

UPF USA: Global Leaders Address the Opening of World Summit 2025 in Seoul

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Seoul, South Korea – World Summit 2025 opened at the Lotte World Hotel in Seoul on April 11, bringing together political and religious leaders, along with experts from various other fields, from 117 nations, to explore paths to global peace.



Under the theme "Contemporary Challenges to World Order: Establishing a New Era of Peace and Prosperity," the event marked the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, which was founded on October 24, 1945, in the same year the division of the Korean Peninsula took place.



In his welcoming remarks at the opening ceremony, **Dr. Charles S. Yang**, chairman of UPF, warned that the current security situation on the Korean Peninsula is "extremely concerning." He said that "without

peace on the Korean Peninsula, there can be no peace in Northeast Asia. Nor can we achieve world peace." He continued, "North and South Korea must resolve their hostile confrontation and create a cooperative relationship of mutual dependence and coexistence. To this end, North Korea must be persuaded to open its doors widely and cooperate with the Republic of Korea."

Dr. Paula White-Cain, senior advisor to US President Donald Trump for the newly created White House Faith Office, attested to the importance of faith and mentioned that over 1,000 faith leaders from diverse religions have visited the White House since January 20 to help shape policy, conduct faith diplomacy, and defend religious liberty.

Dr. White lauded Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and her late husband, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, for "their courageous and undaunting faith" and "their transformative leadership and their dedication to world peace," through numerous peace conferences "where even representatives from nations in conflict sit together in peace."

Pakistan Senate President **Dr. Yusuf Raza Gillani** acknowledged the daunting challenges facing our world, but voiced optimism that a new generation of leadership is emerging with a collective resolve to address the issues.

H.E. Philemon Yang, president of the UN General Assembly, shared a video message in which he acknowledged that the United Nations' founding aspiration to end the scourge of war remains urgent and unfulfilled. "Notwithstanding," he said, "we are not powerless. History has shown that nations united by resolve and common goals can embrace a brighter tomorrow."



H.E. Goodluck Jonathan, former president of Nigeria and recipient of this year's Sunhak Peace Prize Founder's Award, reminded the audience of the ideals upon which the United Nations was founded: unity, cooperation and dignity for all. He said we must protect these values "now more than ever before, because the everyday people are counting on us. The mother who just wants to feed her child. The young person looking for hope. The families driven from their homes by violence or natural disaster. The decisions we make in rooms like this ripple out into the real lives of millions."

H.E. Andres Pastrana Arango, former president of Colombia, and current president of the Centrist Democrat International, is known for his efforts to crack down on drug trafficking. Mr. Pastrana noted that Colombia was the only country in Latin America to participate in the Korean War, sending almost 5,000 soldiers. He said this is a crucial moment for humanity, which cannot afford to miss "the enormous opportunity that lies before us in building a new world."



H.E. Macky Sall, former president of Senegal, expressed his belief that the U.N. Security Council should be able to play a more decisive and robust role in the face of global security threats. He said this is why he continues to advocate for reform of the Security Council and fairer representation within global economic and financial institutions.

Madame Signe Zeikate, first lady of Costa Rica and former economist at the World Bank, reflected on her experience under Soviet occupation in her birthplace of Latvia, until its liberation in 1991. "Living through that history taught me what the true value of freedom, self-determination and the responsibility that we share to safeguard those principles mean."

She said that Costa Rica, her second home, illustrates what it means to "invest in peace." In 1948, Costa Rica made the choice to abolish its military and redirect the funds from the defense budget towards education, healthcare, social programs and environmental protection. "It signaled a social transformation that placed people's welfare above all else," she said. "Thanks to that vision, Costa Rica has fostered a culture of diplomacy, human rights, and sustainability. Our approach recognizes that lasting peace must be nurtured from within by offering a way to achieve dignified living conditions for all."



Hon. Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the US House of Representatives, pointed out that profound changes are occurring in his country and around the world, citing the radical transformation in Argentina, the unprecedented challenges in Germany and France, the rise of tensions in country after country, not to mention the actual wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, and the potential of war over Taiwan. "The fact is," he said, "the whole human race is tossed between the dangers of war, the growing violence by non-governmental systems – whether they're drug cartels or religiously motivated groups – on one hand, and the human race's desire for more science, more technology, more opportunities, on the other hand."



The importance of the World Summit, he said, lies in its ability to discuss all the challenges we face in "a positive, idealistic way." He added, "At the same time, it's important to have leaders here who have led their countries, who've had to solve problems, who've had to win elections, who've had to actually govern. So you get a kind of a practical idealism here, not just ideas up in the clouds."

H.E. Boris Tadic, former president of Serbia, said that although recognizing people who brokered peace between warring countries is important, it is even more important to recognize people who are able to prevent wars and conflicts. He pointed out that "whoever analyzes the activities of the United Nations can come to the conclusion that the global institution is much more focused on imposing peace than on preventing conflicts." He argued that avoiding conflict in the first place would make post-war peace efforts unnecessary.

H.E. Jimmy Morales, former president of Guatemala, observed that humanity is facing an economic crisis, similar to the circumstances prior to World War I. This is exacerbated, he said, by socio-political instability, the climate crisis, poverty, and armed conflict. He stressed the importance of regional cooperation, citing collaborative efforts by Guatemala, Honduras, and Ecuador to bring peace in the region. Such joint efforts are also necessary, he said, on the part of the international community, to achieve the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Besides diplomacy and international cooperation, he also cited education and sharing technological innovation as important tools to advance peace.