

UPF UK: Antonio Betancourt - Historic Visit of Sun Myung Moon to North Korea

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Antonio Betancourt: Preparing the Historic Visit of Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon and Dr Hak Ja Han to North Korea



Summary

At a Universal Peace Federation UK meeting, Antonio Betancourt - former Secretary General of the Summit Council for World Peace - shared how principled diplomacy and the "realm of the heart" laid the foundation for the historic visit of Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon and Dr Hak Ja Han Moon to Pyongyang. Drawing on decades of global peace work, he explained how respect, listening, and interfaith values can turn adversaries into partners, offering lessons for Korean Peninsula peace efforts and international diplomacy today.

Antonio Betancourt: Preparing the Historic Visit of [Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon](#) and [Dr Hak Ja Han](#) to North Korea (DPRK)

At a Universal Peace Federation (UPF) UK meeting, Antonio Betancourt, former Secretary General of the Summit Council for World Peace, reflected on diplomacy, reconciliation, and the behind-the-scenes initiatives that opened the way for the historic visit of Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon and Dr Hak Ja Han Moon to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Drawing from decades of international engagement, Betancourt described how Father Moon had guided him as his envoy to use a diplomatic philosophy rooted in the UPF peace principles and the belief that authentic dialogue begins from the heart.

Turning Adversaries into Partners

Betancourt emphasised a key principle of successful diplomacy:

"Don't create a strong enemy out of an adversary by demonising them. You will live to regret it."

He explained that genuine peacebuilding requires offering respect and dignity, even to those we consider opponents.

In his words:

"In the long term, it is worth it. You can transform an adversary into a partner."

This principle echoes the values in the Founders' Vision. He was guided by Father Moon as his envoy to reach out to North Korea (DPRK).

Watch the related presentations:

[Video One - An American Who Was Able to Change the Mind of North Korea](#)

[Video Two - Turning Adversaries into Partners](#)

Background: From South America to the Korean Peninsula

In the 1980s, Betancourt met many South American heads of state as the Cold War neared its end. His diplomatic work extended across ideological divides and later included sensitive envoy missions to meet senior North Korean officials. These engagements laid the foundation for the UPF Founders' eventual invitation to Pyongyang.

He faced significant challenges:

His Colombian nationality, as Colombia fought against North Korea in the Korean War.

His American citizenship, making him seem aligned with a long-standing adversary.

His role as an envoy of Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon, widely recognised for his anti-communist stance.

Despite this, he persisted in building trust through sincerity and respect.

More on UPF's regional work:

Northeast Asia Peace Initiative. [Fostering Dialogue and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula](#)

Watch the diplomatic context: [Video Three - Changing the Mind of North Korea](#)



A Historic Reconciliation

These early efforts paved the way for a historic moment of reconciliation:

Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon and President Kim Il Sung established a relationship of mutual respect, laying a foundation of goodwill between the Kim family and the Moon family that is still acknowledged today.

This breakthrough exemplifies Track II diplomacy, (more accurately Track 1.5) consistent with UPF's principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universal values.

Learn more about the UPF's 20 Year Anniversary Reflection: ➡ [UPF Celebrates 20 Years of Global Peacebuilding](#)

Betancourt noted that the mission succeeded because he approached his work from the "realm of the heart." His sincerity often led to extraordinary gestures of respect - such as heads of state personally greeting him at airports.

Lessons for Today: Respect, Listening, and Moral Values

Betancourt's message aligns deeply with UPF UK's peacebuilding approach:

1. Respect and Listening

Long-term peace requires treating even weaker nations with magnanimity.

Arrogance, he warned, generates resentment that limits a nation's future destiny.

2. The Role of Religious and Moral Values

He emphasised that spiritual values have shaped the world's great civilisations and must inform modern diplomacy.

UPF's interfaith programmes reflect this: [IAPD UK](#)

3. An Interreligious Council at the United Nations

Betancourt reaffirmed Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon's proposal for an Interreligious Council at the UN - a missing pillar of global governance that could help reduce religious and ideological tensions, especially between Christian and Islamic communities. Read more - [Interfaith Council at the United Nations](#)

Video Resources of his talk.

[Video One - An American Who Was Able to Change the Mind of North Korea](#)

[Video Two - Turning Adversaries into Partners](#)

[Video Three - Changing the Mind of North Korea](#)

[Video Four - Diplomacy with the Logic of Love](#)

Conclusion:

Antonio Betancourt's presentation offers timely lessons for today's world: respect empowers diplomacy, sincere dialogue transforms relationships, and peacebuilding requires both courage and humility.

Guided by Rev. Dr Sun Myung Moon and Dr Hak Ja Han, Betancourt's work helped create one of the most meaningful breakthroughs.

His message endures: Respect opens doors. Heart changes minds. Dialogue can reshape the destiny of nations.

[Become an Ambassador for Peace](#) - Join a global network of leaders, changemakers, and community builders committed to advancing peace, dialogue, and moral leadership.

[Get Involved in UPF - UK's Charitable Work](#) - Support our programmes in interfaith cooperation, youth leadership, gender equality, and community service. Your participation helps build bridges across cultures and strengthens social cohesion in the UK.

[Become a Supporter of UPF - UK](#) - Become a Monthly Donor by contributing regularly to sustain our mission. Your support enables



Featured

Commemorative Address — 20th Anniversary of the Universal Peace Federation

Dr. Tageldin Hamad, President, Universal Peace Federation

Your Excellencies, Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Ambassadors for Peace, the frontline of hope, and cherished friends from around the world, it is a profound honor to connect with you on this momentous occasion: the 20th anniversary of the Universal Peace Federation.

As the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly convenes in New York under the banner "Better Together: 80 Years and More for Peace, Development and Human Rights," UPF reaffirms its deep commitment to those universal ideals. For two decades, we have worked to advance the Sustainable Development Goals through practical initiatives in education, peacebuilding, environmental stewardship, gender equality, youth engagement, and interreligious cooperation. As an NGO with General Consultative Status at ECOSOC, we know that peace, dignity, and development are inseparable and that a just, sustainable world begins with the conviction that we are one human family under God.

Founding the Dream: Co-Founders Dr. Hak Ja Han and the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon

Today we celebrate not only an organization, but a dream. That dream was given form long before 2005, and was inaugurated at Lincoln Center when our founders, [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and her late husband, [Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon](#), launched UPF and set out on a historic 100-day world tour to more than 100 nations. They met presidents and parliamentarians, religious leaders and scholars, and called people across the globe to unite behind a vision of peace rooted in spiritual values and universal principles.

Standing before a global audience, Rev. Moon declared: "I declare today before all humanity the founding of the Universal Peace Federation. Its mission is to renew the existing United Nations and provide a new level of leadership." That declaration was not merely ceremonial, it was a blueprint for action: a call to unite institutional strength with moral conviction.



20th Anniversary Congratulatory Video

Faith and Global Governance

The founders' vision reached even further. In 2000 Rev. Moon proposed an Interreligious Council at the United Nations not to replace politics, but to complement it, to bring moral perspective into global decision-making. Today, interfaith engagement is increasingly present in UN conversations: World Interfaith Harmony Week, interreligious consultations, and faith-based partnerships now play a role in shaping policy and practice. What once seemed audacious is now increasingly necessary and plausible.

Our Principles

UPF's work is guided by five core principles:

1. We affirm that humanity is one family under God.
2. We hold that our highest qualities are spiritual and moral conscience, compassion, integrity.
3. We recognize the family as the primary school of love and peace.
4. We uphold living for the sake of others as the path to reconciliation.
5. We insist that lasting peace requires cooperation across ethnicity, faith, and nation.



Peacemaking in Practice

Principles become meaningful only when acted upon. UPF's regional initiatives — from the South Asia Peace Initiative and the South Caucasus Peace Initiative to the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI)

and the Northeast Asia Peace Initiative (NEAPI) — have convened political and religious leaders to pursue dialogue, confidence-building, and reconciliation. Over 70 high-level meetings have



All religions seek virtue, seek for the good... let us join

brought former heads of state, diplomats, and experts together to explore concrete paths to peace.

We welcome developments like the Abraham Accords, which reflect the same spirit of interfaith reconciliation that MEPI has championed: mutual respect, dialogue, and a regional architecture for peace.

Peace Road and Youth Action

The Peace Road movement — millions walking, running, and cycling in solidarity — shows that peace is both symbolic and active. Alongside Peace Road, UPF's character education, sports-for-peace tournaments, and service-learning projects equip young people with the values and skills to build inclusive communities. Our Youth and Students for Peace programs have engaged thousands across more than 70 countries — a hopeful investment in the next generation of ethical leaders.

The Family, Women, and Moral Leadership

At the heart of UPF's mission is the conviction that peace begins in the family. The family is where responsibility, empathy, and reconciliation are first learned. Equally, Rev. Moon insisted on the vital role of women as moral leaders and peacemakers. Today, Dr. Hak Ja Han continues that mission, elevating women's leadership through initiatives like the International Association of First Ladies for Peace and convening global summits that place women at the center of peacebuilding.

Continuing the Legacy: Co-Founder **Dr. Hak Ja Han**

Since Rev. Moon's passing, Dr. Hak Ja Han has convened landmark summits — including the World Summit 2020 — launched Think Tank 2022 on the Korean Peninsula, and established the Sunhak Peace Prize, honoring those whose lives embody service to humanity. Under her leadership, UPF's global associations spanning faith, governance, academia, business, arts, and women's leadership form an integrated platform for advancing peace through multiple sectors.

Ambassadors for Peace, The Frontline of Hope

Our Ambassadors for Peace are the living network of UPF: more than 100,000 volunteers in over 190 countries. They have organized thousands of forums, service projects, and educational events — bringing practical assistance and moral witness to communities worldwide. They embody the founders' words: "True love gives, forgets that it has given, and continues to give without ceasing."

Healing a Wounded World

We cannot celebrate without soberly acknowledging the suffering that persists — conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East among them. These crises teach us that peace cannot be imposed; it must be nurtured through reconciliation, compassion, and the courageous work of embracing former enemies. UPF answers with both dialogue and service — delivering aid after natural disasters, supporting clean-water projects, and assisting communities in crisis. This is peace in action.

Renewing Our Commitment, A Call to Action

Friends, the world has changed in profound ways over these two decades. New technologies, shifting geopolitics, climate emergencies, and widening inequalities challenge our institutions and consciences. And yet the vision that birthed UPF is more urgent than ever.

So let us recommit today: to bold dialogue where others remain silent; to reconciliation where others choose division; to building bridges where walls divide. Let this anniversary be not merely a commemoration of the past, but a declaration for the decades to come.

Together through our seven global associations, through partnership with the United Nations, and through the tireless service of Ambassadors for Peace, we will advance interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universal values.

If not us, who? If not now, when?

One family under God. Let this be more than a phrase; let it be our shared reality and our shared commitment. Thank you — and may the Universal Peace Federation continue to be a beacon of hope and a force for peace for generations to come.

Dr. Tageldin Hamad

Universal Peace Federation International



Earlier Statement:

UPF Celebrates 20 Years of Global Peacebuilding

UPF 20th Anniversary: Two Decades of Global Peacebuilding and Dialogue

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), inaugurated on September 12, 2005, by [Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon](#) and [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) at Lincoln Center in New York. Over the past two decades, UPF has grown into a global alliance of peacebuilders, partnering with governments, civil society, and faith communities to promote dialogue, cooperation, and sustainable development.

Honouring Ambassadors for Peace and Partners Worldwide

In commemoration of this milestone, UPF extends heartfelt gratitude to its tens of thousands of Ambassadors for Peace and partners around the world. Their tireless work in interfaith dialogue, humanitarian relief, education, environmental initiatives, and moral leadership has brought the vision of "one family under God" closer to reality.

Seven Global Peace Associations: Engaging Leaders Across All Sectors

Since its founding, UPF has supported the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through practical peacebuilding efforts in every region. It has launched seven global associations engaging parliamentarians, faith leaders, scholars, women, business leaders, artists, and former heads of state to address the world's most urgent challenges.

Family, Service, and Shared Values: The Principles of Peace

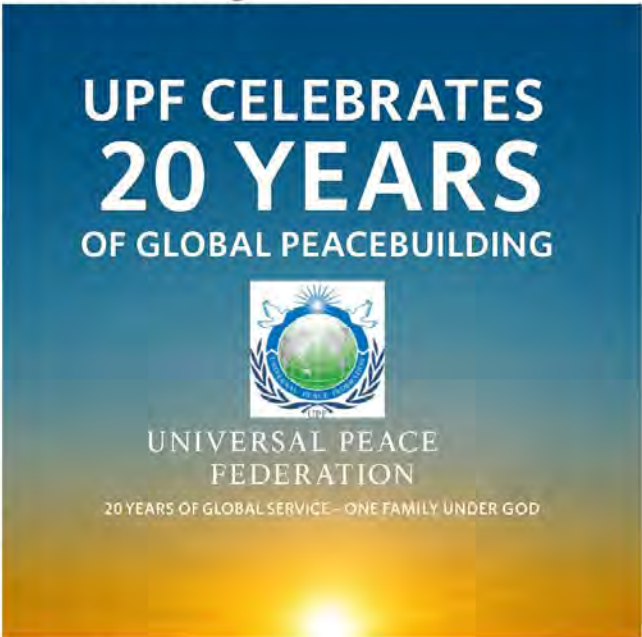
Our principles remain unchanged: peace begins with the family; true leadership is rooted in service; and reconciliation across all boundaries is possible when we center our actions on shared spiritual values.

Reaffirming Commitment to the United Nations and Global Partnerships

As we look ahead, UPF reaffirms its commitment to supporting the UN, expanding its peace initiatives worldwide, and creating a healthier, more hopeful information space online. In a time of uncertainty and division, we pledge to remain a steadfast voice for unity, dignity, and peace.

To all our partners we say: thank you. Let us continue walking together toward a world of mutual prosperity and lasting peace.

Universal Peace Federation
20 Years of Global Service – One Family under God



Read More:

[Dr Hak Ja Han - Mother of Peace, A Life Dedicated to Unity, Family, and Global Peacebuilding](#)

[Universal Peace Federation Declares Spiritual Unity and Religious Freedom 2025 Interfaith Leadership Conference, Republic of Korea](#)

[Honouring a Legacy of Peace - Rev Dr Sun Myung Moon](#)

[Fostering Dialogue and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula](#)

[The United Nations at 80: A Partner for Peace and Sustainable Development](#)