

The Role of Youth and Students in Creating a Culture of Sustainable Peace

Hak Ja Han - Delivered by Sun Jin Moon

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Inauguration of the Network for Youth and Students for Peace in Asia and the Pacific
Keynote Address

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Chairman Terdsak Marrome (UPF Chair). Excellencies. Distinguished Ministers. Parliamentarians. Ambassadors for Peace. Representatives from 26 nations. Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great honor to address you today in this historic venue, the United Nations Conference Centre, ESCAP Hall.

We are gathered today in beautiful Thailand, a nation with a profoundly rich cultural heritage shaped by great religious traditions, including Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Islam and most of all Buddhism. The people of this land are known for their gentle kindness and generosity.

I would like to acknowledge His Majesty, the late King Bhumibol [pronounced Boomibon], who served as father of this nation for more than 70 years, and who is still loved and respected by all the people of Thailand

I want to express appreciation for the sponsors of this program, UPF (Universal Peace Federation), FFWPU (Family Federation for World Peace and Unification), YFWP (Youth Federation for World Peace) and WFWP (Women's Federation for World Peace).

Each of these organizations, founded by my parents, the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, has been devoted for decades to building a world of sustainable peace. They maintain their presence in more than 145 nations around the world.

We gather today for an extremely important purpose, to inaugurate the "Youth and Students for Peace" association. With this in mind, our thematic focus is on "The Role of Youth and Students in Creating a Culture of Sustainable Peace."

Today we have representatives from throughout East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. Many of you are Ministers of Education, Professors, School Administrators, along with student leaders. Most importantly we have nearly 1000 young people attending our program today.

My mother, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, asked me to speak to you today on her behalf.

In February of this year, in Korea, with more than 1500 young people gathered from Korea, Japan and nations around the world, my mother launched the international association of Youth and Students for Peace. She called on the young people to become champions of peace and leaders who can bring about social transformation for the sake of sustainable peace.

In order to accomplish this goal, she emphasized that young people must develop the skills and capacities required to become leaders of the future. Education, therefore, is absolutely essential, including both professional education in the arts and sciences that equip us with the knowledge required to function with high levels competence in various fields such as business, education, service industries, IT, health care, legal services, or government service.



In addition to the acquisition of the skills required for excellence in a career, it is also equally important, if not more important, that we develop our moral character by cultivating virtues such as empathy, and living for the sake of others.

If we become competent professionals without become good men and woman who care about others, who care about future generations, who care about the suffering of others, who care about our environment, then we cannot become the people who can transform our world.

We are all keenly aware that our world is struggling to overcome many critical challenges that threaten the quality of life, and may even threaten life itself. The United Nations is to be applauded for identifying the critical issues of our time—poverty, epidemics, climate change and environmental degradation, extremism, etc.—and has established the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, calling upon all member states to contribute to the achievement of these goals.

However, Governments alone cannot achieve the SDGs. It requires a wide range of partnerships among governments, civil society, the private sector, faith-based organizations, and individual citizens.

My parents have taught that peace is a term that describes the quality of relationships such that they are characterized by harmony, cooperation, respect and love. Ultimate, peace is the ideal of achieving a world where all people throughout the world live together as brothers and sisters, like a harmonious family.

While we may identify with a particular nationality, ethnicity, religion, or culture, we should affirm our common humanity, a value that transcends our individual backgrounds.

Moreover, in addition to harmony among peoples from diverse nations, cultures and religions, there must be respect, appreciation, and harmony with the natural world, including all living things, our planet, the universe. We are the stewards of this planet. We are to take care of this precious environment so that future generations do not live in fear of extinction.

Once again, I applaud the UN for its efforts to address the threats posed by climate change, rising sea levels, desertification, deforestation, and over-reliance on fossil fuels. I urge all of you, as leaders of tomorrow, to become agents of change, men and women who will reverse that trends that have violated the purity and beauty of our natural environment.

To those of you who hold positions in education, I cannot say enough how important your role is, as you work to raise up the next generations to be the people who can take on and overcome the overwhelming challenges of our time.

While education within the classroom is very important, we must not overlook the essential role played by the family. My parents have always taught that the first school that any child attends is the school of their own family.



Their first teachers are none other than mom and dad. In fact, many argue that long before we enter a classroom, our hearts and minds are shaped in profound ways by early childhood experiences in the family.

Thus, my parents placed family at the core of their global vision of peace. In fact, it is by building families of true love, raising children of good character, guided by the principle of living for the sake of world peace, that we contribute to sustainable peace.

As young people, I know many of you look forward to the day when you will marry and form a family. I encourage you with all my heart to take on this task with great seriousness. Your decisions about marriage and family are completely relevant and essential to the task of building a world of peace.

We live at a time when there is much confusion in areas of love and marriage. Popular culture often portrays the good life as characterized by self-indulgence. Self-indulgence, however, takes us in a direction that makes it very difficult to establish harmonious, respectful relationships that are needed if we are to build a family of true love and peace.

Please consider this point and, during your time at this conference, make every effort to learn and grow so that you can become a person who can make a true contribution to sustainable peace.

In conclusion, I want to express once again my profound appreciation to the distinguished leaders from Thailand, from the United Nations and from many other nations who have honored this day with their presence.

I am especially moved by the young people who have gathered here today to support the launch of Youth and Students for Peace. You are humanity's hope, and a shining light to the world. I wish you every success and victory in your precious lives.

The world needs you. Please use your time well.

Thank you for your attention.