

International Day of Peace Observed in France

Jacques Marion
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Paris, France—More than 70 Ambassadors for Peace and guests attended a UPF event held to mark the UN International Day of Peace.

The celebration was held on September 19, 2015, in Paris at the Salle Accueil Barouillère and was organized jointly with the French chapter of Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization.

The theme of the 2015 International Day of Peace was “Partnership for Peace—Dignity for All.” As the moderator, Patrick Jouan, UPF-France vice president, welcomed the participants. The first session began with a brief report by UPF-France President Jacques Marion on the recent World Summit 2015 and Sunhak Peace Prize ceremony, which had taken place in Korea in the last days of August.

The main speaker of the day, Mr. Doudou Diène from Senegal, then was introduced. A former UNESCO Intercultural and Interreligious Department director, former UN rapporteur on racism, discrimination and intolerance, and until this year a member of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Gaza, Mr. Diène had attended the World Summit 2015.

He gave a very articulate speech on the challenges facing Europe, from the migrants to war in the Middle East, in the context of a global transformation redefining the way we look at the world, national boundaries and human solidarity. He emphasized the need for interreligious dialogue, and the conditions it needs to succeed.

First, he said, humankind must shift from a theology-based dialogue to a dialogue based on ethics, in which we identify our common values. Then we must shift from a widespread ideological view of religion that focuses on geopolitical interests and leads to conflict and violence to an ethical view based on human rights and the human spirit, reaffirming freedom of conscience and expression. Mr. Diène said that humankind should pay attention to the spontaneous momentum of solidarity expressed by people around the world, as seen in recent examples of solidarity with the migrants, as a sign of a dawning new era. The audience was captivated by his speech, and the question-answer session went far beyond the allotted time.

In the second session Mrs. Patricia Lalonde, president of the women’s rights association MEWA, who has worked to support women’s rights in Afghanistan, Kurdistan and other nations, gave her perspective and a report on projects of her association regarding the question of migrants in Europe. Brigitte Wada, WFWP-France president and the session moderator, reported briefly on WFWP social activities around the world.

Jacques Marion concluded the day, on the occasion of the 10-year anniversary of UPF, with a presentation on the UPF vision and projects in regard to the current crises in Europe. He outlined UPF’s two main strategies of peace: through interreligious dialogue and cooperation between religious and political leaders; and through strengthening the family. He then presented several tools of peace education, from youth programs to a character education curriculum, which UPF intends to develop until 2020.