

## UPF Europe and Middle East: Experts Seeks Lessons from Russia-Ukraine War

Jacques Marion  
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Kyiv, Ukraine - UPF-Ukraine and the Ukrainian Peace Council held a roundtable discussion on "Russia-Ukraine War: Lessons for Europe and the World" at the Drahomanov Ukrainian State University on November 3, 2023. Ukrainian scientists, educators, and journalists took part, as well as foreign guests from France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria and Switzerland. Dr. Volodymir Lavrinenko, vice rector of the university, served as host.

Former Minister of Education of Ukraine Dr. Mykhailo Zgurovsky, who currently serves as rector of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute" and head of the Ukrainian Peace Council, gave his analysis on what is necessary to end the war.

He pointed out that the search for military, diplomatic and ideological solutions to conflicts was underway at flashpoints all around the world, including the Middle East. "It is becoming clear that the prolongation of these conflicts leads to their globalization," he said. "Humanity is facing a new challenge - the search for a new, effective security architecture. This is the main challenge for the Universal Peace Federation, the Ukrainian Peace Council, and many other peacekeeping organizations."

Dr. Vasyl Kremen, President of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, who is also a former minister of education, said that the cause of the Russia-Ukraine war was that the leadership of the Russian Federation lacks understanding of current civilizational progress, and is trying to return to distant times when the power of the state was determined by its population and the territory it occupied.

Dr. Oleksandr Sagan, Former Head of the State Religion Department, spoke about the role of religion in this war, and Dr. Ruslan Khalikov, an expert from the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, noted that more than 500 religious buildings have been destroyed during the war.

Amb. Valery Tsybukh, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine and head of the NGO

"Environmental Safety Council, emphasized the large-scale ecocide that is currently taking place in Ukraine. He noted that almost 20% of the protected areas in the country are under threat. He also pointed out that 30% of the territory has been mined - an area twice as large as Austria - and that it will take decades to clear away the mines once the war is over.

Tetyana Fedunova, head of the Association of Kyiv Schools, noted that students from the No. 85 School in Kyiv are now studying in 35 countries around the world. She also provided a report on 10 years of experience implementing the Peace School project, which provides leadership training and fosters a culture of peace among students.

Ksenia Abramovych, a student and youth ambassador for peace, described her own experience at the Peace School and emphasized the need to educate youth in the philosophy of peace. Representative of the UNESCO National Commission Olena Stepa noted that the desire for peace is engraved in the heart of every person, and that understanding between different cultures and religions is absolutely necessary in the modern world.

In his speech, Jacques Marion, co-chair of the Universal Peace Federation in Europe and Middle East, emphasized the inability of the United Nations to fulfill its task of preventing wars. The main problem, in his opinion, is that the UN is dominated by national interests, which obscure its original purpose.

Dr. Dieter Schmidt, the chair of the Universal Peace Federation of Central Europe, noted that education is the transformative force of society. And, he said, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an attack on fundamental Christian values and a denial of human dignity.

Dr. Afsar Rathor, president of the ecological organization LIOS-SOIL and former head of UNIDO projects, said that interreligious dialogue is a tool for achieving peace, and religious leaders and institutions can be mediators in conflicts. He cited the examples of Rwanda, Mozambique and other countries.

History has proven, noted Dr. Rathor, that even superpowers cannot defeat the will and spirit of the people. He gave the examples of Vietnam and Afghanistan, both with limited resources, that defeated two superpowers in the last 30 years. National spirit is the main motivating factor that encourages people to defend their homeland, he said.

Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of UPF-Czech Republic, told how his organization is trying to help Ukrainian children maintain their identity. He demonstrated a recently published book of children's fairy tales in Ukrainian and Czech. Mrs. Chantal Komagata from Switzerland, coordinator for UPF-Central Europe, spoke about her program to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees.

Dr. Zgurovskyi concluded by thanking the speakers and noting that this roundtable had opened the way for cooperation between UPF and other peacekeeping organizations in Ukraine.