As you work in your own nations, I am encouraging the United Nations to open up to the insights of all the world’s religions and work together to build peace. In front of the living God, with humility, let us be children of filial piety and loyalty. Let us become the sacred children of God. In light of God’s sovereignty, in this age, let us stand together to establish a world of peace, love and harmony.

Address to the Interfaith Assembly
Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, UPF Founder,
February 8th, 2011

UPF Chapters Participating in the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2011

Azerbaijan  Barbados  Canada  Côte d’Ivoire  Germany  India

Indonesia  Israel  Italy  Japan  Kazakhstan  Kenya

Korea  Malaysia  Moldova  Russia  Slovakia

Solomon Islands  St. Lucia  Switzerland  Thailand  United States
In support of UN General Assembly Resolution 64/81 on the Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding, and cooperation for peace, adopted 7 December 2009, and the recently adopted proposal introduced by H. M. King Abdullah II of Jordan for the annual celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week, the Universal Peace Federation has issued this statement in support of interfaith efforts to address critical global problems:

World peace can be fully accomplished only when the wisdom and efforts of the world’s religious leaders are combined cooperatively and respectfully with the endeavors of national political leaders. Absent the recognition of spiritual principles, the world has drifted increasingly toward analyses and prescriptions that are materialistic and secular in nature. In so doing, we have lost sight of the profound wisdom to be found in humanity’s spiritual heritage.

Global institutions must be built on a foundation that takes into account the full potential of the human being, not only as a political, economic, and social being, but also as a spiritual being with spiritual needs and a capacity for spiritual wisdom and insight. The legacy of the world’s great saints, prophets, sages, and spiritual leaders cannot be denied or discounted without ignoring what is most fundamental about the human being.

In too many ways the history of religion has been marked by narrow sectarianism, strife, and competitive struggle with other faiths, all to the detriment of the cherished goals and teachings of the founders and scriptures. This cannot continue. The need to eliminate corruption, selfishness, and bad governance applies not only to all nations but also to all of the world’s religions.

Lasting peace depends on cooperative partnerships between governments and religions, as well as NGOs and representatives of the private sector. The United Nations can benefit from a council of religious and spiritual leaders to bring broad vision and wisdom to the effort to address critical global problems. International conferences, publications, networking, and on-the-ground activism are mechanisms for interfaith cooperation and lay a foundation for spiritual renewal at the United Nations.

World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrated by the UPF in Seoul, Korea and around the world.
The UN Secretary-General on the World Interfaith Harmony Week

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

The first World Interfaith Harmony Week is an opportunity to focus global attention on the efforts of religious leaders, interfaith movements and individuals around the world to promote mutual respect and understanding between followers of different faiths and beliefs. These partners play an indispensable role in supporting United Nations efforts for peace.

In proclaiming this observance, the United Nations General Assembly encourages all States to use the first week of February to spread “the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship...based on love of God and love of one’s neighbour or on love of the good and love of one’s neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions”.

Respect for diversity and peaceful dialogue are essential if the human family is to cooperate globally to face shared threats and seize common opportunities. That is why efforts by States, civil society and other actors to build trust among communities and individuals lie at the heart of so many United Nations initiatives, from the Alliance of Civilizations to our wide-ranging work to protect human rights, promote social cohesion and build a culture of peace.

The Week will be marked by a broad spectrum of activities around the world. In New York, the observance will include interfaith breakfasts, film screenings and talks featuring the active participation of civil society, UN entities and other intergovernmental organizations.

I look forward to continuing to work with people of all faiths to rise above the tensions and misconceptions that so often divide us, and find the path of harmony and dignity for all.

During the week long Cheonbok Interfaith Festival, Buddhist, Muslim and Confucian faith leaders appreciate each other’s faiths.

Interfaith leaders commit to peace at the World Interfaith Harmony Week program sponsored by UPF in Korea.
More than ever before, our world is confronting multiple global crises which cannot be effectively addressed without a coordinated, multilateral action. No country can face these crises and provide for its future in isolation. The threats are global, and so are the solutions. A strong, central role for the United Nations is essential.

It is also essential to resist forces of division that spread misunderstanding and mistrust, especially among peoples of different religions. The fact is that humanity everywhere is bound together, not only by mutual interests, but by shared commandments: to love God and neighbour; to love the good and neighbour.

This week, my delegation, with the support of our friends on every continent, will introduce a draft resolution for an annual World Interfaith Harmony Week. What we propose is a special week during which the world’s people, in their own places of worship, could express the teachings of their own faith about tolerance, respect for the other, and peace. I hope that the draft resolution will have the Assembly’s support.

Another critical area for United Nations leadership is peace — and one peace hangs in the balance today. With direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, a door opens to a final, two-State settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

People are wary of disappointment, and spoilers are doing everything they can to make us fail. We cannot underestimate the importance of success, or the painful cost of failure. All of us need to support swift action, hard choices and real results. The alternative is more suffering and deeper frustrations, with spreading, more-vicious warfare. Such a catastrophic scenario will continue to drag in the whole world, threatening security and stability far beyond the borders of the Middle East. To prevent that, the talks must be approached with commitment, sincerity and courage.
Introduction

On February 3rd 2011, the Mission of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations (OIC) held a Special Event at the UN, as the first observance of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, which this year fell auspiciously during the celebrations for the Chinese (lunar) New Year. The Universal Peace Federation, an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, is proud to have been able join that program and to support the United Nations by honoring World Interfaith Harmony in more than 20 nations throughout the world, including a major, week-long celebration in the UN Secretary-General’s homeland of South Korea.

We applaud the wisdom and commitment of H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan, and appreciate the quick and enthusiastic response of the General Assembly to his proposal that we recognize that the world take time to share a common goal, that it is indeed time to build a world where we bring an end to the “scourge of war,” where swords are beaten into ploughshares, and where all of the world’s religions and peoples make a new commitment to peace.

On behalf of the Chairman and Presiding Council of the Universal Peace Federation, we also wish to acknowledge and honor our many UPF chapters and our Ambassadors for Peace who took it upon themselves to commemorate this special week by convening interfaith programs dedicated to peacebuilding.

We submit this Special Report as part of UPF’s commitment and resolve to continue the struggle to fulfill the ideals that gave rise to the United Nations, and to all of humanity’s greatest moral, spiritual, and social achievements. Since its foundation, the UPF has been a leader in promoting interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, and strong and healthy families. We are very pleased to be part of this new initiative, and we are looking forward to continue to work together with the United Nations, its agencies and other international partners to promote this interfaith vision of peace. Let there be peace on earth. Let it begin with me … and with each of us.
UPF convened a major International Leadership Conference in Seoul in honor of the declaration of the first United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week by the General Assembly in October 2010. The conference was part of a larger festival of peace that included musical, choral and artistic contests; debates on the topic “theism vs atheism,” and lectures by leading religious figures pointing out the strengths of their own and other faiths, calling for peace through greater understanding.

The opening plenary on February 7 began with interfaith prayers from the Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Confucian, Shinto, Buddhist and Sikh traditions. Each of the religious representatives shared a reading from their scriptures, lit a candle and offered a prayer for peace, while colorful banners and decorations proclaimed the vision of the week of interfaith harmony.

Following the prayers, the Grand Mufti of Korea, Dr. Abdul Wahab Zahid Haq, spoke on the “brotherhood of all humanity,” and of the great moral imperatives of all faiths to love one another. Dr. Edwin Shuker, a leading member of the Jewish community in Great Britain,

Cheonbok Interfaith Festival
World Interfaith Harmony Week in Korea
• Celebration of the Lunar New Year as “God’s Day” for all believers.
• New Year’s Good Luck Lantern Festival
• Opening ceremony of the Cheongshim World Peace Center
• World Interfaith Assembly
• UPF International Leadership Conference
• Birthday celebration hosted by Dr. & Mrs. Sun Myung Moon
• Debate: Atheism, Theism and the Existence of God
• Interfaith Choral Competition
• Oriental Tea Ceremonies
• Blood Drive
spoke of his own awakening to the presence of God, and quoted the Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth, Lord Jonathan Sacks in calling for peace, “bound by a covenant of faith that turns strangers into friends. In an age of fear, let us be agents of hope, a blessing to the world.”

“We are working to cultivate the values of tolerance and understanding,” Mrs. Ida Betty Odinga, wife of the Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga, spoke of the beauty inherent in differences and diversity. “Just as a safari park would be boring with only one type of animal,” she said, “our society is all the richer for its diversity.”

Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, the International Chairman of the Universal Peace Federation, spoke about how God reveals himself in many ways, not only through the teachings of the world’s great religions but also through the mysteries and wonders of the natural world, and through the simple elegance of mathematical and physical laws.

Following the opening plenary, the conference moved on to consider case studies and models of conflict resolution. Many among the more than 150 diplomats, congressmen and women, former heads of state, academics, clerics, and community leaders were in a position to share first-hand reports of dramatic social changes from the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 right up to the demonstrations that began on January 25 in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Dr. Rouhy Saleh, professor from Tanta University (halfway between Cairo and Alexandria), was welcomed with warm applause when he successfully predicted a peaceful and rapid transition in his homeland. “We have decided to be a free country,” he said, citing also evidence of new cooperation among people of different faiths in the quest for freedom: “They tried to create separation between the Copts and Muslims, but the Christians and Muslims are more united now than before.”

Dr. Robert Vandemeulebrucke, a retired Belgian diplomat, spoke of his first hand experience during the 1989 revolution in Benin, West Africa. He recounted how, “after 20 years of failed Marxist philosophy and practice,” then president Mathieu Kérékou had called for free elections, no doubt hoping that the people would reelect him in appreciation for vision for change. But instead, the population voted overwhelmingly for the challenger, M. Nicéphore Soglo.

“We are all made in the image of God, whose nature it is to give and love.”
“It was a politically decisive but also very sensitive moment,” recalled Vandemeulebroucke. “What would the incumbent do? Send his army into the streets, arrest the opposition, send them to jail, and grasp power? Let himself be declared president for life? This hypothesis was not imaginary: it had happened in neighboring Togo and in not-so-distant Zaïre, to mention just those two countries.” History shows that Kérékou chose the high road and welcomed his successor into the presidential palace, concluded the Belgian Ambassador; “Benin has become a beacon of order and prosperity in a region where democracy is still fragile.”

In each of its leadership programs, UPF aims to bring together people from former enemy nations to promote reconciliation and understanding. One emotional highlight of the conference came when Captain Vladimir Arsenkin, the first Soviet veteran of the Korean War to ever visit South Korea, recounted how he had been overwhelmed by the reception he had received in Seoul from the people who were once his and his nation’s enemies. “I am committed to spend the rest of my life supporting the UPF’s work for peace,” he said.

Other presenters on the topic of conflict resolution included Drs. Soewarto Moestadja, the Minister of Home Affairs, Suriname; Hon. Damry Ouk from the Commission of Legislation & Justice, Cambodia; the Hon. Lloyd Sandiford, Ambassador of Barbados to China; and the Hon. Ahmet Gokjan Saricam, Member, Grand National Assembly, Turkey.

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When we look at religion, it is Father Moon’s great insight that, at the very core, what religion truly seeks is relationships. The Latin etymology of the word is to re-connect back to a relationship first with God, and then heaven, earth, and mankind. Only through relationship can the virtues of love, peace, tolerance, harmony, compassion exist. Everything is based on relationships. Even the creation of time and space is centered on God’s desire for relationships.

God is our creator and he desires to be in a relationship of give and take with the created world. From that understanding a true relationship can emerge. A true relationship is to sacrifice oneself for the other; a false relationship is to sacrifice others for ourselves. True peace and compassion can only come about through true relationships: between people and God, husband and wife, parents and children, families and the world.

- Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, Chair, Universal Peace Federation

Looking globally — and I don’t need to remind anyone of the recent events in northern Africa — it is clear that politicians don’t have the strength to solve all the world’s problems themselves. Interfaith dialogue is important, but coming from a country where the religious traditions are in a process of transformation and where more and more people are becoming interested in what we could summarize as “spirituality,” it is important that we do not limit our concept of what is a religious tradition.

- Peter Åkerbäck, Department of History of Religions, University of Stockholm

Our task is to use every opportunity to transform our new world into a world that is more just for the vast majority of citizens, a world in which success is determined by talent and hard work, a world where billions of people will be able to communicate directly with each other; a world where people are not afraid of the government, and international relations are free from double standards, a world where it will be easier and more efficient to work together; to work jointly. We can discuss and realize our dreams together. We are ready for that.

- Hon. Evgeny Nikulishchev, First Deputy Chairman Councillor, Parliament of Russia
Barbados

Bridgetown - The Barbados National Peace Council honored the World Interfaith Harmony Week with a conference under the theme, “Interfaith Activism for Peace and Harmony.”

Following the National Anthem of Barbados, which signaled the commencement of a rally at the UPF headquarters, Mr. Philip Knight, an Ambassador for Peace, welcomed the participants. Representatives of different faiths gave the invocations: Pundit Phakoor Prashaud of the Hindu temple, Rev. Thelma Gill-Barnett of the Messenger for Christ Church, Rev. Anthony Kirton of the independent spiritual Christian faith, and Mrs. Jacqueline Durant of the Unification Church.

Mr. Ladepoo Salankey, former government representative for rural affairs, spoke of the vision for world peace, noting that even small nations could play a leading role in modeling good relations among the religions. After a video presentation on “Creating Unity among the Faiths,” Rev. Peter Oscar Phillips, President of the Barbados National Peace Council, told the audience that “the true value of life is not found in riches or fame, but in the simple finer things in life: love, peace, harmony, and happiness.”

Short speeches were also given by Ms. Undine Whittaker, advisor to the Prime Minister’s office on poverty eradication, Dr. Latchman Kissoon, former president of the Barbados Interreligious Organization, Rev. Buddy Larrier, CEO of the Day of Hope Trust, and Pundit Purufhottam Tiwari of the Bridgetown Hindu temple.

“Even small nations can play a leading role in modeling good relations among religions.”
Montreal - A diverse group of Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain, Scientologist, Unificationist and humanist persuasions gathered for a World Interfaith Harmony Week celebration at the end of January. Reflecting Canada’s large immigrant community, participants hailed from North and Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

Rev. Samuel King-Kabu, a Lutheran minister and long-time Ambassador for Peace, shared about his mother in Ghana who took care of a Muslim man and embraced him as one of her children. “The concept of One Family under God was a reality that I experienced in my own family long before I became a Christian minister,” said King-Kabu. “It has helped me to be open toward other faiths while at the same time nurturing my own tradition.”

Ottawa - The Chair of the Capital Region Interfaith Council, Father Jacques Kabangu, spoke at a gathering on the topic of “Social Sin: How All Believers Can Unite to Eradicate Institutional Evil.”

The parish priest of St. Gabriel’s Roman Catholic Church, Father Jacques was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He described conditions leading to global warming, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and the spread of infectious diseases as examples of social sins. He described how Montreal Catholic dioceses are focusing on such green issues as garbage and washroom efficiencies, and urged residents of Ottawa to do likewise.

"The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. Let us call on people of all religions to join forces to combat poverty."
Côte d’Ivoire

Grand Bassam - The interfaith peace campaign in Côte d’Ivoire started in a very serious context of political crisis. After the second round of presidential elections failed to produce a resolution, the nation was at a flash point. Despite all attempts of the international community to settle the case, the country still had two declared presidents, neither willing to back down.

When UPF Ambassador for Peace Imam Moussa Dramé heard about World Interfaith Harmony Week, he was moved to offer his mosque as a venue, hoping to increase understanding between religious communities. Accordingly, on January 29, 150 people gathered at his mosque for a peace meeting.

The Governor (Prefect) held a meeting with religious leaders of the city, including Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims. The evangelical churches were represented by Rev. Mambo Luc, pastor of the Church of God’s Soldiers for Unification and World Release. The Secretary General of the Harris Mission Church of Jesus, Head Preacher Dogbo Jules, represented his church. Sheikh Zacharia, representing Islam, called for tolerance and understanding on all sides.

Yamoussoukro - Despite all difficulties, including lack of transportation due to a call for a strike by the opposition party, a World Interfaith Harmony Week event took place on January 22 in an evangelical church, the temple of the Soon Returning Jesus Christ. Five Christian leaders participated, along with members of their communities, a total of 75 people. After the welcoming address given by the main pastor, each pastor introduced himself. In support of the current trend toward interfaith harmony, the five clergymen agreed to work together for peace in the future.

"Following disputed elections, religious leaders called for tolerance and understanding on all sides."
Munich - An interfaith conference was convened on February 1 on the theme of “Living with the one God – Foundation for a Culture of Peace? Who is God, Jahweh, Allah?” The conference opened with the reading of prayers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Following this, speakers of different religions and faith communities gave talks about the topic, resulting in a lively conversation among the approximately 40 participants.

Following this, an Imam of a Munich mosque, a Roman Catholic theologian, and a practitioner of the Christian Science Church each gave their points of view about living with God, reconciliation, and peace-building. Faith in the one God and a living relationship with Him was presented as a foundation for peace. Participants became aware of the fact that there are many more elements in common among the world religions than there are differences, and gained confidence that a peaceful world family under one God is possible.

Stuttgart - A World Interfaith Harmony Week event on February 5 opened with an introduction about the history of interfaith dialogue and introduction of the theme of the day: “One Family under God.”

Leaders from six different religious beliefs gave speeches, and four more people read a prayer or a proclamation. After each speaker gave their address on the podium, he lit a candle on the stage: Dr. Al-Radwany, a representative of Islam; Dr. Saidi, a Mandaean; Dr. Tanay, a Sufi; Dr. Schmidt, a Bahá’í; and Dr. Schick, from Scientology.

Each expressed something about the essence of his religion and its contribution to peace. Afterwards came interfaith prayers from Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, and an appeal for unity from a German spiritual healer.

“There are many more elements in common among the world religions than there are differences.”
New Delhi - In support of the World Interfaith Harmony Week, UPF-India invited youth from many backgrounds to join in interfaith prayers for peace and a cleaning project on February 6. The program was chaired by Ambassador for Peace and Vice-Principal of St. Stephen’s College of Delhi University, Rev. Rajkumar Clement. Approximately 30 youth leaders from different faiths attended the program.

Rev. Clement and youth representatives of Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and other faiths began the day by lighting the “lamp of peace,” followed by peace readings from each of their scriptures. Wanting to do something practical and visible to demonstrate their commitment to work together in harmony, the entire group headed outside to clean up a litter-filled local park.

“Though this was a small program, it is part of UPF India’s ongoing commitment to support United Nations initiatives,” said Krishna Adhikari, Secretary-General. “Next month, we will also be observing International Women’s Day in collaboration with the United Nations Information Center in India and Bhutan on the theme of ‘Equal Access to Education, Training and Science and Technology Pathway to Decent Work for Women,’ in a program at the UN Conference Hall in New Delhi on March 7.
Jakarta - A conference on “Building Bridges of Peace through Interfaith Leadership,” took place with more than 140 participants from all walks of life, including UN and governmental representatives.

Mr. Michele Zaccheo, Director of the United Nations Information Center in Jakarta gave opening remarks. “World Interfaith Harmony Week was established to promote peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding among the world’s religions,” he said.

Several representatives of the Indonesian government took part, including Prof. Dr. Agus Sartono, Deputy Minister for Education and Religion of the Coordinating Ministry for People’s Welfare, who stated that the real challenge is how to implement religious values in daily life. Mrs. Kusuma Habir, Director of Public Diplomacy for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed the Ministry’s support for interfaith cooperation as part of its peace policy in response to global terrorism, especially in Indonesia.

Other speakers representing the various religions unanimously called for peace and harmony among all the religious believers. Dr. H. Abdul Mu’ti, Secretary of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, emphasized that interfaith dialogue and cooperation must be reflected in our words and deeds. Rev. Romo Benny Susetyo from the Catholic Church mentioned that interfaith dialogue cannot flourish when people are closed-minded.

The Buddhist representative, Mr. Henry Gunawan, emphasized the importance of listening to others as a foundation for harmonious relations, and Mr. K.S. Arsana from the Hindu faith defined the spirit of peace with the words “heart, humility, humanity and harmony.”
Daliet el Carmel - World Interfaith Harmony Week was observed on January 26 during an event honoring Israeli government workers who have been promoting interfaith activities over the past four years.

Present were representatives of the four major religions in Israel, and under Druze Sheikh Samich Natur’s guidance as MC, everybody was introduced and given the opportunity to speak. Medals of appreciation and Ambassador for Peace certificates were presented. The evening was completed by a sumptuous dinner featuring the foods of several cultures, graciously prepared by host Sheikh Ali Birani and his family.

Pesaro - A January 29 conference in support of the World Food Programme’s campaign to end hunger promoted the importance of interfaith principles to address the global crises. Several NGO representatives talked about how their organizations are addressing important needs.

A Kenyan representative described ways to connect small farmers with markets. A representative of the Women’s Federation for World Peace focused on empowering women, and a representative of Religious Youth Service described ways young people are learning the power of the individual and developing their leadership capacities.

Other strategies recommended by the World Food Program include giving food assistance in crisis situations, serving meals at school, setting up safety nets, providing adequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life, utilizing new technology to expand people’s purchasing power, and building resiliency in vulnerable communities.

A representative of Lega Ambiente (an environmental organization) talked about protecting forests, and a Christian pastor from Nigeria talked about a new ethic of governance.

**UPF’s Peace Principles are a way of cooperating with the United Nations to develop a culture of peace.**
Japan

Tokyo - Rev. Taishu Nara, a Shinto priest opened the January 29 observance of the World Interfaith Harmony Week by blowing a stone whistle, which was a ritual for inviting the gods, and offered a purification prayer. Then, Mr. Kumar Raiv, a research scholar of the Hindu Cultural Exchange, prayed for peace, and Rev. Nichiko Yoshida and Rev. Jiei Shizuka, who are both Buddhist monks, chanted a sutra harmoniously. Rev. Toru Miyahara, a Christian pastor, read verses from the Revelation of the New Testament and offered a prayer for welcoming the Lord at the Last Days.

Representatives of each religion lit the candles after their prayer, and the program was concluded by a silent prayer by all participants. They all prayed for the realization of religious harmony as well as for a peaceful world. Some participants commented afterwards, “It would be a good idea to start meetings with an interfaith program like we did today. Then, we can discuss in a sacred atmosphere and the deliberation will be peaceful.”

Kazakhstan

Almaty - A celebration of the World Interfaith Harmony Week on January 29 featured a discussion on the qualities of peace-loving people. Among the participants were people of different religions and various walks of life who rarely had the chance to meet in Kazakhstan’s more turbulent past.

The president of the Family Federation, Larissa Lee, gave introductory words to the participants based on the recently published autobiography of the UPF Founder, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon. Personal reflections were offered by UPF representative, Sergey Chuprakov, and local minister, Aina Dolgova.

The meeting concluded with conversation over coffee, during which everybody had an opportunity to share with each other and build personal relationships. Many present gave their support to the proposal to meet again to plan the United Nations International Day of Peace, and several new Ambassadors for Peace were appointed.
Kenya

The UPF delegation visited several leading houses of worship of different faiths in Nairobi, including the Shree Sanatan Dharam Sabha Hindu Temple; a Sikh Gurdwara and a Therevada Buddhist temple as guests of the Ven. B. Thente Y. Wmiala and also visited the Brahma Kumaris society. (Bottom-right) UPF-Kenya is partnering with local organizations to create a soccer field for disadvantaged Kenyan youth.

“Each of you are demonstrating that you are making a difference by standing up for the ideal of peace that transcends race and religion.”

Hon. Kenneth Marende, Speaker of the Kenya national assembly

Nairobi - The UPF International Chairman Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, on his first visit to Kenya, was welcomed by the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Kenneth Marende, at a meeting of several hundred Ambassadors for Peace. “The absence of peace brings hatred and division, and Kenya knows much about it,” said Dr. Hasmukh Dawda, the Chair of UPF in Kenya, referring to the bitter post-election conflicts of two years ago. “I urge Kenyans to reach out to each other and extend the powerful hand of forgiveness, without waiting for anyone to call upon them. Forgiving and reaching out is one way of preaching peace.”
**Malaysia**

**Kuala Lumpur** - The World Interfaith Harmony Week found deep resonance in the hearts of peace-loving Malaysians during a gathering to promote understanding and harmony among various religions. The program featured prayers and music from the Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Sikh, and Baha’i communities.

The President of UPF-Malaysia, Tan Sri Dr. Devaki Krishnan, welcomed the 80 participants, and UPF-Malaysia Committee Member Dr. John Gurusamy led the participants in singing interfaith songs. Seven faith representatives, Dr. Amir Farid, Rev. Thomas George, Mr. Siva, Ven. Kalyanawansa and Dhamminda, Mr. Lim Teng Kau, Mr. Harcharan Singh, and Mr. T.K. Lee recited prayers before the event highlight, an illuminating 30-minute talk on the future of interfaith in Malaysia and the world by Interfaith Spiritual Fellowship Chairman Dr. Amir Farid.

After his talk, the discussants Ms. Sekina Joseph, Mr. Joachim Ng, Rev. Thomas George, and Gurumahan Parajonthiar gave insights. The event closed with plans for an international interfaith conference with the theme “The Significance of Interfaith for Peace and Development,” scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur in July.

**Moldova**

**Chisinau** - A round-table discussion on “Interfaith cooperation as the important instrument of establishing the culture of peace in Moldova” took place on February 2. Among the participants in the round table were representatives of different religious organizations of Moldova, including the pastor of a Lutheran church, the head of the Islamic community of Moldova, the director of the Kishinev Center of the World Spiritual University Brahma Kumaris, the founder of Ansuya Yoga Center in Kishinev, followers of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and an officer of the UN Development Program.

Participants discussed the possibility of cooperation in some public projects. They expressed a desire to work together to break down barriers in their relationships and achieve common ideals.
A Festival of Spiritual Music took place on February 4 supported by the municipal government of Kondopoga and the Consultative Council of Relations with National and Religious Associations. The festival featured both adults and children singing a variety of spiritual songs from different cultures around the world as well as from Russian composers. The musicians included the clergy choir from the Holy Martyrs Faith, Hope, Love and their mother Sophia Temple; the choir of Evangelical and Lutheran parishes; and the Good News Evangelical Christian Church. Participants received certificates with the following words: “But by whatever names you call Him, the Lord is One for the whole planet.”

“I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS FESTIVAL OF SPIRITUAL MUSIC WILL HELP PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.”

TATYANA KRASTNOSUMOVA, FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Novosibirsk - A meeting on the theme of “Love of God and your neighbor as the foundation of world peace” took place on February 6. The meeting opened with a video “Creating the family of faith,” followed by a Minute of Silence in commemoration of the victims of oppressive regimes. Thereafter, followers of different faiths and NGOs representatives participated in an invocation, calling people to unite in love, harmony, and beauty, contemplate God, and serve him and humanity. During the program the participants delivered prayers and cited quotation from their teachings: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Baha’i.
The director of the Brahma Kumaris mission in Novosibirsk, Margarita Vladovskaya, said: “What is it that unites us? We are united by desire to be healthy, happy and feel love. Also, we all want to live in the bright, beautiful and clean world. What should be our consciousness? It should be brotherly and based on love.” Borisenko Marina from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness asked: “Is it possible to love God and feel no love for other people, followers of different religions, and no love for yourself?”

Tatyana Nikonova, Secretary General of the Novosibirsk Model UN, said, “Future diplomats need to honestly study different cultures and religions; it will help them to solve the most difficult problems on the way towards security and human development.”

**Moscow** - An interfaith youth round-table discussion about “Interreligious Cooperation as an Important Instrument for Creating the Culture of Peace in Russia” took place in Moscow on January 29. Speakers included experts who devote much attention to interfaith relations. Each introduced interesting ideas and propositions that could be called stages towards mutual understanding and creating an interconfessional dialogue.

Valery Mikhailovich Emelyanov, Executive Director of the International Cooperation Association “Time and World,” spoke about the problem of the unequal positions of religions in Russia and challenged people of faith to show the positive sides of their religion through action and personal example. A Professor at the Moscow State Institute of Radio Engineering, Electronics and Automation, Andrey Fedorovich Volkov, countered the idea that science negates religion and expressed his opinion that religion promotes the development of science.

**Sports for Peace** - A “Play Football, Make Peace” youth tournament took place at the Moskvich Sports Palace on January 30, in honor of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Team representatives of different religions came together to play football, not only to win prizes, but also for the sake of making friendship between people beyond their religious, cultural, and national backgrounds, and creating dialogue.

Among the participants were teams representing Islam (Coordination Center of the Azerbaijani youth in the Russian Federation), Unificationism, and the Scientology Church of Moscow, as well as Orthodox Christian.

The players competed vigorously while observing the spirit of “Play Football, Make Peace” and parted as good friends expressing a desire to continue with such tournaments.
Yekaterinburg - In the comfortable hall of the Writers’ House in Yekaterinburg, representatives of different religions and spiritual groups met on February 6 in support of the World Interfaith Harmony Week.

A large Candle of Peace and Understanding was lit, and from this symbolic light, all the participants lit their own small candles, which were blown out after the last prayer ended.

Prayers for peace and harmony were offered according to their religious tradition by regular participants of such meetings: World University of Spiritual Culture Brahma Kumaris, the Academy of the International Scientific School Universology, “Magnetic Net - Star of Transfiguration,” the New Life Protestant Church, the Church of the Last Commandment (Vissarion Church), the Unification Church, the Association of Sri Chinmoy, and the Noospheric Spiritual and Ecological Peace Assembly. They were joined by the head of the Evangelical Lutheran parish, the head of the mosque in Yekaterinburg, and a follower of the Buddhist group in Yekaterinburg.

“WE ALL WANT TO LIVE IN THE BRIGHT, BEAUTIFUL AND CLEAN WORLD.”

Margarita Vladovskaya, Brahma Kumaris, Novosibirsk

A candle lighting ceremony in Yekaterinburg, Russia
Slovakia

**Nitra** - UPF-Slovakia and the Old Catholic Church of Slovakia held a joint prayer and worship service in the Old Catholic Church in Nitra on February 6 in honor of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Archbishop Augustin Bacinsky welcomed all participants representing historic and new religions with words about the necessity of interfaith dialogue and cooperation. UPF Secretary General Mr. Milos Klas then introduced the UN declaration of World Interfaith Harmony Week and read the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s letter of support.

Archbishop Bacinsky and Rev. Miroslav Rybar lit candles symbolizing the light of truth. Another religious text was read, and Rev. Vlastimil Sulgan spoke about interfaith harmony from a biblical viewpoint. The meeting concluded with an opportunity for participants to learn to know each other and engage in discussion over the coffee and cake prepared by the Old Catholic Church members.

**Solomon Islands**

**Honiara** - UPF-Solomon Islands sponsored an interfaith forum on January 28. Three guest speakers were invited from different faiths to share a brief introduction to their faith and their thoughts about interfaith harmony. Those representatives were from Buddhism, the Baha’i faith, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Mr. Rex Masuaku, Secretary General of UPF-Solomon Islands, also shared some background information about UPF’s peace initiatives.

Representing the Solomon Islands’ government, Hon. Hypolite Taremae, Minister of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, gave special remarks in support of this interfaith forum to be held once a year.

The program concluded with expressions of hope and understanding amongst participants that religious unity and harmony are possible and they are essential bases for world peace.
Switzerland

**Bienne** - In commemoration of the World Interfaith Harmony Week recently proclaimed by the UN General Assembly, UPF-Switzerland with other partners held an interfaith gathering Bienne, Switzerland, near the capital, Bern.

The day-long conference included a series of lectures drawn from the UPF International Leadership Program given in an innovative style in both French and German by pairs of lecturers from the different regions of Switzerland. Swiss Ambassadors for Peace from the religious communities provided very insightful introductions to each presentation.

The program included a ‘Water of Life’ ceremony in which representatives of different religions or philosophies, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Animism/African tradition, and Avatar/free thinking, poured water into a bowl symbolizing the unity of the different religions. The purpose of this ceremony was to set a condition for all to go forward together as a unified and powerful current centered on a vision for unification.

The culmination of the day was a very festive marriage renewal and “Blessing” ceremony designed to highlight the pivotal role of marriage in creating a culture of peace. Many participants spoke of their profound experiences and personal realizations during the program.

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**Anse-la-Raye** - Youth representatives of four different religious denominations planned the Interfaith Harmony Week program. Participants formed discussion groups and reflected on questions such as: “What is a true religious person?” “What are the common qualities or values recognized by all the religions?” and “When you die, what do you think will be the first question that God will ask you?”

Each group expressed that the program was thought-provoking, and that it helped them to respect each other’s denominations more.

It was a great opportunity for youth leaders to discuss together and realize that Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr. and all true religious persons can be examples of inspiration for all believers of any faith.

One young participant reported: “I feel like I can appreciate the different religions more because in truth and fact we all fight for the same things.”
Bangkok - UPF Thailand hosted another meeting in a series to discuss the creation of an Interfaith Peace Council in Thailand and the eventual establishment of a similar council within the United Nations. The Thai Council will work to solve the conflict and bring cooperation, morality, goodness, and peace in Thai society.

The participants in this consultation included senior representatives of many of Thailand’s leading faith communities, including Mr. Chalore Wannapratheep, representing the Catholic Archbishop of Thailand; Mr. Veera Tangkijsiri, Secretary General of the National Buddhist Association of Thailand; Hindu representative, Mr. Satit Kumar Pava; Mr. Amarin Payasajjadej, Representative of National Sikhism of Thailand; and Mr. Suthep Laolamao, Representative of Chularatchamontri, the leader of Muslims in Thailand.

Governmental and university leaders included Mrs. Radjai Penkaew, representative from Thailand National Moral Center under the Office of the Prime Minister; General Terdsak Marome, vice-president of UPF Thailand; and Gen. Pol. Thaveesak Tuchinda, Secretary General of Anti-Corruption and Promotion of Good Governance of the Senate of Thailand.

"Interfaith cooperation is needed in order to send a wave of religious consciousness throughout the world."

Prof. Lt. Gen. Somchai Virunhaphol, UPF-Thailand
Washington, DC - An interfaith luncheon on February 24 brought together diplomats as well as religious and civic leaders. H.E. Dr. Hussein Hassouna, Ambassador of the League of Arab States to the United States, referred to interfaith initiatives by Jordanian and Saudi monarchs, and spoke of how relationships with people of diverse faith backgrounds had enriched his own life. “I am a Muslim and was raised by devout Muslim parents,” he said, “But I was educated in a Jesuit school and I have many Jewish friends.” Hassouna answered questions about the recent uprisings in the Arab world and expressed optimism about the outcomes, especially in his homeland, Egypt.

Other speakers included Rev. Walter Fauntroy, a pastor, civil rights activist, and former member of Congress; Pastor S. Matthew Goldberg, pastor of the Maryland Family Unification Church, offering insights into the Jewish tradition; Minister Amar Nath Gupta, former Indian diplomat and head priest of the Hindu Capital Temple; and Ven. Cang Kim, President of the Cambodian Buddhist Association of Richmond, Virginia.

In closing, 12 people read words from religious texts and quotes by spiritual leaders and then, in a “water of life” ceremony poured water into a large vase. Just as water flows from high to low and eventually into the oceans, providing resources to sustain life, so too the truths of the world’s different faiths are destined to flow together in a common goal.

“RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE OF DIVERSE FAITH BACKGROUNDS HAVE ENRICHED MY LIFE.”

H.E. DR. HUSSEIN HASSOUNA, AMBASSADOR, LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
The water of life ceremony, which was held in many of the World Interfaith Harmony Week locations, encourages representatives of different faiths to pour a small vessel of water into a larger basin, and offer a scriptural reading, symbolizing the contributions that each of the world’s faiths can make toward peace.

**Buddhist Reading**
May those frightened cease to be afraid, 
and may those bound be free. 
May the powerless find power, 
and may people think of befriending one another.

**Christian Reading**
Blessed are the peacemakers, 
for they shall be known as the Children of God. 
I say to you that hear, love your enemies, 
do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

**Hindu Reading**
May there be peace on earth. 
May thy Vedic Law propagate peace 
All through the world. 
May all things be a source of peace to us. 
And may thy peace itself, bestow peace on all, 
and may that peace come to me also.

**Jewish Reading**
Come let us go up the mountain of the Lord, 
that we may walk the paths of the Most High. 
And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, 
and our spears into pruning hooks. 
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation—
neither shall they learn war any more.

**Muslim Reading**
If the enemy incline towards peace, 
do thou also incline towards peace, 
and trust God, for the Lord is the one 
that heareth and knoweth all things. 
And the servants of God, 
Most Gracious are those who walk 
on the Earth in humility, 
and when we address them, 
we say “PEACE.”
True Love is the Ideal and the Guiding Principle of the Universal Peace Federation