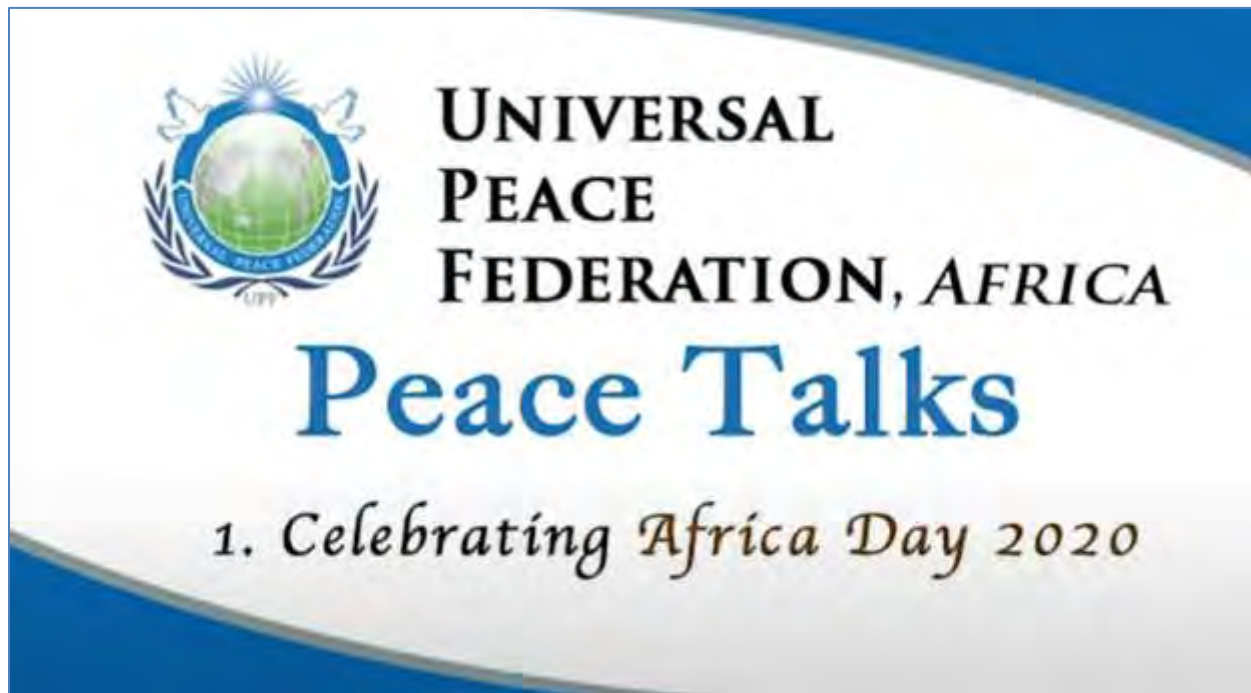


## UPF-Africa Commemorates Africa Day With Webinar on Covid-19 Crisis

Aidan Walsh  
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Africa -- In the early afternoon of May 25, 2020, UPF-Africa organized its first "Peace Talk" web conference on the theme "Creating an Interdependent and Prosperous Africa in a World in Conflict at the Time of the Covid-19 Crisis." The webinar served as UPF's celebration of the UN Africa Day for 2020. The conference had more than 500 attendees individually or in small groups all over continent and beyond.



Rev. George Marcus Ogurie, Subregional Director of UPF-West Africa, served as the moderator. In his opening remarks, he mentioned that the Africa Day celebration is always an opportunity to reflect on the African Union's transformation and achievements and also to renew commitments to realize the Africa Agenda 2063. UPF has been an active supporter of Africa Day for the past eight years, hosting events in New York in partnership with the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union at the United Nations. The 2020 Africa Day theme is in concert with the theme of the African Union Summit.

The questions discussed, among others, were:

What are the factors that can best contribute to the achievement of the African Union's peace and development objectives?

How can we build a society of interdependent communities and prosperity during this time of

conflict and Covid19?

How can the UPF founder's vision of a "Shining Africa" contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the African Union?



#### Panelists

Dr. Thomas Walsh (Chairman, UPF International) spoke first. The Covid crisis has precipitated a global economic recession and exacerbated tensions between the United States and China, threatening stability. The African Union has the role of maintaining stability in its region; therefore, in this time, its work is more vital than ever. He emphasized UPF's desire to act as an ally and friend to Africa. Dr. Walsh congratulated all Africans on Africa Day and recognized the recent Muslim holiday, Eid al-Fitr, that was celebrated the day before.



H.E. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (International Summit Council for Peace-Africa Chairman, Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) described a number of programs undertaken by the African Union, including the African Development Bank and the Lagos Plan of Action. In 2015, the president of the African Union set some goals for the Union's centennial in 2063, namely, to transform Africa into a global economic powerhouse. Dr. Jonathan called for increased trade among countries within Africa. He noted that there are more bureaucratic barriers to travel between African countries than there are for people visiting Africa from the United States. He called for economic interconnection, legitimate elections, ends to conflict and better childhood education in order to move the continent forward.

H.E. Dr. Nevers Mumba (Former Vice President of Zambia, President of the Movement for Multiparty

Democracy) gave some background on the history and purpose of Africa Day. Africa has produced great scholars, historians, scientists, doctors, and more, who have identified many sources of problems on the continent. He called for Africans to frame their own future in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, rather than allowing the rest of the world to dictate their place in it. He encouraged the promotion of African industry, commodities, culture and language, and he asked for unity among African countries, in order to better leverage Africa's population and natural resources on the world stage.

H.E Delfim Santiago das Neves (President of the National Assembly of Sao Tome and Principe) gave his presentation next. Africa, he said, has many myths and prejudices that prevent its development. Individualism and the leaders' thirst of power that have left the vast majority of the population lacking the basic needs for survival are also some of these barriers. They must be addressed by fostering solidarity among African countries, be they white Africa or black Africa, in a world of interdependence, where nations can only prosper through good cooperation and partnership. He added that a true Africa Union will come to existence in this time if we follow Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's vision of peace, unity and harmony that she is promoting. Speaker Santiago das Neves concluded by saying that Africa has succeeded at mobilizing to follow World Health Organization guidelines in order to stop the spread of Covid-19.



Hon. Marie-Laurence Sranon (Former Minister of Family, Social Affairs and MicroFinance, Republic of Benin) began by paying tribute to all who lost their lives due to the pandemic. She called for increased, fairer compensation for Africa's natural resources. Young refugees are dying as they flee hardships, she said. Africans must ask: Why are young people dying to leave the continent? Why are problems increasing? Who benefits from this situation? Honorable Sranon praised UPF's vision for peace and its alignment with the goals of the African Union.

QandA followed: In response to a question about members of the African diaspora returning to their roots, H.E. Dr. Mumba responded that the approach should be to develop solidarity between Africa and the diaspora in order to make sure that Africa's voice is heard and Africa gets the respect it deserves. H.E. Dr. Jonathan called for members of the diaspora to invest and participate in Africa's development. Responding to a question about persons from one African ethnic group being viewed as foreigners in other African countries, H.E. das Neves called for leadership in order to resolve ethnic conflicts within Africa and encourage interconnections. An IAPP representative asked about approaches to combating COVID-19 without compromising investments in African economies. Hon. Sranon noted that this is a good time for Africans to learn technological skills.

Mrs. Katherine Rigney (Regional Chair, UPF-Africa) gave closing remarks with the following highlights:

Since the 1960s, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, the founders of UPF, had great ambitions, particularly for the vitality and development of the African continent. This conviction was confirmed by the numerous initiatives of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, in Dakar and on the Island of Gorée, during the First African Summit in January 2018, marked by the launch of her Heavenly Africa Project, a "Shining Africa." This new initiative, for the building of a new Africa, has enjoyed widespread support throughout Africa. For Dr. Moon, the hope of a continent and a world of peace can only rest on principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values centered on God, the Heavenly Parent.

On June 1, the international community will celebrate UN Global Day of Parents. As is its custom, UPF will partner with the United Nations to celebrate this day as it should. Eminent personalities will lead the panel for this occasion, which will be organized by UPF-Africa.