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

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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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.”
Peace perspectives from Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity

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.”