

United Nations international Day of Peace

“The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Religion”

Oslo, Norway, 22. September 2016



By Steinar Murud

The UN International Day of Peace was celebrated together with the Wat Thai Buddhist Temple in Oslo on Thursday the 22. September. The Temple staff deserves credit for their generous preparation of Thai food, refreshments and all decorations for the event.

The UN topic for the day was about the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). We decided however to adjust the title to include religion, under the title; «The UN SDG and Religion». Our question was, «where does religion come into the picture?» And «How can religion contribute?»

The advisor from the UN Communication Office in Oslo, Ms. Malin Lenita Vik, presented the new 17 UN SDG as an ambitious plan to end

extreme poverty, create peace and stop the climate change within the time span of 15 years until 2030.

In her presentation, she touched on the present situation in the world and the need for these particular goals. She explained about the process of selection of these goals, and emphasized the importance of including many in the selection process.

Having goals helps to focus our efforts in the same direction. During the recent Millennium Goals the extreme poverty has been reduced by 50 percent. The realization of the goals is not only a governmental task; we can all be involved, whether we are an organization or individual, ms Vik concluded.

The monk Pramaha Apinon from the Wat Thai Temple gave a presentation

about «A Buddhist Approach to Peace».

He said in spite of the many good resolutions we have observed up to now, we still have conflicts. Often human beings seem to be more attracted to violence than to peace. And to make peace is often more easy to create than to keep. Peace seems temporary.

Conflicts arise in the mind and should be resolved there. We are mind.

Apinon said that peace and happiness go together. Without peace there is no happiness and vice versa. He added another synonym; freedom. Only a free man can be peaceful and happy. He elaborated on three freedoms; physical, social and spiritual.

Meditation is a Buddhist practice to help the mind towards freedom. It is difficult to control the world, but we can learn to control our mind. We need to inspire people to spread happiness, was central in Pramaha Apinons approach to peace.

Steinar Murud, leader of UPF Norway, spoke on the topic «Spiritual Values and World Peace». He characterized the SDG as universal and something everybody should be able to agree upon.

Peace itself is something we all should be able to agree upon but still we have conflicts. No peace has been sustainable. Why not?

Murud said that intelligent and knowledgeable people are good, but





give no guarantee for World Peace. Knowledge is a step on the way, but not enough.

The real foundation in any society is a question of values, not material but spiritual values.

It is this foundation that has inspired and developed peaceful societies.

In the UNESCO constitution it says; Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Peace must begin in the human mind and then expressed externally. This is a challenge. We might have good goals but if they are not rooted in our hearts they can easily remain as a utopian goal.

Murud referred to Dag Hammarskiöld, the 2nd UN secretary general, who himself said the world needs a spiritual rebirth. To the degree that our society has a healthy foundation, based on spiritual values, the external goals can be achieved. Murud concluded that it is for this purpose that religions can contribute.

The discussion that followed pointed out the difference in the UN approach to peace in external political goals and the eastern and religious approach focused on the spiritual aspect. They are both most relevant and complementary to build a peaceful world.

Great refreshments made by the staff of the temple was much appreciated during the final social mingling that concluded the celebration.”