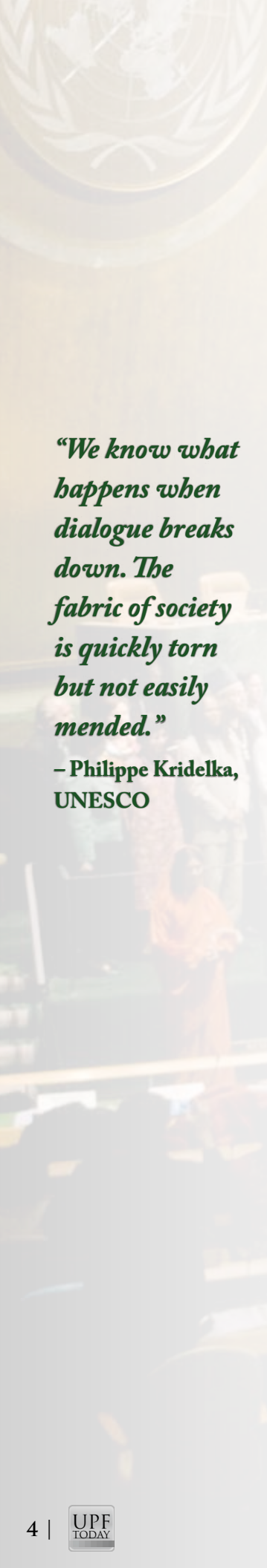
“We recognize and celebrate the values that are shared across religious traditions,” said Mr. Al-Nasser. “These common principles form a common ground that unites us in our rich diversity.” The General Assembly President went on to note that the United Nations was itself established in pursuit of universal values such as peace, freedom, human rights, dignity, and the oneness of humanity, which are also espoused by many of the world’s religions.

Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro urged the interfaith community to speak out against extremism, advance tolerance, and stand firm for social justice, dignity, and mutual understanding. “Although faith is the glue that often bonds communities and cultures around the world, it

is too often used as an excuse to emphasize differences and deepen divisions,” she said. “Only by finding common cause in mutual respect for shared spiritual and moral values can we hope for harmony among nations and peoples.”

H.E. Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, said that the Pope and Church leaders had repeatedly called on all believers to reject religiously-motivated violence. Yet the solution is not, as some would advocate, the rejection of religion itself, since “the denial of God has led to much cruelty and a degree of violence that knows no bounds.”

Monica Willard, President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations, said that interfaith dialogue was already playing an important role in bringing peace. “Interfaith harmony is alive and well. It is carried out daily by people of faith throughout the world,” she said. But it isn’t publicized widely. “We need to have institutional ways to share the fine work that is being done.”



“We know what happens when dialogue breaks down. The fabric of society is quickly torn but not easily mended.”

– Philippe Kridelka, UNESCO

THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Dr. Marc Scheuer, Director, Secretariat of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, and Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace, both stressed the value of diversity and inclusiveness. “The world’s religions are different. These differences are profoundly defining,” said Vendley. However, he identified a basis for multi-religious cooperation: the shared conviction that “honoring the Divine is directly linked to honoring and protecting the inviolable dignity of every person.” Philippe Kridelka, of UNESCO agreed, “The imperative of dialogue has never been more important than it is today,” he said. “We know what happens when dialogue breaks down. The fabric of society is quickly torn but not easily mended.” “There is no department of life that can be divorced from religion,” said Acharya Shri Shrivatsa Goswami from India, quoting Gandhi.

CONFLICT MEDIATION

H.E. Mrs. U. Joy Ogwu, the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to United Nations, said that the misuse of religion is at the heart of the problem. “If we promote mutual dialogue and respect, there will be greater harmony among religions and also among nations. We need to educate our young people to be a new generation of peace. In this respect, women have a most important role to play.”

“Religions should not be misused and abused to justify violence,” said Prof. M. Din Syamsuddin from the Indonesia Ulama Council. Rabbi David Rosen, American Jewish Committee, agreed, saying “Religious leaders have the capacity either

to make the situation all the more intractable, or to make it all the more soluble by creating a context of greater mutual respect.”

One of the founding principles of World Interfaith Harmony Week is to teach religious communities about the ways in which God is present in other faiths. Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, founder of the Cordoba Initiative, quoted not from the Quran but from the Bible: “Jesus taught us to love God and love the neighbor,” he said. “The real battle front is not between religions but between all the moderates and extremists in all faith traditions.”

Bhai Mohinder Singh, from Birmingham, England, emphasized the role of compassion and forgiveness. “As religious and secular extremism becomes more sophisticated, exercising increasing compassion becomes a vital necessity,” he said. “Where there is forgiveness, there is God himself.”

DISASTER PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

“Why should the UN engage with faith communities?” asked Dr. Azza Karam of the United Nations Population Fund. “The fact is that 40 percent of basic health care is provided by faith-based communities, and in conflict zones it is as high as 70 percent. Although the UN and faith-based organizations are not the same, we need to be sensitive to the impact of religion.”

Bill Canny, Catholic Relief Services, testified to the vast scope of faith-based contributions to disaster response, health and education, noting that effective disaster response recognizes spiritual and psychological needs following crises. “We ask



“In today’s interconnected yet divided world, it is more important than ever to draw on religion’s potential in the promotion of peace and stability.”

– H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the UN General Assembly

the UN and other organizations to give us space to minister to these spiritual needs.” Yuka Saionji, Byakko Shinko Kai and the Goi Peace Foundation, spoke with deep emotion about the impact of the help that Japan received following the earthquake and tsunami last year. “Religious organizations played a key role,” she said. “Churches and temples alike became evacuation centers and have continued on as community centers.”

RENEWAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

One of the highlights of the program was a moving performance by the Children’s Theater Company. One by one, bright young children—the youngest only five years old—confidently recited “Peacemaker’s quotes,” drawn from the scriptures of all religions and from more recent sources such as Einstein, Gandhi, and King. Their finale song, “One,” brought the entire audience to its feet for a standing ovation for the power of youth.

“Faith can be a strong ally of the United Nations,” said Katherine Marshall of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, USA. “Although the United Nations is not a faith institution, it is nevertheless a product of all the world’s faiths and the universal human longing for peace.”

“We all need to update our mentality to meet the challenges of our time,” said Ven. Dr. Chung Ohun Lee, Won Buddhism International. “Interreligious understanding and cooperation may be the most effective instrument for world peace because religions are a vital agent for change.... Interfaith dialogue may help everyone to see the ties that connect us all.”

Rev. Michael Beckwith, who leads a California megachurch, quoted from Hans Kung, saying “There will be no peace in the world without peace among religions; there will be no peace among religions without dialogue among religions.” “Peace at its best is meeting at the center of our being,” he said. “Science makes the world a neighborhood; but religion makes a brotherhood and sisterhood.”

H.E. Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, invited all the participants to continue their investment and engagement, including an invitation to visit her country for the upcoming Rio+20 conference in June. “We need to balance material and human development with protection of the environment,” she said. “Civil society, including religious societies and institutions, has an important role to play. Let us strengthen and renew broader efforts for sustainability.”

The program was brought to a close by an “interfaith tree of harmony ceremony” symbolizing the commitment of all faiths and traditions to the future of the planet and the work of the United Nations. One by one, representatives of eleven faith traditions poured water representing wisdom and healing onto the roots of a tree symbolizing the entire human family. The music of saxophonist Paul Winter interweaved the ceremony.

“What we have achieved here today is significant,” said President Al-Nasser. “Let each of us assume the task of interfaith harmony as our personal responsibility, for as was so clearly demonstrated here today the fruits of religious dialogue and understanding offer the hope of a new era of peace for all humanity.”

INTERFAITH HARMONY & GLOBAL COOPERATION

By Joy Pople

The central theme of World Interfaith Harmony Week, “Love of God and Love of the Neighbor,” offered a logical springboard for discussion.



Lighting candles, pouring water into a common bowl, listening to the collective wisdom of spiritual leaders, sharing with one another around a circle, visiting places of worship together. These are some of the methods used to communicate the spirit of interfaith harmony.

UPF chapters around the world responded to the invitation to organize programs for World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2012, designated as the first week of February each year by a UN General Assembly Resolution approved in 2010.

Some gatherings built on the foundation of past interfaith work. In **Thailand**, the World Interfaith Harmony gathering built momentum for the National Interfaith Peace Council, which was launched on September 21, 2011. In several cities of **Nepal** faith leaders offered their insights into ways to build peace in this nation where a stable government is still elusive. The Teusaquillo district of Bogota, **Colombia**, has been dedicated as a “Peace Territory,” and the leaders met there during Interfaith Harmony Week to plan activities for the year. Each of these nations have experienced bouts of violence, and faith leaders are paving paths to cooperative, peaceful

(From top to bottom) Brazil, Israel, Italy



UPF PROGRAMS

development in their nations. In Utah in the US, an interfaith roundtable has been meeting monthly since the Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games of 2002, during which local leaders of many faiths served as chaplains.

Compelling visual imagery helps translate concepts into tangible reality. In **Hungary**, **Italy**, and Washington, DC, representatives of various religions poured water into a central bowl signifying their awareness of being members of one common human family under God. In **Australia**, **Germany**, and **Korea**, faith leaders lit candles and offered prayers for peace. In Tokyo, **Japan**, prayers were offered not only for world peace but in memory of the devastation of the Great East Japan Earthquake last year.

Another type of transcendent unifying principle among faiths comes through their mystical traditions. In Germany and **Malaysia**, speakers from a variety of mystical traditions offered insights about the distinctive as well as common elements from their faiths. Joint visits to places of worship was a featured activity in **Russia** and **Taiwan**. Prayers and readings from various faith traditions were the focus of programs in **Canada** and **Honduras**.

The central theme of World Interfaith Harmony Week, “Love of God and Love of the Neighbor,” offered a logical springboard for discussion. UPF chapters in nations such as **Albania**, **Austria**, **Chile**, **Czech Republic**, **Ecuador**, **Moldova**, **Netherlands** and **Poland** invited representatives of various faiths to share their insights.

In **Brazil** and the **Philippines** this message was taken to the halls of city and state government. In the **United Kingdom**, a forum in the House of Commons addressed challenging issues of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Another approach to World Interfaith Harmony Week is to take the vision of interfaith understanding and cooperation to the younger generations. A Christian university in **Indonesia** invited Muslim as well as Christian leaders to address the student body. Children in **Moldova** enjoyed a program of humor that drew on themes from various religions, and students in **St. Lucia** discussed insights from various faiths.

Hindu and Muslim university students in New Delhi, **India**, debated each other about the need for interfaith harmony, and young adults from diverse religious communities in **Austria** shared with adults their life experiences with people of different faiths and cultures.



Another type of transcendent unifying principle among faiths comes through their mystical traditions.

(From top to bottom) Poland, Czech Republic, Russia

Forums in **Georgia**, **Kazakhstan**, and **Slovakia** offered opportunities for people to share memorable experiences in interfaith settings. Ideally, such conversations lead to constructive action. People in **Chile**, the **Czech Republic**, and **Russia** decided to continue the conversations. In **Zambia**, a national interreligious council was suggested, and Israeli scholars proposed the establishment of a Peace Academy.

Next year will be the third observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Who knows what will develop by then?

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HARD ROADS AND SOFT ROADS TO PEACE

By Michael Balcomb

“Father Moon’s simple but powerful message of boundless love and unconditional compassion, of service and sacrifice, of family values and spiritual leadership, is like a lighthouse which beckons the world.”

– Krishna V. Rajan

UPF’S latest international Leadership Conference, held in Korea over the Chinese New Year holidays, January 21-25, brought together 200 participants from 72 nations to consider possible roads to peace. There was a particular focus on peace and security issues related to Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula.

The area had been in a state of heightened alert following the sudden death of North Korea’s long-time dictator, Kim Jong-il, in December and the accession of his little-known youngest son, Kim Jong-un. Along with the displays of public grief by its citizens, North Korea conducted missile tests clearly staged to send a message across the 38th parallel and further afield to Japan.

The world’s press also drew attention to the launch of China’s first aircraft carrier, the 67,000 ton *Varyag*. Although the ship may be several years away from active service, sea trials were seen by some as a response by China to US President Barack Obama’s Pacific Rim tour to bolster the US’s strategic alliances in Asia.

In several tightly debated sessions, experts from Russia, the United States, Japan, and South Korea considered the implications of these developments and pondered the relative effectiveness of “hard power” options (political, military, and economic) and “soft power” alternatives including citizen diplomacy, humanitarian, cultural, and even religious and interfaith responses to conflict.

Dr. Aslambek Aslakhonov, Deputy Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the Senate of the Russian Federation, spoke on the

growing role of Russia’s foreign policy in the Pacific Rim, reminding the participants that two-thirds of Russia’s territory is North East Asia.

Dr. Alexandre Mansourov, Visiting Scholar at the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University in the US, predicted that North Korea will become more dynamic, more pragmatic, and more nationalistic. Prof. Toshio Miyatsuka of Yamanashi Gakuin University in Japan raised concerns about the persecution of religion in North Korea and the lack of food and health care.

In his presentation “Strong Korea?” Dr. Kook Jin Moon, the fourth son of UPF Founders Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, looked beyond Pyongyang to the broader challenges that the explosive growth of Chinese military and economic power could pose to South Korea and its democratic neighbors and allies. “Freedom is worth defending,” he said, “and the time has come when we cannot solely rely on the good will and assets of other nations – especially the United States – for our own security.”

Among those considering soft power options was Joyce Davis, long-term foreign affairs correspondent for National Public Radio. Although a free press has been essential in peaceful democracies, she pointed to the fast-growing impact of “citizen journalism” and the ability of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to facilitate rapid social change, as shown during the “Arab Spring.”

Cindy Courville, the first US Ambassador to the African Union, reflected on some of the growing pains of these new democracies, noting

the importance of respecting the will of the people even when elections bring to power parties with values that could be seen as threatening to Western interests, such as the recent ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. “The United States cannot pick sides,” she said. “That is and must be a matter for the people of each nation to decide.”

Echoing these sentiments, Ran Cohen, a former member of the Israeli Knesset, said that the best hope for peace for Israel and its neighbors was for ordinary Israelis and Palestinians to find a direct way to peace through a popular referendum, citing evidence that a majority of both Israelis and Palestinians favor a two-state solution. Elected leaders, on the other hand, are dragging their feet.

Another highlight of the conference was a celebration of the second United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, observed around the first week of February each year.

Meeting in the Cheon Bok Goong, a modern interfaith sanctuary, religious leaders from nine faiths – Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Shintoism, Sikhism, and Unificationism – offered prayers and lit candles in a spirit of reconciliation before moving outside to light lanterns to welcome in the Chinese Year of the Dragon.

Following the interfaith ceremony, Geetha Rajan, Trustee of UPF-India, spoke of the need for UPF to expand its work in India, and Amb. Sam Zakhem of the USA echoed a similarly passionate call for UPF in the USA.

UPF Chairman, Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, concluded the session with a keynote address calling on UPF Ambassadors for Peace and volunteers worldwide to expand their service to the

world, building a global movement that addresses global problems and brings realistic solutions.

The UPF has long advocated a heightened role for religious and spiritual voices in the peace process. Dr. Moon has called for the creation of an interfaith council within the United Nations system. On the national level, UPF chapters have been active in creating or promoting national interfaith councils, and recently Thailand became the latest nation to inaugurate an interfaith council, with representatives of all of the major faiths.

The ILC participants also had the opportunity to join several festivities celebrating the “Year of the Dragon” as well as a banquet, entertainment, and prayer ceremony at the Peace Palace high in the mountains above Seoul, and a downtown parade of friends and members of the wider Unification Movement in honor of the birthday celebrations of Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, now 93 and 70, respectively.

“Father Moon’s simple but powerful message of boundless love and unconditional compassion, of service and sacrifice, of family values and spiritual leadership, is like a lighthouse which beckons the world,” said Ambassador Krishna V. Rajan of India in his congratulatory message. “His answer to conflict is the realization that we are one human family created by God. Living for the sake of others is the only road to real happiness.”

“Freedom is worth defending, and the time has come when we cannot solely rely on the good will and assets of other nations – especially the United States – for our own security.”

– Kook Jin Moon



NEWS FROM EUROPE

Malta: Europe, Africa and the Culture of Peace

“A New Vision for Cooperation Between Europe and Africa and the Culture of Peace” was the theme of a conference in Malta by UPF and the Women’s Federation for World Peace. Europe’s relationships with Africa and emerging economies, gender equality, and aid effectiveness were assessed by political, diplomatic, economic, and religious experts from both continents.

African speakers included H.E. Agbéyomé Kodjo, former Prime Minister of Togo, on ethical and religious principles as grounds for good governance. H.E. Dr. Abdelaziz Hegazy, former Prime Minister of Egypt, gave insights into the current situation in Arab states. H.E. Gen. Malimba Masheke, former Prime Minister of Zambia, urged Europeans to invest their technology and expertise in Africa in ways that will enable Africans to take development into their own hands. H.E. Dr. Mary Mbiro Khimulu, Ambassador of Kenya to UNESCO, testified to women as agents of change.



Under the patronage of President George Abela, the dining hall of the Presidential Palace was the venue for the first day of the conference. The Hon. Michael Frendo, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, welcomed participants from 25 European and seven African nations, with additional delegations from the Middle East and Japan. He referred to Malta’s long history of invasion and occupation, its neutral status, and its central location in the Mediterranean Sea as appropriate for hosting a discussion of European-African cooperation.

H.E. Davidson L. Hepburn, President of the 35th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, related UNESCO’s mission and guiding principles to the conference theme. Professor Henry J. Frendo, a leading historian of the relationship between Europe and Africa, delivered a masterly expose of the conference theme.

The conference concluded with a call for fostering Europe-Africa relations through mutual respect, dialogue, and people-to-people interaction, guided by the principle of living for the sake of others.

Bratislava: Forum on the End of Communism

UPF-Slovakia organized a forum to commemorate the end of Communism in the Soviet Union 20 years earlier. On December 25, 1991, the Communist Party was abolished in Moscow, and seven days later the Soviet Union was formally dissolved. The end of the “Evil Empire” and the Cold War heralded a new dawn of freedom in Europe.

UPF speakers highlighted the contributions of their founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, in sponsoring countless events to inform people around the globe



about Communism's ideological errors, political threats, and violations of human rights. Dr. Juraj Lajda described the educational programs that began in South Korea in 1968 and expanded to Asia and the Americas.

Lubomír Morbacher, Ph.D., from the Nation's Memory Institute, explained the ideological roots of state terror against religious believers. Juraj Durik, a national representative of the Chinese movement Falun Gong, described the methods used by Communist China to destroy any religion or church that does not submit to the rules of the regime.

The presentations sparked a lengthy discussion about whether the people of Slovakia have learned from their totalitarian past and whether the crimes of the Communist period have been punished. The unanimous answer was no.

London: Evaluating Progress in Human Rights

UPF-Europe and the Women's Federation for World Peace organized an International Leadership Conference in London in commemoration of Human Rights Day 2011, and Lord Tarsem King of West Bromwich hosted a plenary session at the Parliament.

Rt. Hon. Baroness Scotland of Asthal QC, who served as Britain's first female Attorney General, shared her experiences in combating domestic violence in Britain. "Peace at home is a fundamental human right, which must be protected unconditionally," she stated. The former Human Rights Ambassador for Spain, Silvia Escobar, pointed out the role played by institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe in securing human rights in Europe. Rt. Hon. Tom Brake MP, Liberal Democrat spokesman for Home Affairs issues, expressed



his concern about backlashes against human rights in the United Kingdom.

Another session focused on human rights further afield. Prof. Akiko Yamanaka, former Vice Foreign Minister of Japan, called for more focus on preventative diplomacy. Austrian Ambassador (Rtd.) Dr. Walther Lichem talked about 14 cities around the world that have declared themselves human rights cities, where human rights are taught in schools and have become the basis of civic life. Willy Fautre, Director of Human Rights without Frontiers International, described his work with North Korean refugees.

Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke, President of the World Congress of Faiths, drew upon his extensive experience in matters of religious freedom in chairing a session on the topic. Speakers described challenges faced by minority religious groups in Hungary, Pakistan, and Japan.

A training session for young social entrepreneurs started with André Hackett talking about a mobile recording studio where young people from the street can record music. "I tell my guys that if they start thinking of others and helping others, they can deal with their own problems more easily," he said. "Life is all about communication," declared one woman who launched a program for disadvantaged youth after her son got stabbed at school. Then the participants split up into small groups to brainstorm ideas for projects.

San Marino: Poetry Prizes

UPF and the San Marino's Cultural Academy presented their annual Titan Poetry Prizes. Thirty Italian poets were honored, and they attended along with their friends. There was also a gathering of 20 young students taught by Ambassador for Peace Renato Piccioni, president of San Marino's Cultural Academy. The youth received awards as "Pioneers Promoting a Culture of Peace" and copies of UPF-Italy's quarterly magazine, *Voci di Pace* (Voices of Peace). Below is a poem by a ten-year-old student, translated from the original Italian:

THE SKY *by Filippo Ye*

The sky offers hospitality to the clouds.
It is there where thunderstorms
and rainbows come.
You know...
there exist different skies...
a sky of serenity
with white clouds,
a furious sky
with noisy thunders,
and a sad sky too,
crying light.

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MARRIAGE & FAMILY PEACE INITIATIVE

By Joy Pople



“A proper marriage builds a good family with healthier members who live in peace and have a longer lifespan. Members from a family with good morals have a better potential to solve many challenges in life.”

– National research reported by a senator in Rwanda

“I feel very impressed by the presentation on ‘The Family as a school of Love.’ I want to have these materials in my classroom.”

– School teacher in the Solomon Islands



Couples speak about marriage and family on national television in Nepal

THE Universal Peace Federation’s Marriage and Family Initiative, launched in 2011, challenges people to expand their vision about ways to promote family values throughout their nation.

In **Nepal**, Himalaya Television aired a nationwide broadcast of a panel discussion about the importance of marriage and family for lasting peace and social development. The theme of the November meeting of the **Georgia** Peace Council was “Innovative ways to promote family values throughout the nation.” Participants in a forum in **Siberia** planned action steps that included drafting a family policy for the Novosibirsk region and **Russia** as a whole.

In **Cambodia**, a workshop for families took place during the annual Water Festival, which attracts huge numbers of people to the capital. UPF-Cambodia invited visiting families to a day-long seminar. The highlight was a lottery matching families from different parts of the nation. The pairs of families

enjoyed dinner and conversation together, expanding the realm of family connections across Cambodia.

As part of a continuing contribution to the national recovery process, UPF-**Japan** held a peace vision seminar in Osaka. “The values of the Japanese people have changed dramatically after the Great East Japan Earthquake,” said Mr. Kanji Ohashi, Secretary General of UPF-Japan’s Kansai branch. “People have rediscovered the importance of family bonds over wealth.”

Lessons about family values were offered in secondary schools and universities in **Moldova** and **Norway**. Representatives of various faith traditions offered insights about the family during programs in **Ghana**, **Lithuania**, **Panama**, **Peru**, **Scotland**, **Sierra Leone**, and **Taiwan**. Public seminars and forums took place in **Argentina**, **Azerbaijan**, **Bangladesh**, **Czech Republic**, **Indonesia**, **Kazakhstan**, **Latvia**, **Rwanda**, **Solomon Islands**, **Sri Lanka**, and **Uruguay**.



Clockwise from top left: Argentina, Moldova, Ghana, Norway

UPF STATEMENT ON THE FAMILY

THE Universal Peace Federation acknowledges that the family is a microcosm of the global community. If the world is to finally come to an era of sustainable peace and harmony among civilizations, that peace must be founded on this basic, most intimate social unit of humankind. In other words, the family is the central building block of society, as well as being an instrument for peace and reconciliation.

The family is universal. Regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliations, we are all members of families. Most importantly, the family is the school of love and ethics. Through experiences in our families, we learn to embrace and value all relationships in our wider human family; with friends, neighbors, co-workers, colleagues and strangers.

Marriage, parenting and the family are the basis of human development and the core institutions for education in character, ethics, social relationships, and citizenship. Strong, healthy, loving parents and families help protect society from the moral decline of its youth, increase in crime, drug abuse and corruption, as well as the spread of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. In addition, it can help break down the age-old resentments that have fueled religious, tribal and civil conflict.

Throughout history, the family has experienced economic and social unrest, and its adaptability is now being threatened by a wide range of social, economic, cultural and political developments. UPF chapters around the world are focusing on projects to overcome poverty and social exclusion within families and have been mindful to include underprivileged or marginalized groups in their programs. UPF includes wide representation of the various faith groups in its policies and projects.

Lasting peace is secured not merely through laws, backed by the power of government enforcement, but by a rising awareness of our universal solidarity as one human family, brothers and sisters who share a common spiritual and moral heritage. We are one family under God.

“The issue of stable families is very important for Azerbaijan. Since ancient times, the culture of good families has been an intrinsic part of the national tradition. Azerbaijan should offer additional support for marriages and families.”

**- H.E. Rahim Huseynov,
former Prime Minister**

RYS in India, Nepal, Russia, and Sri Lanka

By Frank LaGrotteria

INDIA

Twenty-six young people from five Asian nations assembled in Kochi for a service-learning project promoting sustainable development and environmental awareness. The project was inaugurated by Prof. N.R. Menon, a renowned educator, who challenged participants to look for the common threads that connect humankind.

Dozens of students joined the participants in carrying bricks, mud, and manure to the rooftop of the ACS School and filled more than 100 sacks with the growing mixture. Staff and students helped plant saplings and vegetable seeds in the sacks. Experiencing the interconnectedness and interdependence of life, students will care for the plants and sell the produce to help cover the school fees of needy students.

Project participants learned leadership and peacemaking skills as well as effective communication from Ms. Dinesha Liyanasuriya, Secretary General of RYS-Sri Lanka. Each morning, everyone joined in prayers and meditation according to different faith traditions. Although the majority of people in this part of southwest India are Hindus, its history as a center of trade left a legacy of large Muslim and Christian communities. A sports field was cleaned and a friendly football match took place there. Clothing and basic necessities were given to children at the Sai Niketan orphanage on the eve of a traditional festival. In addition, participants visited religious centers, a fish farm, and a museum.



Kochi: RYS staff & students plant saplings and seeds

NEPAL

Nepal is famous around the world for Mount Everest and Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, known as the “Light of Asia” and “Fountain of World Peace.” Hundreds of thousands of people visit Lumbini each year. UPF’s service-learning project near Lumbini began on December 1, 2011, the same day the government launched a campaign to promote tourism and development of its key Buddhist shrines.

Participants included 36 dynamic, peace-loving youth representing different faiths and organizations all over Nepal. During the seven days, they engaged in manual service for the benefit of poor children in Laxmipuri who did not have classrooms or a toilet. The 300 students sit outside on plastic sheets in the scorching sun and chilly winter; during the rainy season, there are no classes.

With the completion of a new building and toilet, supported jointly by UPF and the local education department, these children can now enjoy the basic right to an education supported by a permanent shelter. Many other organizations have worked over the years in these areas, but this project made a special impact, according to Piya Ratna of RYS-Nepal. In addition to construction work, participants taught classes at the school and visited sacred sites.



Lumbini: RYS Nepal volunteers teaching students

RUSSIA

The cultural capital of Russia and home of notable Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist places of worship, St. Petersburg is a potential “city of interfaith harmony,” in the vision of UPF-Russia. People from throughout Russia, Estonia, and Latvia assembled at the historic House of Writers near St. Petersburg from January 24 to 27, 2012 forming a microcosm of interreligious cooperation.

Each day started with the declaration of the word of the day – a moral notion highlighting the day. The first word was “tolerance.” A training on “Living in peace with others” and film on tolerance helped convey the theme. At a party after dinner, participants from Estonia and Latvia shared unique aspects of their culture and religion. On following days themes were unity, family, and harmony.

Participants visited a synagogue, Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, and Orthodox Church, experiencing warm hospitality in the cold weather and learning about the various traditions and symbolism. The interiors of the mosque and Buddhist temple were closed, but participants savored the unique architecture that conveyed the spirit of those religions.

Volunteer activity at the House of Writers included interior cleaning, taking large carpets outside for cleaning, and hauling away lumber. Educational topics included “Universal Principles and Life Goals,” “Cause and Resolution of Conflicts,” “The Family as the School of Love,” and “Living Religions.”

Project director Dmitry Officerov challenged groups of participants to develop plans for a future activity based on the themes of interreligious cooperation, family, and volunteerism. Proposals included creating an ecological park and forming a club where young people could share experiences



St. Petersburg: Cleaning a carpet at the House of Writers

and get advice about relationships. The final program featured poems, songs, and skits, followed by distributing little “sacks of happiness,” a traditional way to cultivate a caring heart. On the first day, each person received by lottery the name of a “secret friend.” As the days went by, they filled their sacks with small souvenirs, which were given to the secret friends as farewell gifts.

SRI LANKA

Throughout Sri-Lanka’s 16-year civil war and its aftermath, Religious Youth Service has been bringing together young people from different parts of the nation for service-learning projects. The most recent such program took place December 16-22, 2011 in the village of Polonnaruwa in north-central Sri Lanka, site of some of the most brutal fighting. Forty-three people from three nations and four religious traditions worked with local professionals to construct a new community center with support from local and national government offices. The task of digging 14 holes for pillars was complicated by heavy rains, but the holes were dug and reinforcing rods for six of the pillars were set in place.

A teacher at a Muslim school in the Northern Province participated along with several of his students. “We need to rebuild our nation,” he said. “We need to be able to maintain our religious heritage and at the same time transcend the divisions of race, religion, and caste.” Another participant said,



Polonnaruwa: New community center being built

“RYS allowed me to experience a larger family, to play, to learn, and to live with others as brothers and sisters.”

Each day grandmothers, mothers, and daughters brought tea and snacks. The head priest of the village temple visited the work site, and a farmer brought mangos. “More than building a new community center, this project has helped to rebuild the spirit of our community,” reported the president of the Village Welfare Society. On a trip to visit religious sites, the bus got stuck in the mud. Working together, they got the bus going again, an example of the theme of the week, chosen by UPF-Sri Lanka Secretary General Dr. Chula Senaratne, that nothing is impossible!

THAILAND FLOOD RELIEF

By UPF-Thailand



IN response to the prolonged rainfall and catastrophic floods that have now affected 12 million people, UPF Thailand has helped organize a variety of relief projects, starting in Ayutthaya province with the support of the mayor and local police. Volunteers went house to house by boat with food, drinking water, and survival kits, and visited an evacuation center at a temple to offer comfort and encouragement, which flood victims sometimes need just as much as food and water.

At the time, no one imagined that the floods would extend to the capital, but northern Bangkok would also soon be under water. UPF donated 1,000 boxes containing meals and water packs to people in an evacuation center at the Rajamangkhla Sports Complex in Bangkok, just 500 meters from the headquarters of UPF-Thailand. Volunteers also filled sand bags to help strengthen the barriers.

As the flooding spread, the next destination was an evacuation center at the Adisorn Military Base 30 km east of Ayutthaya, where 1200 people from flooded regions of the Ayutthaya and Pathumtani Provinces were housed. UPF staff helped cook meals and care for the people, especially the elderly and sick, and prepared donated items to distribute to the victims.

In December, UPF launched Peace Volunteer Thailand, with a mobilization of young people cleaning up flood damage at the Tha-It Suksa School in a traditional Islamic community. The Tha-It Mosque, built 200 years ago, is located beside the Chao Phraya River, the major river

flowing through Bangkok and source of recent flooding. Volunteers spread throughout the classrooms, hallways, and outdoor areas cleaning and scrubbing. Electrical engineering teachers and students checked the classrooms and did minor repairs.

The 70 Muslim, Christian, and Buddhist volunteers came from various religious groups and educational institutions, including Ramkhanheang University, Rajamongkol Thanyaburi University, Rajamongkol Suwannabhumi University, and the Loving Fatherland Association. Drawing from networks linked to the Thailand Interfaith Peace Council, there were Christian youth from the Ruamnimit Church and Muslim youth from Kasem Bandit University. The project was supported by the Foundation of Center of Islam of Thailand and the Royal Thai Army.

Mr. Pairach Panisworanant, the school director, and Mr. Kamol, Assistant Secretary General of UPF-Thailand, expressed gratitude to everybody who worked together to promote peace through service. “This humanitarian effort is one outcome of the September 21 inauguration of the Interreligious Peace Council of Thailand by Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh leaders,” said Thananopavarn [see UPF Today, November 2011]. “The council works to promote cooperation and harmony among people of different religions and promote religious teachings that uplift the standard of morality, virtue, and ethics throughout the nation.”



Bangkok: Clean-up of the Tha-It Suksa School

NEWS FROM WASHINGTON DC

WOMEN & THE ARAB SPRING

By Tomiko Duggan, Director of Public Affairs,
UPF International - DC Office

AMBASSADOR for Peace, Mrs. Houda Zaïbi Belhassen, the Vice-President of the League of Tunisian Women Voters shared her experiences of the Arab Spring in her native Tunisia at a recent luncheon hosted by the UPF Washington DC office at *The Washington Times*.

The League of Tunisian Women Voters (LTWV) promotes voting to the populace and works to register voters. Of the seven million eligible voters, over 55% have registered, many are women. Women were trained for 20-25 weeks to learn how to make voting more simple and accessible. Slogans were created to encourage voting, "Take a friend," or "Take your family to vote." The recent election for candidates to create the new constitution resulted in 49 women filling seats out of a possible 417. "A surprising result," Belhassen said, "is that 42 were from the moderate Islamic party and only 7 from the progressive liberal party."

A lively question and answer session followed. Ambassador Gilbert Galanxhi of Albania, and Ambassador Srdjan Darmanovic of Montenegro applauded Tunisia's efforts. Ambassador Winston Thompson from Fiji thanked her for her talk. In all, 10 embassies sent high level diplomats including 4 ambassadors.

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KOREAN SECURITY ISSUES

By Bill Selig, UPF Office of Peace and Security,
Washington DC

THREE days before the death of Kim Jong Il a small group of analysts participated in an informal UPF discussion about security issues on the Korean Peninsula.

The participants included Dr. Larry Niksch, a senior associate with the Center for Strategic & International Studies and recently retired after 40 years as an Asia specialist with the Congressional Research Service; Stephen Costello, an independent analyst, who for many years represented Kim Dae Jung in DC; and Zachary Hosford, a rising star analyst with the Center for a New American Security, a think tank closely allied with the Obama administration. Also in attendance was Ms. Sohee Gu, a research associate with the ROK Embassy and Dr. Mark Barry a commentator on Northeast Asia Affairs.

Dr. Antonio Betancourt served as moderator for the 15 discussion questions that were used to frame the three-hour discussion. These questions included the implications of the shift of foreign policy of the U.S. President Barack Obama's Administration towards Asia Pacific with strong declarations in Hawaii and Bali. The questions allowed the discussion to have a comprehensive view of the many issues relating to the present and future of the two Koreas, China, and the US.

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Washington DC: Program at *The Washington Times*

UPF Peacebuilding Efforts Around the World

TOKYO, JAPAN

The 13th Peace Diplomats Forum on the theme of Security in Tokyo featured 40 experts from various fields, including several diplomats. Mr. Gentaro Kajikuri, Co-Chair of UPF-Japan, opened the December 8 forum. Referring to the Pax Romana and Pax Britannica, he emphasized that peace during these periods was assured by strength. “Although nonviolent philosophy has had significant influence in making peace in some sense, considering the current international situation, we cannot ignore the necessity of force in peacekeeping,” he said.



Japan: Diplomats Forum

“Although nonviolent philosophy has had significant influence in making peace in some sense, considering the current international situation, we cannot ignore the necessity of force in peacekeeping.”

- Mr. Gentaro Kajikuri

The keynote speech was given by Gen. Takahiro Ninomiya, special assistant to the chairman of the Council for Comprehensive Security, a non-partisan group of over 150 Japanese Diet Members. The theme of the speech was “Collaboration between the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and Japan: Toward Peace Consolidation and International Cooperation.”

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

A seminar explored the theme “Full Dimensional Characteristic of Unification Thought” on October 30. The 146 participants included members of the Professors World Peace Academy, Ambassadors for Peace, and people of various religious backgrounds. Held in Taipei every two months beginning in May, the four seminars during 2011 featured a wide range of insights into the Chinese edition of *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, the autobiography of UPF Founder Dr. Sun Myung Moon.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Two young musicians greeted the audience with the language of music as they arrived for a December conference on “Interreligious Dialogue: The Role of the United Nations and Peace in the 21st Century.” Speakers included Dr. Walther Lichem, former Austrian Ambassador to Canada and other nations; Dr. Ulrike Kraus, Sinologist and lawyer; Dr. Elsayed Elshahed, head of the Center for Intercultural Islamic Research in Vienna; Mr. Peter Jurkowitsch, past president of the Austrian-Indian Society; Mrs. Claudia Henzler, a photo artist and journalist; and Dr. Leo Gabriel, a social anthropologist.



Austria: Interreligious dialogue

OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

The conference hall of the National Archives of Ouagadougou was the venue for a ceremony honoring Mr. Paterné Sosie Lin Zinsou, Sub-Regional Director of UPF-West Africa, as a Knight of the National Order of Burkina Faso. The ceremony, organized by the office of the Great Chancellor of the Burkina Faso Order, took place during an international UPF forum on marriage and family on December 10.

It was conducted in the presence of Hon. Professor Albert Ouedraogo, Minister of Secondary and Higher Education, and Mrs. Delphine Zinsou Kwende, the honorary consul of Benin in Burkina Faso, representing the Benin Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This award is the highest national distinction. It was given in recognition of Mr. Paterné Zinsou’s service to Burkina Faso by promoting a culture of peace and non-violence and developing the Ambassadors for Peace foundation.



Ghana: New Doctor Helen M. Osei

ACCRA, GHANA

The Secretary General of the Universal Peace Federation Ghana, Mrs. Helen M. Osei, was conferred with an Honorary Doctorate Degree by the Pan African Christian Theological University, an affiliate of the American Urban University, San Diego, California - USA.

JAKARTA, INDONESIA

UPF partnered with the Faculty of Economics of the Universitas Negeri Jakarta (UNJ) to organize an international seminar on the theme “National Character Building: Opportunities and Challenge” on December 19. The conference brought together major stakeholders concerned with research, planning, and implementation of the Indonesian government’s policy for National Character Building. One hundred and eighty participants from three ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and Coordinating Ministry of People’s Welfare) as well as six universities and more than 20 schools discussed critical issues in conducting effective character education programs.



Indonesia: Character Education conference

ST. PETERSBURG, HELSINKI AND STOCKHOLM

Young Russian musicians and artists traveled to Finland and Sweden for the third annual “Light of the Christmas Star” International Goodwill Festival. The multicolored opening of the Festival on December 9 was held on board the Princess Maria ferry that set off from St. Petersburg with a jury of noted musical professors and performers.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

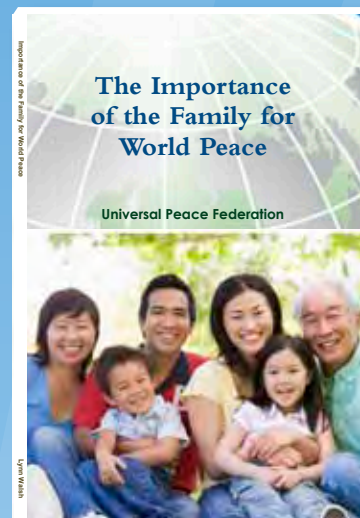
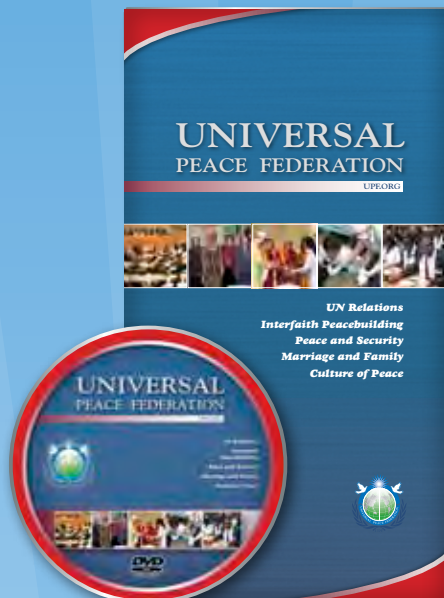
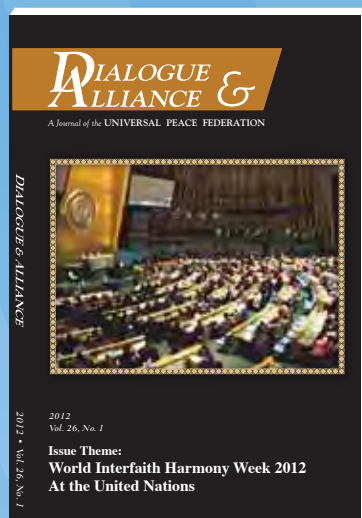
UPF-Australia hosted the seventh annual Living for Others Award ceremony. There was a full house of 120 attendees in the main hall of the Oceania Peace Embassy in Sydney. Nine worthy recipients, including one youth recipient, were honored. Then in a further ceremony, five of the awardees, together with 11 other UPF supporters, were appointed Ambassadors for Peace.

The program included congratulatory addresses by the Hon. David Clarke (MLC), New South Wales Parliamentary Secretary for Justice, and Dr. Dong Woo Kim, Chairman of UPF-Oceania. Entertainment was provided by 25 young violinists of the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association Violin Ensemble, harpist and vocalist Elizabeth Lawrence, and the UPF Youth Choir.



Burkina Faso: Paterne Zinsou (right) knighted

NEW UPF PUBLICATIONS

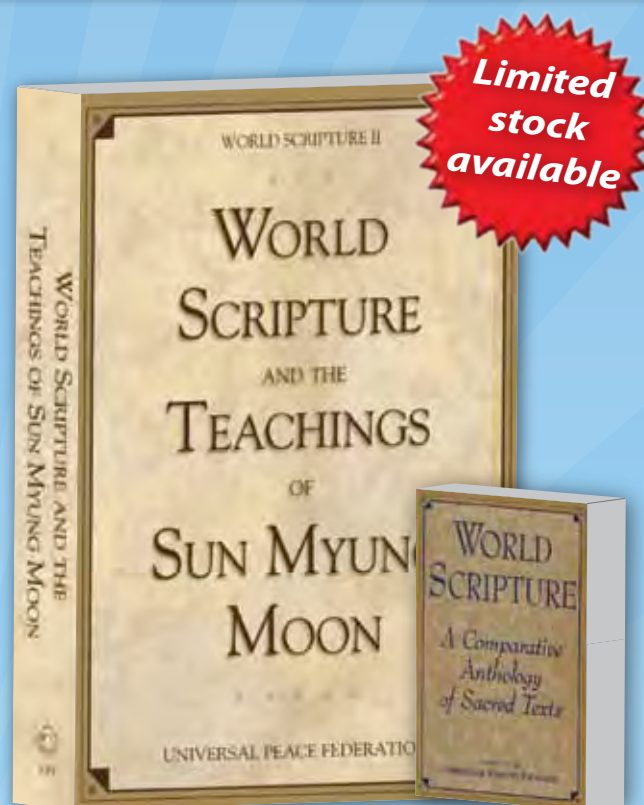


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UPF FOUNDER REV. DR. SUN MYUNG MOON COMMISSIONED THE WORLD SCRIPTURE SERIES BASED UPON THE FIRM CONVICTION THAT RELIGIONS HAVE A KEY ROLE TO PLAY IN BUILDING A WORLD OF LASTING PEACE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. INDEED, IN COMPILING AN AUTHORITATIVE SELECTION OF HIS OWN TEACHINGS, REV. MOON HAS INSISTED ON THE INCLUSION OF THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE WORLD.



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