



# Föderation für Weltfrieden Interreligiös und International Universal Peace Federation

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## Universal Peace Federation was launched in New York when the UN observed it's 60th birthday

Larry R. Moffitt, Editor, United Press International Religion & Spirituality Forum; New York, United States, September 12, 2005

Declaring the world to be at a pivotal "historic turning point," Reverend Dr. Sun Myung Moon asked an international peace gathering to consider, "Can everlasting world peace take root, or are we doomed to repeat the 20th century's dark and oppressive history of war and conflict?"

Addressing a standing-room-only house in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, Reverend Moon spoke on the topic, "God's Ideal Family: The Model for World Peace." The address marked the inauguration of the Universal Peace Federation, convening in New York City with 376 delegates from 157 nations.

Calling the past century "a period of ceaseless war and colonial domination," he said, "I have always prayed sincerely that the United Nations, founded after the second World War, would be an institution of peace, and that it would uphold God's will for the realization of eternal world peace."



Rev. and Mrs. Moon receive a commemorative plaque from Ambassadors for Peace Dr. Walter Fauntroy and Dr. Mohammad Murad

While acknowledging that the United Nations has made important contributions in conflict resolution, Rev. Moon pointed out that many critics, both inside and outside the organization, say that the UN remains far from fulfilling its founding purpose - the establishment of world peace.

In addition, citing the inability of the United Nations member states to rise above their own self-interests, he gave the Universal Peace Federation the mission to "renew the existing United Nations and provide a new level of leadership as an "Abel-type" United Nations, that is, a United Nations whose efforts for peace are offered to heaven, investing itself ceaselessly in living for the sake of others."

He reminded the delegates that the United States is approaching a \$200 billion dollar price tag for the war in Iraq. Calling that conflict, "a folly," he asked, "Why must we continue pouring countless dollars into wars that do not accomplish anything more than death?" Calling for an end to the "perverse cycle of sacrificing our children's lives and squandering astronomical sums of money to fight wars," he said, "the time has come for the countries of the world to pool their resources and advance toward the world of peace desired by God."

Reverend Moon asked that, instead of war, nations spend money on projects that unite nations and cultures. "I propose that we build a passage for transit across the Bering Strait to link an international highway system that would allow people to travel on land from Africa's Cape of Good Hope to Santiago Chile, and from London to New York, across

the Bering Strait, connecting the world as a single community." He called the proposed bridge "a truly providential and revolutionary project."

Expounding on a central theme of his lifelong ministry, Reverend Moon said that Adam and Eve were created as the direct children of God, and lamented that "God's life, love and lineage" were destroyed in the fall of man, which he said has created a permanent "unbridgeable gap between God and humankind."

He said the biblical account of Cain and Abel reveals the beginnings of human conflict within Adam's family, and provides the archetype for all levels of human struggle - "beginning with the war between the body and mind within each individual, and extending to wars between nations." He called the historic struggle of Cain and Abel that still exists today between nations and races, "an ancient knot that has been tightened for thousands of years and grows ever more tangled."

"Extreme selfish individualism threatens our prosperity. We deem young people to be the hope of humanity holding the promise for the future, but drugs and free sex enslave them. Advanced countries seem to believe that material goods are all that matter. They recognize only their own interests while ignoring the misery of tens of thousands who die of starvation every day.

"A life lived for the sake of others, for true love, is the absolute prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Through these words," he said, "I give you the truth that God wants to deliver to humanity."

Reverend Moon's speech was the first event in a speaking tour that will take the 85-year-old religious leader to 100 cities throughout the world, visiting and delivering this major address in almost one city per day.

The Universal Peace Federation grew out of, and represents an expansion of, the six years of peace initiatives by the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP), according to Tom Walsh, Director General of the IIFWP.

The Honorable José de Venecia, Jr., Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives, opened the program with congratulatory remarks for the work of the IIFWP, and also expressed his hopes for the success of the new Universal Peace Federation. "For harmony among the world's religions - Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and all others - we have proposed that in the United Nations, we create a global dialogue between religions." To sustained applause, De Venecia told the group, "The UN General Assembly finally approved our proposal."



Honorable José de Venecia, Jr., Speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives

Regarding formalizing this initiative, he said, "When our President Macapagal Arroyo arrives in New York, we will propose creation of a formal organization within the UN to oversee this dialogue between all religions, of all nations in the world. We say no to the clash of civilizations and we say no to the clash of religions. We all belong to one human family and we are all children of God." He additionally offered a proposal that a series of interfaith dialogues be organized in those parts of the world where there is the greatest conflict.

In addition, De Venecia proposed an innovative debt-reform plan for the Developing World. He said, "Our plan is for creditor nations to plow back into the economies of the debtor countries, 50 percent of the debt-service payments they receive." Calling the plan, "neither debt forgiveness or debt moratorium or debt discount," De Venecia said half of

the countries' debt payments should be invested back into the debtor countries as "equity investments" in reforestation, food production, housing, water treatment, schools, information technology and other projects.



Also preceding the main speaker was His Excellency Makarim Wibisono, Chairman of the UN Commission of Human Rights and Indonesia's Ambassador to the United Nations. He said, "I believe in the purpose of this Peace Federation. After witnessing so much conflict in the world, some of it in my own country, my belief in the importance in this forum is even greater."

He said, "The concept introduced by Reverend Moon on the culture of heart, is important and relevant," adding that it is crucial that we distill out and follow the "spirit" of religion, lest someone distort the letter of a teaching in order to use it to commit unjust violence. Taking an optimistic view of the future of humanity, he expressed the feeling that those who believe they are furthering their religion by committing violence on innocent people, "will eventually be visited by revelation" and set straight. "My belief," he said, "is that human civilization has entered a stage where the incentive for peace is greater than the incentive for war." Despite the fact that no nation has a history free of conflict, Wibisono took issue with those who claim that war is an inseparable part of the human condition. "Some say conflict is inherent in the psychology of mankind, but if war is a natural part of human history, then so is peace," he said.

The recently elected president of Burundi Pierre Nkurunziza, a long-time supporter of the peace initiatives of the IIFWP, and who is in New York for the observance of the 60th birthday of the UN, also attended the address and was introduced from the stage.

The **Universal Peace Federation** grows out of the work of the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP), whose volunteer corps of Ambassadors for Peace have been sponsoring dialogs and cooperative projects between religious leaders and leaders of good conscience, particularly in the Middle East, for six years.

Thomas Walsh, secretary general of the IIFWP said that the work of the Universal Peace Federation represents a new stage in the development of the IIFWP, a shift that includes establishment of "a more formal structure of regional and national peace councils and a presiding council whose membership is largely former heads of state and governments." He also pointed out that the new name is shorter and less cumbersome.

Joining Walsh at the podium were Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders who will be involved in creating the configuration of the Universal Peace Federations special bodies, which will include commissions focused on peace education, justice and reconciliation, women's rights and other issues.

Dr. Hamdi Mohammad Murad, a leader of the Jordanian Interfaith Co-Existence Research Center in Amman, Jordan cited the significance of launching this new initiative during observances of the anniversary of the World Trade Center bombing, saying, "because of the great tragedy that happened here, the world's religions are coming together under one God in our hearts."

Ron Cohen, a member of the Israeli Knesset, said, "We need the help of the leaders of all religions - to encourage people to cooperate with one another. That's why I believe this group can be very helpful in bringing peace."

Bishop George A. Stallings, Jr., pastor of the Imani Temple in Washington, DC, said, "If we are going to have peace, we as religious leaders must bridge the gap between races and ideologies, transcending the barriers between our different religions."