

Eurasia and Europe: Cooperating for a Culture of Peace & Human Development

Chang Shik Yang

December 3-4, 2013

Opening Plenary International Chairman, Universal Peace Federation

Hotel Paris 'Novotel Vaugirard', Paris, France



Distinguished Guests, Ambassadors of Peace, Ladies & Gentlemen, on behalf of the Founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, and the members of the Board of Directors and the Presiding Council of UPF International, it is my privilege to address you today here in Paris for this conference on Cooperating for a Culture of Peace and Human Development.

I want to express my appreciation to the co-sponsors of this conference, especially the Mission of Tadjikistan, represented here by Ambassador Soliev, along with the Missions of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. I am indeed honored and grateful that we received a message of welcome and support for this conference from former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali. In addition, I was very pleased to watch the video message from H.E. Federico Mayor, former UNESCO Director General, and to listen to the speech, read by his Secretary, of former President Kravchuk of Ukraine. President Kravchuk was prevented from being here himself due to the current situation in his country.

As Chairman of the Universal Peace Federation I am very proud of the work of our Regional Offices here in Europe and Eurasia. This conference is the third in a series that began in Moscow in April of 2012, with a focus on multi-culturalism, followed by an excellent meeting in Vienna in September 2012, which addressed the relationship between Russia and the EU. Both of these meetings were extremely productive, and established the foundation for our meeting here today in Paris.

It is unfortunate that we could not hold this event at the UNESCO Headquarters itself as originally planned, due, I believe, to some deep misunderstandings on the part of certain officials. However, I am confident that we will be able to resolve these in due course. What has occurred will certainly not take away from the special respect and appreciation that UPF feels for UNESCO as an institution.



UNESCO has led the way globally in promoting the ideal of a Culture of Peace. Those of you who work with UNESCO have continually reminded us that “peace is in our hands.” In other words, the destiny of the world---a world of peace, or a world of war and conflict--- is something that we can shape, based on our own actions.

UNESCO also reminds us that “peace begins in the minds of men and women.” Hence, the supreme importance of education and communication. UNESCO has also lead the way in promoting the “rapprochement of cultures”, encouraging dialogue and cooperation. By organizing this conference, the Universal Peace Federation seeks to fully support these UNESCO initiatives. In this way, we want to serve as a helpful civil society partner.

Europe and Eurasia represent two enormously important civilizations that play major roles in world affairs, politically, economically, socially and culturally. Of course, the history or the relationship between these two cultural spheres has not always been characterized by harmony and cooperation. The legacy of two world wars during the last century, and the longstanding Cold War have left bitter memories and scars.

In particular, the “border” nations of Eastern Europe, including the Baltic Nations and Balkan nations have perhaps suffered the most due to the painful realities of the past 100 years. The rise of the European

Union has been a very significant development, representing the largest economic bloc in the world. The EU provides an example of regional cooperation for other parts of the world. Similar efforts have developed in other regions, for example, the African Union, CARICOM, and ASEAN. I hope that eventually there will be a Union of the Nations of Northeast Asia, to promote economic and political cooperation, and to assure peace.



The Commonwealth of Independent States and the Russian Federation are equally important historical developments. Currently President Putin is seeking to establish a Eurasian Economic Union.

The trend toward union and cooperation is both noble and natural, and is to be encouraged. No European nation has attacked another European nation since the time of WW II, and at this

time, such an act of aggression seems almost unthinkable. There is every reason to hope that this realm of mutual trust and cooperation can also include Russia and the CIS, together with Europe and the European Union.

As a Korean, I have witnessed directly the suffering and misery that accompanies war and conflict. To this day, my homeland remains divided. Moreover, the Korean peninsula is one of the world's most dangerous flashpoints. Recently UPF has been convening a series of high level dialogues examining the core issues and root causes of the conflict and exploring prospects for peace and stability.

UPF is especially committed to promoting interfaith, inter-ethnic, and inter-civilizational dialogue and cooperation. One of our main projects over the past ten years is the Middle East Peace Initiative or "MEPI". Recently we convened an important conference in Amman, Jordan to address the conflict in Syria, calling upon religious leaders, representing Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Druze to raise their voices for peace and interfaith cooperation. We expect to have a strong interfaith presence in Geneva at the time of the Geneva II negotiations next month.

I sincerely believe that by fostering closer and more cooperative relations between Russia and the CIS with Europe and the EU we can make a great contribution to world peace, overcoming many of the obstacles that have divided these two geopolitical and cultural spheres.



I note that recently President Putin met with Pope Francis. This is an encouraging sign.

In alignment with UNESCO's vision, UPF hopes that this conference can be a substantial step toward improved relationships between the countries of Europe and the CIS. Along these lines, I want to offer the following recommendations:

First, let us work together to increase "people to people"

interaction, including, and perhaps especially for the youth of Europe and Eurasia.

Second, let us promote more interfaith and ecumenical dialogue among faith leaders of Europe and Eurasia, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches and the Vatican and interfaith organizations such as King Abdullah's Inter-cultural and International Interfaith Center in Vienna.

Third, let us promote educational programs that affirm the core values of both Europe and Eurasia, and underscore the shared values that bind us closer together.

Fourth, let us pursue a variety of "soft power" approaches to peace, confidence-building and trust-building between European and Eurasian peoples and governments.



thoughts and I appreciate your kind attention.

Thank you and God bless you.

Fifth, let us develop a variety of track-two diplomatic efforts, involving civil society organizations dedicated to building good relationships, protecting human rights, and encouraging democratic values, while at the same time being respectful of traditions that are deeply rooted in the respective cultures and civilizations.

Once again, I am grateful to have been invited to share these