

## Prominent women speak in Italy to mark UN International Women's Day

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Monza, Italy—Prominent women from various fields spoke at a conference in northern Italy held to mark UN International Women's Day.

The conference, titled “Women on Their Journey: Paths and Testimonies,” was held on Saturday, March 11, 2017, at the Urban Center. It was sponsored by the local chapters of the Universal Peace Federation and the Women's Federation for World Peace, an affiliated organization, together with the House of Culture, the City of Monza, and the Province of Monza.

Ms. Cherubina Bertola, the deputy mayor of Monza, welcomed the participants and gave an insight into the value of International Women's Day.

Carlo Chierico, the president of UPF-Monza, recalled Salvatrice Benincasa, a young Sicilian woman who entered the Resistance in Milan and was killed in 1944, at the age of twenty, by the fascists at Monza. At this point Mr. Chierico asked the large audience to observe a moment of silence to commemorate all women who have been victims of violence.

After this intense and moving moment, the first speaker was Wesam El Husseyni, a young mother of Egyptian origin who is now Italian. She spoke about the life of women in Egypt, which differs depending on whether one lives in the big cities such as Cairo—where she has met many women managers engaged in business and in social activities—or in small towns, but is not unlike the life of many contemporary European women.

An important contribution was made by Hon. Roberto Rampi, a member of the Italian Parliament, who spoke about the role of politics and the practice of "good policy" fundamental to the lives of citizens. Having participated in the UPF World Summit in Seoul, South Korea, where he saw several hundred parliamentarians who were committed to promoting the nascent International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace, bridging the divides between political parties, Hon. Rampi testified to the founders of UPF in their work for world peace.

Among the main speakers was Cecilia Strada, the president of the non-governmental organization Emergency, who moved the audience by giving a glimpse of what it means in practice to treat war-wounded people. She described the emotion that grips the volunteers of Emergency when severely mutilated children arrive at their field hospitals, with wounds to the spirit as well as to the body—wounds that may last a lifetime. Ms. Strada also focused on the Sunhak Peace Prize, which was founded by UPF Co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. In 2017, the Sunhak Peace Prize was awarded to her father, Dr. Gino Strada, the founder of Emergency, as well as to the Afghan educator Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, the latter for educational activities carried out with refugees in her country, even at the risk of their lives.

Also very intense, but in a different way, was the testimony of Alessandra Marzari, the president of the Consorzio Vero Volley volleyball team, who spoke of the practical value of sport for young people as well as its educational value. Sister Agnese Roveda, a missionary connected with the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), told of her experience of eight years in a village in the Amazon. Although the people in the village were very poor, she said, they maintained strong and shared spiritual values.



The other speakers were:

Hon. Elena Centemero, a member of the Italian Parliament, who is working to improve the schools

Margherita Brambilla, the deputy mayor of the town of Agrate Brianza, who in an ironic way described her experiences in balancing her political career with family commitments and three children

journalist Monica Guzzi

the regional half-marathon champion Chiara Rossi

Maria Grazia Vatican, who encouraged everyone present to engage in active volunteering, describing her personal experience

Dr. Anna Maria Mussato, a member of the Women's Federation for World Peace, an organization that is affiliated with UPF, who described the activities of her association.

A whole morning of testimonies and life stories moved the audience, who responded with warm applause to all the speeches. At the end all the participants expressed the desire to see each other and to meet again in the near future to continue along this journey.

