

European Leadership Conference Focuses on the Balkans

Tirana International Hotel, Tirana, Albania, 21. – 22. November 2015



By Jacques Marion, regional secretary general, UPF-Europe

UPF held a European Leadership Conference under the theme “**Mutual Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, Security and Human Development in the Balkans.**”

The event, co-hosted by the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) in Europe, also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the visit to Tirana of Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, the founders of UPF and WFWP. The purpose of their 2005 visit was to inaugurate the Albanian chapter of UPF, and they also launched the

Ambassadors for Peace movement and the UPF Balkans Peace Initiative.

About 130 participants attended the event, which took place on November 21 and 22, 2015, in the Tirana International Hotel. Speakers came from 12 nations, including seven Balkan countries: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Greece. Ambassadors for Peace from UPF-Albania also used the opportunity to convene their yearly General Assembly.

The Balkans were the last area of conflict in Europe in the 20th century, and their ethnic and religious diversity

makes the region a training ground for peace in the 21st century. In the context of international conflict in the Middle East and the rise of terrorism, the event began a new cycle of the UPF Balkan Peace Initiative.

Session I

Perspectives on Peace, Security and Human Development in the Balkans



The conference was opened with welcoming remarks from UPF-Albania Chair **Mr. Bajram Ibraj**, a former general police

director of Albania. Asking the audience to rise for a minute of silence in honor of the victims of recent terror attacks in France, Russia, Turkey, Lebanon and other nations, he then spoke of the historic mission of a united body of Ambassadors for Peace, in the face of spiritual and physical violence, to open a path for peace.





Professor Yeon Ah Moon, the president of WFWP International, gave the opening address on behalf of the

founders. Reviewing activities that WFWP is conducting around the world, she reaffirmed the importance of the family as a base for national stability. She also testified to the current work of UPF and WFWP Co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, mentioning in particular the inauguration in 2015 of the Sunhak Peace Prize, which was given to two individuals: Kiribati Islands President Anote Tong for his dedication to the cause of climatic change, and Dr. Modadugu Vijay Gupta from India for his achievements in developing aquaculture in Southeast Asia. She concluded by affirming the role of women, in cooperation with men, for sustainable peace and development.



H.E. Alfred Moisiu, the president of Albania from 2002 to 2007, said that although the Balkans often have been considered a

“powder keg,” he challenged that assertion in regard to modern Balkan nations. However, traces are still there, he said, and no effort should be spared to safeguard peace in the region. He deplored the fact that some politicians still tend to foster division and hatred among people and between nations for the sake of their own political agenda. The factors of division are not only economic, he said, but also cultural. Thus local governments should not only focus on improving living conditions or decreasing unemployment but also give their attention to developing quality education and reviving cultural life in order to foster a broader mindset among people. He acknowledged that comprehensive religious education for children is necessary, but said that priority should be given to putting under control a few radical preachers who are actively working in some churches and mosques and leading some young people to join the ranks of jihadists.



H.E. Fatmir Sejdiu, the president of Kosovo from 2006 to 2010, expressed worries that conflicts in the

may be exported to neighboring regions. The conscience of Europe has been tested by migrants at its borders, he said, but not every nation passed the test well. He **condemned Serbian Patriarch Irenej’s declaration in early November, before the vote on Kosovo’s membership in UNESCO, that “if force was deployed” to deprive Serbia of its cultural and historical heritage in Kosovo, Serbians will “do all they can to defend them by peaceful means or by force.” Serbia’s diplomatic moves to block Kosovo’s membership in UNESCO revived tensions and undermined the process of normalization between the two countries, President Sejdiu said.** He deplored other nationalistic trends in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Macedonia. He also condemned what he saw as attempts by criminal groups in his own country to influence politicians and high officials, but **reaffirmed his faith in Kosovo’s future based on religious tolerance and ethnic cooperation.**



Dr. Walter Schwimmer, from Austria, a former secretary general of the Council of Europe, refuted the idea that the Western Balkans were just a “gray area

on the map of Europe,” reminding his listeners that the Balkans were a cradle of European civilization and the birthplace of several Roman emperors including Constantine. Applying European Union

standards in the Balkans is of mutual interest, he said, notably in terms of securing business investment and fighting corruption and organized crime. Reconciliation in the Balkans is possible, just as it was between France and Germany after World War II, he emphasized. Regretting that the Dayton Agreement had been good to end the war in Bosnia but not enough to foster peace, he challenged Bosnian people to take ownership for peace in their country. Naming three Balkan personalities who are the pride of all Balkan people—**Nikola Tesla, Ivo Andrić and Mother Teresa—he concluded: “You have much more in common than what divides you.” In the later discussion, he said it was very shortsighted on the part of Serbia to have blocked Kosovo’s entry into UNESCO, since Kosovo’s membership would be the best guarantee to protect Serbian historical monuments in that country.**



Mr. Jack Corley, the regional chair of UPF Europe, then gave an overview of the Universal Peace Federation’s goals, values and activities.

Reminding the audience that the founders’ heart and core values were the real power behind the organization’s worldwide activities, he expressed the desire to support the UPF peace initiative in the Balkans. He spoke of other UPF peace initiatives around the world—the Middle East Peace Initiative, the Korean Reunification, the South Caucasus Peace Initiative—then reviewed programs of character education once developed in the former Soviet Union which could be used to educate young people in the Balkans. Deplored the declining family values in Western Europe, Mr. Corley said that one important aspect of the UPF work in the Balkans would be to strengthen marriage and the family.



Hon. Mićo ORLANDIĆ, Member of Parliament, Montenegro, receives the Ambassador for Peace certificate.



Prof. Dr. Arben Malaj, a former Minister of Finance and Economy and the chair of the UPF National Peace Council in Albania,

asserted that there can be no prosperity without peace and no sustainable peace without prosperity. He stressed that the Balkan nations should take an example from Western nations that developed based on higher human values and built strong institutions instead of focusing on individual benefits. No country can prosper by closing its borders, and no region will develop if it is isolated, he said. Even if individuals are at peace, a crisis in the nation will affect all people. According to Dr. Malaj, three main challenges obstruct and endanger the future of Balkan nations: growing unemployment, poverty and inequality, and populism and extremism. He concluded by calling on young participants to foster change in society through moral, human and political means, and to not imitate the false models of those who have a fast career and wealth.

Session II

Peace, Security and Human Development in the Balkans: Challenges and Opportunities



The second session was moderated by **Mr Ali Laçeaj**, a co-coordinator of the Albanian Peace Council, who reflected

on the Balkans. We need to accept each other if we want to be accepted by Europe, he said. He then reviewed some of the difficulties Balkan people have to face, from problems of governance to issues of environment or education, challenging the Ambassadors for Peace to take responsibility for them.



Dr Todor Mirkovic, from Serbia, a senior advisor to the European Center for Peace and Development in Belgrade, gave

an appraisal of the geopolitical situation of the Balkans. The development gap between the Balkans and other European regions is widening, he said: The gross domestic product (GDP) of Balkan countries, except Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, was in 2010 at the same level as in 1990, he said, giving three reasons: armed conflicts, social transformation and economic transition, and the global financial and economic crisis. Education for peace and tolerance is most essential to dealing with

challenges in the region, he said. First experienced in the family, education for peace and tolerance needs to be implemented throughout primary and high school and university. Religious representatives and the mass media should be its main promoters. One of its main tasks, he said, is to instill an awareness in future political leaders of the benefits of peace versus the atrocities of war. He concluded that the integration of Balkan nations in the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would be a factor of both peace and development.



Dr. Theodosios Georgiou, from Greece, the Founder and Director of the Greek Association for Atlantic and European Cooperation,

spoke of two competing paradigms in the Balkans: on one hand endemic warfare, on the other hand, the impressive development of the post-Cold War transition period. In the face of globalization, security matters are more complex, he said: Issues such as the migrants or terrorism can be dealt with only through international cooperation. To be good neighbors, he said, we need to plan a common future, and he described some of the benefits of cooperation between Albania and his country. Global NGOs such as UPF, he said, have an important role because they are not limited by borders. Let us first remove the borders from our minds, he said, and then let us turn the **Balkans from a “security belt” to a “prosperity belt.”**



Hon. Mićo Olandić, a member of Parliament from Montenegro, said that peace, security and interreligious cooperation

were of high concern to all in his country, by tradition and as a result of history. Montenegro has been a home for many displaced people following the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, he said. Today Montenegro plans to join the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Let us cooperate to fight against ignorance and hatred, he said, and let us not leave the Balkans in the hands of 20th century historians, but let us look forward to a 21st century in which peace and security will reign in the Balkans and foster development. We especially need to teach the youth about peace and tolerance, he said, so that they can behave normally and respect one another. To reach this goal, he concluded, coordination among governments is needed to prevent terrorism and organized crime and ensure environmental and cybernetic security.

Prof Anis Bajraktarevic, the chair of the Department of International Law and Global Political Studies at IMC (International Management Center) University in Vienna, who originally is from Bosnia, declared that “the time



has come for us to focus on real issues.” In a brief historical review, he said that the Balkan nations are victims of their ambition to be “greater”: a

Greater Serbia, Albania, Croatia, etc. An underlying reason, he said, is that we have lived in a federation of theocracies based on non-territorial principles under the Ottoman and Austrian empires, where nation-states were not established. How could the Balkans, which contributed so much to Europe’s greatness, end up in this miserable situation? We suffer, he said, from “anthropogeographic inversion,” whereby the periphery becomes the center and the center turns into the periphery. Even our narratives have been dominated by others, he said. But Europe is now coming to a deep crisis. In the Balkans, he concluded, the most serious crises are depopulation and a crisis of cognition and morality.

Session III

Interreligious Dialogue, Peace Education and Sustainable Development



The The third session was moderated by **Mr. William Haines** from the United Kingdom, who was also one of the speakers.



The first speaker was **Muhammad Effendi Jusufspahic** of Serbia, who began by elaborating on various meanings of God’s name in different



languages. Then he spoke of the meaning of peace, whose source is God. In essence, God is Peace, he stated: “Peace be upon you” means “God be upon you.” Our main problem, past and present, is materialism. That disease has three aspects: First, nationalism. We put our nation above all. Second, worshipping our Teacher, our Prophet. But according to Scriptures, there is no difference among the Messengers of God, he said. Third, worshipping religion. Some people today worship Islam; therefore they are not Muslims, they are Islamists. God said that only He should be worshiped. Such is the way to peace, he concluded.

Archimandrite Nikifor Milovic,



from the Serbian Orthodox Church diocese of Budimlje-Nikisic in Montenegro spoke of the renewed important public role of

religion in the post-Cold War Balkans. The challenge, he said, will be continuity, tradition and heritage. State and religious institutions need to demonstrate their relevance to future generations and give contemporary solutions to current problems. We need to show that religious pluralism, mutual respect and understanding are the cornerstone of a peaceful and just society, he said. Education, culture and prayer are the means to combat extremism. He concluded with a moving personal story. On the wall of the Montenegro monastery where he was an abbot for six years, a fresco represents two brothers: Mehmet Pasha Sokolović, a famous janissary and grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire, who was taken away as a child

from his Orthodox Bosnian family, and his physical brother Makarije Sokolović, whom he installed in 1557 as the first Serbian patriarch. When asked once by a visitor about the possibility of coexistence of Christianity and Islam, Father Nikifor looked at the fresco and felt overwhelmed by a voice from the heart. He responded, “If these two brothers have lived 500 years side by side on this wall, why couldn’t we?”



Ms. Besa Ismaili, the leader of the Kosovo Women Islamic Forum, spoke of women’s role in

interfaith activities in Kosovo. Through interfaith activities women’s voices have become stronger, she said. Women have been actively involved in community work and counseling between the communities, with a focus on youth and children. However, although they have succeeded in solving community problems, they lack support. All their work is by self-initiative, she said. After ethnic conflicts in Kosovo in 2004, women were the first to reach out to other women in Serbian enclaves, but they often were treated as traitors. Women need to be equipped against extremist ideology, she said; mothers are best placed to identify early signs of extremism in sons or husbands. They need to be supported. But patriarchal attitudes limit their activity. They need better coordination with other agencies; capital support for activities; and better communication support from the media. Then they can develop their creativity, she said.



Dr. Theodosios Georgiou, Prof. Dr. Alik Mitsakos and President Alfred Moisiu



Mr. Engjëll Ndoci, the deputy director of Albanian National Television, spoke about his life experience as a longtime journalist regarding

interreligious tolerance in Albania. He recalled several events in Shkodra city where religious leaders showed courage in unity and forgiveness beyond religious denominations. This foundation of religious harmony and tolerance is tried **by today's events worldwide, particularly** by the latest terror attacks. He concluded by bringing up the extraordinary example of **Mother Teresa's multifaceted life: a** Catholic nun of Albanian descent, who lived for people in need in a foreign country of a different faith. Tolerance should be not just a nice word, he concluded. It means to live and to allow everyone to live in his or her own way and environment.

Mr. William Haines, a schoolteacher in Great Britain and former curriculum director of the International Educational Foundation in the former Soviet Union, explained to the participants how religious education in British schools covers all main religions. In the 1990s, he said, after the UPF Founders met with President Mikhail Gorbachev, IEF was invited by the Russian Ministry of Education to produce a series of textbooks on spiritual and moral education for adolescents, to address the crisis of values and meaning after the collapse of Marxism-Leninism. The curriculum eventually was used in thousands of schools, he said. In the first volume students are taught to recognize

that morality is universal, to respect other faiths and be tolerant, and to be able to combat religious and secular extremism. The second volume deals with norms of human relationships, teaches students about traditional marriage and family practices and about sexuality, promoting chastity and personal integrity.

Session IV

Women's Leadership in Securing Lasting Peace and Sustainable Development



The fourth session was moderated by **Mrs. Saemira Pino**, a former deputy minister of education and the deputy chair of UPF-Albania, who commented

on how the vision of peace of the UPF founder had bloomed in so many directions and brought together people from so many different backgrounds and disciplines.



Prof. Dr. Alik Mitsakos, the founder and dean of the International Center for Leading Studies in Greece, said that she had long been involved in

gender issues and human security. Women provide for human security, she said. The family, the basic cell of society, is the place where continuity and inheritance take place, and where women

play a central role. But a main issue in recent years has been education, she said. There are many schools and academic degrees available, but what is needed is a broader education, providing a philosophy of life that allows one to **appraise oneself and one's surrounding**, she said. Women today should be able to move into all professional positions, but most essential to them is that philosophy of life allowing them to experience security and provide it to people around them—especially to the younger generation. Current crises, whether economic, social or terrorist, she concluded, are caused by the absence of such a philosophy of life.



Hon. Hatixhe Hoxha, a former member of Parliament and the chair of UPF in Kosovo, said that gender issues cannot be dealt with unless

men also are emancipated. Without an emancipated community of men, we cannot have an emancipated society. She went on to recall some of the Albanian women who made a difference in history, such as Queen Teuta in the 3rd century BCE, Mother Teresa, and all those who contributed to the cultural renaissance of **Kosovo and its independence**. Women's rights, she said, can be protected only by strong democratic institutions, which punish crime and violence. But in the Balkans, women often were violated in wartime. She expressed her conviction that intense efforts should be made to educate women, young women in particular, in order to increase employment opportunities and their participation in public life, which is one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Professor Dr. Shekerinka Ivanovska, the the dean of the Faculty of Economy at the International Slavic University in

Macedonia, gave a broad overview of **women's role in securing lasting peace**. She reviewed studies describing **women's specific capacities for leadership** in a complex world. From the second half of the 20th century, women have moved to the highest levels of political power and have been

able to get scientific education.

However, the world's women still face challenges, she said: Among the poorest and the illiterate in the world, two thirds are women, and their overall share of managerial positions is still minor. Only 20 percent of members of Parliament in the world are women, she said, with some major European nations being at the bottom of the list. Quoting a study, she said: "Women leaders are more likely to spend money on improving health, education, infrastructure and eradication of poverty and less likely to waste it on tanks and bombs," concluding that the fastest way to world peace is to mobilize women. She emphasized the key role of women in the development of the family, saying, "The greatest punishment for human beings is the wrong path taken by children."

Happiness is loving one's motherland, she said, but why should that love stop at the borders?



Professor Lan Young Moon, from the Republic of Korea, the president emeritus of the Women's Federation for World Peace

International, explained that six of the eight Millennium Development Goals proclaimed by the UN in 2000 were related to women and children. Today, she said, to fulfill the new 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the unique leadership capacities of both men and women, and their partnership, are very much needed. She testified to the sacrifice and achievements of WFPW volunteers around the world, based on motherly love. She then recalled her experience as a North Korean refugee girl, when she lost her father, brother and relatives during the Korean War. Through practicing Rev. **Dr. Moon's teaching and guidance for a** half-century, she said, she eventually could free herself from anger and hatred. Only true love can solve such problems, she said. She described her visits to North Korea and the 1% Love Sharing humanitarian project she initiated to support the North Korean people. A culture of peace will come only through the joint efforts of men and women, centered on God and loving each other, she concluded, but sweat, tears and passion also are needed.



Session V

Youth and Education – Basis for Peace, Prosperity and Sustainable Development for Tomorrow's Balkans



The fifth session was moderated by **Mr. Gani Rroshi**, the president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification in Albania.



The first speaker was **Professor Dr. Shezai Rrokaj**, from Albania, a former rector of Tirana

University, currently a dean of the history and philology faculty. Too little investment currently is made in educating youth in the values of brotherhood and conviviality, he said. The education system is not fulfilling its mission of youth education and integration. Some even use history to feed extreme nationalist feelings to innocent young people. Peace starts from oneself, offering love instead of hatred, tolerance instead of intolerance, integration instead of division, appreciation for the neighbor instead of disdain, he said. A lot of energy was lost in communist times, when the country closed itself and truths about neighbors were distorted. He suggested that governments should encourage and finance a revision of school textbooks to update them and clean up historical distortions. We need more courage to

accept each other's truths, learn from negative experiences and benefit from positive ones, he said.



Mr. Siniša Ruzicic, a journalist, football coach and chess master from Serbia, and a UPF Ambassador for Peace,

stated that without justice there will be no peace in the Balkans. The challenge lies with young people. He deplored corrupt practices in education and politics, and the dire consequences they have for youth, who indulge in destructive lifestyles. Technological progress leads to impoverished communication among young people, he regretted. He pleasantly recalled the day, 38 years ago, when he skillfully initiated a conversation with the young lady who became his wife. He went on to describe the gloomy future that politicians offer to youth, and spoke about the painful dismemberment of Yugoslavia. International law was not respected, he said, and power became the rule. If we follow rules, as in sports, he concluded, the world would be much better for everyone.



Hon. Ismail Kurteshi, a member of Parliament of Kosovo and an educator himself, opened his speech with quotations on

the importance of education as "the best protector of freedom." Albanian Renaissance leaders put education as



the priority for their platform, he said, and the fact that Balkan nations are lagging behind is due to the stagnation of educational systems. Most of the ills of society are caused by uneducated people, he said. Aware that supporting education is an investment for their future, advanced countries put forward a lifelong learning system. Balkan countries should prioritize education and cultural development, he suggested, and cultivate among youth the desire to work in cooperation and solidarity at all levels. Better-educated youth will be willing and able to solve issues facing our nations, within and among them, he said.



Mr. Marijan Orsolic, the co-founder and editorial board member of the Web portal Prometej, deplored the fact that in his

native Bosnia, a culture of walls still prevails over a culture of bridges and dialogue, particularly in the realm of education. There are 13 different educational policies in a country of less than 4 million people, he said. Two separate schools may use the same buildings, and there is an identity war in classrooms through ethnocentric curricula. According to the NGO Save the Children, 50 percent of all peace agreements in the world fail because of neglecting the educational system, he warned. Regarding the crucial issue of religious education, there is a heated debate between advocates of purely confessional education in religious settings and advocates of teaching a broader culture of religion. But a third way is possible, he said: developing interreligious education in schools, in

cooperation with religious communities. He outlined the benefits of such interreligious education in schools, notably the prevention of extremism, the promotion of integrative values in society, and the fact it could be better monitored by the state. Two most serious problems affect education in Bosnia, he concluded: the brain drain of youth leaving the nation, and the depopulation. There are about 300,000 fewer children registering in elementary school today than 25 years ago. Civil society and the religious community should be partners to make a culture of bridges, he recommended.



The last panel speaker was **Ms. Lediana Mertitri**, a Youth Ambassador for Peace who earned a **master's** degree in the

Albanian language at Tirana University. She described her participation in a volunteer project of the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWPU), an organization affiliated with UPF, entitled **"Beauty and Variety"** that was sponsored by the Youth in Action program of the European Union, attended by 20 participants from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, the United Kingdom and Italy. As they together served children in a local Albanian school and listened to each **other's presentations about their** nations, they began to overcome prejudice and see each other as real people and friends, she explained. One Kosovo participant with a strong prejudice against people of Serb origin had a real change of heart when she became seriously ill and was healed through the care of a young

Macedonian doctor who was a participant. Ms. Mertiri also praised **the Albanian prime minister's** initiative, before a sensitive match against Serbia, to invite Serbian youth to spend a week in Albania to overcome prejudices. As such personal experiences are shared with friends and communities, she concluded, such projects should be expanded and supported by the media.

Session VI

Closing session



The closing session was moderated by **Mr. Hydajet Hyseni**, a former member of Parliament and the UPF Albanian Peace Council

coordinator in Kosovo. We are united with our friends from abroad in suffering and in common ideals for a comprehensive peace, he said. Referring to the average population age of 25 in Kosovo, he emphasized how crucial normalization, peace and progress were for his country. He then expressed his heart for the victims of the November 13, 2015, terror attacks in Paris by reciting a poem he had written in the Albanian language.



Mr. Aleksandar Pekovic, from Serbia, the project director of **"Herceg Novi 2021**, the Montenegro City candidate for European Capital of

Culture," expressed satisfaction that culture was a central issue at the conference. Culture defines humanity, he said, yet it is often marginalized by political leaders and **today's children** receive poor cultural education through social networks. Montenegro has an extremely beautiful bay area, but young people are leaving this paradise for crowded European cities. He spoke of his approach to culture on the foundation of tolerance, talent, technology and transparency. To develop culture by integrating the contradiction between conflict and unity in the Balkans, he united the

concepts of friends and enemies into **one word, “frenemies.”** The people who conquered us also built our churches, he said, while friends sometimes neglected us. Friendship is the greatest gift one can give to enemies, he said. Peace through art was the guiding vision of what began as a small project in a beautiful Montenegro bay and in ten months has become a national project. Pay attention to culture, he concluded; it is the soul of society.



Hon. Gaqo Apostoli, a former member of Parliament and minister of transport of Albania, and the newly elected chair of

UPF-Albania, recalled the first visit to Tirana in 2005 of UPF Founder Rev. **Dr. Moon, whom he called “a prophet of our times.”** How to overcome terrorists who shock the world and threaten Albania and the Balkans? There is a visible and an invisible ISIS, he suggested. The visible ISIS is the Islamic State, a manifestation of evil. Overcoming it requires military efforts

and alliances, the support of the international community and religious communities—particularly Muslim. But the invisible ISIS potentially exists within every nation, community, family and individual, he said. It is manifest when one cuts oneself off from God. Because this potential evil is within each of us, peace is first of all our responsibility. He concluded with **remarks on the Balkans’ current situation.** The diversity of religious backgrounds should be treated as a cultural heritage, not as a problem, he said. Religions should harmonize and not be used by politics, nor use politics for their sake. The Western Balkans should be rapidly allowed to integrate into Europe. The globalization of economy needs in counterpart a globalization of democracy and human rights.



Mr. Jacques Marion, secretary general of UPF Europe, gave the closing remarks by reflecting on the values of the Balkans

Peace Initiative. Peace education, he mentioned, is about knowledge and skills, but more fundamentally should be about moral and ethical values. However, unless values are based on altruism, peace will not be reached, he said. The struggle for equality, justice or reciprocity can turn into conflict and vengeance if not based on an altruistic mindset. Altruism being the root of religious values, religious leaders are called to be the conscience of their nations and inspire political leaders toward altruistic policies. The family, he said, needs protection precisely because it is the place where altruism is meant to grow. He then suggested several projects to be undertaken by the Balkans Peace Initiative: creating a Balkan Council of elder political and religious leaders giving advice on policies and action steps for peace and development; developing interethnic, interreligious youth dialogue and activities; and using publications such as the anthology of sacred texts *World Scripture* and the interreligious character education school curriculum published and used in Russia and former Soviet Union countries in the 1990s, *My Journey in Life*.

