

## **International Day of Peace Observed in Sri Lanka**

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Madurankuliya, Sri Lanka—UPF-Sri Lanka began its celebration of the UN International Day of Peace 2015 on September 21 with a walk for peace. Approximately 500 students participated in the 2 kilometer walk, holding peace messages, which ran from the center of Madurankuliya, a town located on the northwest coast of Sri Lanka, to the town's main railway station. This station was especially selected as the end point of the walk because it has a track that connects the northern, western, eastern, and southern parts of the country. During the Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009), train services were disrupted and the track to the northern part of the country was destroyed. The track has since been rebuilt, and about 10 months ago, the northern and southern parts of the country were re-connected.

After refreshments, the main program started at the front of the station. Welcoming remarks were given by Mr. Bandara, assistant director of the Zonal Education Department. Dr. Chula Senaratne, secretary general of UPF-Sri Lanka, spoke about this year's theme for the International Day of Peace, "Partnerships for Peace--Dignity for All," based on the teachings of UPF founder, Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Dr. Senaratne also emphasized the importance of celebrating the Day and the relevance of its theme for this year to Sri Lanka, which is experiencing a period of reconciliation.

This was followed by a reading of the UN Secretary General's message on the International Day, given by Mrs. Hiranthi Gunawardena, information officer of the UN Information Centre in Colombo.

Mrs. Kumari Wickramasinghe of the same office spoke about the practical importance of having an International Day of Peace and the benefits it has for countries like Sri Lanka, where post-war reconciliation and development is taking place quickly.

Many students of different ethnicities and religions came forward, some prepared and others unprepared, to speak about peace. Several student leaders expressed their views on the Day and highlighted the importance of the day in Sri Lanka.

Dances and skits, performed by the student participants, depicting the importance of interreligious harmony in Sri Lankan society, concluded the event.