



Balkan Leadership Conference

Tirana, Albania, March 30, 2019

By Jacques Marion

On March 30, 2019, UPF Albania organized in Tirana a Balkan Leadership Conference on the theme: “Good Governance and Sustainable Peace in the Balkans: the necessity of cooperation – the challenge of integration”. The conference brought together 120 participants, including former heads of state and government from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo, and over 30 members of parliament from Albania, Kosovo and Northern Macedonia.

The meeting laid the foundation for the Europe and Middle East Summit to be held by UPF in Tirana, Albania, on October 25-27, 2019.

The presence of former Balkan heads of state and the gathering of Albanian parliamentarians from both ruling and opposition parties, at a time of enduring conflict in the Albanian Parliament, raised the interest of the local media which covered live the whole event.



The first session was moderated by **Hon. Gaqo Apostoli**, former Minister of Transport and current chairman of UPF in Albania.



Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, chairman of UPF Europe & Middle East, greeted participants on behalf of UPF and reported about the recent World Summit 2019 held in Korea, which was attended by most participants on the panel.



Former Albanian **President Alfred Moisiu** reviewed some of the challenges faced by his own country and Balkan nations. He pointed to nationalistic trends and outside influence, recalling the Balkan history and regretting a lack of will to find common solutions.





Former Croatian **President Stjepan Mesic** emphasized the need for Balkan nations to gain a new European identity through joining the European Union, to develop bilateral ties as a first step toward integration, and to get rid of mutual mistrust and what he called “legends and myths which we treat as historical facts”.



Former Albanian **President Rexhep Meidani** assessed the status of Balkan nations applying to join the European Union and NATO, evaluating the period needed to complete the process, and recommending more interaction to counter foreign influence preventing integration.



Former Kosovo **President Fatmir Sejdiu** denounced the pressure exerted against his country in the name of a dialogue that seeks to challenge the independence of Kosovo. At the same time, he said, the country needs to strengthen youth education and the fight against organized crime.



Former **President Zivko Budimir** of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina spoke about the challenges resulting from the political configuration of his country inherited



from the Dayton Agreement. It weakens democracy, he said, and leaves people with less and less hope for change in the face of pressure from foreign influence.



Former **Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi** of Kosovo spoke about the option of a federation of the “four small states in the Balkans” – Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia – none of which is in the position to claim hegemony, he said, and which would empower them politically, economically and militarily in the face of a hostile environment.



Concluding the session, **Dr. Michael Balcomb**, Chairman of the Family

Federation in the Europe & Middle East Region, announced the plan to hold the Europe & Middle East Summit 2019 in Tirana in October and to invite UPF Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to give the keynote address. Hon. Gaqo Apostoli read the resolution to hold the Summit in Tirana, which then was signed by all participants.



The second session on the theme “Parliamentarian Diplomacy and the Role of Parliamentarians for Peace”, was moderated by **Hon. Shezai Rrokaj**, coordinator of the Parliamentarians for Peace initiative (IAPP) in Albania.



Mr. Jack Corley, head of UPF in Eastern Europe, gave introductory



remarks on IAPP's vision to address issues through bipartisan cooperation and governance.

Then 7 members of parliament representing 3 Balkan nations, including both ruling and opposition parties in Albania and Kosovo, shared their perspective for sustainable development in their country and the Balkan region. They included:

From Albania: Prof. Dr. Vasilika Hysi, Deputy Chair of the Parliament and Hon. Dashamir Shehi, Prof. Dr. Mimoza Hafizi and Hon. Rajmonda Stefa, Members of Parliament.

From Kosovo: H. E. Jakup Krasniqi, former Chairman of the Parliament and

Hon. Albin Kurti, Member of Parliament and leader of the opposition party;

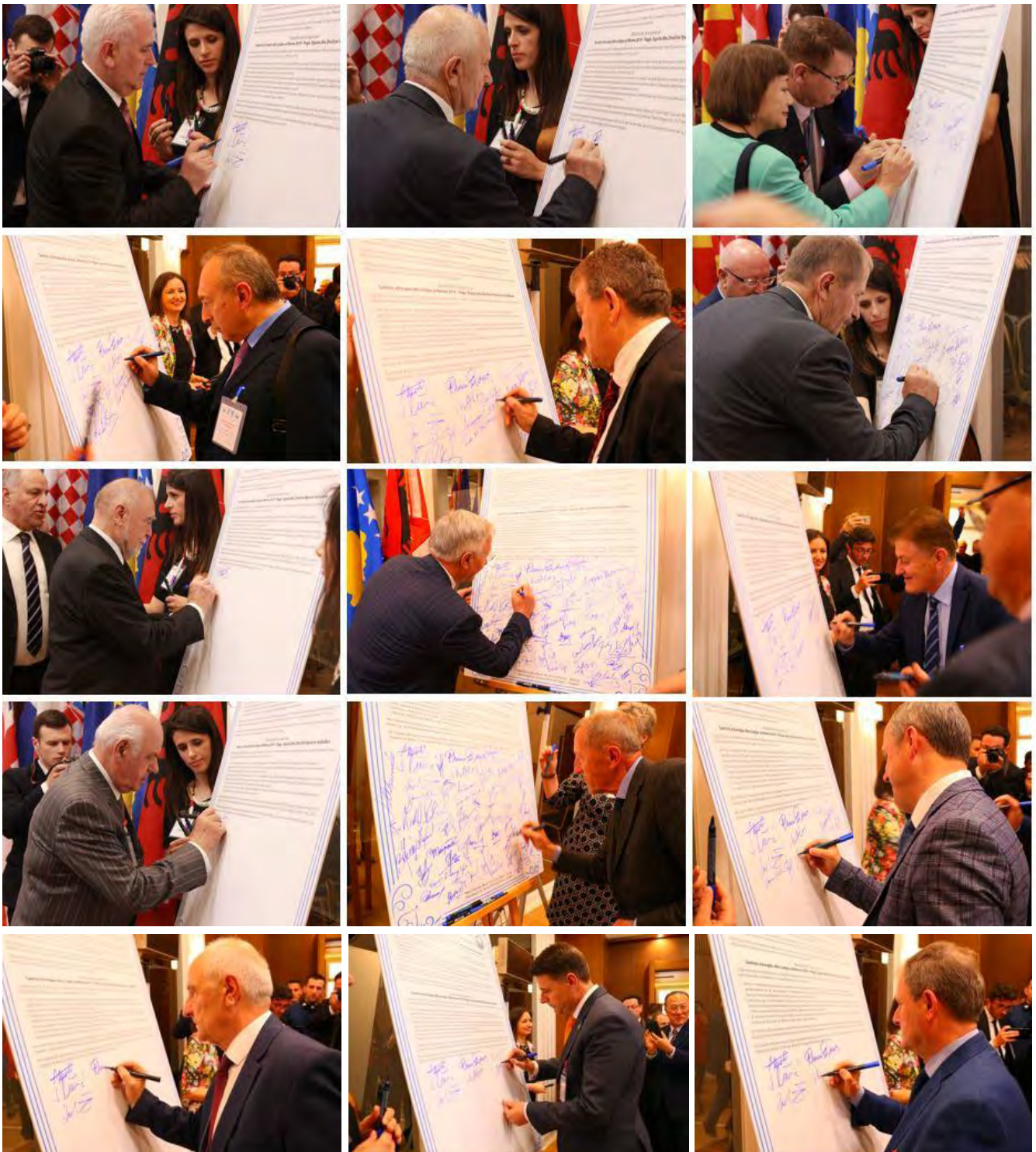
From Northern Macedonia: Hon. Gjylmysere Kasapi, Member of Parliament.



Mr. Jacques Marion, Secretary General of UPF Europe, concluded with remarks on the significance of holding this upcoming Summit in the Balkans.

During the discussion that followed, participants gave some input on the various themes that the Summit could address.

The event was regularly reported in the news in the following days, including interviews of the former presidents of Albania who attended the meeting.





Universal Peace Federation
 International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace
 Federata e Paqes Universale
 Organizata Ndërkombëtare e Parlamentarëve për Paqe



Resolution to convene the
Europe and Middle East Summit 2019 – Peace, Security and Development in the Balkans

As participants in the Balkan Leadership Conference and Forum of Parliamentarians for Peace sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation and convened in Tirana, Albania, on March 30, 2019;

- Aware of the urgent need for responsible leadership and good governance in bringing about a world of lasting peace, in which people of all nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, and worldviews live together in mutual respect, harmony and cooperation, as one family under God;
- Recognizing that the critical challenges of our time, such as violent extremism, poverty, the degradation of the environment or the crisis of the family require a transnational approach and a collaboration of various sectors of society, including government, civil society, faith-based organizations, academia and the private sector;
- As former heads of state and government and as members of parliaments from the Balkan region, which plays a crucial role as a crossroads of nationalities, cultures and religions linking Europe and the Middle East;

We endorse the proposal to convene the Europe and Middle East Summit 2019 on Peace, Security and Human Development in the Balkans, and we solicit the support of Albanian authorities to host this Summit in Tirana, Albania, on October 25 – 27, 2019.

We respectfully and wholeheartedly extend our invitation to the UPF Co-Founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, to honor us by visiting Tirana Albania from October 23-28 and to deliver the Summit Keynote Address.

Rezolutë për të organizuar
Samitin e Evropës dhe Lindjes së Mesme 2019 – Paqja, Siguria dhe Zhvillimi Njerëzor në Ballkan

Si pjesëmarrës në Konferencën e Lidërshiptit Ballkanik dhe Forumin e Parlamentarëve për Paqe të sponsorizuar prej Federatës së Paqes Universale dhe të mbledhur në Tiranë, Shqipëri, në 30 mars, 2019;

- Jemi të vetëdijshëm për nevojën për lidhshmëri të përgjegjshme dhe qeverisje të mirë për të realizuar një botë paqeje të qëndrueshme, në të cilën njerëzit e të gjitha kombësive, etnive, kulturave dhe botëkuptimeve të jetojnë së bashku në respekt, harmoni dhe bashkëpunim të ndërsjellët, si një familje nën Zot;
- Duke pranuar se sfidat kritike të kohës sonë, të tilla si ekstremizmi i dhunshëm, varfëria, degradimi i mjedisit apo krizat e familjes kërkojnë një qasje ndërkombëtare dhe një bashkëpunim të sektorëve të shumëllojshëm të shoqërisë, përfshi qeverinë, shoqërinë civile, organizatat me bazë besimin fetar, akademinë dhe sektorin privat;
- Si ish krerë shtetesh e qeverish dhe si anëtarë të parlamenteve nga rajoni i Ballkanit, që luan një rol kyç si udhëkryqi i kombësive, kulturave dhe feve që lidhin Evropën dhe Lindjen e Mesme;

Ne mbështesim propozimin për të thirrur në Ballkan Samitin e Evropës dhe Lindjes së Mesme 2019 mbi Paqen, Sigurinë dhe Zhvillimin Njerëzor, dhe kërkojmë mbështetjen e autoriteteve shqiptare për organizimin e këtij Samiti në Tiranë, Shqipëri, më 25-27 tetor, 2019.

Me respekt dhe përzemësi, ftojmë bashkë-themeluesen e FPU-së, Dr. Hak Xha Han Moon, për të na nderuar me vizitën e saj në Tiranë, Shqipëri në datat 23-28 tetor dhe për të mbajtur fjalën kryesore në Samit.

(The following section contains numerous handwritten signatures in blue ink, including names like Ahmet, Banu, G. G. G., and others, all written in cursive script.)

Signed this day, March 30, 2019, in Tirana – Albania
 Nënshkruar sot, 30 mars 2019, në Tiranë – Shqipëri