Special Report
UPF Programs on the United Nations International Day of Peace 2010
UPF Special Report: Introduction

The United Nations annual celebration of the International Day of Peace, which this year came on the eve of the opening of the 65th General Assembly and the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, provides an opportunity for the whole human family to pause and reflect on the meaning and value of peace, while at the same time addressing the many obstacles that stand in the way of the universal aspiration to bring about a world of lasting peace.

The Universal Peace Federation, an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, is proud to support the United Nations by honoring the International Day of Peace each year. We applaud the wisdom and commitment of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, along with all the member states for calling all nations and all people to recognize that we all share a common goal, that is, to build a world where we bring an end to the “scourge of war” and swords are beaten into ploughshares.

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

This Special Report represents the commitment and good work of men and women on six continents, north, south, east and west, coming together to voice their determination to build a future that knows no conflict or poverty, no human rights violations, and no oppression; a world where people of every nationality, religious tradition, and ethnic background live together in mutual respect and harmony, with love for one another.

We submit this Special Report as evidence 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.

Let there be peace on earth. Let it begin with me ... and with each of us.
Today we observe the annual International Day of Peace – a day dedicated to ceasefire and non-violence. Peace is precious. It must be nurtured, maintained, defended.

That is why, each year on the International Day of Peace, I ring the Peace Bell at United Nations headquarters. And it is why – every day – I work for peace. I mediate between antagonists. I sound the alarm about threats – those we can see clearly, and others that lurk just over the horizon. I promote tolerance, justice and human rights, and I campaign for harmony among countries and peoples.

This year, Peace Day is dedicated to young people. This month marks the beginning of the International Year of Youth. Its theme of dialogue and mutual understanding captures the very essence of peace.

Young people today are at home with global diversity; comfortable in an interconnected world. Yet they are also vulnerable to the forces of extremism. So I say to all governments and our partners: let us do more for young people. Let us give them a world of peace and tolerance.

And I say to all young people: join us. Help us to work for peace. You are impatient. You see what we, your elders, allow to persist, year after year: poverty and hunger; injustice and impunity; environmental degradation.

With just five years remaining to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, I ask all, young and old, to help us to find global solutions to these global problems. Share your plans and ideas, act with creativity and passion. Help us fight for peace and prosperity for all.
The Universal Peace Federation fully affirms and supports the United Nations’ annual International Day of Peace. In 2010, UPF chapters around the world will join with UN agencies and with other NGOs in observations and celebrations of this day. In both 2008 and 2009, UPF hosted and participated in more than 40 such programs, and this year is expected to be equally active.

At the same time, UPF recognizes the important truth, eloquently stated in the UNESCO Constitution written just after World War II in 1945—

“Since wars begin in the minds of man, it is in the minds of man that the defenses of peace must be constructed.”

The UN’s task to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” is of course not just the task of the United Nations but the entire human family.

Human conflict and the resort to arms and weapons have their roots in the breakdown of human relationships and the human failure to live up to our highest ideals and aspirations. Violence is a symptom of a moral and spiritual failure. If we are to eliminate violence and weapons of mass destruction, we must commit ourselves to a moral and spiritual awakening.

Lasting peace is secured not only through the reduction of weapons and arsenals but, more importantly, by the growth in solidarity among the whole human family and a recognition that we are all brothers and sisters who share a common spiritual and moral heritage. We are one family under God. It is this understanding that gives rise to the collective will to put an end to violent conflict.

Religion has profound relevance and significance in the effort to secure human rights. Religions teach that we share a common origin, the source of our sacred value and our rights as human beings. Religions teach of the value of each human being and the need to love and serve others. With increasing spiritual awareness, there emerges a great collective will to ensure the well being of all people. As such, we should advance the universal values found in the teachings of all the world’s great religions.

At the same time, we must recognize the unfortunate and unpleasant truth that many, even most of today’s violent conflicts are exacerbated by religious disputes. Therefore, UPF emphasizes that world peace can be fully accomplished only when the wisdom and efforts of the world’s religious leaders work cooperatively and respectfully with national leaders who have much practical wisdom.

Therefore, on this occasion of the International Day of Peace 2010, the UPF is proposing the establishment of an Interfaith Council at the United Nations, both as a venue where the world’s faiths can meet together in peace to address areas of conflict and friction and as a forum where wisdom and insight can be shared in hopes of helping the UN meet its many difficult challenges.
Kabul, Afghanistan – On September 24 UPF-Afghanistan held a celebration in honor of the International Day of Peace. We had 80 people attending the event, including Ambassadors for Peace, Youth Ambassadors for Peace, a Member of Parliament, the Deputy District Leader of Pole Khosh (Mr. Fraidun Nizami), social activists, and musicians.

The event had two sections. The first focused on peace messages such as that of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in video form and the Message of Peace from Afghanistan’s President Hamid Karzai. After that, UPF Director Umberto Angelucci gave the UPF message on the theme “Living for the Sake of Others Is the Way of Peace.” Then Dr. Sifigh, a Member of Parliament from DaiKondi, gave a message especially encouraging the youth.

The second part was a Music Festival for Peace. We had different Afghan musicians play traditional Afghan songs focusing on the theme of peace. The young people were especially inspired, first clapping and eventually joining in the dance. We ended with the National Dance of Afghanistan, the Atan.

One of the key factors that added to the success of the event was that the participants were all from enemy tribes and also from antagonistic Muslim sects. We all united under the motto “One Family Under God” to bring a united foundation for the future peace of Afghanistan.
Albania

Tirana, Albania – A beautiful program was held on September 21 in which 70 school packages were given to orphans referred by the Institute of Albanian Orphans. Many Ambassadors for Peace attended along with leaders of NGOs dealing with children. In addition to the greeting messages, there was a beautiful musical play and a dance by some Roma minority children and a song by volunteers who lifted up the spirit of the event.

The main celebration of the International Day of Peace followed, with Mr. Bajram Ibraj, head of the UPF-Tirana council, as emcee for the event, radiating love and goodness as he stood in front of some 30 Ambassadors for Peace. He gave a short speech based on the UN’s message for the International Day of Peace and the UPF’s perspective on peace.

Afterwards Mr. Ali Lacej, chair of UPF-Albania, gave a short speech and a 20-minute video presentation about the importance of water. This was preceding the ceremony of harmony, unity, and peace symbolizing the common origin and purpose of mankind. Seven guests from the audience came forward, each with a bowl of water to be poured in a common vessel, signifying harmony, unity and peace. Participants in this symbolic event reported feeling a special grace as they took part.

The evening concluded with a reading of the UPF Statement on the International Day of Peace by Mrs. Lavdie Ruci, one of the founders of UPF in Albania.
Buenos Aires, Argentina – UPF-Argentina marked the Day of Peace with a poetry competition on the theme “Values for Peace,” as part of its ongoing commitment to the goal of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and in particular in building better relationships among Buenos Aires’ very diverse communities.

Santiago Villareal read the Ban Ki-moon message, and then eleven faith leaders came forward to offer prayers of peace, including Hindus, Jews, Christians, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists and more. Following the prayers for peace, Claudia Rivero and Jose Luis Beltran performed a peace duet, singing “We are family” set to music written for the occasion by Manrique Zago.

The poetry contest attracted 196 participants, 137 of whom were from Argentina. Contributions came from as far away as Mexico, Spain, Israel, Italy and Australia. The judges admitted that they had a hard time selecting the grand prize winner, Zulema Josefina Funes, for her poem “Y digo paz” (And I say Peace).
Yerevan, Armenia – The International Day of Peace celebrations in school №194 on September 21 included singing, dancing, and artwork for the students, followed by a presentation to teachers about peacemaking activities.

The program began at 10:00 am with singing and dancing, followed by a speech by the School Director Nune Manukyan, an Ambassador for Peace.

We organized two competitions for students on the theme “I am drawing peace.” About 10 participants from ages 8 to 12 painted on paper, and about 150 participants from ages 6 to 12 drew with colored chalks on the pavement in front of the school. The jury looked at the work of participants and made some remarks.

The second part of the program took place from 1:30 to 3:00 pm. About 25 school teachers and Ambassadors for Peace participated. First, the head of UPF-Armenia spoke about UPF vision and goals and its peace programs around the world. Then a discussion took place about universal values.
Australia

Sydney, Australia – A day-long celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace was held in Martin Place in downtown Sydney on September 21. Many different community organizations and schools were involved, and a great deal of energy and goodwill was engendered, making it a most successful day.

The staff of UPF-Australia was involved in assisting the organizers, the Ministry for Peace Australia, in the weeks of preparation and coordination required for an event of this nature.

UPF-Australia had a half hour slot in the day-long program, during which it presented songs and two speeches in support of the International Day of Peace. UPF-Australia also introduced its initiative to establish an interfaith council as part of the structure of the UN.

UPF was also invited to participate in the official opening, which included the representative of the Lord Mayor of Sydney and representatives of the major religions, who each offered prayers and blessings on the event.
Vienna, Austria – After participating with a delegation of Ambassadors for Peace at the celebration of the International Day of Peace at the Vienna International Center UPF-Austria hosted a celebration on the topic of “Youth for Peace and Development.”

After few words of welcome by UPF-Austria Secretary General Peter Haider, a video message by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set the tone for the event. Father Vahan Hovagimian from the Armenian Catholic community read a prayer for peace in his native language, and Elder Reuben Silverbird played beautifully on his flute preparing a harmonious atmosphere for the presentations of several projects of youth representatives.

Jörg Reitmaier spoke about his experience in the Austrian Service Abroad, a non-profit initiative founded in 1998 by Dr. Andreas Maislinger. The organization provides placements for an alternative Austrian national service all over the world. Ms. Daniela Zwerger reported about her visit to Israel and Palestine with a group of students from all over Europe and Mr. Ilia Sichrovsky spoke about his experiences during and leading up to a Muslim-Jewish Conference, which he and his friends organized during the summer of 2010.

Ms. Leila Salehi-Ravesh spoke about the Green Movement in Iran that started during the elections for a new President in 2009. To conclude the presentations Ms. Kaidi Cui, a young Chinese violinist, spoke about the “Young Generation in Modern China of the 21st Century.”
Belarus

Orsha, Belarus – The District Executive Committee, the Belarus Peace Foundation, the UN Representative, and the UPF initiated celebrations of peace and brother-cities from September 19-21 in Orsha, one of the biggest cities of Belarus. Among the guests of honor were mayors of cities and districts of Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, and Russia. This was the first celebration of its kind in Orsha.

The program included exhibitions, receptions, and children’s drawing competitions. On September 21, in the offices of the District Executive Committee, the Belarus Peace Foundation held a conference reporting the results of the Peace Relay race and a series of peacemaking programs in the Belarus Republic. There was an emphasis on the importance of involving young people in peacemaking activities.

On the same day, trees were planted in the historical center of the city, making a Peace Lane. Public leaders including the Chairperson of the City Executive Committee, Nikolai Lisovski, planted trees together with the children of Orsha. This concluded with the unveiling of a commemorative stone.

A peaceful procession of about 10,000 people walked through the city streets. Among the speakers was the head of the UN Public Information Office in Belarus, Victor Radivinovski. He read to the participants the welcoming address on behalf of the UN. Then the Secretary General of UPF-Russia gave a speech reminding the crowd that “world peace begins with peace in our families and in our minds. Peacemaking activity also promotes character development and helps create stable families within society.”

Finally, in the evening, people enjoyed performances by children’s artistic groups from Belarus, Moscow and St. Petersburg.
Burkina Faso

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso – Several days of celebration included sports, a blood donation drive, and youth character education with an emphasis on AIDS prevention. Programs were held in four provinces of Burkina Faso: Djubo, Kaya, Nanoro and Ouagadougou.

A seminar on “Youth for Peace and Development” was held in partnership with the National Assembly and attended by a representative of His Majesty le Mogho Naaba Baongo, who serves as UPF’s Honorary Chair, and by members of the Assembly, religious, community and political leaders and the president of the National Youth Council.

His Majesty Kamsongho Naaba Sanem encouraged the young people to make peace a daily behavior, and said that he hoped the conference proceedings could be translated into Morée, the national language. Ms. Ilboudo Mau Ngoma, Secretary General of UPF-Burkina Faso, introduced the UN Day of Peace and delivered the message of Ban Ki-moon.
Phnom Penh, Cambodia – On September 21, 150 Cambodia Mekong University students and some representative Ambassadors for Peace of UPF-Cambodia responded to the call by the United Nations to commemorate the International Day of Peace and strengthen the ideals of peace.

The event was organized by UPF-Cambodia and Cambodia Mekong University. The first session was held at the university. Three young representatives of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam created a solemn atmosphere by offering prayers for peace. H.E. Sau Phan, Ambassador for Peace and Deputy General Commissioner of the National Police, said in the opening speech, “Before we demand the government to change the society, we have to change our mindset to think of the happiness and sadness of others as our own and live for the sake of others.”

Executive Director of UPF-Cambodia, H.E. Sok Seng Yan, spoke on Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution. “The first important thing for building peace is to reconcile with God,” he said.

For the second session, participants visited the killing field where the Khmer Rouge regime brutally massacred almost 9,000 people and buried the bodies between 1975 and 1979. Even though it is still the rainy season, this day was beautiful with a clear sky. It seemed that the spirits welcomed us with joy. For most of the Cambodians, it was their first visit to this place.

H.E. Sau Phan offered flowers to pay respect to the victims’ spirits. Participants offered one minute of silent prayer for them. The 150 participants made a resolution not to repeat the same mistake and instead to build peace in Cambodia by becoming peacemakers.
Chad

N’djamena, Chad – The Universal Peace Federation celebrated the Week of Peace and Security in Africa, September 13-21, together with government of Chad, the United Nations, and the African Union. The overall program was under the patronage of the Prime Minister and Chief of Government of Chad, H.E. Emmanuel Nadingar.

The opening program was held on September 15. Present at the opening ceremony were 13 Cabinet members, officials of the presidency and Prime Minister’s office, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of international and national NGOs and international institutions, UPF Ambassadors for Peace, and guests.

The program started with traditional dances performed by the National Ballet of Chad, followed by the introductory speech of the President of UPF-Chad, current Minister of Justice Mbailao Naimbaye Lossimian; it was read by Ambassador for Peace Ganda Mayoumbila. Then the Ambassador of the African Union, Ki Doulaye Corentin, spoke, followed by a special representative of the UN. Finally the Prime Minister, H.E. Emmanuel Nadingar gave his opening address.

On September 21, two long vehicles decorated with banners and art exhibits went through various avenues of the city. Banners were posted in several main squares and public places announcing the International Day of Peace. Later in the day army veterans and civilian soccer teams met at the Idriss Mahamat Ouya Stadium for a Soccer for Peace match.
Religious leaders join in a march and prayers for peace in Bogotá

Bogotá, Colombia – At the initiative of Ambassador for Peace Rev. Luis Fernando Sanmiguel from the Presbyterian Church, a march and prayer for peace took place on the International Day of Peace, September 21.
Brazzaville, Congo - UPF-Congo organized a commemoration of the International Day of Peace on September 21 in the Congressional Palace. The 300 participants included Ambassadors for Peace, students, and NGO representatives.

The meeting opened with invocations by a Christian pastor and a Muslim leader. After the opening speech of UPF chair Gen. Blaise Adoua welcoming the participants, Col. François Bouesse, representative of the High Commissioner for Reintegration of Ex-combatants, read the message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Then the Project Coordinator for the Consolidation of Peace, Mr. Ameth Diouf, explained the role of youth in his project.
Barahona, Dominican Republic – The UPF chapter of the Dominican Republic celebrated the International Day of Peace in the city of Barahona. Catholic and Evangelical leaders were invited to attend as well as political, academic, and NGO leaders of the region and students.

Dr. Isaias Zorrilla, the director of the Regional University Center, agreed to support this event. He and his team were wonderful hosts. Ambassador for Peace Dr. Victor Terrero, former Congressman and renowned local medical doctor, also gave his support and came to the celebration. Dr. German Castro, former Senator and Ambassador for Peace, drove 400 km. early in the morning to Barahona.

The Association of Evangelical Pastors of the South West Region was represented by Rev. Julio Cesar Castillo, who was invited to give the invocation for the event. Also, the Rev. Father Alfredo Romero of the Episcopal Church of Barahona gave the closing remarks and closing prayer.

The M.C. was a young professor and journalist, Miss Ocelia Guevara. Her team helped us prepare the auditorium. She did a marvelous job as M.C. and introduced us to the city through a radio program she co-produces.

Inspirational background music before the event helped prepare the atmosphere, and during the program we showed two videos: the UPF presentation video and a popular peace song “Un Mundo Nuevo” (A New World).
Quito, Ecuador – Young people from various religious backgrounds talked about their experiences and activities promoting peace at a round-table discussion on September 18 in commemoration of the International Day of Peace.

Each participant made an impassioned appeal for peace, along with a brief explanation of their religious teaching on topics such as the reality of God’s existence, the necessity of dialogue and unity among religions, inner peace as the foundation for peace on all levels, and how to counter tendencies toward selfishness.

Other speakers included a delegate of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Miss Gaia Pallecchi, who described the fund’s work to promote a peaceful environment by empowering women and promoting gender equality. An official from the Ministry for the Environment explained the government’s plan for promoting a culture of peace among young people.

The event at the Ecuador Municipal Association Hall began with one minute of silence followed by a solemn trumpet fanfare by soldiers from the Presidential Escort. The UN Secretary-General’s message was read as well as UPF’s Statement. Young musicians from different religions expressed their heart of peace with excellent performances.
Estonia

Tallinn, Estonia – On the International Day of Peace, UPF-Estonia Secretary General Johann Hinterleitner gave a presentation about the proposed interreligious council at the UN at the UPF Peace Embassy in Tallinn. Other speakers included Roland Rand, President of Diverse Faith Alliance, and Mrs. Ilvi Jõe-Cannon, speaking on “How Estonia could contribute to the promotion of peace.”

Another event took place in a school in the Estonian countryside. UPF volunteer Niina Sinilova, who began to work in the Rakke Gymnasium as an English language teacher at the beginning of September, arranged a simple yet well-appreciated program with the school’s director.

Rakke High school students gathered during their break time to mark the International Day of Peace. The students were shown a presentation that introduced the background of the day. This was followed by a short film about peace, made by an independent journalist. The event ended by lighting a candle of peace accompanied by the song “Imagine” by John Lennon, which stirred people’s emotions and added significance to this day.
Finland

Helsinki, Finland — On the International Day of Peace, UPF-Finland held an afternoon seminar for Ambassadors for Peace and other invited guests on the topic of “Youth, Peace and Development.”

During the first session, “Principles of Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution” were presented by UPF-Finland Secretary General Keijo Mikkanen, followed by questions and answers as well as a discussion.

In the second session, five different panelists offered contributions on the topic “How to Encourage Youth to Serve for Peace.” The panelists were men and women as well as younger and older people, which resulted in lively, easy-to-follow presentations.

Maija Saarni from the Finnish Lutheran-backed development aid organization Fida International discussed her organization’s positive experience with young people volunteering in aid work overseas.

Kalervo Aromäki, a psychologist and pastor, reported on his experience working among young people who engage in risky behaviors in one of Finland’s provinces.

Monica Melén-Paaso, an educational counselor with the Ministry of Education, spoke of her research and work on global education and globalization education.

Raine Klemola, chairman of Finland’s Christian Democratic Youth, elaborated on his experience as a young politician motivating young people to participate in international and development aid projects.

Finally, some of UPF’s Religious Youth Service projects were introduced. They have a distinctively interreligious purpose, which makes the experiences both challenging and enriching.
Georgia

Tbilisi, Georgia – UPF-Georgia and the Association of Russian Speaking Journalists of Georgia held a “Brain Ring” intellectual competition on September 20. The program was funded by the UN office in Georgia. High school and university students of different nationalities living in Georgia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Assyria, Hebrew, Ossetia, Germany, Russia and Ukraine) took part in the event.

The “Einung” House of the German Community accommodated some 50 participants and guests. The questions for the contest were connected to peacebuilding from the spheres of sociology, political science, culture, sports, history, literature, geography, and natural science. Competitors showed mutual respect and wisdom during the contest. The event concluded with an award ceremony for winners, and all participants received gifts.

UPF-Georgia gave lectures on “Culture of Peace: Patriotism” at the schools #136 and #98 for 10th, 11th and 12th grade Russian and Georgian speaking pupils on September 21 and 22.

About 200 children and teachers learned about the meaning of true patriotism, tolerance, and the importance of character development as foundations for peacebuilding. At the end participants received pens and cups with the UN International Day of Peace logo, prepared by the UN office in Georgia.
Germany

Stuttgart – UPF-Stuttgart organized an event for the UN International Day of Peace on September 18. During the event we collected donations for disaster relief in Pakistan.

About 40 guests from different faiths and international backgrounds attended. The main speech of the event was given by Dr. Hellmut Schmidt, a leader of “Religions for Peace in Stuttgart” and member of the Bahá’í faith, on the topic: “The Meaning of Religions for World Peace.”

Dusseldorf – UPF-Germany held a Day of Peace event in Dusseldorf to raise awareness about the UN Millennium Development Goals. There was music, dance, interactive learning about conflict resolution, and intercultural exchange.

“Peace by piece-Contribute Your Part!” was the motto of the program. The audience, mostly youth, wanted to call attention to the upcoming International Day of Peace and the Anti-Poverty Summit at the UN. The highlight of the event was joining in the worldwide initiative to “STAND UP-Take Action”. Guests and passers-by joined to form a human chain creating the word “PEACE.”

Munich – The local UPF community in Munich gathered together people from different faiths under the motto “Prayer for Peace and Meditations of the Religions” on September 21. There were four presentations and a round-table discussion, as well as a meditative lighting of candles.
Accra, Ghana — Letters were sent to Ambassadors for Peace from various religions and religious bodies within the region inviting them to participate in an interreligious forum on the UN International Day of Peace, September 21. Major religions expected were Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity; invitations were also sent to smaller religious groups. The program was held at the African Regent Hotel, Airport West in Accra.

The official theme was: “The Role of Religion in Peacebuilding.” Our aim was to bridge the gaps between the various religions and religious groups in the country through interactive discussions and invite comments about UPF’s proposal for an interreligious council at the United Nations.

In welcoming the guests, the MC for the morning session, the West African Director of Religious Youth Service, Alhaji T.S. Kerim, remarked on the significance of the day as it coincided with the birth of the first President of Ghana, the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. He explained the purpose of the forum to integrate ideas from all the religious groups in the nation. With this remark, he introduced the Chairman of the occasion, Srivas Das, the National Secretary of the Hare Krishna Movement in Ghana.

The Chairman noted that while it was a day of celebration of peace, it is also important to think about how to help the UN achieve the desired dream for peace. He praised the UN for its efforts, noting that it focuses mainly on physical approaches to peace and doesn’t emphasize the spiritual essence of human beings. Hence, the UPF call for an interreligious council is timely.
India

Gangtok, India – The Universal Peace Federation of Sikkim commemorated the UN International Day of Peace on September 21 at a gathering in the Forest Department Conference Hall in Gangtok. The function was organized to spread the message of peace as per the UN’s declaration of this year as the “International Year of Youth” with the theme “Youth for Peace and Development” to appeal to youth to participate in fulfilling the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

In welcoming the gathering, Shri G.M. Gurung emphasized the theme of the day, “Youth for Peace and Development,” and stressed the role of youth in promoting a peaceable and stable world in which religious and communal conflicts can be eradicated through the concept of One Family Under God.

Shri Krishna B. Adhikari addressed a wide range of subjects including the significance of the International Day of Peace, UPF’s interfaith peace initiatives, family values, good character, spiritual values, and the essence of true love. Shri Nima Thingh and Shri Dendup Sherpa read the message of the UN and the Peace Message of UPF-International respectively.

UPF-Sikkim had previously organized an inter-school poetry competition on the theme of Youth for Peace and Development, and the results of the competition were announced and the winners presented with trophies and certificates.
A small gathering to discuss the implications of Ban Ki-moon’s IDP message

Jerusalem, Israel – A number of Israeli Ambassadors for Peace gathered together on the evening of September 21 in Jerusalem, including a few who have worked or still work in the Jerusalem Municipality. After sharing the speeches of the day by the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon and the UPF Statement on the Day of Peace, we began a discussion reflecting on developments during the Middle East Peace Initiative events July 20-24 and what we can add to help the peace process in upcoming initiative events.

Prof. Eliezar Glaubach, a long-time Ambassador for Peace, called for a special request to be sent to UPF headquarters by the Israeli National Peace Council, supported by key Ambassadors for Peace, to seek the Nobel Peace Prize for the UPF Founder Dr. Rev. Sun Myung Moon for his untiring work over the past eight years to help develop the peace process in the Middle East region through inspiring more than 40 Middle East Peace Initiative trips, which brought to Israel and Palestine thousands of religious, political, and other leaders to share insights, gain deeper understanding of the situation, and act as intermediaries to help bring both sides together.

Lots of homemade sushi and desserts were shared during the discussion, which continued until quite late into the night. Then the Ambassadors for Peace, some who had come from as far as Tel Aviv, returned home to prepare for the Jewish festival of Sukkot, which started the following day.
Monzsa, Italy – UPF-Italy organized activities for a “Week of Peace” in honor of the UN International Day of Peace September 21-28 with activities in Monza, Milan, and Bergamo.

An interfaith prayer vigil on September 21 in Monza brought together representatives of various faiths and communities to the Piazza Trento e Trieste in front of the Town Hall to promote interreligious dialogue and highlight the contribution that people of various religions, ethnicities, and cultures can make in peacebuilding and promoting human rights. The cooperation demonstrated that religion and diversity are not necessarily reasons for conflict but potential sources of cohesion promoting mutual respect and cooperation.

Among those present were Buddhist monks of Burmese and Tibetan origin calling attention to the human rights situation in their countries.
Japan

Tokyo, Japan – UPF-Japan and the Youth Federation for World Peace commemorated the International Day of Peace on September 19 by cleaning up the Wada-Nahama beach on the Miura peninsula of the Kanagawa prefecture.

The theme of this year’s International Day of Peace was “Youth, Peace and Development” and the Secretary-General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon called upon youth around the world to organize projects for peace during the 100 days countdown until the International Day of Peace. The cleanup project was held in concert with this call.

Including of the members of the Association to Protect the Nature of Wada-Nahama Beach, around 60 people participated in the project, which started at 9:00 in the morning. On the day before the project, the YFWP and UPF-Japan called on people around the Misakiguchi station of the Keikyu Line to join the project. Thanks to this, additional participants such as girl students from local schools also took part in the project. The “Peace Rangers,” the YFWP characters for the cleanup project attracted the attention of the tourists who came to enjoy the beach.
Amman, Jordan – A peace football tournament under the patronage of former Prime Minister H.E. Faisal Fayez commemorated the International Day of Peace on September 21.

The day opened with the national songs of Jordan and Iraq and speeches by representatives of the organizations who cooperated in sponsoring the event. Dr. Ghazi Tayyeb, president of the Iraqi Brotherhood Association, spoke on behalf of H.E. Fayez, followed by Mr. Arafat Jamal, Deputy Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Jordan.

Disadvantaged Jordanian youth and Iraqis living in Jordan were selected to play, and they felt honored to compete before such a distinguished audience. The final match was played between Jordanians and Iraqis. A fireworks display followed the award ceremony.
Riga, Latvia — The Peace Embassy in Latvia was the venue for a friendly meeting on September 25 dedicated to the Day of Peace. The celebration was to support the International Day of Peace established by the United Nations. The organizers wanted all participants to realize how much each individual’s actions can contribute to the common cause of peace.

The participants were mostly young people and families: volunteers from the Latvian chapter of UPF and their friends and guests representing Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and different regions of Russia, altogether 20 people.

The program opened with a video about Peace Day and the ten years invested into its establishment by Jeremy Gilley, whose life dream and goal was to create a day when gunfire stops and peace and tranquility set in.

In a friendly setting, sipping on a cup of tea, the participants shared their views, dreams, and goals. Later they engaged in games whose purpose was to show that true victory comes only through unity and team work, in the spirit of cooperation and mutual support.

In conclusion people demonstrated their various talents playing musical instruments such as piano, saxophone and accordion.
Marshall Islands

Majuro, Marshall Islands – UPF-Marshall Islands organized a celebration of the UN International Day of Peace with students at the College of the Marshall Islands on September 22.

We shared about the history of the International Day of Peace and read the message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the statement by the Universal Peace Federation. Since the UN Secretary-General especially emphasized youth this year, this gathering with college students who are the future leaders of this country was significant.
Moldova

Chisinau, Moldova – On the UN International Day of Peace, UPF-Moldova and its NGO partners organized presentations in schools and colleges on the theme “Youth for Peace and Development” as well as one conference.

In collaboration with the Chisinau city Central District Administration, presentations were organized at the Polytechnical College on September 15, and at the Construction College on September 22.

On September 21, UPF-Moldova organized a conference on the theme “Youth for Peace and Development 2010.” This offered a good opportunity to give an overview of the ten years of activities dedicated to promoting a culture of peace and non-violence in Moldova.

The presentation by Tatiana Sanina, a member of AIESEC Moldova, about her experiences as a volunteer in Moldova, USA, and Korea inspired the audience as one of the many young Moldovans learning from the world and returning to serve Moldova and create a culture of peace and sustainable development.

Former Vice-Minister of Economy and UPF Peace Council representative, Dr. Marin Mazur, suggested launching a project involving all nationalities and ethnic groups living in Moldova for the cause of the harmonious and sustainable development of Moldova and its families. Participants were encouraged to come up with proposals and be more actively involved in UPF-Moldova and its local NGO partner projects.
Kathmandu, Nepal – The Universal Peace Federation of Nepal partnered with UNICEF, UNESCO, Peace Education Network of Nepal (PENN), Nepal’s Ministry of Education, and Save the Children in a week of activities called “Peace Week.” From September 14 to 21, events were held throughout the Kathmandu Valley, the capital region of Nepal.

A press conference kicked off the week of peace activities on September 14. Over the course of the next six days various programs were held, including talk show programs, service projects, street theater, oratory competition, an interactive program (which brought together students, teachers, educators and parents), a peace song program, and the culminating celebration on September 21, the UN International Day of Peace.

Dr. B.N. Sharma, President of PENN and the main organizer, said these events were designed to commemorate the United Nations’ International Decade of Peace (2000 - 2010) to establish a “Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.”

The State Minister of Peace and Reconstruction, Mr. Dilli Bahadur Mahat, was chief guest at the concluding event at City Hall. He emphasized that children must be given character and moral education, saying, “Education is incomplete without peace and civic education.”
Netherlands

Utrecht, Netherlands – UPF-Netherlands hosted a conference on Development Aid: Perspectives and Examples, in Utrecht. Speakers included Yakubu Iddrisu, founder and executive director of the Ghanaian NGO Community Partnership for Youth and Women Development, and Huub Mudde, Manager of the Sustainable Development Center at the Maastricht School of Management.
Oslo, Norway – Around 70 people attended the UN International Day of Peace celebration at the Islamic Cultural Center in Oslo. The theme of the day was “Peace, Future, Youth and Development.”

The three-hour seminar opened with an invocation by Imam Mehboob, reciting from the Qur’an, followed by words from the secretary general of the mosque about the important role of the UN in benefiting the people of the world.

The information secretary from the UN Communication Office in Norway offered greetings on the day, commenting on the importance of investing in young people; after all, 2010 is also the International Year of Youth.

Going from domestic matters to global affairs, a researcher from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs spoke about threats to peace and security in today’s world. He emphasized that even though the number of wars have decreased during the last few decades, this development would not necessarily continue. Among many things, he mentioned the lack of resources as a potential source of future conflicts.

A panel of four young students from the Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, and Sikh traditions commented on the best points in their faiths concerning peace. They covered ideas such as the importance of our thoughts, equal treatment of all people, kindness among people, and the need for spirituality.
Peru

Lima, Peru – The UN International Day of Peace was celebrated in one of the rooms of the National Congress of Peru, in coordination with UPF-Peru. Similar meetings took place in the provincial capitals of Trujillo and Puno.

Congressmen and religious leaders of various faiths participated in the event in Lima, along with a former Minister of Defense, representatives of the Lions Club, various government officials, and university and college students. The room was filled to overflowing, and many people were unable to enter.

Speeches on peace and the theme of the day were made by Congressman Yhony Lescano; Dr. Luis Huarcaya, former government minister; Dr. Christian Pardo Reyes, President of an international youth organization, and Dr. Antero Flores Araoz, past President of Congress.

The President of UPF-Peru Ing. Jorge Chavez read the speech of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and Rev. Trevor Jones read the message from UPF International.

There was an interreligious candle lighting ceremony and the appointment of five new Ambassadors for Peace; the meeting closed with a song of peace and the reading of two peace poems.
Philippines

Davao and Cagayan de Oro, Philippines – To commemorate the UN International Day of Peace, UPF organized events in Davao and Cagayan de Oro on the southern island of Mindanao.

Davao City

On the UN International Day of Peace, UPF-Davao, in collaboration of the Department of Education and its NGO partners, organized a Peace Forum at the Philippine College of Technology on September 20. Participants included Ambassadors for Peace, NGO leaders, educators, business leaders, and military and police officers.

Cagayan de Oro City

On September 21, UPF-Cagayan de Oro organized a conference on the theme of “Celebrating Diversity of Race, Tradition and Culture towards Achieving Peace and Development through a Culture of Heart.” The 55 participants included Ambassadors for Peace, NGO leaders, professors, teachers, business leaders, local officials, religious leaders, and youth leaders from universities in Cagayan de Oro, Misamis Oriental, and Misamis Occidental.
Russia

Moscow: Joint program with the NGO Federation of Peace and Concordance

Nizhny Novgorod – Young Ambassadors for Peace went to the main street of the city on September 25 and appealed to citizens to donate to the Rehabilitation Center, which provides social support for people with no fixed dwelling.

Serov and Ekaterinburg – Two celebrations in the Urals helped build goodwill with people of Georgia as part of UPF’s South Caucasus Peace Initiative. The celebration in Serov featured an exchange of letters between students at schools in Georgia and the Ural region; at the Sverdlovsk Regional Medical College in Ekaterinburg, torches of peace were lit and messages of peace exchanged with people from Georgia. Also in Ekaterinburg, representatives of various religions also offered prayers for peace.

Moscow and Zelenograd – “We Pursue Peace” was the theme of the September 21 International Day of Peace celebration at the Russian State Humanitarian University, with support of the Universal Peace Federation and the Model UN Secretariat. On September 20, UPF participated in the March for Peace organized by the Federation of Peace and Concord in Moscow. In nearby Zelenograd, students in school No. 1923 honored the International Day of Peace by observing a Minute of Silence.

Medvezhiegorsk and Kostomuksha – UPF-Russia organized a variety of creative activities on the International Day of Peace for students in the towns of Medvezhiegorsk and Kostomuksha in the Karelia region of northeast Russia.
Honiara, Solomon Islands – Two days before the International Day of Peace, there was a special forum on the radio organized by Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation in conjunction with the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, in which some UPF representatives participated.

Mr. Rex Masuaku, Secretary General of UPF-Solomon Islands, was invited to present UPF’s view on “Youth for Peace and Development,” the theme of the 2010 observance. The program was aired nationwide during the International Day of Peace 2010 awareness week leading up to September 21.

UPF-Solomon Islands organized a candlelight prayer service to commemorate this year’s International Day of Peace at a Family Federation for World Peace Center in Honiara, where about 30 Ambassadors for Peace and friends participated.
Spain

**Madrid, Spain** – UPF Spain’s Marriage and Family Initiative hosted a seminar about peace in honor of the UN International Day of Peace on September 19 in Madrid. Presentations about peace were given, followed by appointments of new Ambassadors for Peace and interreligious prayers.

Forty-four people participated from all over the world and from different races and religions. They included presidents of associations, politicians, students, artists, educators, and Ambassadors for Peace.

Mr. Mad Aidar Aidar, president of the Association of Afghan People in Spain, spoke on “Peaceful Solutions for the Conflict in Afghanistan.” He gave a very clear exposition of the problems in his country and spoke from the point of view of a citizen not as a politician.

Mr. Emilio Asti, a professor at the University of Milan who is dedicated to international humanitarian projects for peace, spoke on “Spiritual Visions of Peace in Asia.” In summary, he said: “Asia is the birthplace for many different religions and the homeland of many spiritual founders. Peace is achieved by individuals trying to knock down selfish barriers and seek justice and goodness. In the Oriental traditions, peace is pursued by overcoming bodily passions and gaining internal stability.”

Mrs. María Concepción Pérez Hidalgo-Chacón, a Councilor for Citizen Participation and Cooperation for Development for the City of Madrid, spoke on “Four Great Figures of Peace.” She talked about the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Nelson Mandela as models of peace.
St. Lucia

Castries, St. Lucia – UPF-St. Lucia and six other local organizations signed a joint declaration to mark the International Day of Peace 2010. It was published in the two main newspapers, and excerpts were read on the radio:

St. Lucia joined the international community in the annual celebration of International Day of Peace, on September 21, 2010. The theme for this year’s commemoration is “Peace, Youth and Development” under the slogan “Peace=Future.”
Tajikistan

Dushanbe, Tajikistan — On the International Day of Peace, UPF-Tajikistan representatives Alexander and Tatyana Fedorov participated in a program at the Tajik National Conservatory.

After speeches by Conservatory Rector Amirov and representatives from the Dushanbe City Hall and the Tajikistan Peace Fund, Alexander Fedorov gave a talk on “My responsibility in building peace.” Professors made a proposal to hold such lectures on a monthly basis.

On the same day, a Board Meeting of the Tajikistan Peace Fund was also held in which an activity report was given, including the visits to senior citizen homes made in cooperation with UPF.
Bangkok, Thailand – Approximately 200,000 students, teachers, and parents joined the “One Minute of Silence” campaign to commemorate the International Day of Peace in Thailand on September 21. More than 200 schools responded committing themselves to this observance.

UPF-Thailand sent letters to more than 1,500 schools in Thailand asking the director of the school to read the International Day of Peace 2010 message of Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the topic “Youth and Development” and the motto “Peace = Future.” In addition, we also asked the teachers and students to observe “One Minute of Silence” during the Flag Ceremony at 8:00 am and pray for Thailand’s efforts for peace and reconciliation.

The TV channels 5 and 7, owned by the Thai government, went to one prestigious school, Kasetsart University Laboratory School, to report on the day’s observance and interview some elementary school students. More than 2,500 students and 200 teachers at that school commemorated the International Day of Peace.
Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago – UPF-Trinidad and Tobago commemorated the International Day of Peace at S Early Learning Kindergarten School in South Trinidad. This school consists of children from ages 3 to 5. It is important to nurture and instill in the hearts and minds of these young children the importance of creating a peaceful world of mutual respect, harmony, cooperation, freedom, and prosperity for all. Through this initiative we can also support the concerted global efforts towards fostering a better world and establish lasting peace.

The young students kindled the hearts of everyone in the audience with their performance of the songs “Carry Your Candle” and “This Little Light of Mine.” They sang angelically with buoyancy, and as they held candles in their tiny hands they represented the hope and future of our nation. A minute of silence was offered at noon followed by a keynote address explaining the importance of this occasion and the need to unite all people in order to bring about a world of lasting peace.

A peace pole was planted outside the school yard, engraved with words “May peace prevail on Earth” written in English, Hindi, and Arabic, representing our main religious and ethnic backgrounds. It was also written in Korean as a symbol of hope for North and South Korea becoming one nation and uniting with the rest of the world.

At the end of the world peace ceremony white doves were released into the air as a symbol of hope and the dawning of a new era for Trinidad and Tobago.
United Kingdom

London, United Kingdom – UPF-UK’s September 23 commemoration of the International Day of Peace featured two speakers about youth development projects in London and an expert on the Sudan and Darfur.

The event coincided with UN Summit for the Millennium Development Goals with guest speakers theming their talks on Youth, Peace and Development. We had the pleasure of having Dr. David Hoile, an expert in Sudan and Darfur, Keldon Alleyne from Lewisham Youth Aid, and Seja Majeed from Vinspired, the youth volunteering organization, speaking at the event.

Guests included prominent philanthropist Sheridan Mungal. Keldon and Seja talked about their respective organizations’ roles in youth development in London and how clubs and societies can give young people a purpose in life and direct them away from crime and violence. Later guests added to the debate with Mr. Mungal and Alan Reigner explaining the importance of father figures and role models for inner city kids to prevent them from going astray.

Overall, the night proved a success with an edifying discourse on how to achieve one of the Millennium Development Goals and an opportunity to celebrate the UN International Day of Peace.
United States

Washington DC, United States – The UPF-Washington DC chapter celebrated the UN International Day of Peace with a program at the Embassy of Ghana on September 23. The Ghana Embassy, co-sponsor of the program, provided the spacious setting of their auditorium.

Ambassador of Ghana H.E. Daniel Ohene Agyekum and his wife, Mrs. Rose Agyekum, along with their daughters, Dr. Irene Agyekum and Dr. Linda Osei Agyekum, welcomed to the embassy distinguished guests, including the Ambassador of Gambia, H.E. Alieu M. Ngum and his wife, Mrs. Ngum. Also present were representatives from the embassies of Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Libya, Namibia, Taiwan, Timor-Leste, and the League of Arab States. Ambassadors for Peace and friends of the UPF were in attendance.

Ambassador Agyekum welcomed the guests and spoke about the importance of the UN International Day of Peace and the commitment to the family as the key for achieving the ideals of peace in societies and nations. He emphasized the necessity for each person to commit to building a world of peace.

His remarks were followed by a brief introduction by Dr. Irene Agyekum, a medical doctor, to the UPF-DC’s new initiative on breast cancer education and prevention, “Ambassadors for Peace Taking Action.”

The program finale was a moving concert by soprano Seiko Lee, who was singing at the DC program prior to her departure for Japan. Ms. Lee will participate as a Pink Ribbon Ambassador in the “Light the Town Pink” program at the Kumano shrines and pilgrimage routes in Japan that are on a UNESCO World Heritage list.
Montevideo, Uruguay — These first ten years of the third millennium, which we all wanted to be filled with peace, have been painfully marked by wars and violence that have had much to do with the religious factor. The United Nations designated September 21 of each year as the International Day of Peace and calls on people to observe it as a day of ceasefire and non-violence on a worldwide level.

In commemoration of this day, UPF-Uruguay organized an interreligious summit at the Hotel Radisson Montevideo Victoria Plaza on October 5. Our speakers were representatives of different religious institutions who expounded on their vision of the central theme of the interreligious summit: “The Contributions of Religions to the Search for Peace.”
Venezuela

Caracas, Venezuela — On September 18, the Universal Peace Federation of Venezuela, in alliance with the Lions Club of Petare, and the Committee on Legislation of the Caracas City Hall, commemorated the International Day of Peace with the completion of a voluntary social service project.

We began painting work, restoration of walls, cleaning and organization of the library of St. Edmund Kids’ Corner Foundation, located in Las Minas de Baruta, Federal District. The Foundation shelters 250 unattended children in the community and neighborhood giving them three meals a day and overnight accommodations for 70 of these children who are abandoned or whose families are in extreme poverty.

The Universal Peace Federation invited 12 Youth Ambassadors for Peace organized by the youth leader Daniel González, a student of Computer Engineering, who volunteered to do painting and repairs, The Lions Club provided fruit and drinks, organized the library, and helped clean up the institution. The Committee on Legislation provided part of the paint as well as food for the children of the institution.

After the service project, young people living in the St. Edmund Kids Corner Foundation, along with Ms. Soledad, the Director, were very grateful and happy to see the big difference before and after the volunteer work. It is very important to understand that true leaders are those who do volunteer work with a responsible heart, serving others without expecting anything in return. A simple “thank you” gives great satisfaction and joy. We were very happy for this opportunity to serve the needy.
Lusaka, Zambia – Approximately 50 people attended a celebration at the Peace Embassy, including students, teachers, members of the clergy, business people, and Ambassadors for Peace. Among the participants were the Chairman of UPF-Zambia Rt. Hon. Gen. Malimba N. Masheke (former Prime Minister of Zambia), Patriarch Emmanuel Milingo, Secretary General of UPF-Zambia Rev. Rudolf Faerber, and Mr. Lawrence Banda, Director of Education of UPF-Zambia.

Gen. Masheke emphasized the importance of young people practicing the ideals of peace. “Respect for human rights, and solidarity across the boundaries of nationality, culture, religion, and civilization are fundamental to a sustainable peace in communities, nations, and the world,” he said.

Patriarch Milingo referred to the youth as leaders of today and tomorrow. He urged them to conduct themselves morally in line with the will of God and refrain from sex before marriage, drinking, and smoking. He stressed that self-control is the first task for anyone who would try to lead his nation to peace.
Zimbabwe

Harare, Zimbabwe – The UPF Secretary General worked with the UN Information Center, Iranian Embassy Cultural Department, Zimbabwe Olympic Committee, The Voice of Revival Ministry, and Fatima Zahra Women’s Organization to organize a celebration of the UN International Day of Peace.

The theme was Youth for Peace and Development, and the main activity was a sports tournament in various disciplines among students of 12 schools. Prizes were given to students who had won in the tournament. The Minister of Education, Sport and Culture was the Guest of Honor.

Representatives of several organizations elaborated on what peace meant to them. The message of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was also read.