

## April Newsletter from UPF

Tageldin Ibrahim Hamad  
April 30, 2026



UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION

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## April 2026

In April, designated the Month of Service in our 100 Days of Serving Community campaign, many UPF chapters conducted local service projects; others reached a broader audience through online programs. Sports was a key theme, marking the UN's International Day of Sport for Development and Peace on April 6th. To follow our activities in May, as we mark the Month of Family, please visit [www.upf.org](http://www.upf.org).

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### May as the Month of Family

In May, UPF enters the third month of its 100 Days of Serving Community campaign, bringing this public work to its center: the family and values-based education. If communities are to become more peaceful, more stable, and more humane, the family must be strengthened. It is where children form conscience, where burdens are shared, where values are transmitted, and where dignity is either protected or neglected.



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## Cambodia Martial Art Competition Champions Peace through Sport

**Phnom Penh, Cambodia** – In conjunction with the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, the Cambodian Tong Il Moo Do Federation held its national championship from April 8-11, 2026, at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. The event brought together athletes, coaches and supporters from across Cambodia, encouraging discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship.

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## Latin American Professionals: Sport Builds Bridges

**South and Central America** – A panel of leaders from South America, Central America and the Caribbean gathered in a webinar on April 9, 2026, to commemorate the UN International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, under the theme “Sport Builds Bridges and Breaks Down Barriers: Youth, Family and Future.”



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## IMAP-Zambia Seminar Strives for Ethical Media Culture

**Lusaka, Zambia** – The International Media Association for Peace (IMAP) Zambia held a seminar for media professionals, educators and students at the Golden Peacock Hotel in Lusaka on the theme “Building a Peace-Driven Media Culture.” The event, which was sponsored by UPF-Zambia, was endorsed by the Ministry of Information and Media; a ministry representative officially opened the event.

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## Global Experts Call for Renewed Commitment to Multilateralism

**Melbourne, Australia** – One hundred leading international scholars, policy-makers and peace practitioners gathered online on April 18, 2026, to mark the UN International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, calling for a renewed global commitment to cooperation, shared values and ethical leadership in an increasingly uncertain world.

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## Annual Montréal Meeting Recognizes Peace Ambassadors

**Montréal, Canada** – April 18, 2026 was a bright, sunny spring day in Montréal, where UPF-Canada held its annual Ambassadors for Peace Recognition Luncheon at Hotel Ruby Foo's, under the theme "Interreligious Dialogue, Interculturality, and Secularity: A Contemporary Perspective."

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May 25, 2025 · 3 min read

# INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN LEADERS

Africa Day 2025 Celebration – Mvezo-Komkulu, South Africa

Your Royal Highnesses, Nkosi ZMD Mandela  
Esteemed Members of the Royal House of Mandela,  
Honourable Elders,  
Distinguished Guests,  
And most of all, the vibrant youth of Africa,

I virtually stand before you today in the sacred village of Mvezo-Komkulu, not only with great humility but with a deep sense of reverence — reverence for the memory of Nelson Mandela, the father of this land, and for the vision of Africa rising.

I bring heartfelt greetings from the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and our global Co-Founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han. On this day of continental reflection and renewal, I am honoured to share a message grounded in our Founder’s enduring commitment to Africa, and to speak on a subject that lies at the very heart of the continent’s future: **Inspiring African Youth Leadership**.

As you may recall, UPF had the honour of co-organizing the 100th birthday of Nelson Mandela right here in Mvezo on July 18, 2018, which marked the reaffirmation of our close and respectful relationship with the Royal House of Mandela.

Today, as we observe Africa Day 2025, we do so not merely to celebrate what is — but to awaken what can be. Dear friends,

Africa is young. Africa is gifted. Africa is rising! But Africa’s youth cannot walk forward unless they first understand where they came from. This is why Dr. Hak Ja Han, in her love for this continent, never ignored its painful history. On the contrary, she embraced it with prayer and tears.

She personally went to Gorée Island, the infamous slave port off the coast of Senegal, and there she stood with young people to pray — not only to remember the horror of what had been suffered, but to plant the seeds of healing and transformation. She also visited the Hector Pieterse Memorial in Soweto — a place that symbolizes the courage and sacrifice of South Africa’s youth — and there she prayed again, this time that the young generation might never forget the cost of justice, but also never remain prisoners of the past.

She echoed the wisdom that says:

**“Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”**

Holy Mother Han, as we lovingly call her, believes that Africa’s youth must know the truth of history — but choose forgiveness, choose hope, choose to create a better tomorrow.

This is why, at UPF, we are not content to simply call for education — we call for character education. We advocate not only for skills and jobs, but for values and vision.

Dr. Hak Ja Han teaches that the greatest power is not economic or political — it is moral leadership. Leadership anchored in the truth that we are One Family Under God — black or white, rich or poor, from the village or the capital — all created with dignity, all destined to love and serve.

That is the foundation of her many initiatives that place young people at the center of global transformation. Because the youth of Africa must not only be trained — they must be trusted. They must not only inherit the past — they must co-author the future.

Nelson Mandela was a young man when his conscience awakened. So was Martin Luther King Jr. So was Mahatma Gandhi. The world’s turning points have always been led by the clarity and courage of youth. The same is true today in Africa.

But that courage must be guided. And that guidance must come from families, from schools, from faith leaders, and from elders like you, who have walked the road before.

Let us not give Africa’s youth **only** laptops and hashtags. Let us give them moral clarity, self-respect, and a sense of sacred responsibility. Let us teach them that true freedom is not the license to do as one pleases, but the strength to do what is right.

As UPF and its associations continue our mission in Africa and the world, we pledge to walk with you — the Royal House of Mandela and the people of this great land — to raise youth who are not defined by what they escaped, but by what they build.

To every young person here today:

You are not the future — you are the present with a future.

You are not victims of your history — you are heirs of greatness.

You are not prisoners of resentment — you are ambassadors of reconciliation and hope.

Let us walk together, with a new generation of African leaders — rooted in character, driven by vision, and united as One Family Under God.

May God bless the youth of Africa.

May God bless the legacy of Nelson Mandela.

And may Africa Day 2025 be remembered as the day a new fire was lit — in the hearts of the next generation.

Thank you for your kind attention,

Dr. Tageldin Hamad  
President of UPF International

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## CELEBRATING MAY AS THE MONTH OF FAMILY



As May 2026 begins, the [Universal Peace Federation](#) enters the third and final full month of its [100 Days of Serving Community](#) campaign, running from February 20 to June 1, 2026. March emphasized partnerships to strengthen local impact. April emphasized volunteer service that communities could recognize and welcome. May brings this public work to its center: the family and values-based education. This leads directly to the [Global Day of Parents](#), and raises a practical question. If communities are to become more peaceful, more stable, and more humane, what must be strengthened first?

The answer begins in the daily environment where children form conscience, where burdens are shared, where values are transmitted, and where dignity is either protected or neglected. May is an opportunity to place family life where it belongs, at the center of serious reflection on peace, education, and social development.

The [International Day of Families](#) will be observed on May 15, 2026 at United Nations Headquarters in New York under the theme "Families, Inequalities and Child Wellbeing." It highlights family-friendly policies, such as child benefits, parental leave, affordable early childhood education, and community-based family support. Such measures help ensure stable families where children can receive a fair start in life.

This observance also builds on the role of the family in implementing commitments from the World Summit for Social Development and its Doha Declaration, aligning family-oriented policies with efforts to reduce inequalities and promote child wellbeing.\*

Across the globe and over the years, UPF has promoted family-centered peacebuilding through a multitude of programs. To give just a few examples:

- At the United Nations in [New York](#), UPF serves as an executive member of the NGO Committee on the Family. On January 22, 2026, UPF co-organized a virtual program titled, "Empowering the Family through National Policies: Insights from Burundi and Italy."
- In [London](#) on May 31, 2025, UPF-UK held a colorful family event featuring reflections on intercultural marriage, an interfaith peace blessing, music, poetry, and Exemplary Family Awards.
- In [Vienna](#) on May 17, 2025, UPF-Austria convened a conference on family-oriented policies for sustainable development, linking family dignity, character education, cultural diversity and the public good.
- In [Bangkok](#) on May 27, 2025, more than 500 participants joined a webinar with family specialists, medical professionals, and government-related representatives.
- In [Auckland, New Zealand](#) on May 24, 2025, UPF highlighted youth empowerment and family-oriented policies, linking family stability with the perspectives of young people.
- In [Burkina Faso](#), UPF organized a public conference on Family and Social Cohesion in the capital city of Ouagadougou on February 14, 2026, integrating peace strategies with traditional family culture.
- In [Argentina](#), UPF-Argentina and the Pacis Nuntii Movement co-sponsored a program on the theme, "We Are Siblings, We Are Family" on October 9, 2025, in Paraná City, stressing the link between family ties and community.

UPF has also offered practical assistance to vulnerable families:

- In [Conakry, Guinea](#), UPF supported families with premature infants by distributing sanitary and nutritional kits to hospitals and clinics in January, 2026.
- In [Mullaitivu, Sri Lanka](#) on December 28, 2024, UPF and partner networks distributed food aid to flood-affected families.
- In [Madrid](#), UPF-Spain organized a charity event from February 28 to March 1, 2026, to raise funds for impoverished families in Cameroon, to support their children's education.

Going forward, UPF encourages its local chapters, partners, and Ambassadors for Peace to celebrate May with meaningful Month of Family events. These may include a parenting workshop, an intergenerational service day, a school partnership on values-based education, a family health awareness event, a youth mentoring initiative, or a public forum on family resilience under pressures such as inequality, child wellbeing, addiction, migration, or loneliness. A program can be educational, celebratory, preventive, or compassionate, always keeping the dignity of family life at the center.

For UPF, the family is the first school of love, responsibility, and civic virtue. Dr. Hak Ja Han and the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon consistently taught that lasting peace cannot be separated from strong families and a culture of living for the sake of others. Our slogan "One Family under God" complements the United Nations vision of "a human family." This ethical perspective encourages cooperation that honors both spiritual convictions and universal human rights.

As we move toward June 1, the Global Day of Parents, let's remember that the foundation for peace is built long

before diplomacy, legislation or institutional reform. It is built where children first learn love, discipline, truthfulness and respect – in the family.

#### Family-based holidays in May

- May 5 [Children's Day](#) in Japan and South Korea
- May 8 [Parents' Day](#) in South Korea
- May 10 (2026) [Mother's Day](#) in the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, Mexico, Guatemala, India, China, Japan, and many others
- May 26 [Mother's Day](#) in Poland

#### UN Day Observances

- May 8-9 [Time of Remembrance and Reconciliation for Those Who Lost Their Lives during the Second World War](#) offers comfort to families who carry the wounds of war through grief, displacement, trauma and silence.
- May 16 [International Day of Living Together in Peace](#) calls societies to reconciliation, inclusion, and solidarity, virtues that are learned first in the family.
- May 21 [World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development](#). Culture is first transmitted in families – in language, stories, food, music and celebrations. Homes can become places where prejudice hardens, or where dignity across difference is learned.
- May 18-23 [Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly](#) in Geneva will impact global health policies that affect families through access to care, prevention, affordability, maternal and child health, and the burden placed on parents when systems fail.
- May 31 [World No Tobacco Day](#) focuses on "Unmasking the appeal: countering nicotine and tobacco addiction." Safeguarding children and adolescents from nicotine dependence and preventable harm must be a focus of families, schools and public policy.

#### Policy and Civil Society Forums

- May 4-8 [Second International Migration Review Forum](#) begins with a multi-stakeholder hearing on May 4. Migration governance impacts family unity, child protection, safe pathways, and the human cost of separation.
- May 18-21 [Family and Relationship Services Australia](#) convenes its national conference in Brisbane.
- May 28-30 [International Commission on Couple and Family Relations](#) holds its annual conference in Brussels, Belgium.

\* Many of the issues raised in this Month of Family are directly linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular [SDG 1](#), [SDG 3](#), [SDG 4](#), [SDG 5](#), [SDG 10](#), and [SDG 16](#).

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Apr 11 · 1 min read

# CAMBODIA MARTIAL ART COMPETITION CHAMPIONS PEACE THROUGH SPORT



**Phnom Penh, Cambodia** – In conjunction with the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, the Cambodian Tong Il Moo Do Federation held its national championship from April 8-11, 2026, at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. The event brought together athletes, coaches and supporters from across Cambodia, encouraging discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship.

Tong Il Moo Do is a comprehensive martial art system founded on principles of unifying body and mind, character development and spiritual growth. The championship also supported the vision of UPF by promoting peace through youth development, cooperation and mutual respect. Through friendly competition, participants strengthened unity and demonstrated the positive role of sport in building harmony within society.

**Mr. Chamroeun Sophal**, regional director of UPF-Indochina, stated that sport is a powerful tool to connect people beyond social and cultural differences, and helps inspire young people toward leadership and responsible citizenship.

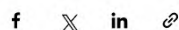
During the closing ceremony on April 11, a message from the United Nations was delivered, highlighting the 2026 theme of the International Day of Sport: "Sport: Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers." The message emphasized the importance of sport in promoting inclusion, equality, peace and sustainable development.

The event was attended by senior representatives from government and sports institutions, including **HE Dr. Chey Chap**, adviser to the Royal Palace and president of the Cambodian Tong Il Moo Do Federation; **HE Mr. Bou Chumserei**, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; **Dr. Ouk Divorng**, deputy director general of the Directorate General of Sports; **Mr. Sam Sokyi**, deputy director of the National Sport Training Center; **Mr. Chamroeun Sophal**, regional director of UPF-Indochina; and **Mr. Ear Thou**, vice president of the Cambodian Tong Il Moo Do Federation.

By Chamroeun Sophal, Regional Director, UPF-Indochina  
April 11, 2026

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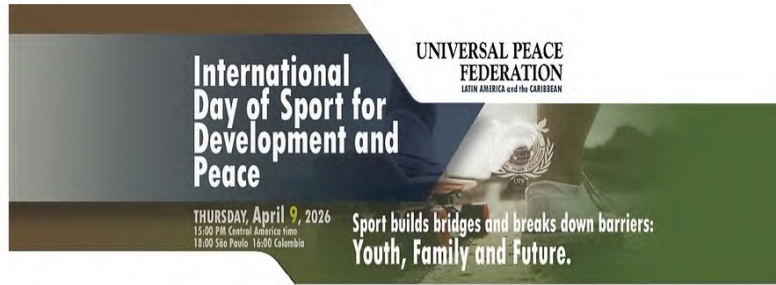
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Apr 9 · 3 min read

# LATIN AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS: SPORT BUILDS BRIDGES



**JAIME FERNÁNDEZ**  
SECRETARIO GENERAL DE LA FEDERACIÓN PARA LA PAZ UNIVERSAL - PERÚ



**ELIECER ARAYA**  
PRESIDENTE REGIONAL DE LA FEDERACIÓN PARA LA PAZ UNIVERSAL - AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE



**HÉCTOR EDUARDO CÁCERES DURÁN**  
PROFESIONAL EN CULTURA FÍSICA, DEPORTES Y RECREACIÓN; FISCOSISTAS DEPORTIVO, TÉCNICO DE FÚTBOL CON LICENCIA PRO, ESPECIALISTA EN DOCENCIA



**DR. GUSTAVO GIULIANO**  
PRESIDENTE DE TONG-IL MOO-DO PARA AMÉRICA CENTRAL Y EL CARIBE. GRAN MAESTRO, 7º DAN. DOCTOR EN EDUCACIÓN, MAGISTER EN INVESTIGACIÓN EDUCATIVA Y PROFESOR UNIVERSITARIO EN



**MARIBEL CRISTINA GRANIZO PESANTES**  
LICIA EN ADM. DE EMPRESAS, FACILITADORA DE TALLERES DE YOGA A NIVEL INTERNACIONAL Y CUATRO VECES CAMPEONA NACIONAL CON EL CLUB REGATAS, LIMA, PERÚ.



**NAHUEL FERNANDO LÓPEZ**  
ENTRENADOR DE VOLEIBOL DEL CLUB REGATAS LIMA, ENTRENADOR NIVEL FIBV INTERNACIONAL Y CUATRO VECES CAMPEÓN NACIONAL CON EL CLUB REGATAS, LIMA, PERÚ.

**South and Central America** – A panel of leaders from South America, Central America and the Caribbean gathered in a webinar on April 9, 2026, to commemorate the UN International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, under the theme "Sport Builds Bridges and Breaks Down Barriers: Youth, Family and Future." The event was organized by UPF and several organizations under the UPF umbrella.

**Mr. Jaime Fernandez**, secretary general of UPF-Peru, served as moderator. He extended a warm welcome to the group of panelists, followed by the reminder that the UN General Assembly in 2013 proclaimed April 6 as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, underscoring sport's unique ability to promote protection, inclusion and peace in an increasingly fragmented world.

**Mr. Eliecer Araya**, regional president of UPF for Latin America and the Caribbean, shared words of welcome with all participants and extolled the highest ideals of sports: "All people can become one through sports, so that sports may extend a bridge of reconciliation and peace, where the hearts of all the peoples of the world can unite as one."

He added, "Sports were originally created to build strong bodies and maintain safe societies. Today, they have developed globally and bring enjoyment and enrichment to the lives of billions of people. That is why it is important for us to seek ways in which sports can contribute to achieving peace for all the peoples of the world."

The first panelist was **Mr. Hector Eduardo Ceres Duran** from Colombia, a professional in physical culture, sports and recreation. He is a sports journalist, pro-licensed football coach, and specialist in education. "Unfortunately, many governments around the world have cut sports funding because their leaders are unable to manage their resources and prefer to invest in weapons instead," he said. "Yet sports are undoubtedly one of the best ways to build better human beings."

The next speaker was the president of Tong-Il Moo-Do for Central America and the Caribbean, a 7th dan grand master with a doctorate in education, **Dr. Gustavo Giuliano**, from Argentina. "When we think about sport, we often associate it with winning, competing or excelling," he said. "However, the United Nations' proposal goes further: it speaks of sport to instill values, strengthen communities and foster social harmony. And precisely, martial arts – in their origin – were created with that purpose."

He explained that Tong-Il Moo-Do means "the path to the unification of martial arts," but this does not refer only to technique; it is also a unification of body, mind and spirit. Tong-Il Moo-Do proposes a philosophy based on universal values to develop people rather than competitors, because it understands sport as a tool to build peace.

**Ms. Maribel Cristina Granizo Pesantes**, from Ecuador, is a professional in business administration and a facilitator of yoga workshops for women in vulnerable situations, with an emphasis on therapeutic and community-based group support. She contributed her experience in enhancing well-being, providing emotional support, and strengthening communities.

"When we talk about peace, we often think about something that happens outside: in relationships, in communities, in the world. But we rarely stop looking at a more intimate and, at the same time, more decisive place: the way we live inside ourselves," she explained. She said that yoga helps people stop merely reacting to what others say or do, stop comparing themselves to others, and look inward. She described this as a path to freedom and to peace, choosing how to respond; shifting from reacting automatically to acting consciously.

To conclude the forum, the last panelist spoke in support of the commemoration of International Sports Day. **Mr. Nahuel Fernando López** is a volleyball coach at Club de Regatas Lima. He is a FIVB international level coach, and four-time national champion with his club in Lima, Peru. "The reality is that only 0.01 percent of children who play sports become professionals, so sports aren't designed to create professionals. Sports are designed to create people who know how to navigate society, who know how to work as a team, who understand goals, and who possess perseverance. That's the most valuable aspect of sports," he said.

By Mario Salinas, Secretary General, UPF-Latin America  
April 9, 2026

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Apr 19 · 2 min read

# IMAP-ZAMBIA SEMINAR STRIVES FOR ETHICAL MEDIA CULTURE



**Lusaka, Zambia** – The International Media Association for Peace (IMAP) Zambia held a seminar for media professionals, educators and students at the Golden Peacock Hotel in Lusaka on March 19, 2026, on the theme "Building a Peace-Driven Media Culture." The event, sponsored by UPF-Zambia, was endorsed by the Ministry of Information and Media; a ministry representative officially opened the event.

The program focused on ethical journalism, and sought to position journalists as "architects of peace" rather than mere observers of conflict. Government leaders, who have recognized the media as a unique "agenda-setter" and cautioned against the dangers of digital misinformation, welcomed this approach. This alignment ensures that IMAP's vision for responsible journalism is supported by national policy frameworks.

**Rev. Lawrence Banda** and **Rev. Jean-Augustin Ghoms** provided the philosophical core of the event, framing journalism as a profession with a moral obligation. They introduced participants to the concept of a "peace-driven media culture," where reporting is anchored in truth, human dignity, and the "Give to Gain" framework. Video presentations from UPF-Africa's Media Directorate connected local efforts to the broader continental architecture of peace.

A significant portion of the discourse focused on the "noise" of the digital age. Participants addressed the threats posed by sensationalism and unverified social media content. The seminar committed to promoting "solution-oriented journalism," which moves beyond highlighting problems to actively identifying viable societal solutions.

To ensure the sustainability of IMAP's mission, eleven distinguished media practitioners were commissioned as Ambassadors for Peace. This initiative creates a dedicated network of ethical "gatekeepers" across print, television, radio and digital platforms who are now formally committed to the UPF vision.

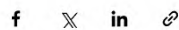
"Journalism carries a moral obligation to contribute to peacebuilding. We must move beyond reactive reporting to adopt a proactive stance that promotes national unity and constructive dialogue," explained Mr. Peter Chikwampu, president of IMAP-Zambia. "Peace is not only an ideal; it is an action. For the media, this means the deliberate choice to uphold truth and verify information, recognizing the profound impact our narratives have on societal stability."

This event served as a relaunch of IMAP-Zambia, which now has a clear roadmap: expanding membership across all ten provinces, organizing regular professional training programs, and launching public awareness campaigns against hate speech. By positioning IMAP-Zambia within the global framework, the chapter is now equipped to lead the transformation of the national media landscape toward principled and reconciliation-oriented journalism.

By Dr. Paterne Zinsou, Secretary General, UPF-Africa  
March 19, 2026

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# GLOBAL EXPERTS CALL FOR RENEWED COMMITMENT TO MULTILATERALISM



**Melbourne, Australia** – One hundred leading international scholars, policymakers and peace practitioners gathered online on April 18, 2026, to mark the UN International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, calling for a renewed global commitment to cooperation, shared values and ethical leadership in an increasingly uncertain world.

Hosted by the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP) Asia Pacific, a primary association of UPF, the webinar brought together speakers from across the globe under the theme: "The UN Charter at a Crossroads: Renewing Commitment to Universal Values, Multilateralism and Diplomacy in an Era of Global Uncertainty."

The event highlighted the enduring relevance of the United Nations Charter as a cornerstone of international cooperation, particularly at a time marked by geopolitical tensions, rapid technological change and growing global interdependence.

Opening the session, moderator **Mr. Greg Stone** emphasized that multilateralism remains central to addressing global challenges, noting that "shared values and cooperation are more critical now than ever before."

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks from **Dr. Tageldin Hamad**, president of UPF- International, who emphasized the importance of multilateralism, dialogue and cooperation in achieving peace. He highlighted UPF's mission to connect values with action and called for the development of a clear and actionable framework for peace through IAAP.

### UN Charter Modernization Proposals

A key presentation by international economist **Dr. Augusto Lopez-Claros** explored efforts by the Global Governance Forum to draft a reformed UN Charter. He argued that reforms are necessary to strengthen global institutions and respond to contemporary challenges, drawing on decades of experience at organizations such as the World Bank and World Economic Forum.

Dr. Lopez-Claros outlined three proposed changes: legacy updates, normative advances and structural reforms. Key proposals included creating a Parliamentary Assembly and expanding the Security Council to 25 members with modified permanent member vetoes that could be overridden by a two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly.

Dr. Lopez-Claros said that the concept of national security should be broadened to include human development and human security. He discussed the need for structural changes in global governance, including better voter engagement and education about global citizenship. He also explained that Article 109 provides a mechanism for amending the UN Charter without veto power from permanent Security Council members, suggesting this process should be triggered to discuss potential reforms.

### Multilateralism and Global Governance Reforms

Peace negotiator **Mr. Masoom Stanekzai** delivered a compelling address on ethical leadership and diplomacy, reflecting on his experience in Afghanistan's peace processes. He argued that the UN Charter remains the most viable framework for managing international peace and security, arguing that the Charter's relevance is not diminishing but being "tested." He urged nations to act in the spirit of its founding vision to prevent future conflict. He said, "The central problem is not simply institutional. It is behavioral. The effectiveness of the UN system ultimately depends on whether states – and particularly major powers – choose to act within its rules. The gap between principle and practice is widening. Without sustained political commitment, even the strongest legal frameworks cannot deliver collective security."

Mr. Stanekzai highlighted challenges such as the erosion of international legal norms and the rise of unilateral actions. He emphasized the need for structural and ethical reforms within the UN system, including addressing the veto power in the Security Council and strengthening diplomatic efforts to prevent conflicts. He also stressed the importance of shifting decision-making from individual countries to collective multilateral processes, and called for a commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts rather than the use of force, adding that "the decisive variable is ethical leadership."

### Global Citizenship and Peace Initiatives

**Dr. John Bellavance** presented on the concept of global citizenship based on universal values. He explained: 1) The global village needs shared values; 2) Artificial Intelligence must be guided by values; 3) Scientific and economic development must be guided by values; 4) Polarization – "us vs them" – must be

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countered; 5) Interfaith dialogue requires shared values.

Dr. Bellavance examined the role of human values in an age shaped by artificial intelligence, arguing that true intelligence must go beyond technical capability to include empathy and moral responsibility. "In a world increasingly influenced by AI, our shared human values – dignity, equality, freedom, justice and peace – are more important than ever," he said, pointing to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a guiding ethical foundation. Dr. Bellavance encouraged scholars to contribute a chapter in the new IAAP book on Universal Values, Interdependence and Mutual Prosperity.

#### Linking Multilateralism with Health Security

Dr. Wali Islam then spoke about the intersection of multilateralism, health security, social cohesion and sustainable development, drawing parallels between the body's immune system and societal cooperation. He said, "Biological systems do not operate in isolation, and neither do human societies. The same interconnectedness that governs immune responses within the human body also shapes relationships among nations, institutions, and communities."

He maintained that multilateralism is not merely a diplomatic preference; it is an essential condition for achieving global health security, sustaining social cohesion and delivering meaningful and equitable development outcomes.

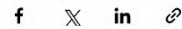
The webinar concluded with an interactive Q&A and discussion, where participants echoed a common message: that global peace and stability depend not only on institutions, but on a collective commitment to shared values and responsible leadership.

As the world navigates complex and interconnected challenges, the event served as a timely reminder that multilateralism – rooted in trust, dialogue and cooperation – remains essential to building a peaceful and sustainable future. The discussion highlighted the need for ongoing dialogue and reform to promote global peace and address systemic issues.

By Dr. John Bellavance, Vice President, UPF-Australia  
April 18, 2026

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## ANNUAL MONTRÉAL MEETING RECOGNIZES PEACE AMBASSADORS



**Montréal, Canada** – April 18, 2026 was a bright, sunny spring day in Montréal, where UPF-Canada held its annual Ambassadors for Peace Recognition Luncheon at Hotel Ruby Foo's, under the theme "Interreligious Dialogue, Interculturality, and Secularity: A Contemporary Perspective."

More than 70 people attended, drawn by a theme that resonates both globally and within the Canadian and Quebec context, where such dialogue – and even more so intercultural and interreligious collaboration – has become essential to the survival of a free and harmonious society.

The event was moderated by **Ms. Chantale Viau** and **Ms. Brigitte Grenier**, who guided the gathering with great sensitivity, creating a calm yet dynamic and well-structured atmosphere.

Participants were primarily religious leaders from diverse faith communities (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, United Church of Canada, other Protestant denominations, Muslim, Latter-day Saints, Scientologists). Other attendees included leaders from community organizations working with children and families, international organizations, academics, and representatives from the political sphere.

Following the introduction of UPF – its foundational principles and its vision of a world of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values – by **Mr. Franco Famularo**, president of UPF-Canada, the assembly was greeted by **Mr. Aref Salem**, Montréal city councilor and member of its executive committee, who expressed support for UPF and its values as an ambassador for peace himself.

The keynote speaker, **Mr. Pierre LeBel**, an associate researcher at the Institute for Theological Study and Research in Interculturality, Migration and Mission (IERTIMM), developed the idea that a balanced secular society rests on mutual respect, an active spirituality engaged in the world, and openness to others. His approach is unifying and calls for a lived, applied faith rather than a static form of interreligious dialogue. **Ms. Louise Royer**, director of the Office of Social Pastoral Care of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Montréal, and **Mr. Robert Duffy**, secretary general of UPF-Canada, were then invited to respond.

Ms. Royer expanded on Mr. LeBel's presentation by linking it to Catholic social teaching, emphasizing deference in dialogue, participation, a "spirituality of indwelling," and the welcoming of foreigners. She concluded by affirming that all are called to become peacemakers through respect, commitment and openness to others, placing human dignity at the center.

Mr. Duffy, for his part, resonating with the first two speakers, focused his response on the history of secularity, the tension between religion and the state in Christian history, and its current manifestation in the modern world, particularly in the province of Québec, referencing two government bills recently passed to restrict public, and even private, displays of religiosity in places of work as well as in public spaces.

A question period followed, offering a dynamic exchange in which ideas were further clarified. The program then turned to music, featuring a beautiful performance by **Ms. Christa Maria Abou Akl**, a highly talented young Lebanese-Canadian artist who places her gifts in the service of peace.

Two ambassadors for peace were then invited to share their personal journeys.

First, **Father Tiburtius Fernandez**, pastor of St. Augustine of Canterbury and St. Edward the Confessor, recounted 21 years of involvement with UPF in Montréal, beginning in 2005 through an invitation to interreligious dialogue. He emphasized the importance of encounters between people of different beliefs in building peace, despite a world marked by conflict. He reminded the audience that peace is both a personal and collective journey, illustrated through concrete examples of reconciliation. He concluded by invoking the figure of Kateri Tekakwitha, the first North American indigenous Saint of the Roman Catholic Church, who for him embodies this path: a life of faith, suffering, and peace that inspires continued commitment.

Next, **Dr. Denitsa Tsvetkova**, co-director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism and deeply engaged in interreligious dialogue, movingly shared how her motivation for peace stems from childhood, when her grandmother, who had lived through five wars, described to her the profound sadness and suffering they caused.

Seven new ambassadors for peace were then commissioned. These individuals are committed to building a world of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values:

- **Christa Maria Abou Akl**, a young Lebanese-Canadian artist engaged with youth
- **Efa Brillant Efon** and **Faith Efon**, senior pastors and founding missionaries of the international mission "Witness of the Truth"
- **Jean-Marc Jacques**, a seasoned expert in politics and public administration

- Lucas Magnus, an active member of the Focolare Movement
- Omar Messioun, a businessperson active in the community
- **Father Serge St-Arneault**, a missionary priest in Africa, now serving in the St-Roch neighborhood in Québec City, and advocate for the PolySeSouvient cause.

Christa Maria was invited to present a fundraising project she is organizing in collaboration with UPF to assist thousands of displaced people in Lebanon.

Following a photo session, the afternoon continued with a meal and networking – a valuable time for exchanging ideas, building partnerships, and deepening mutual understanding.

This annual event is central to the development of the ambassador for peace network in Québec and to its impact on the ground. Thanks were extended to the team that made this meaningful event a success.

By Robert Duffy, Secretary General, UPF-Canada  
April 18, 2026

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