

UPF Moscow, Russia marked 2019 International Day of Peace with a roundtable

Maria Nazarova
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Moscow, Russia -- UPF marked the 2019 International Day of Peace with a roundtable focusing on issues relating to the environment.

The September 20 event, titled "Peace and Sustainable Development: Challenges and Solutions," was held at the historic National Hotel, near the Kremlin and Red Square.

The roundtable reflected the theme that the United Nations had announced for the 2019 International Day of Peace: "Climate Action for Peace."

Recently in Russia special attention has been paid to the issue of ecology. The Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation states that the strategic goal of Russia's climate policy is to ensure safe and sustainable development of the country, including the institutional, economic, environmental, and social (including demographic) aspects of development in a changing climate and emergence of relevant threats and challenges.

The UPF roundtable was devoted to these issues, as well as to the overall implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Representatives of various circles took part, including the scientific community, government officials, socially oriented non-profit organizations, and organizations with special consultative status with the UN.

Vladimir Pavinsky, deputy director of the UN Information Center in Moscow, sent his greetings to the roundtable participants. In particular, he said that "the realities of the modern world compel us to take a fresh look at the canonical triad of politics, economics, people." The fundamental conceptual program document The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), which has been implemented since the beginning of 2016, clearly highlights the human dimension, he said.

Mr. Pavinsky emphasized the main plan for the implementation of the 17 Strategic Development Goals to make our planet more secure and prosperous. After all, he said, every person in the world has the right to be happy and successful. Therefore, at the basis of this concept there is a new philosophy, which claims that the interests and needs of people must be put at the forefront. Mr. Pavinsky also noted the importance of international cooperation, so the UN platform is very important for coordinating the common actions of states.

Rasul Botashev, a member of the State Duma on the Foreign Affairs Committee, sent his greetings to the roundtable participants.

The Sustainable Development Goals, which are universal in nature, are relevant and understandable in our country, he said. Russia is moving toward a more developed society and a prosperous economy, he said. Mr. Botashev expressed hope that the roundtable would be another constructive platform in which representatives of different spheres of life would work together to implement goals for the prosperity of Russia.

Vasily M. Vlasov, a member of the State Duma and first deputy chair of the Committee on Natural

Resources, Property and Land Relations, was the first speaker.

He said that his committee in the last few years has been adopting state programs and allocating money for the sake of the environment.

At the moment, he said, the statistics are very disappointing. Whereas in the European Union about 60 percent of garbage is recycled, in Russia it is only 4 percent.



Currently in Russia there is only one garbage recycling plant, located in the Leningrad Region, which produces electricity from garbage, with methane gas released as a result of processing.

In regard to deforestation, Mr. Vlasov said, the various political parties are unanimous in that alternative materials need to be found so as not to cut down the forest. The forest industry is very large in Russia, he said, but it has been unprofitable until this year.

Mr. Vlasov said that a few months ago, a new initiative was launched in Moscow and in neighboring regions to collect clothes for those in need.

Jack Corley, the chair of the Universal Peace Federation in Eastern Europe, reported on recent activities of UPF International and its co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, as well as the core principles upon which UPF activities are based. Mr. Corley finished his speech with an explanation about the upcoming World Summit 2020, which will be held in Korea in February.

Gadzhimurad Z. Omarov, a member of the State Duma on the Security and Anti-Corruption Committee, said that he was moved by a reference in the UPF magazine to "The Quranic Call for Unity," which he said was very important and relevant to today's program. In the words of the Prophet, he said, there is a call to save what was created by the Creator. The Universe was created not by the State Duma or any political parties but by the Lord God. And He created us as well. Therefore, it is very unfortunate that we often do not take care of our planet and our resources.

Mr. Omarov said that to solve these problems, we must begin with ourselves and take the initiative -- not by words but by deeds -- and show that we can make our planet cleaner and more comfortable, and the people kinder.

Gennady A. Saraev, an ombudsman in the Russian Republic of Karelia, stated that we have an Internet-dependent lifestyle and we need to accept this. Without the Internet, none of us would be able to work normally, he said. New terms have appeared -- "virtual reality," "digital space" -- but these are nothing more than information that we must learn to work with. We need to learn to be critical of this information, he said, because one of the key phenomena that we are encountering as ombudsmen is cyberbullying as a result of incorrect perception, understanding and use of information.

"In my opinion," Mr. Saraev said, "we have got a tool that we don't know how to handle. A person is allowed to drive a car only after passing exams on traffic rules and practical driving skills. Today people

are in possession of an even more serious tool in the form of a phone with Internet access, but they are not taught to use it."

The roundtable also was attended by foreign guests. Among the speakers was Veronica Rusu from Moldova, the deputy head of the Main Directorate of Social Assistance and Protection of the Family in the Ialoveni Region. Ms. Rusu spoke on "Demographic Development under Climate Change: Opportunities and Threats." She said that people are intensively exploiting natural resources that are being worn out, and this has a detrimental effect on human life.

Over the past 60 years, Ms. Rusu said, the world's population has tripled, from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 7 billion in 2012. Nature is being destroyed for the needs of human settlements, and the Earth cannot cope with the rate of consumption of its resources, she said. According to current consumption, to meet our needs, we need 1.5 planets, she said.

Pollution in megacities affects the quality of life, as well as ecosystems that are tens of kilometers away, she said. Harmful substances, such as heavy metals, nitrates and plastics, inevitably enter the soil and water. Pollution undermines human health and budget. A study published in the journal *Annals of Neurology* indicates that polluted air accelerates brain aging and aggravates dozens of known diseases.

Despite the difficult social, political and economic situation in the Republic of Moldova, there is a tendency to improve the environmental situation in the country, and a rational way of life is being promoted to strengthen public health and protect the environment, Ms. Rusu said.

Sergey A. Ostroumov, a doctor of biological sciences and a leading researcher at the Laboratory of Physical Chemistry of Biological Membranes, Faculty of Biology, Moscow State University, spoke about the Climate Doctrine of the Russian Federation. He emphasized that the unprecedentedly high rate of global warming observed over the past decades is causing concern. Modern science provides increasingly good reasons to confirm that human activities, primarily related to greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, have a significant impact on the climate.

Dr. Ostroumov emphasized that scientists are working to deepen understanding of the natural mechanisms of climate stabilization and biosphere parameters. At the same time, scientists have revealed the great beneficial role of wildlife -- ecological systems -- in modifying, regulating, and shaping the environmental parameters, including the climate. He noted that the initiator of this work in Russia was V.I. Vernadsky.

At the end of his speech, Dr. Ostroumov assured those present that Russian science is not standing still, and that his Moscow State University colleagues are doing everything possible to contribute to the scientific basis for solving the problems of climate change and other changes in the biosphere.

Interesting speeches also were delivered by: Vladimir Y. Potashnikov, a senior researcher at the Center for Economic Modeling of Energy and Ecology at the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration; Gulnaz M. Kutueva, Ph.D., the editor-in-chief of Bashkortostan *Kyzy* magazine; Ildus A. Yanyshhev, president of the Union of Cyclists in Tatarstan; and Alexander A. Aigistov, president of the National Union of NGOs, president of the Russian Municipal Academy, and director general of the Russian Agency for Development of the Information Society.

Sergey V. Dvoryanov, Ph.D., the founder and president of the Amicability international diplomatic club, in his speech touched upon the issues of a unipolar or multipolar world. He emphasized the importance of the emergence of a unipolar world, provided that it is a global, universal, humane, and spiritually centered ideology. Development of our civilization is possible only when we can rid the world of conflicts and confrontation, and sit down at the same table and understand that we are all brothers and sisters, he said. Such an ideology will be able to unite us all in the zeal of serving the higher ideals and values that are mentioned in the world's Holy Scriptures.

In conclusion, Ambassador for Peace certificates were handed to Gennady A. Saraev, ombudsman of the Republic of Karelia; Nina Ruchkina, designer and social activist; and His Excellency Mohamed Yongawo, ambassador of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the Russian Federation.