

Peace Message: We Need to Come Back to the Essentials, to Our Basic Values

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First of all, I would like to thank UPF and its founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for her kind invitation to participate in this event. It is always a pleasure to be with UPF. I have been before in Korea and Seoul, this time it is not possible, we have to do it virtually, but I think we feel we are all together. We are now living in an interesting but an extremely difficult time. The rule today is uncertainty.

We have of course all the pain of this pandemic COVID-19, economic recession, higher unemployment, higher debt that is also a burden for the future generations, but also growing frictions internationally including armed conflicts and a possibility of new armed conflict.

And we have more permanent threats and challenges like climate change, I think this is an existential threat to our home, our planet. The question now is how to face those challenges. And I believe it is more important than ever to come back to the essentials, to the basics, to our values. Values like peace, like freedom, and above all the dignity of every human being. When I had the honor to receive on the behalf of the European Union the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, in Oslo, I had the occasion to underline the very close link between peace and those of the values we have in a society, the society at all levels, starting with the family. That is our most basic community, the family, our countries, and why not to say the international society, the international community. And this is why it is important to commit to multilateralism, to commit to a renewed international cooperation. Because it is obvious that for some common, public goods, we will only reach them if we work together.

First of all, the common public good that is peace and security, but also the fight against climate change, the fight against global pandemics, the promotion of financial stability, the promotion of free and fair trade and open investments. And of course, the freedom of circulation of people and ideas. All these public goods require a renewed commitment to multilateralism and more international cooperation. Now, about this, of course we know that we need to face the difficulties of the current prevailing pessimism.

Fear dominates today. And fear is not a good advisor for decisions. If we look at the language, today when we see the public debate, we hear all the time the word 'crisis', financial crisis, it was the year of crisis, refugee crisis. We even hear the word 'threats', climate treats, pandemic treats, or the word 'extinction', life extinction, the planet extinction. So you see, this vocabulary reflects a mood of pessimism that to a large extent is driven by a market of ideas.

Today it is more difficult in the public debate to be in favor of, let us say, reasonable, rational opinions, because they sell less well. So to be moderate, that does not mean that you are not committed to our opinion, but to express things with balance, I would say also with politeness, it's more difficult in this social media landscape of some aggressiveness, sometimes fear, and sometimes hate. So, in the end, I believe courage will win over fear. I believe that we can win that debate being, why not, polite and kind and trying to express this in international society.

Because I look at the world as a society, as if we were in a family. And sometimes there are also problems within the family, but we should understand above all our disagreements there is that common purpose of our global family. The future is not written in advance. It depends on what we can do, we, I mean each one of us. And I insist on that idea of 'each one of us' because very often when we speak about politics and about global order we think in terms of abstract categories, the world, a class, a party, a nation.

And we forget one thing, at the end of the day what counts is a person, a man, a woman, and a child. I see some nationalists speaking all the time about the sovereignty of our nation. Of course, we love our countries, we are patriotic. It is our community, like I said, like a family we can love our community, our nation. The problem is the extremism, thinking that our nation, for some reason, is better than others. And so, I think instead of speaking all time about national sovereignty, we should think about sovereignty of the individual person, each person should have maximum freedom to realize his or her potential, and to fulfill his or her dreams. At the end that is what counts, a person. And that is why I continue to think that fear is going to be defeated, because hope is stronger than fear. I thank you for your attention.