

Report on the ELC in Oslo -Celebration of the UN International Day of Peace

Steinar Murud

21st and 22nd September 2012

Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future



This conference which was sponsored by the Norwegian Government was attended by one hundred participants from all parts of Europe. Each sessions addressed a different aspect of the main UN theme, Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future. In all the two day conference included 24 well qualified speakers who illuminated the topics in a stimulating way.



Session one: A New Vision for Sustainable Peace

Mr. Steinar Murud, Secretary General of UPF Norway, gave his welcoming remarks, praising the efforts of all the participating leaders, who are making great efforts in their respective fields. World peace cannot be created by any single individual or group - we all need to work together in order to build sustainable peace.

Mr. Stian Bragtvedt, Communication Officer in the Norwegian UN office in Oslo, commented on the role of the UN and the importance of aligning national politics with the UN. He also explained about the role of the local Norwegian UN Association, which is a large office with its 30 employees.

Mr. Mark Brann, Secretary General UPF Europe, spoke on the importance of the logic of love in combination with the logic of power, which has been the main way of solving conflicts. He illustrated his point by talking about Dr. Moon's and UPF's peace initiatives in Nepal and in North Korea.

Session two: Education for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Peace

When people of the world are only concerned with their own interest, a common culture of peace is very distant. How can we educate people in global citizenship?

This was a youth session with **Bogdan Pammer**, UPF Youth Europe Director, as the moderator.



Left to right: Ms. Irene Incerti, Ms. Sarah Ben-Amman, Ms. Hilde Ekeberg, Ms. Nassima Dzair and Mr. Bogdan Pammer

Ms. Hilde Ekeberg, Norwegian Director of Youth for Understanding, Spoke about the value of cultural

exchange. Learning to understand each other beyond cultural and national difference is one of the fundamentals for sustainable peace.

Ms. Nassima Dzair, Director of the international Federation of Medical Students' Associations, used her own background as an example. She is from Algerian parentage, born in Norway and attended the French school in Oslo. Her diverse background made her feel very connected to the theme of being a global citizen.

Ms. Sarah Ben-Ammar, a Project Manager from Finland, also with a very international background, spoke about the need for informal education. While society values formal professional education, in addition we need informal education and learning in order to mature as human beings.

Ms. Irene Incerti, Board member of Young Dialogue in Norway, and UPF Youth representative, spoke on freedom and responsibility. We all value freedom, but to be responsible in all kinds of situations is fundamental to building peaceful relations.

After lunch, the conference sessions continued in the Norwegian Parliament.



Session three: Our Spiritual Traditions and Sustainable Peace

While the essence of religion pertains to good values; in reality we can see tension between religions and denominations. How can religions contribute to sustainable peace?

Ms. Marcia de Abreu from WFPW Spain moderated the session.



Mr. Stein Villumstad, Secretary General of the European Council of Religious Leaders, asked why it is important to involve religions in the peace process? He gave five answers:

- 1) The importance of God cannot be ignored.
- 2) There's a growing movement towards interfaith engagement.
- 3) Religions need to be engaged if we are to solve the problems of society.
- 4) The power of religious assets, for example The Golden Rule.
- 5) Religions include important social groups such as women's groups and youth groups.



Imam Sajid, Chairman of Dialogue of Cultures in Europe, said we all have to work together for our common good. "Actions speak louder than words. If there is no action, words are meaningless. We must speak to other people peacefully. We cannot use force or compulsion against each other. Respect each other. Without the family there is not going to be any peace. Without role models, we're going nowhere. Religions need to be engaged. Secular society needs to make space for religions".



Venerable Bhante Sobhana, from Stockholm Sri Lanka Theravada Buddhist Temple expressed that morality is the first step in our training: the importance of right speech – abstaining from worthless talk; the importance of right action – abstaining from robbing and stealing; the importance of right livelihood. The world is like a mirror; if you look at the world with a smiling face, you will see others smiling back at you as a reflection of yourself. Even if things are others’ fault, you must see it as your own fault. If you treat others kindly, they will treat you kindly..

Mr. Tim Miller, Vice Chair of UPF Europe, spoke on the relationship between -public and private concerns. Public values and affairs always need to have priority over private matters if we are to avoid irresponsible and damaging conduct which causes conflict and hurt.



Session four: Human Rights – a Necessity for Sustainable Peace

Human rights have high priority in our culture. What is their role in peace building?

Mr. Ed Brown, from the Stefanus Alliance International, was an effective moderator.



Left to right: Mr. Eyal Bloch, Ms. Silvia Escobar, Mr. ed Brown and Mr. Jan Egeland

Ms. Silvia Escobar, former Human Rights Ambassador for Spain, asked “If Human Rights were respected universally, would there be an ideal world?” Maybe not, but surely Human Rights are a prerequisite. She quoted Kofi Annan’s millennium speech: “No development without peace; no peace without human rights.”

Civil society needs to promote Human Rights. Promote respect for and educate about Human Rights. There is no genuine democracy without Human rights.

Mr. Jan Egeland, Director of Human Rights Watch Europe, pointed out the decreasing number of armed conflicts and lesser risk of suffering a violent death in the world today compared with past periods. At the same time the number of democracies have increased and the number of dictatorships decreased.

One challenge is internal conflicts and their adverse impact on human rights. The UN has been ineffective

in solving such internal armed conflicts, e.g. in Syria. The Security Council members take different sides in the conflict. Human rights and peace are interrelated. The individual should be protected against government and armed actors. Human rights are for everybody without discrimination.

Mr. Eyal Bloch, founder of Education for Sustainability, Israel, asked the question: “How can we make good news out of good deeds?” The media likes conflicts, but if we build something peacefully together, that is not a news item. There are instances of media organizations deliberately creating conflict between Israelis and Arabs in order to make news. .

In Israel Eyal is involved, among other things, in working with the army - teaching soldiers to love peace. We have to enter the formal system in order to have impact and make it sustainable. “Our heart and our head need to communicate in order to build peace but the biggest distance on earth seems to be the 30 cm between the head and the heart.”

Session five: Contributing to Sustainable Peace between Israelis and the Palestinians



Film premiere of Within the Eye of the Storm shown in the Norwegian Parliament

This session was a film premiere of a documentary film made by the Bereaved Family Forum in Israel. This Forum consists of people who have lost their children or close relatives in the ongoing conflict. The film followed one Palestinian and one Israeli in their efforts for reconciliation and was shown simultaneously in many cities in Israel and Palestine on this International Day of Peace.

Dinner and Cultural Performances

The evening dinner was also a celebration with cultural performances. Ms. Torhild Nigar, song-writer and composer, sang “Eternity” which won the Norwegian final of the Eurovision Song Contest some years back.

A great surprise for all participants was the performance of Kjell Elvis Bjørnstad, number one Elvis tribute artist in Europe. He charmed everybody with his performance. As this was a peace conference he took time to share how he is engaged in supporting thousands of orphans in Burma as his own effort for peace.

Our Ambassador for Peace, Faizullah Khan (Former Speaker of Hackney Council in London), recited his own wonderful poems as the conclusion of the evening.



Left to right: Torhild Nigar, Kjell Elvis Bjørnstad and Faizullah Khan

Day 2

Session six; Human Security and Sustainable Peace

The question of security is complex. Which areas are involved and how can we strengthen human security?

Mr. Robin Marsh, Secretary General UPF UK, moderated the session.



Left to right: Mrs. Kerstin Schulz, Prof. Akiko Yamanaka, Mr. Robin Marsh, Mrs. Carolyn Handschin and Mrs. Isabel Hillestad

Professor Akiko Yamanaka, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, emphasized how political dynamics have changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. Now we are faced with a variety of threats to human security such as: shortage of natural resources, natural disasters, nuclear accidents and financial crisis. Security issues are increasingly complex and multi-faceted. There are environmental and social dimensions and their inter-linkage. Even the USA, the sole super power, cannot function without cooperation with other states.

Professor Yamanaka explored the concept of preventative diplomacy - using nonviolent means to resolve international conflicts. She concluded by quoting Aristotle: “It is more difficult to organize the peace than to win a war.”

Mrs. Kerstin Schultz, Researcher from the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research in Stockholm, spoke on the increasing number of civilian casualties in conflicts. In World War I, there were 10% civilian casualties, in World War II 45-50%, in some recent conflicts more than 90% civilian victims.

It is essential in peace building to restore civil society. Unemployed young men are easy to recruit for warfare. In some countries it is dangerous to socialize outside your own ethnic group. Poverty eradication should be given preference over military spending.

Women must be given greater priority - UN resolution 1325 highlights the situation of women in armed conflicts. Women in Africa organize themselves across ethnical borders and such valuable work has even been recognised with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. There is great under-representation of women in politics – greater representation would assist peace-building and conflict prevention.

Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, President of WFPW in Europe, said: “The emphasis must be on “inclusivity”. In a culture of peace, we can’t just think of external things, we have to embrace the citizens in our culture of peace.

We often speak of the society and the individual, but the family is a bridge that can build peace in the world and peace in the individual. Let us consider a new paradigm: Familiarchy- a system that minimizes the need for an intricate legal system and its enforcement and relies upon inclusivity and respect for the other.

Mrs. Isabel Hillestad, from the Institute of Family Policy in Oslo, spoke about the state of the family in Europe. The birth rate has fallen in Europe and today those over 65 outnumber those under 14, a situation that could eventually lead to the bankruptcy of the welfare state. The family is a basic condition for peace. The family here in Europe is being destabilized by: an aging population, critical birthrate and the escalating number of abortions. However the family is the antidote against individualism. We need a culture favorable for the family and motherhood, if we are to find sustainable peace.

Session seven; Peace Loving Nations retaining Military Strength -

a Prerequisite for Sustainable Peace

Moderator Mr. Mark Brann, Chair UPF Europe.



Left to right: Mr. Jack Corley, Mr. Mark Brann, Colonel Gjermund Eide and Dr. Werner Fasslabend



Dr. Werner Fasslabend, former Defense Minister of Austria, identified the areas of tension and instability around the globe. In addition to analysing trouble spots in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, Dr Fasslabend dwelt particularly on the military buildup in China. For the first time in China's history there is no threat from the north, Mongolia and Siberia, nor from the south west, India and Pakistan. So China can focus on its Eastern maritime front where China's territorial claims go all the way down to Indonesia. Just as NATO is securing the Atlantic Rim, there is a need for an alliance to secure the islands in the Pacific Rim. Japan had before and during World War II its "Greater Asian Co-Prosperty System". It occupied a wide territory all the way to Burma, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Now China is on a similar track. China spends a lot more than Japan, South Korea and the Philippines on its military. In the 1990 Europe could not prevent the Yugoslavia crisis because we were ill-prepared. The key is to foresee future threats and to be prepared.

Colonel Gjermund Eide, from the Norwegian Military College, pointed out the changing global security situation since the Cold War. There is a growing unpredictability. We have failed states. We have the inherent unpredictability of non-state actors, e.g. terrorists. There is increased chaos and disorder. In addition there is also the danger of cyber-attacks and long range weapons.

Obama said: "Make no mistake about it, evil exists." Negotiations alone would not have been enough to make

Hitler's regime lay down their arms and today it will not be enough to combat Al Quaida. Colonel Eide referred to the Righteous War Principle: War as last resort, for the purpose self-defence and authorised by the UN Security Council. We need smart power which is an optimal combination of hard and soft power if we are to win not only the war but also the peace.

Mr. Jack Corley, chair UPF-UK, made insightful reference to the biblical archetype represented by Cain and Abel. Cain planned to get rid of his brother Abel. Ideally Abel should have won the heart of Cain peacefully through effective communication. However once Cain had a weapon in his hand, what should Abel have done? He should have protected himself.

In contrast in the story of Jacob and Esau, Esau tried to kill Jacob, but Jacob escaped and only returned 21 years later. Although Esau's enmity remained, Jacob had acquired wisdom and wealth during his exile and used them to melt the heart of his brother, leading to a dramatic reconciliation. After World War I, Germany, a proud nation was humiliated after its military defeat. France was adamant that Germany should pay in full for its aggression and this resulted in the Treaty of Versailles - a very punishing treaty with no hint of compassion.

This enabled Hitler to play on the resentment of the German people and their desire for revenge. This is illustrated by the fact that Hitler had the French sign their surrender in the very same train carriage and in the same village as the German Generals surrendered in 1918. In contrast after WWII the Marshall plan provided generous aid to former enemies and as a result former enemies turned into the closest allies of USA, Britain and France. We should combine strong defense with magnanimity towards the defeated enemy such that they become our friend.

The lunch on Saturday was organized as a meeting between the youth participants and Professor Yamanaka who made herself available for questions, answers and discussion.

Session eight: Role Models and Peacemakers

Presentations about paths to peace are valuable, but good role models can give added inspiration. This session touched on this topic by speaking about a nation and an individual.

Mrs. Cecilie Fortune, UPF-UK, was the moderator

Professor Öyvind Tønnesson: The Norwegian government wants Norway to be recognised as a ‘peace nation’. The former PM started his own peace centre. Peace is trendy in Norway, and this image is confirmed by outside observers. Since 1991 the Nobel Peace Prize based in Norway has been a focus of the international media.

The University of Oslo carried out research to analyse whether Scandinavia has its own peace tradition or not. Is it true that Norway has a strong peace tradition? Professor Tønnesson’s interesting answer: “It is a myth. But it is a good myth and it is better to live with a good myth than none.”



Mr. Tim Miller, Vice-Chair of UPF Europe While professor Tønnesson spoke of a national tradition, Tim Miller spoke of an individual tradition. His example was drawn from the Autobiography of UPF’s founder, Dr. Sun Myung Moon, As a peace Loving Global Citizen.

He spoke of Father Moon’s early life experiences of colonial oppression, torture, civil war and being a refugee, his religious calling to dedicate himself for World Peace and how one individual can accomplish much, particularly how his meetings with Gorbachev and Kim Il Sung could have a positive impact on international relations.

The ninth and final session: Update and conclusion

Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, gave an update on WFWP activities in 2012 and **Mr. Mark Brann**, gave an update of UPF activities.

In summary we enjoyed two days of stimulating presentations, questions and comments. Many expressed that they learned a lot and enjoyed the cultural performances. New relationships were built and ideas were conceived. All these inspirations will enable the conference to have a lifelong after these short two days in Oslo.

