

UPF Moscow, Russia: Peacekeeping and Interethnic and Interfaith Separation

Marya Nazarova
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Moscow, Russia -- In the historic Hotel National, not far from Red Square decorated with New Year's lights, UPF held a conference titled "Peacekeeping in the Context of Interethnic and Interfaith Separation."

The December 22, 2018, conference, which was attended by 70 people, was the occasion for the inauguration in Russia of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), an initiative of UPF.

The conference was opened by Iosif E. Diskin, the chair of the Commission for Harmonization of Interethnic and Interfaith Relations of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation. He spoke on "The Value Foundation of the Modern Multipolar World." Development of the world economy in a sociopolitical respect required reduction of the barriers dividing countries, he said.



The first attempt to achieve global peace was made by the end of the Middle Ages, Mr. Diskin said. Today the fact of globalization is beyond anybody's doubt, but to stop the senseless struggle against globalization, it is necessary to understand why we must be critical of unipolar globalization, he said. Today the values of liberalism and democracy have lost connection with their historical roots and national interests. Now we are dealing with a pseudo-liberal civil religion, Mr. Diskin said. A solution was proposed at the annual Munich Security Conference, where the Russian president criticized the unipolar world and proposed moving toward a multipolar world.

Konstantin V. Krylov, secretary general of the Eurasian branch of the Universal Peace Federation, summarized the work of UPF in 2018. The main milestones were the programs of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) and the Interreligious Association for Peace and

Development (IAPD), he said. As a result of its worldwide activities this year, UPF International gained the general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Mukhamet M. Gallyamov, Ph.D., the imam khatyb of the Ikhlās Mosque in the Kirovsky District of Ufa, the capital of the Russian Republic of Bashkortostan, stressed that bias in historical disputes impedes mutual understanding.



In support of his words, he quoted the Arab proverb "People are at war with what they know not." A careful study of all major Islamic movements shows that their similarities are more numerous than their differences, he said, and in fact the call for cohesion applies not only to Muslims. The Holy Quran calls on the unity of all those who worship the Most High, he said, including Christians and Jews, and recalls their common roots.

Lama Sanal Sanjayev, a representative of the centralized Buddhist organization Bagshn Kūrya of the Russian Republic of Kalmykia, emphasized the importance of the family in solving many modern social problems. He called on everyone to unite first of all in their thoughts, wishing everyone good, which relates to the spirit of the Creator. Sanal Lama said that today many people do not respect people whose worldview or religion differs from their own. However, he said, the Creator made us all different. If people don't respect others, they contradict the Creator Himself.

Maxim Melinti, Ph.D., an archpriest of the Orthodox Church and president of the public organization Island of Happiness, spoke on "The Mission of Religious Leaders in the Modern World." He said that "we cannot and do not have the right to reject a great gift in Christ -- peace between nations throughout the earth. Therefore, the main task of the church should be to maintain and expand the peaceful dialogue between nations, states, communities, power structures and religious leaders of all denominations."

In his address, Vadim V. Polyansky, the chair of the St. Petersburg religious community of conservative Judaism Masorti and chair of the Union of Eurasian Jewish Clubs Maccabi, called on everyone to be more flexible, tolerant and remember that we all live on the planet Earth, breathe the same air, drink the same water. So let's protect our fragile world in order to save the planet Earth for children and future generations, he said.

He ended his appeal by reading a prayer for peace by the great Jewish tzadik Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (in Ukraine), which he offered at United Nations headquarters in New York, in the Yangon Buddhist temple in Myanmar, in the Lutheran church, on the holy land in Jerusalem and other places of religious worship.

Vladimir A. Egorov, the director of the St. Petersburg Center for Religious Studies and a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies of the Russian Christian Academy of Humanities (St. Petersburg), spoke on "Local Experience of Integrating the Secular and the Religious in the Civil Society of the Russian Federation on the Example of the Council on Religious Studies of the 'Knowledge' Association of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region."

The period between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was a time of hopes, aspirations and expectations, he said. The past was clear, the present is not obvious, and the future is hazy. The atheistic USSR has moved to a new form of its existence as a secular state, which legally declares ideological pluralism (religious, atheistic, agnostic, materialistic, etc.): non-interference of the state in the affairs of religious organizations, and of religious organizations in the affairs of the state, the right of a citizen to practice any religion operating under Russian law.

Such religious pluralism, as well as the newly emerging relations between religious organizations and the state, among religious organizations, and between religious organizations and civil society, led to the formation of a certain informational vacuum that needed to be filled. The organization of the new civil society, which has set itself the task of eliminating this deficiency, is the Scientific and Methodological Council for Religious Studies under the "Knowledge" association of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region.



The representatives of Russia's main religious denominations presented unique speeches. At the end of the conference, the participants signed the proclamation in support of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), whose activities are focused on finding innovative solutions to the most urgent problems of our time on the local and national, regional and global levels.

The conference was attended by representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Judaism.

The speech of Sergey V. Dvoryanov, Ph.D., the founder and president of the Amicability international diplomatic club, was very lively and interesting. He congratulated everyone on the upcoming holidays, and also noted the important role of Russia in peacebuilding, especially in our time of numerous interreligious and interethnic conflicts.

Sergey G. Afanasyev, a doctor of economics and a professor, the president of the North-West State Fund for Development, and the chair of the Perspective World council of the international union of public associations (UNESCO and UN programs), also spoke at the conference.

The participants of the conference liked the very practical presentation of Damir Safin, director of the Union of Cyclists of the Russian Republic of Tatarstan. He inspired participants about the Peace Road project, initiated by UPF, which gradually has become popular in Russia. Mr. Safin described a project in Tatarstan under the auspices of the Peace Road, The Way of Tukai, which is gaining momentum. The Way of Tukai passes through the historic places of life and work of the great Tatar poet Gabdulla Tukai.

At the end of the conference, Irina Aksenova, a professor and the rector of the Upper Volga Institute, took the floor. She urged participants to carefully look at university campuses, since interethnic and interfaith harmony and cooperation are an integral part of the educational process at universities. In the course of the educational process, students naturally learn to respect people of different nations and worldviews.

The final conference of UPF-Russia in 2018 turned out to be interesting, lively and multifaceted. We'll meet again in 2019!