

Sunhak Peace Prize Awarded at World Summit 2017 to S. Yacoobi and G. Strada

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Seoul, Korea -- Two persons who have been a godsend to countless refugees were awarded the Sunhak Peace Prize during World Summit 2017.

Dr. Gino Strada, founder of Emergency, an organization that provides medical and surgical care in Africa and the Middle East to civilian victims of war, and **Dr. Sakena Yacoobi**, founder of the Afghan Institute for Learning, which provides refugee-educational programs in Afghanistan, were the recipients of the prize in its second year.

More than 800 dignitaries from 120 nations, including current and former presidents, vice presidents, and leaders of parliament, academia, business, media and religion, attended the emotional ceremony held at the Lotte Hotel World in Seoul on February 3, 2017, the third day of the World Summit.

The Sunhak Peace Prize was formally proposed on February 20, 2013, by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, who also co-founded UPF. The prize honors the legacy of her husband, the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, who dedicated his life to realizing world peace, prosperity and coexistence.

Dr. Il Sik Hong, the former president of Korea University and chair of the Seoul-based Sunhak Peace Prize selection committee, initially announced the two winners on November 29, 2016, at an awards banquet held during a UPF International Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C.

While the very first Sunhak Peace Prize, awarded in 2015, dealt with climate change and the food crisis, the 2017 Sunhak prize focuses on the refugee crisis. The peace prize, Dr. Hong said, is awarded to “those who have dedicated their lives in service to humanity and the noble ideal of peace.” Dr. Strada and Dr. Yacoobi represent the “heroes of today,” who go beyond national borders to express love and service to humanity, he said.

In his welcoming address, Dr. Hong congratulated this year’s laureates, “two outstanding individuals who have dedicated themselves to realizing peace for the sake of humanity.” Regarding the “record-breaking global refugee crisis,” he said, “We must approach and understand this issue from the higher vantage point, that is, the history of civilizations. Diaspora, throughout the ages, has been one of the oldest adaptation strategies of humankind. Migration is a strategy for survival. Hence, going forward, migration will be an even more important issue in the effort to establish a world of peace for all.”

The laureates “have devoted their lives to providing basic and fundamental solutions to the refugee crisis,” Dr. Hong said. “In order for the world to become a peaceful community, no one should be excluded from the right to medical aid and education. The world in the 21st century must overcome an order that is based on the logic of force, which begets enmity, conflict and discord, and establish itself as a community of peace and coexistence, reconciliation and cooperation based on universal principles.”

After the showing of videos especially created about the laureates and their work, Dr. Strada and Dr. Yacoobi each received a beautiful plaque and medal from Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and Dr. Hong.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Gino Strada, the executive director of the Italian-based NGO Emergency, thanked the hosts for their work for peace and dialogue in the name of the human family. There is a compelling need to build a better world, he said. Dr. Strada described the results of war that he has seen over the past three decades in many war-torn countries. The organization that he founded, Emergency, provides free, high-quality treatment. Most people in the world do not have contact with war or any experience with the lack of medical treatment.



“For most of us they seem so far and alien from our daily life. It is so easy to listen to the news without realizing that after every bomb, after every shell, there are people struggling to survive,” he said. Ninety percent of the victims of wars are civilians, “people equal to us,” Dr. Strada said. Last year more than 60 million people were forced to leave their homes, looking for protection and safety. He called on world citizens “to take action and conquer peace.”

Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, the chief executive director of the Afghan Institute for Learning, based in Afghanistan, in her acceptance speech spoke about her work and the vision that inspired her. She said the purpose of this prize is to remember the ideology of peace as taught and practiced by Rev. and Mrs. Moon: “We are one family under God.”

Dr. Yacoobi expressed outrage at the refugee situation today. She herself experienced life as a refugee. “I know how the refugees feel: They lost everything, loved ones, their dignity and resilience. ... No one wants to leave, but when war breaks out, people are forced to leave.” Refugees who fled their homes are being forced to return to their countries because the world is not accepting them, she said. “People in Afghanistan are human beings just like anyone else. They need help.” Dr. Yacoobi called for education programs that teach “wisdom, love, dignity, responsibility, and cooperation.”

H.E. Anote Tong, one of the two recipients of the first Sunhak Peace Prize in 2015, congratulated Dr. Strada and Dr. Yacoobi, thanking them for their “lifelong dedication to the well-being of refugees and war victims.” The former president (2003-2016) of the Republic of Kiribati said that their accomplishments are very much in the spirit of the UPF founders’ vision to build “One Family under God” and that their efforts complement the founders’ global work for peace and development.

President Tong congratulated the participants of the World Summit for their contributions to peace. He reflected on his own experience of receiving the previous peace prize for his work in educating the world about the danger of climate change. President Tong described climate change as “the most significant moral challenge for humanity. We’re fighting against ourselves, not another nation.” The nations of the world have a moral obligation to help one another. In closing, he said, “Peace starts within us; then you can pass it on.”

The awards ceremony was an exquisite affair with pomp and circumstance. The entertainment included the world-famous Little Angels Children’s Folk Ballet of Korea, as well as Korean entertainers Ms. Kolleen Park and Mr. Jaerim Choi. The stage was well designed with bright colors and backdrops. The

high-quality videos about the laureates were professional and inspirational.

Plenary Session I: World Summit 2017 Keynote Addresses -- Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time

Moderator **Dr. Charles S. Yang**, the secretary general of UPF International, introduced the keynote speakers, who spoke on the general conference theme of the “Critical Challenges of Our Time: Peace, Security and Human Development.”

Hon. Bubhaneswar Kalita, a member of India’s parliament, said that in his country there is a saying, “*Vashudaiiva Kutumbakam*,” which means “The whole universe is one.” He called the audience’s attention to the economic disparity between the rich and the poor. Conflict is due to a lack of human development, he said. Parliamentarians have an important role to play, he said, and “parliamentarians are the bridges between the people, the legislators and the governments.”



Hon. Kessai Note, a senator and the former president (2000-2008) of the Marshall Islands, said that global problems demand global solutions. He called on the leaders and parliamentarians to develop a strategy for sustainable peace. He spoke about the history of the Marshall Islands. After World War II, the United States used some of the islands for nuclear tests. As a result, the people of Marshall Islands have the most cases of cancer in the world. Some of the islands are still uninhabitable due to the levels of radiation. Besides the issues left over from colonization and radioactivity, global warming and climate change are wreaking havoc on the ecosystem of the region.

Rt. Hon. Parmanand Jha, the former vice president (2008-2015) of Nepal, congratulated Dr. Moon on holding these important events. “Her vision and selfless investment for world peace [are] a model for all of us to learn from. I applaud her and wish her and her late husband a happy birthday.” He defined peace as “having a feeling of equality in our hearts toward all people, without any feeling of discrimination based on age, gender, religion, or wealth. Peace is treating everyone with love and respect.” In order to realize this, he said, “We need to first create peace in our mind, in our behavior and in our environment. Then peace can prevail in our families, societies, nations and world.”

H.E. Federico Franco Gomez, the former president (2012-2013) of Paraguay, spoke about efforts in his nation to fight hunger and care for the environment. He publicly thanked Rev. Moon and his pioneering efforts to develop fish farming in the Chaco region of Paraguay and Brazil. Paraguay, he said, “can become the lung of humanity, because it has one of the largest wetlands in the world.” The vision of Rev. Moon to end poverty through development of fish farming is very viable, he said.

H.E. Moustapha Cisse Lo, the regional president of the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Senegal, said that in recent years conflict zones in West Africa have multiplied. An increase of crises hinders regional development, he said. For example, there have been conflicts in Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Gambia. Development is hindered when the community is not at peace. Without security Africa will never be able to exploit its huge potential, he said. ECOWAS has completed measures to promote sustainable development, good government and the rule of law; however, there are so many challenges on the continent. “We must work

together for peace,” he said; the African nations must make partnerships with other organizations, civil and government, in order to stabilize security and achieve sustainable peace.

Hon. Michael G. Aguinaldo, the chair of the Commission on Audit of the Philippines, said that peace is not just the responsibility of governments or international organizations. The people must assume some portion of responsibility or ownership. He recalled the famous words of U.S. President John F. Kennedy in his inaugural address, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” Mr. Aguinaldo’s organization, the Citizen Participatory Audit, is designed to watch the government and ensure public accountability, transparency and effectiveness. Transparency is needed to ensure peace and security, he said.

Ambassador Joseph De Trani, a former special envoy of the United States to the Six-Party Talks, spoke about the problem of nuclear proliferation. “I believe negotiation is attainable,” he said. Reminding the audience that North Korea has conducted many tests of nuclear weapons and missile development, he said, “The realities have to be addressed, hopefully through peaceful negotiations. The alternative could be an arms race in this region.” There’s also the danger of nuclear terrorism, he said. Ambassador De Trani called on the assembly to find some way to reach out to North Korea, whether through academic, cultural, athletic or economic exchange, to bring it into the community of nations.



Plenary Session II: World Summit 2017 Keynote Addresses -- Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: Perspectives on Peace, Security and Development

Moderator **Mr. Tageldin Hamad**, the chair of the World Association of NGOs (WANGO), an organization that is affiliated with UPF, said the United Nations works to maintain peace in the world, but there are cases in which the UN has not been successful. UPF and the World Summit have responded to the call of the new UN secretary-general, António Guterres, when he declared: “We need a global response that addresses the root causes of conflict and integrates peace, sustainable development and human rights in a holistic way, from conception to execution.”

Hon. Molana Haideri, the deputy chair of Pakistan’s Senate, praised the World Summit as “a platform that holds great potential in peacebuilding and gives us a much-needed opportunity to contribute our share for this cause.” Islam has been unjustly maligned, he said. The core principles of Islam are based on peace, harmony, tolerance and justice. “If we are to build a peaceful world around us, it is imperative that we stop judging and treating people based on their race, color, creed, and faith.” He called for justice for all human beings regardless of their faith.

Hon. Jae-kwon Shim, the chair of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee of South Korea’s National Assembly, said it is meaningful that we are working together for mutual prosperity, transcending race and religion. Hon. Shim expressed concern about the new Trump administration’s pledge to shift diplomacy and trade in favor of the United States and the uncertainty it is causing in the world. Everyone is watching what the United States will do regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and immigration. He called on the participants and nations to come together and work collaboratively for sustainable development. Hon. Shim pledged to continue to support the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace, an organization created in 2016 by UPF founder Dr. Moon.

Hon. Professor Akiko Yamanaka, the former Japanese vice minister of foreign affairs (2005-2006), described the 21st century as the “age of balance.” Professor Yamanaka made the interesting point that

during World War I, Japan played an important role in securing the sea lanes in the western Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean against the German navy. But then Japan “became arrogant” and joined the Axis alliance during World War II. “Through this experience we can understand the mindset of both winner and loser. Therefore, Japan can be a mediator between the victors and the defeated, introducing the mindset of each other.” She closed with a quote from Aristotle: “It is more difficult to organize peace than to win a war, but the fruits of victory will be lost if the peace is not well organized.”

H.E. Professor Dioncounda Traoré, the former president (2012-13) of Mali, spoke about the situation in Africa and the general theme of peace. He said that peace is not just a ritual; it is the foundation to build. Everything that is built in a society begins with peace, he said. “If there is peace in the heart, then there can be peace in the nation and the world,” he said. He used the metaphor of the relationship between rivers and the ocean: They are separate but they come together as one. Similarly, humanity is composed of many nations, but we are connected and part of the human family, he said. “Without peace there is no development, and without development there is no peace.”

He said it is unacceptable that eight persons control the same amount of wealth as the poorer half of the globe’s population. Economic inequality is a serious threat to security, he said. The president also spoke about the Islamist militants who are terrorizing Mali. These extremist groups are killing innocent people and destroying the infrastructure. Acts of terror not only cause economic insecurity but also create spiritual misery, he said. He concluded by quoting Albert Einstein: “The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.”



Dr. Asmaa Mahmood Kftarou of the United Arab Emirates, a member of the UN Commission for Syria, spoke about her own experience as a refugee from Syria. She left four years ago, but that “land is still in my mind and heart.” She described Syria as the land of prophets and mosques; the land of Abraham, Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad. The core values of all religions are the same, she said. Dr. Kftarou spoke about her grandfather’s meeting with Reverend Moon. Her grandfather told her, “It was a turning point in my life.”

Hon. Ranjith Madduma Bandara, the minister of public administration and management of Sri Lanka, described the situation in his nation after the civil war which lasted 30 years. Tens of thousands of lives were lost, with huge damage to property and displaced millions. The rival political parties are working together to address the problems, he said. “It is my view that human development is an integral part of security and peacebuilding. If nations with diverse groups of individuals don’t embrace their diversity, certain groups may feel marginalized.” It is this sense of alienation that makes individuals and groups more likely to be attracted to extremist groups, he said. The minister called on the assembly to work together, “irrespective of religion, caste, creed, color, wealth, and geographical boundaries.”

Dr. Po-Ya Chang, the president of the Control Yuan of Taiwan, addressed how the government investigatory agency promotes good governance and protects human rights. The Control Yuan is an ombudsman’s office that deals with complaints about governmental decisions and actions, she said. Its role is to protect people against violations of rights, abuse of power, corruption, errors, negligence, and unfair decisions. Last year, “the Control Yuan received about 13,000 cases of complaints lodged by the general public,” Dr. Chang said. In protecting the human rights of the citizenry, “a country must fulfill at least two prerequisites,” she explained. First, the nation must “establish norms by means of passing domestic human rights-related bills and ratifying the international human rights treaties.” The second deals with the mechanisms that institutions must set up to implement and protect those rights.

Plenary Session III: Sunhak Peace Prize Laureates

Moderator **Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges**, the former president of the Chamber of Deputies (1989-2009) of Luxembourg, introduced the laureates:

Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, the chief executive director of the Afghan Institute for Learning (AIL), Afghanistan, spoke about her work. When she founded AIL in 1995, Afghanistan had been at war for 13 years and more than half of the population was displaced. Millions had died, Dr. Yacoobi said. The country and its institutions were destroyed. AIL has the following core principles: Involve the community; allow communities to define their own needs; listen to the community; provide high-quality and culturally sensitive training and programs; whatever you promise, deliver; and take the time to cultivate trust, and work to maintain it. She told inspiring stories about a school for refugee children in the refugee camps.



Dr. Yacoobi described her own story as a refugee when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. “My family all became refugees. I know what it feels like to be in a place where all of your rights have been taken away from you. I know how it feels to lose everything you have, including your dignity and self-confidence.” She called for greater understanding. “We must rise above the hate. We must use our voices for good. We need to remove the injustice and eliminate poverty. War is not the answer to any problem. We must work together collectively to bring peace in this world. In order to do this, we need to share our knowledge and build a support system that provides sustainable results.”

Dr. Gino Strada, the executive director of the humanitarian organization Emergency, based in Italy, recalled his own experiences. “I have spent the last thirty years of my life in war-torn countries, operating on patients in Rwanda, Peru, Ethiopia, Somalia, Cambodia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan. In these and other countries, Emergency -- the humanitarian organization I founded 23 years ago -- is committed to providing free and high-quality medical and surgical care to the victims of war, whose effects are not limited to the wounded and refugees, but have severe repercussions on the future of entire generations.”

He spoke about the “hypocrisy of the European approach to human rights. On the one hand, we firmly promote the principles of peace, democracy and fundamental rights, while, on the other, we are building a fortress made of walls and cultural barriers, denying access and basic help to thousands of people fleeing war and poverty.”

Dr. Strada called on all the participants to take action and join in the effort. “It is up to the world citizens to take action and conquer peace. Renouncing the logic of war and practicing fraternity and solidarity [are] not only desirable but urgently needed, if we want the human experiment to continue.”