

UPF Africa: Looking back at UPF's 18 years of Endeavors for Peace

Katherine Rigney

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18th anniversary of founding the Universal Peace Federation



Opening Session

After introducing the context of the day's meeting, Dr. Paterne Zinsou, led the ceremony to offer greetings to Heavenly Parent and True Parents. Subsequently, Reverend Jean Augustin Ghomsi offered a heartfelt prayer to commence the celebration in the grace of the Heavenly Parent.

A virtual candle-lighting ceremony and the cutting of the 18th-anniversary cake for UPF followed.

Co-chair Dr. Katherine Rigney began by recalling the presence of the President of Burundi, His Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza, during the inauguration of UPF. She emphasized that his presence as the sole head of state at the foundation and launch of UPF provided a strong foundation for Africa and embodied the hope that this continent carries. She reminded everyone that for the international president of FFWPU, Dr. Song, Africa represents the world's hope due to its unique spirituality. Dr. Rigney stressed the importance of unity among the organizations established by the True Parents to restore the world. She encouraged harmonious cooperation and unity while calling for an end to criticism among them. She concluded by reaffirming Dr. Song's conviction that God has chosen Africa to lead the world towards global restoration and called for mutual support to realize this vision.

Co-chair Ambassador Adama Doumbia began by wishing UPF and all the members present at the meeting a happy anniversary. He explained that while this occasion is normally a celebration, it has been turned into a working session due to the many tasks at hand. He shared his personal experience during the trip for the foundation and inauguration of UPF in Alaska, where they went fishing, an activity organized by True Father to prepare them for UPF's mission. Ambassador Doumbia also discussed the early days of UPF and explained that UPF's mission was to translate the Divine Principle into a universal language for the personalities and authorities with whom they work. He also mentioned the significance of Expo 2023 in South Korea, emphasizing that Africa's support was essential. He stressed the need to keep the promise made to the True Mother to assist in this endeavor.

Next, Ambassador Doumbia asked countries that had already begun working on Expo 2023 to present their progress, strongly encouraging other countries to follow their example. Several countries shared their ongoing efforts, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Kenya, and Malawi.

Dr. Kathy Rigney then reminded everyone that there are only 60 days left for nations to submit the countries they support, and it is essential to get involved now to ensure that Africa makes a significant contribution to Busan's victory. True Mother has hope, but we need results, and time is running out.

Session 2: Communication - Orientations and Discussions

During the main presentation, Dr. Paterne Zinsou, Secretary-General of the UPF Africa Region, delivered a comprehensive address centered around the theme: "Promoting Sustainable Development Goals, Establishing Partnerships, and Enhancing Institutional Relations with the United Nations System - Initiatives to Fortify the Mission of Ambassadors for Peace." Through his presentation, Dr. Zinsou artfully conveyed and reiterated the foundational vision of the True Parents for UPF, elucidating the path to be followed by all those dedicated to the cause of restoration.

Dr. Zinsou also underscored the profound words of the True Mother regarding UPF's core purpose: "The fundamental essence of UPF is to be an organization that guides people toward blessings." This presentation, firmly grounded in the teachings and guidance of True Parents, proved to be exceptionally enlightening, offering all participants a deeper insight into the profound commitment of True Parents to the work of UPF.

Furthermore, Dr. Zinsou delved into various aspects, including True Parents' vision, practical relations and growth, the significance of recognizing and appointing Ambassadors for Peace, their roles and the criteria for selection, and the Five Principles of Peace. Dr. Zinsou also shed light on the foundational principles of NGO status within the ECOSOC framework and the unique characteristics of UPF's General Consultative Status.

Lastly, participants received comprehensive explanations of the Heavenly Africa Project, including its achievements and ongoing activities within UPF in Africa. Additionally, Dr. Zinsou emphasized the importance of commemorating the United Nations International Days as an integral part of the organization's mission and outreach efforts.



Interventions - Questions - Answers

Q: How does the regional staff plan to assist nations that have not yet launched UPF- affiliated organizations?

Rev. Clément Tsana

A: Planning is underway to launch organizations at both the regional and national levels. However, the most crucial step is to educate the Ambassadors for Peace, who will be the key players in these organizations. The regional coordinator holds the primary responsibility for the association, so they should always be involved before any activities commences.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Q: What are the most important international days to commemorate?

Rev. Clément Tsana

A: The most significant international days will be communicated to the Secretaries- General so that they are aware and can prepare activities accordingly.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Q: Is there an existing standard structure at the regional level that all nations should follow for organizing UPF?

Rev. Clément Tsana

A: Work is currently underway between the regional staff and the international president to regulate and finalize the standard structuring of UPF.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Q: Is it possible to make the document presented by Dr. Zinsou available and to schedule sessions in the same direction to educate national leaders, and standardize UPF programs in Africa?

Rev. Tati Ntoko

A: Utilize available documents such as the Cheon Seon Gyeong, Pyeong Hwa Gyeong, and Chambumo Gyeong, which are the resources left by the True Parents.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Intervention: Considering traditional leaders who are integral to the realities of Africa and who can also contribute to the restoration. (Suggestion)

Rev. Jean Augustin Ghomsi

A: The association of traditional leaders will be revived, reorganized, and restructured with a coordinator to oversee the activities.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Q: What will be the distinction between the witnessing done by FFWPU and the testimony given by UPF?

Mr. Claudel Kanyama

A: There is no distinction, as we are essentially doing the same work but with different target audiences. Let us not forget that the essence of UPF is ultimately to bestow blessings.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Q: What will be the content of the witnessing done by UPF, how far should it go, and at what point should it stop?

Mr. Aka Saye Lazare

A: There is no distinction, as we are essentially doing the same work but with different target audiences. Let us not forget that the essence of UPF is ultimately to bestow blessings.

Dr. Zinsou Paterne

Orientations of UPF Africa

Ambassador Doumbia addressed several crucial points during the meeting:

Financial Autonomy: It was emphasized that UPF Africa, now in its 18th year, must strive for financial autonomy. The organization is entering a phase where maturity is paramount. The goal is to harmonize the organization throughout the African continent.

Currently, there is a tendency for different nations to personalize aspects such as Ambassador for Peace (AP) cards, scarves, and certificates. Given that the organization's founder is still alive, the focus should be on unity and uniformity.

The primary concern is ensuring clarity regarding the number and identity of Ambassadors for Peace. The leadership is actively working on establishing a consensus on the current count and outlining the educational and follow-up measures for the APs.

Additionally, discussions have arisen regarding the registration fees for APs, with an emphasis on the importance of introducing a basic registration fee.

International Day of Peace: The upcoming United Nations International Day of Peace was underscored as a significant event. The international UPF headquarters has requested that this day be commemorated with an activity.

Dr. Kathy Rigney reiterated the importance of the leader's presence at the meeting and expressed concern about the absence of certain key figures. Given the current providential significance and the subject matter of the meeting, this absence was deemed inappropriate.

Director Fortune Winter presented the current status of Ambassador for Peace data collection, including progress, deficiencies, and what is still expected from nations and sub-regions. Dr. Kathy expressed disappointment upon hearing the report on data collection and stressed that True Mother desires clarity on the situation. District Sub-Regional (DSR) leaders were instructed to closely monitor responses and non-responses in their respective areas to ensure the proper functioning of this critical work. The results from each nation must be reported to both the international and regional headquarters, highlighting the need for effective coordination in this effort.

Ambassador Doumbia decided to hold meetings with each sub-region before the end of the week to clarify the issues surrounding the database.

Secretary-General Dr Zinsou clarified that each coordinator must soon present their action plan. Coordinators from various FPU organizations had the opportunity to share their thoughts on the meeting's proceedings.

Finally, the Reverend Jean Pierre Kadima offered words of encouragement and a call to action, and a beautiful song performed by Goodson Ogurie was played to conclude the meeting.