



European Leadership Conference Tour 2011

Geneva, Switzerland, March 25th - 26th, 2011



European Leadership Conference participants in front of the World Council of Churches

Under the banner of a UPF/ WFWP partnership, a “European Leadership Conference” tour was successfully launched in Geneva, Switzerland on March 25-26. During sessions held at the **World Council of Churches** and at the **United Nations Office**, nearly two hundred participants, including legal and human rights professionals to religious leaders, grassroots activists and UN Ambassadors representing over 30 nations were welcomed.



Session I:

“Human Rights and Dignity: A New Paradigm for an Intercultural World”

The conference was opened at the World Council of Churches by **Carolyn Handschin** (WFWPI- President for Europe) “As never before in history, as we interact through our television screens and internet sites from the other side of the globe, the calls for a bright, just and participatory future finds a resonance and brings us closer together as one human family. At this time of dramatic upheaval- we need to ask what can we do from here, what can I do- concretely?”



The keynote speaker, **Dr. Yong Cheol Song** (Chairman of UPF – Europe) , just back from a meeting of the UPF Peace Council in Albania, explained the commitment of UPF to advancing human rights and responsibilities in all countries. “We cannot be complacent. It is significant that we are here in the WCC, as religion





can provide a moral and spiritual framework for how we treat each other. Human rights violations come from ignorance of these principles. We should advance the cause of all religions centered on human values. Strengthening the institution of marriage and promoting the concept of one family under God is the best way that we can encourage human responsibilities”.



H.E. Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani of the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations, the second panellist, spoke about the experience of Indonesia in cross cultural dialogue and cooperation. The largest Mosque in Jakarta was built by a Christian. As a secular country housing many religions, our problem is that everyone wants to have their

own different religious holidays!

We have to promote dialogue without inciting hatred- and it must lead to cooperation and dialogue at the grass-roots level. According to an Indonesian proverb, consultation and consensus



for the benefit of all is what is needed.

Professor Alfred-Maurice da Zayas, Professor of International Law, Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations and former Human Rights Committee member highlighted the role of civil society in change. It was as a result of the input from civil society that the Human Rights Council called

a workshop on the emerging claim for a “Human Right to Peace” as a legal framework. It has been spreading like wildfire, but not without concerted efforts on the part of some civil society campaigners like David Puyana (pointing). There is no doubt that such a right to peace will ultimately be instated and repercussions will be profound: Culture of Peace, etc..

Another civil society project, initiated at Berkeley University is project 2048 (100 years after signing of the UDHR) that restates the original through 44 instead of 30 articles and would institute a world court. Switzerland has spearheaded the idea. It is in the hands of civil society to carry these initiatives through. Dr. da Zayas also pointed out that the concept of human dignity should be looked at as a general principle of law- at the level of natural law and as above everything else.



Ms. Berhane Raswork, Executive Director of the Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC) said that many wars have been fought because of misunderstandings about traditions, etc. “In my part of the world, women as a tradition are mutilated alive. This is an upheld and respected value done with the approval of the community, including Moslems and Christians and even the

women themselves”. As the only African in a working group of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva in the 70- 80’s “on female circumcision”, she was asked to moderate the group. Everyone thought they were crazy, but they pushed and pushed and used various entry points of the Human Rights Council (HRC) to work on this issue. The story is long as it involves with each breakthrough here in Geneva, going back to the





grassroots and wrestling with it there. The HRC has since ruled that the integrity of the female body should be left intact. The African Union, 28 governments, many religious leaders and NGO's have taken up the issue.



Rabbi Aron Muller, of the Israelite Community of Baden, Switzerland spoke about the concept of intensity and extensivity. Misunderstanding and then, clashes begin because – “we’d rather take care of our brother than someone we do not know- both in public and private life”. This fight for democracy in the Middle East is very popular, but who

knows when the extensivity factor will come in? Are there sufficient notions of democracy? Ignorance is a serious problem. Solomon stated that wisdom is better than strength (Ecclesiastes 9:16). We need to get the message out until extensivity meets intensity, for example, through the interfaith learning centers whose establishment we are currently discussing with UPF. Rabbi Muller ended by singing a John Lennon’s song, “Imagine” of which he modified the lyrics to “Imagine objective thinking, yes it’s possible” and finished with “You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one, I hope someday you’ll join us, and the world will unite as one”.



Paula Pace, of the International Migration Law Unit spoke on behalf of **Md. Shahidul Haque**, Director, Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships – International Organization for Migration (IOM). The opportunities offered by multiculturalism and interfaith dialogue are many and IOM has developed projects in that area. A video was shown involving youth in seeking solutions. This video won a competition.

Migration is a fact of life more than a problem. The film can be found on the IOM website? Another project “Integration, A Multifait Approach” (IAMA) <http://www.iom.fi/iama> was carried out in Finland and other countries to stimulate dialogue between migrants and the local population and provide civic education and the exchange of views with other migrants. In 2010, IOM held various consultations on the importance of putting the migrants at the center of integration policy, based on the protection of human rights. To close, Ms. Pace quoted a recent article of the “Tribune de Genève” which referred to the fact that Italy had refused to take some illegal immigrants. The news article was obviously tainted with misleading language. We have to combat these misunderstandings as they make integration very

difficult. Transnational migration will continue as a fact of life and is therefore an important issue for us to deal with.



Dr. Jesus Domingo is the Minister, Disarmament and Humanitarian Affairs, Permanent Mission of Philippines to the United Nations. This is a leadership conference of UPF Ambassadors for Peace in conjunction with WFPW and GIA. In Geneva, over the past 3 years, we have been working to advance interfaith unity with local religious leaders, government missions and bodies of the United Nations.

We have been promoting the establishment of an Interreligious Council at the UN, e.g. through a Model UN involving youth and the simulation of such an interreligious council.

How can we advance this vision? “If you are an Ambassador for Peace, what is your embassy?” The answer is that it is your area of work, your base. As an Ambassador for Peace, you should have an embassy, this is your family. Learning must come before action. The anthology World Scripture, of UPF is a good educational text for ambassadors for peace that could possibly be expanded, showing how this ties in with moral and spiritual obligation. For example, we could publish the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a series of commentaries showing how each of its articles is rooted in the different religions. The Mitzvah tank is an example of a method of putting faith into action. To advance interfaith, we need to have interfaith committees on the city or town level. Religion has an important role to play. For example, in order to help Philippine citizens in Libya and Japan during the current crises, we tapped into the religious communities.





Session 2:
“ Interreligious Cooperation and the Prevention of Incitement to National, Religious and Racial Hatred”
 United Nations Offices Geneva, Hall XXIV. March 25, 2011, 14h00



Mr. Peter Zoehrer, Secretary general of the Forum for Religious Freedom (FOREF) based in Austria introduced the topic of the session.

Dr. Antonio Stango - SG, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Italy and member of UPF's Global Peace Council gave a very informative summary of religious freedom in international law.



Snapshots: The next five speakers each presented a “snapshot” of their engagement in the prevention of incitement to hatred and other human rights violations in their countries of origin.

Ms. Tseten Zochbauer- Austria / Tibet was introduced, saying that she met UPF in Vienna while on a hunger strike for more than 12 days for Tibet. Her country after 52 years is still fighting to keep the culture and language alive. After



Tibet was occupied by China, she was exiled and sent to a foster family in Switzerland, attending high school here in Geneva. In 1989, she founded the Tibetan Community of Austria and in 1992 the SAVE TIBET Austrian Association and since then has continued her efforts to support the People of Tibet and is currently the President of SOS Tibet in Austria.

There is a new generation of Tibetans coming up and the Dalai Lama is stepping down from his political role. It's the struggle of the Tibetan people, not just the Dalai Lama. He teaches about how to be democratic without violence. I represent Tibetan women in the exiled Tibetan Parliament and my colleague in that Parliament, a Tibetan monk from Spain, is also here today. It is a race against time, even in Tibet there are 3 times as many Chinese as Tibetans. If nothing changes in the next 5 years, it will be lost. “We have gained many famous friends. If we don't succeed, how can others with even less support succeed?” It would be the first time for a nation to get its sovereignty back by non-violent means. In Tibet, people are ready to die for this cause.





Ms. Naima Serroukh- Switzerland/ Morocco, Tunisia is a lawyer who serves on the Integration Commission in Biel, Switzerland and is president of the association "Pont de Communication". She is originally from Morocco, her husband is Tunisian and they have 3 children. She and her husband have initiated numerous projects related to integration and human rights.

When she came to Switzerland she thought this would be the country of democracy and true freedom, but found that there are sometimes chains of hatred and discrimination. "I'm talking about my personal experience. Do I need to compromise to be accepted, stop going to Church or the Mosque? Should I not have too many children?" I can break these chains if I go back to the Koran which has a universal message. In the first verse it says that we should learn from and go toward others and liberate ourselves from ignorance. When I make the effort to understand the person in front of me, I can develop. That's universal, not just for Moslems.



Mr. Alex Ntung- UK/ DR of Congo has been working in the area of peace building and conflict resolution for the past 13 years. He is currently adviser to the Brussels based International Peace and Development Initiative for Central Africa. Since independence, DRC has been going through civil war and has benefitted from UN intervention. In Eastern Congo, peace builders have to be escorted by UN troops. There

are 5 major antagonistic ethnic groups. Conflict is associated with identity and victimization. There is a lot of sexual violence used as a weapon of war. Peace builders tried to bring these 5 ethnic groups together to talk and find representative leaders to come up with an action plan. There is a lack of dialogue between the leaders. This is a sensitive issue and there is a lack of trust. These people usually never meet, but we were able to bring them together and come up with an action plan. Mr. Ntung showed a photo of him shaking hands with the head of a group responsible for killing many of his family members. Various projects were launched such as a peace conference to combat racial hatred. The major outcome was that one rebel group became integrated into the national army after 10 years of rebellion. They also had a prayer of forgiveness among the different tribes. Action speaks louder than words, so don't hesitate to be an activist.



Ms. Manal Timraz – UK / Palestine was born a Palestinian and worked for many years for the United Nations on projects relating to the welfare of women and children in Palestine. She grew up believing in the dream that one day there would be no more US and THEM, but only a place where all of us, Arabs and Jews, can live peacefully side by side.

She found a model of this dream in Coventry, in the United Kingdom, where people are living side by side as neighbors, regardless of their differences in race or faith. During the bombing of Gaza in December 2008, Manal lost 15 members of her family- 11 were children under the age of 12. This was the greatest test for any human being to go through, let alone a peace activist. She asked herself, "am I really a peace activist or will I seek revenge like everyone else"? She refused to grieve and rather launched the 'Millions Candles for Peace Campaign', with the candle as a symbol of peace. She flew with her children to the Holy Land, carrying One Million Candles donated from the people of Britain for the sake of humanity. "It was the little voice of Mohammad in my head, the youngest of my family members who were killed, which led me to start the campaign." Before he died, he asked me one favor over the phone, that is to come and take him to England to watch a football match, but it was impossible for him because this would require a UN resolution. I said to him that one day he would be able to come and watch any match he liked. His voice which had been filled with hope came to me. I felt like I stepped out of my own existence. It was the voice of the victims that motivated me.



Afsharpur Yazdan- Switzerland / Libya, works as a journalist with a Libyan NGO based in Switzerland since 2000- Human Rights Solidarity . He explained that he'd like to give a snapshot of how the critical situation that the world is watching in Libya began- and the hopes of the people there. The beginning of the uprising for democracy, which we hope won't be derailed, came from the overdue need for changes in the Arab world. It was

inspired by the uprising in neighboring countries. There was a call on 17th February for a demonstration on the anniversary of the events on that date in 2006. Prior to that date, the Libyan regime always arrested those deemed dangerous. 150 members of the central committee demanded the release of the detained activists. On 16th February, demonstrations started in various



places including in Benghazi. The regime's security forces withdrew from the areas where the demonstrations took place. On 17th February, munitions were shipped to begin killings, which outraged the police who then switched sides. In Benghazi, where the people held peaceful demonstrations, 257 people were killed, went missing or were injured. Following this, there were huge demonstrations in Tripoli and the security forces disappeared from the scene. It was peaceful on the side of the demonstrators until then. On the evening of Sunday 27th February, Gaddafi's son launched the state terror machine on the people. As a result, the demonstrators were forced to arm themselves. This led to resolution 1973 of the UN and now the NATO led intervention. There is still much to tell, beyond what can be seen on the television, but please know that the Libyan people need your support!

Peter Zoehrer explained that following these snapshots, there would be three detailed interventions.

Professor Dr. Christian Brunner, University of Graz, Institute for Austrian, European and Comparative Public Law, Political Sciences and Public Administration, Member of UPF's Global Peace Council and President of FOREF in Europe. "We have a problem with religious freedom in Europe" began Dr. Brunner, speaking on the "function and dysfunction of religion in secular states". Religion is not purely a private matter; our European institutions, policy and public space are



being influenced by the convictions of citizens. In my city of Graz (230,000 inhabitants) there are over 70 active religious communities, yet more than half of the population considers themselves without a religious confession. The European Court for Human Rights speaks about positive and negative religious freedom.

Consequences of modern pluralist society tensions are far-reaching. Some proposals to promote social coherence include 1) self restraint in use of language and articulation 2) a need to refrain from presenting Christianity as the leading culture because this gives the green light to discrimination and denies the contribution of other cultures. The crucifix in schools issue could be solved if non-religious pupils could place their non-religious symbols on the wall beside the crucifix. Recently, the Archbishop of Vienna called for an acceptance of multiple religions. Yet, proclamations are one step, and must be followed by concrete action- such as the closing of anti-sect bureaus in Austria. We are seeking a secular order of freedom in which there are binding law-embedded values that are coherent for the religious and non-religious and an "eternity clause" for our European constitution(s) as found in US, French and German documents, stating that human dignity and fundamental human rights are in violable and inalienable!



Mr. Dan Fefferman- USA has been the executive director of the International Coalition for Religious Freedom since 1984. He came from Washington DC and is speaking specifically about the problem of forced conversions in Japan in violation of article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). (This theme had been decided prior to the

earthquake and tsunami struck- and was presented with respect and deep concern for Japan and Japanese citizens). The phenomena of forced conversion had been briefly manifested in Europe and the USA in the 1970s and 80s but comparatively rapidly recognized as illegal and largely eliminated.

In Japan, more than 4300 religious believers have been confined in connection with their forced conversion through the actions of Christian ministers. These victims are mainly Unification Church members, but also Jehovah Witnesses and others. The police often refuse to help the victims. Missing persons reports are usually denied unless they are submitted by family members, but in these cases it is the family members who are the perpetrators. There is also racial discrimination, especially between Japanese and Koreans spouses. There have been no criminal prosecutions in the 16 to 20 cases in which the victims have tried to bring charges.

The typical tactics in the 1990s included prison-like apartments: confinement, forced conversion and renunciation of faith as a condition of release, as well as action against the person's prior religion. There has been inhuman and degrading treatment, including starvation and rape. These Christian ministers bragged of converting hundreds of "Moonies"(Unificationists) and Jehovah Witnesses. Some victims were held in mental hospitals. A video was then shown of Toru Goto and the Japan kidnapping confinement issue.

This is a violation of article 18 of the UDHR and in some cases of articles 5 and 19 concerning torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Mr. Goto was held for over 12 years. In the case of Takako Fujita, the police refused to help her husband seek her release and she committed suicide during confinement. This should have been investigated but was not.

We have asked the World Council of Churches and the US National Council of Churches to look into this as it is committed by Christian ministers. To the best of our knowledge, at least 2 people are currently being held in confinement.

We are calling upon the UN and related institutions to do something about this. Given that Japan is a civilized nation committed to the UDHR, something can be done and NGOs can put pressure on Japan to enforce its existing laws. We are asking for: 1)the reopening of the Toru Goto case, 2) the prosecution of the perpetrators, and 3) a standard policy of police investigation when complaints of this nature are brought to them.



Dr. Aaron Rhodes is an international human rights activist, university lecturer and essayist based in Hamburg, Germany. He served as Executive Director of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) between 1993 and 2007. He was also active in the Human Dimension of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2008, Dr. Rhodes, who was born in the United States of America, was

made an honorary citizen of Austria for his contributions to the Republic.

There have been many cases of hate speech for example in the Balkans. In the IHF, we had many debates about how much freedom of expression should be limited in order to prevent hate speech. Dr. Antonio Stango is one of the few human rights activists who went to the Caucuses during the recent difficult time. The Russian government passed laws against incitement to hatred under pressure from the Council of Europe. However they were at times used to convict human rights activists and in one outstanding case, forced the Russian – Chechen Friendship So-

ciety out of existence. The Russian – Chechen Friendship Society were accused of being racist, because they dealt with racial problems, but it was a humanitarian organization. European laws against incitement to hatred originated as a consequence of the Holocaust. Europe is struggling with its multicultural reality. This is with us whether we like it or not.

The first draft referred to banning hate speech which led to actions or violence, but this was extended by other states. Hatred and hostility were deemed too vague: Eleanor Roosevelt warned against the use of these terms. The internationalization of laws against hate speech has its origin in certain authoritarian states. He referred to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

For civil society, the best prevention of hate crimes is respect for other people. Many non-democratic states have jumped on the anti-hate speech legislation bandwagon, because it gives the state the right to do things coercively. The reality is that crime has gone up in countries with anti-hate speech laws. We should not expect coercive laws by states to eliminate these kinds of problems.

In conclusion, Peter Zoehrer stated that UPF is focusing on human rights. There can be no world peace without human rights. We should build a network and make our experiences count.

**Session 3:
Towards an Interreligious Council at the United Nations.
Hotel Warwick, Geneva, March 25, 2011**



This session dealt with the particular issue of reforming the United Nations in light of an empowerment of religious leaders to become part of the solution for the world's problems. Heiner Handschin gave a short introduction to the original statement of UPF's founder Dr. Sun Myung Moon, at the time of the Assembly 2000 in New York, where he suggested the creation of such a council, as a body comparable to a "senate" of religious leaders. These delegates would deal with all the major issues, such as fulfilling the MDGs, but based on their wisdom, experience and influence as religious and spiritual leaders. After the initial launching, the Philippine government began to take concrete action steps in the direction of an Interreligious Council. Min.

Gary Domingo of the Philippine Mission to the UN in Geneva, reported about the history and current state of this initiative.

Parallel to governments, UPF and its partner organizations (GIIA), started to launch a Model UN program with religious youth of different faiths at the UN in Geneva, showing the importance of bringing in religion as a factor for peace building and reconciliation. Between 2008 and 2011, six conferences took place at the UN in Geneva and in diverse parts of the world under the general theme of "Interreligious Cooperation, Human Rights and Dignity". These conferences tackled various specific issues, like the need for creating alliances among stakeholders that included religious leaders, education in rights and dignity, family values,





disarmament, mediation, reconciliation, and others. Niraj Pabari, a senior college graduate at Webster's and leading member of the UPF/GIIA Model UN Youth program presented to the audience a short overview of his valuable experiences with the program. It seemed that the UN would be more open to a youthful approach in including religious voices in their deliberations.

The evening concluded with a light pot-pourri of songs and flute performances of 2 young Geneva Artists, Claire Millet and Julia Handschin.

Session 4:
Human Rights based on Universal Principles: A New Paradigm
 Hotel Warwick, Geneva, March 26, 2011



Mr. Peter Zöhner showed in his presentation an impressive overview of the fundamental core principles and values that UPF leadership conferences promote, and brought them in line with notions of human rights. As nothing exists for itself in nature, but everything serves the whole and lives for the “other”, human rights solutions can be more deeply understood. He also explained that the way these Principles are lived in the life of the UPF founders, Dr. & Mrs. Sun Myung Moon.

In a very passionate response, **Dr. Emmanuel Bezzina**, paid a tribute to the UPF founders and their total dedication to their mission of bringing about a world of lasting peace.

Session 5:
Human Rights and Dignity, Gender Roles in a Culture of Peace:

Following this, **Mrs. Carolyn Handschin**, European WFWP President, addressed the audience with a presentation about the topic of “Human Rights and Dignity, Leadership and Gender Roles in a Culture of Peace”. The presentation is part of a “Knowing our Rights, Living our Responsibilities” series being developed by WFWP- Geneva. It uses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a measure and an impetus in accessing human dignity and a natural course of empowerment of both women and men.



Responding to the presentation, **Prof. Mohan Gautam** of the Netherlands lent further insight as an anthropologist about the benefit to society when women recognize their potential to the maximum.

Session 6:
Causes for Conflict and Resolution



In the 2nd session on Saturday March 26, 2011, **Mr. Tim Miller**, Vice-Chairman of UPF Europe, addressed the issue of Root causes of Conflict and Resolution. In this very poignant lecture, Mr. Miller reminded us peace starts in our minds, and as human beings are often conflicted within themselves, even extended ethnic conflicts begin within those conflicted minds. It isn't enough to search for just a political solution to problems

of conflicts in the world. The world's religions address this, healing the world starts with my own conduct. Mr. Miller went on to explain UPF's vision and concrete steps on conflict resolution and reconciliation, showing in a very concrete and practical way





that to get rid of an enemy is by getting rid of enmity within ourselves. The great saints and sages in history have shown such an example of sacrificially embracing the enemy with a heart of a parent.



In response to Mr. Millers lecture, **Mrs Aline Afazali** of Birmingham, gave a very touching testimony of her experience of the “Rwanda genocide”, where she lived as a daughter of a Congolese Mother and a Rwandan Father through the terrible drama of losing her own father at the hands of brutal criminal gangs. She demonstrated that despite going through such a shattering

experience, we can still chose to actively pursue forgiveness and reconciliation through creating a website memorial for those former childhood classmates who perished and reconnecting to several hundred classmates throughout the world who all managed to survive.

Session 7: Closing and reflexions about the two day ELC program:



The closing session of the ELC featured a very lively line up of statements and reflexions of many participants of the conference. Many expressed their deep realizations during the past two days for the need to rededicate themselves for the great cause of Peace

and serving humanity in these most turbulent times in human history. At the closing there was a nomination of a new Ambassador of Peace in the person of Dr. Krishna Ahoja Patel, former deputy director of INSTRAW and current Vice-President of NGO -CSW – Geneva.



European Leadership Conference

Geneva, Switzerland, March 25th, 2011

Opening Plenary - World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland

Welcoming address of Dr. Yong Cheol Song

Chair, Universal Peace Federation, Europe



Your Excellences, Distinguished guests, Ambassadors for Peace, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very happy to be here in Geneva with you all today and want to warmly welcome you all to this European Leadership Conference focused on the vital areas of Human Rights and Human Dignity.

Thank you so much for making the effort to come here today from all over Europe to participate in this important conference being held both here at the World Council of Churches and at the United Nations.

I am particularly grateful that so large and distinguished a body of people as yourselves with a track record of protecting Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms has been able to gather here at such short notice under the banner of UPF and related organizations. The advancement of Human Rights of all peoples is part of the core mission of UPF and we sincerely and deeply appreciate those who champion the fundamental rights of others. Especially in the last couple of years, I have been truly humbled and moved by the depth of the commitment of many of you in this area and the personal sacrifices you regularly make for the protection and promotion of the human rights of others. In this, if I may say so, you seem to demonstrate a remarkable depth and unconditional quality of love for your fellow human beings which I truly and deeply respect!

We meet against the backdrop of unfolding events in the Arab

world that demonstrate in unprecedented ways a growing awareness of our shared humanity and of our destiny to become one global family in which the Human Rights of all, regardless of race, religion, nationality or ethnicity are respected. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that there must be what it calls a "common standard of achievement for all people". Even as we gather here today we can witness this principle coming to fruition in Egypt and Libya. In Egypt a spontaneous uprising against tyranny has cast off the gross violations of human rights of the passed 30 years and opened up the real possibility of democracy and greatly increased freedoms of all kinds for the masses there. Movingly, Christian and Moslem have joined together to protect each others rights and freedoms. In

Libya, the military might of NATO is being used with the approval of most of the Arab world to protect the lives and freedoms of innocent civilians threatened by a brutal dictator who is a fellow Arab. In this, the human family represented by the UN can be seen to be standing together as one against unacceptable standards of behavior by rogue members of that family.

Universal Peace Federation is deeply committed to advancing the cause of both Human Rights and Human Responsibilities. The passed 60 years or so have seen great advances in the quest to secure the rights of all human beings and Europe can feel justifiably proud of the seminal role that it has played in this process and which has seen it take the leadership role in implementing Human Rights around the world. But there can be absolutely no room for complacency or foot dragging. We recognize that there remains an enormous amount of work to be done if we are to build a world of lasting peace wherein all people live together in mutual respect, harmony, cooperation and co-prosperity.

With this great objective in mind I want to invite you to consider for a moment certain key principles that need to be fully considered and, I believe implemented, if Human Rights are to become things that we routinely respect and uphold rather than things that are routinely violated.

It is perhaps fitting that this event here in Geneva focused on Human Rights and Dignity should be taking place at the World Headquarters of The Protestant Tradition with its long commitment to the ideals of God-centered peace and reconciliation. And this is also perhaps a fitting place for us to reflect upon the immense contribution that religion as a whole (be it Islam, Judaism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity or any other) has played in fostering human rights and human dignity down the ages. The sacred texts of all these great religions are full of injunctions to us to treat our fellow human beings well. Truly understood, all these faiths have done so much to educate their adherents in the idea that they owe it



to no lesser being than their own creator, God, to treat their fellow human beings with love, dignity and respect. Christianity introduced for the first time the notion of God as the parent of all humanity, thus bequeathing us all the sacred relationship of brothers and sisters. There can surely be no more simple, yet telling definition of both Human Rights and Human Responsibilities than the biblical command to "Love one's neighbor as oneself".

So first, as already mentioned, I think that we should give deep consideration to the profound relevance and significance of religion to the effort to secure human rights. Religions, after all, provide a deep moral and spiritual framework that sensitizes us to the way we treat each other and demands that we aim to be selfless in our dealings with others. They teach that we share a common origin, the source of our sacred (and potentially even divine!) value. Religions teach of the value of each human being and of the need to serve and love others.

Violations of human rights, therefore, can be seen as rooted in moral failures and moral ignorance related to spiritual poverty. Increasing spiritual awareness gives rise to a greater collective will to ensure the well being of all people. UPF therefore believes we should advance the values of all the world's great religions, highlighting their emphasis on universal values. For this reason, we believe that The UN Human Rights Council should establish an inter-religious advisory committee on human rights and human responsibilities which would have as its aim to bring the wisdom and deepest heart of the world's religions to bear on human rights and human responsibility issues. In the same vein, but on an altogether larger level, we have since the year 2000 advocated that an Inter-religious Council should be established as part of The structure of the UN and of similar authority within that structure to The UN Security Council.

Second, I cannot emphasize strongly enough how important the family is (or should be) in establishing norms of good behavior by one human being towards another. It is (or at least has the potential to be) the primary "school of ethics" in human society and should serve as the "school of love" wherein we learn to love, respect and serve others and find our true value through so doing. By strengthening the institutions of marriage and family, we can educate our children to respect all people, thereby establishing a culture of respect for human rights rooted in the family. By the same token, all violations of human rights and failures of human responsibility can be seen to stem from breakdown in the family. For example, we have seen time and again how despots and tyrants and those who exploit or abuse others emerge from troubled and disturbed family backgrounds.

Third, the curricula in our schools and other educational institutions should teach about both human rights and human responsibilities. This can be done through a character education or moral education curriculum. Men and women who are taught to fulfill their moral obligations and responsibilities in their families, among friends and associates, will naturally respect and live for the greater good and fulfillment of others.

Finally, I want to emphasize that human rights can be secured not merely through laws, backed by the power of criminal or civil sanctions, but by an ever growing consciousness that we are part of one human family – that we are brothers and sisters who



share a common spiritual and moral heritage, that we are, in effect, "one family under God".

I believe that our conference theme "*Human Rights and Dignity: A New Paradigm for an Intercultural World*" is a challenge to us to consider what are the critical first steps in bringing change: vision, strategy and hope.

Later today our focus will shift toward some of the issues being addressed by the 16th session of the Human Rights Council, at the United Nations, which is concluding its main annual 4 week session today. There we will be looking at various outstanding specific human rights violations and injustices in the session on, "*Interreligious Cooperation and the Prevention of Incitement to National, Racial and Religious Hatred*". In the spirit of UPF's approach and work ethic, we have asked presenters to speak not only about the gravity of violations, but most emphatically, about what has and can be done in order that similar injustices may be prevented in the future. With these, we will be noting recommendations to be provided to the UN and other international bodies and possibly setting out the first tasks for our new European Peace Council to attend to.

In recent years UPF has increasingly been invited by governments around the world to present programmes of human rights education to legislators, civil servants and members of the executive. Based on the success of such UPF programmes - such as in Liberia, Jamaica, Nepal or Sri Lanka and others, we are committing ourselves to action and continued partnership with International, European and local institutions during this year of 2011.

You may not think that I look typically European, but in my heart, I feel that I am indeed a European. As you all have surely experienced in your years of fighting for peace and justice, when you invest and fight for a cause over time, it becomes your own. My family and I have gone through much during the nearly 8 years we have been working in Europe and we really feel that in this time we have become European and we are proud of that fact. But I have also been on extended missions in Africa, in the south Pacific and elsewhere. So again, as many of you have already experienced, eventually it really seems that the whole world is without any borders. For me, that is also connected with my conviction that God is our loving parent and we are meant to live as one interconnected family.

I look forward very much to meeting you all during the course of this conference and to getting to know those of you who are here for the first time. I trust that you will find your experience here deeply meaningful and enriching and once again I want to thank you all for making the effort to come and for all that you are contributing by your presence here! Thank you very much!