



Multiculturalism - A Contribution to Peace ?

Geneva, Switzerland, United Nations Office, September 23rd, 2011



ties in collaboration with seven partners: the permanent missions of the **Republics of Indonesia and the Philippines to the UN in Geneva**, the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, the **Asean Foundation**, the **Fribourg Peace Forum**, the **Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWPI)** and the **Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance (GIIA)**.

The European Leadership Conference featured five sessions in day one at the United Nations in Geneva, marking the International Day of Peace, and on day two another four sessions at the University of Geneva.

Session 1

Government and Migration

Mr. **Heiner Handschin** opened the first session by inviting Philippino/Swiss singer, Lica de Guzman, to sing "All I want to be" an expression of the hope of young people in our globalized world.

UPF's European Chair, **Dr. Yong Cheon Song**, emphasized that



world cultures spring in the main from religious roots and that UPF's strategy for Peace has always been, to foster dialogue and cooperation among the different religions and cultures. He reminded the participants of the words of UPF's founder, Dr Moon, in the UN in New York, encouraging reform of the UN through the creation of an Interreligious

Council, empowering the religious communities to become a decisive partner in solving world problems through the wisdom and experience of the world's faiths.

Dr. Makarim Wibisono, former head of ECOSOC, the Human Rights Commission and currently Executive Director of the

In recent months Angela Merkel, David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy all referred to Multiculturalism's failure to deliver cohesive communities with a core of shared values. Cameron stated: "We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong". In response religious minorities and migrant communities felt targeted as being part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

The Universal Peace Federation (UPF) decided to explore the challenge faced by our increasingly globalised urban communi-



Makarim Wibisono

Asean Foundation, stressed interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation and respect for human rights as prerequisites for dealing with the world's 214 million migrants. The Asean group of nations, look to the EU -model, trying to create a similar regional structure and in 2004 signed a treaty against human trafficking to protect migrant workers.



Amb. Evan P. Garcia, expressed that his nation, the Philippines, take pride in their support for the programs of the Model UN Interreligious Council at the UN in Geneva and in being one of the primary movers in interreligious dialogue and cooperation in the world. Multiculturalism and related migration

issues are of high importance for the Philippines, which is on the one hand sending many migrants around the world and on the other receiving many migrants. If the world's 214 million migrants were members of one nation they would be the 5th most populous - therefore concerns around migration are receiving more interest from international and national institutions. All of us are members of a religious or cultural grouping.



Amb. Robert Vandemeulebrouck

Ambassador Robert Vandemeulebrouck of Belgium pointed out that migration has been a phenomena throughout history, back to the times when Abraham moved out of Ur and up to and beyond the migrations to the US in the 19th and 20th centuries. Strongly critical attitudes to migrants, "you come here and remain the same", gave rise to populist parties and narrow minded policies. There are many examples of migrants being very productive and contributing to the wellbeing of their

host nation. Recent global economic and social troubles have caused such an influx, that some nations which have been open to migrants have now almost closed their borders.



Monica Malek, Office for Integration, Dept Ministry of Justice and Police, Switzerland conveyed the best wishes of the Minister, Hon. Simonetta Sommaruga, absent due to important sessions of the Swiss Government. Switzerland has 1.7 million immigrants - 22% of the nation's population, with every 3rd marriage being bi-national. Generally there is mutual respect and tolerance,

migrants are asked to learn one of Swiss languages and in this way they can get equal access to education and job opportunities. Recently populist parties launched an initiative against the building of minarets. The government had underestimated fear of an "islamisation" of the country and the people decided against the government's position in this matter.



Finally the former Minister of Defence of the Netherlands, **Dr. Willem Van Eekelen**, commented that "greying" Europe badly needs migrant workers and that we should make a distinction between migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from wars and famine when seeking to understand the situation. He referred to the Asean region, where the 10 member nations have built up a record focusing on things they

agree on, whereas we in Europe tend to focus on what we disagree on. The EU has transformed relations in Europe - nobody thinks of war between European nations any more. Our most cherished freedom has its limit where we infringe on our neighbor's freedom. Migrants should be willing to respect the society that hosts them.



Left to right: Ms. Elisa Ingrassio, , Ms. Rachel Brady, Mr. Jesus Domingo, Mr. Omar Bawa, Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, Ms. Houda Balti

Session 2 - Model UN Interreligious Council - “Special Session on Multiculturalism”



Minister Jesus Domingo of the Mission of the Philippines to the UN gave an overview of the history of the GIIA Model UN Interreligious Council Program since 2008 - to date eight conferences in four countries. Program co-coordinator Ms. Carolyn Handschin, President of the WFWPI in Europe introduced the youth delegates and the roles that they would be playing.

President of the Interreligious Council (IRC), played by **Omar Bawa** (law student, Geneva) reminded the Council of the role that the recent tragedy in Norway and the referendum in Switzerland had played in the decision to call for this special session. He then called upon the Secretary General of the UN as the first of three invited speakers to address the IRC. **Ms. Rachel Brady** (degree in Int'l Development and Conflict Management, USA) began, “In the last century we saw the clash of cultures and nations in two horrendous world wars, and yet out of this dark period came new calls for cooperation and mutual prosperity as embodied most clearly in the founding of this great institution. International organizations are on the rise and the creation of intergovernmental organizations defies rationalist political thought. It seems to be the destiny of humanity to come together as one.” No one is born disliking or prejudiced against another.

The strength of this council is in acknowledging an even greater commonality, our Creator, making us one family, sharing one home.

Representing the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, **Ms. Houda Balti** (PhD student and NGO lawyer on migration issues, Vienna) had prepared a power point presentation assessing assimilation and multiculturalism. The latter, ensuring the existence of diverse cultures and promoting a harmonious relationship among them has provided enrichment to both migrant and host communities. A project of IOM “Mentoring for Migrants” was recommended as best practice and a possible joint initiative.

The next speaker, the Director General of UNESCO, **Ms. Elisa Ingrassio** (Masters student in History and Politics at University of Zurich) explained that the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states that ‘cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.’ UNESCO’s International Coalition of Cities against Racism may be considered as best practice and as a driving force in proving diversity to be a motor of development when functioning under unifying core principles .

The Council Debate where standing members of the Interreligious Council took the floor followed.



The Delegate for Catholicism, **Ms. Lica de Guzman** (High school student in Geneva, graduate of Little Dreams Foundation), asked the question, is it multiculturalism which has failed us or we who have failed multiculturalism? Referring to the hate propaganda posters of right wing political parties in Switzerland, which depict scenes such as black hands trying to grab a

Swiss passport, she described the frightened reaction of youth in her constituency. In reality in classrooms where nearly 60% of students are of different origins, all generally manage to get on well together. Remembering the 87 youth gunned down in Norway: "I call on the United Nations and its member states, all non-governmental organizations and world religions to reinforce their commitment to multiculturalism at the heart of the global fight against discrimination and xenophobia."



The Delegate for Hinduism, **Karthik Ragavan** (assistant priest in Geneva Hindu temple, IT professional at UNICC) opened with his wife's Hindu chant: like rivers flowing across the country, all flowing to the ocean, religion should provide a world view that connects the individual to the whole. "I call upon the Inter Religious Council & the

United Nations to inculcate and blend education with Human Values on all levels. Violence can only succeed when we dehumanize others. It is imperative to emphasize actions that give value to others." Protestantism was represented by **Mr. Mutua Kobia** (student at Geneva University)



The Delegate of Islam, **Ms. Neelam Rose** (leader of "NO to Racism" Campaign in UK, and University "Diversity Officer"). Against a background of soaring youth unemployment and mistrust of police and state, people of faith stood together to defend their businesses and places of worship during the recent riots in UK. Although it is very sad

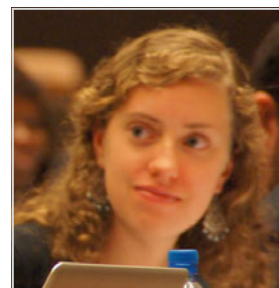
to see many young people going to prison, many youth also cleaned up the streets. The funeral of the 3 young Muslim men who were protecting their shared communities attracted 20,000 people from all races, religions and ages. It is so very important to facilitate dialogue between races and religions and to invest in



young people. The Delegate of Judaism was **Ilja Sichrovsky** (completing Masters in Int'l Development, Founder and SG of Muslim Jewish Conference).

The Delegate for Sikhism, **Sundeep Singh** (Law student at Oslo University and leader of "Young Sikhs")

The recent events in Norway caused us to ask the question, what does it make if one nurtures a strong critique of minorities? Such political parties collected 30% of the vote. Norway has decided, in response to violence, that it needs more democracy and respect, bringing participation and dialogue to all citizens. How can one expand the representative democracies:-by letting people interact and ordinary people interact more effectively with their government and the UN. The Inter-religious Council can help this - we are making our choices for the future now!



The Delegate for Unificationism, **Cathleen Dumas Bell** (Graduate in Global Peace and Justice Studies, Trainer with performing arts-based AIDS prevention education program). Recent tragic events, such as the assassination of former Afghan

president Rabbani, remind us of the importance of this session. "Espousing the belief of thinking and acting like a family to create a global family is not unique to my faith community- and herein lies our great strength: we are not nearly as different as some in this world would like us to believe." Cathleen recommended: 1) To urge the General Assembly to acknowledge the essential value of marriage and family, and their role in peace-making- and that our own Council consider the same priority in choosing our upcoming projects and events. 2) By using the media, arts and culture, the Council should aggressively disseminate it's message- taking note of the successful media campaign of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Italy.

The Council President thanked all the speakers, stating that the secretariat had taken due note of all interventions and recommendations and would prepare a report to be the basis for further action.





Left to right: Rev. Dr. William Mc Comish, Prof. Dr. Adrian Holderegger, Dr. Walter Schwimmer and Mr. Neil Bulme

Session 3

Multiculturalism - Interreligious/Intercultural Co-operation and Human Rights

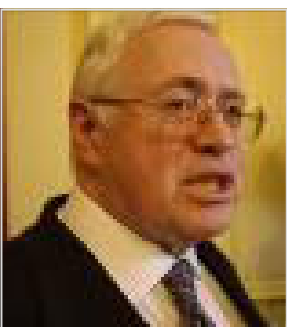


Prof. **Dr. Adrian Holderegger**, Professor of Moral Theology and Ethics of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and founding member of the Fribourg Peace Forum, chaired the session.

The panel of outstanding speakers opened with **Dr. Walter Schwimmer**, former Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who stated that interreligious and intercultural dialogue are crucial for the current time, as we understand multiculturalism not just as a way of living side by side or in isolated ghettos. Such an understanding will definitely not work! As SG of the Council of Europe, he had spoken on behalf of 800 million people, of which 100 million were Muslims. People's well-being in a multicultural society should include both physical and spiritual factors. There is not a



“clash of civilizations or cultures”, but we need to educate our population about the pluri-cultural reality of our societies so that there will not be a clash of ignorance.



Rev. Dr. William Mc Comish, President of the Geneva Spiritual Appeal and former Dean of the Cathedral St. Pierre of Geneva, emphasized that in all major documents and constitutions, bills of rights and even the UN Charter, there should be a reference to moral and spiritual values, oft forgotten, but so utterly important. “I believe that no peace can come on earth without multiculturalism.

As a protestant minister I must make it clear that I do not believe God made us to be the same in race, language, gender, age, even religion. Our diversity is a our strength – people who are different help us to question and

better understand our own beliefs. I believe it is God's wish that the world be multi-cultural, so that we can actively rejoice in our difference. In Geneva we have schools with 100 nationalities and we realize that it is all possible....”



Mr Neil Buhne, Director of the United Nations' Development Program (UNDP) in Geneva, began with some personal reflection about the situation of the eight sometimes troubled countries in which he worked during the last 20 years. In some nations there were religious leaders who accentuated the existing multicultural differences

and political leaders who encouraged people to identify with their narrow ethnic or religious identity rather than their national or world identity; these divisions resulted in great loss of human life and resources. As a Canadian he could see the fruits of the mix of cultures, expressed in 2nd and 3rd generation Canadians. The UN should encourage people's natural inclination to be compassionate and to set the best example. We need to create conditions where people have a sense of identity rooted in the positives of their own culture/religion and at the same time as a part of a global culture.



The last speaker was **Mr. Bashy Quraishy**, President of the European Network Against Racism. As an immigrant from Pakistan, living currently in Denmark, he absolutely believes in Inter-Culturalism, and hopes that we in Europe can move more and more from dialogue towards – cooperation. Europe is in danger of becoming a closed down fortress of secularism - widespread prejudice against religions resulting in

secularism and the loss of spiritual values. These tendencies have negative consequences on the multicultural societies growing throughout Europe and the world as a result of increased migration. Through his work in the last 32 years he could see that original spirituality and faith had the potential to be the glue to bind our societies together.

Session 4 - Multiculturalism - Women and Development



Ms Blandine Mollard (IOM Gender Issues Coordinator). Female migrant workers often have difficulty integrating in their new situation. Women may be affected by harmful traditional practices which violate their rights – forced marriage, genital mutilation etc. Often these women are not taking

part in organizations and remain invisible. The media tends to dwell on negative aspects, but we should not forget the great economic and social contribution that immigrant women make. The money they send back home can raise entire communities out of poverty. Often the less well paid raise larger proportions of their income home, foregoing their own comfort. These attitudes affect the view of women in communities of origin.



Ms. Nicole Heydari – (US of Mexican/Iranian parentage, studies Int'l Development at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna) discovered that relationships are everything – interact and put ourselves in others shoes. While embedded with the military in Afghanistan providing development assistance, she could build bridges between the foreign military and the Afghan population. She found Af-

ghans could more easily express their complaints to a woman and that she could play a key role in facilitating solutions.

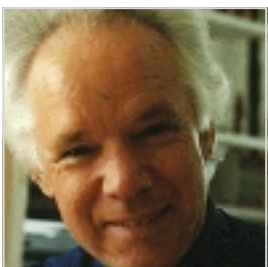


Ms Carolyn Handschin (WFP-Europe President) described the founding of WFWPI. Teams of Japanese volunteers were sent to over one hundred countries some twenty years ago to support local women's development initiatives, with the firm assumption that women's innate talents and life experiences are a vital contribution to community cohesion and development. Out of these local needs, the resources available and innovative leadership - each national chapter has produced its projects and programs.

Bridge of Peace programs have aimed at reconciling historic enmity (political, religious and ethnic) and forged hundreds of peace building projects worldwide. There are Dignity of Women campaigns throughout Europe as a reaction to sexualized advertising, they give strong advocacy power to local women. Many local activities and projects have been created to support UN Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Eradication, Culture of Peace, to resolve pressing problems, and to provide girls and women of grassroots communities the opportunities to act and influence on a global scale.

An interactive discussion followed.

Session 5 - Multiculturalism - Educational Programs and Institutions



Prof .Dr. Richard Friedli, Professor emeritus of theology and history of religions, of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and member of the Fribourg Peace Forum introduced:

Ms. Christine Aghazarm of the International Organisation for Migration who explained IOM's important work due to an increase of worldwide trouble spots in the light of wars and conflicts and most recently the "Arab Spring", which added to the number of refugees trying to flee areas of conflict. There are very few areas more subject to misinformation than issues related to migration. Managing

migration includes managing how migration is perceived in the host societies. The overall perception tends to be negative - public perceptions are not formed in a vacuum - consider the impact of economic recession and other contextual realities. Far too often the critique regarding the failure of multiculturalism has placed the responsibility on the migrant populations rather than on inadequate policies. We should move beyond dialogue and directly exert influence through the education system, creating tool kits that can provide a human face to immigration statistics. It is crucial to avoid blanket labeling and biased media reporting about migrants. Training religious leaders of immigrant and host communities, so that they can more effectively navigate the issues raised by migration would be of great importance.

Mr. Jack Corley, Chairman of UPF in the UK, shared about his more than two decades in Russia and China, with UPF's



"Character Education" programs. After the end of communism there was a great need to fill the values gap with shared values drawing on traditional sources but avoiding division and denominationalism.

UPF's educational programs highlighted educating for character through an emphasis on motivation (heart) and good relationships (norms). The family was described as the "School of Love" stressing it's vital contribution in the creation of a society where diverse populations can live together in peace and harmony.



Ms Ruveni Wijesekera from the Swiss Academy for Development reported about SAD's sport and play programs in inter-ethnic dialogue in Sri Lanka - an attempt to build trust and empathy between fractious communities. Because sport is a-political, it was a safe tool for children and youth in harmonizing the two communities. Through children and youth it became possible to involve the rest

of the community and the leadership. Through sports and play one can develop social skills, respect for diversity, a sense of fair-play and increase people's self esteem. These programs have also helped to build sensitivity toward the minority. Intercultural sports activities led to discussion and lasting learning experiences.

The Restaurant AU VIEUX BOIS right beside the UN's Pregny Gate provided the venue for a reception and entertainment to conclude this very full and exciting day at the United Nations.



Day 2

Innovative Approaches to World Peace - UPF and WFPW Programme



A good synergy between the generations was facilitated during day two of our conference through the youthful atmosphere of the University of Geneva and its well equipped lecture theatre. It was exciting to have with us a number of the dynamic young adults who had contributed so much to the July ELC in Vienna. Bogdan Pammer opened with a presentation addressing Multiculturalism from the perspective of the need to balance diversity with an understanding that universal values enable us to find the fundamental points we hold in common and to discover difference as an asset in establishing mutually beneficial relationships. Nicole Heydari facilitated a role play through which cross-generational representatives could explore the application of meditation to a fictional but tense situation addressing difference of culture, belief, gender and ethnicity. It was good to move from theory to application on the foundation of Jack Corley's presentation exploring the causes of conflict and the principles through which peace and cooperation can be recovered.

Timothy Miller and Jack Corley went on to explain more about the Founders of UPF and WFPW, Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, and their extensive work for World Peace. Sales of Rev. Moon's autobiography and of Dr. Walter Schwimmer's work, *The European Dream*, testified to a healthy interest in innovative approaches to world peace and positive role models.

Final reflections and Ambassador for Peace Awards brought the Conference to a meaningful conclusion. Once again UPF and WFPW had been part of facilitating a constructive and warm environment in which a very diverse community of participants could assure themselves that good will and good character enable us to discover each others' precious and unique value.



European Leadership Conference - Multiculturalism – A Contribution to Peace?

The United Nations, Geneva, 23rd September 2011.

Introductory Remarks by Dr. Yong Cheon Song,

Chairman of the Universal Peace Federation in Europe.

Good morning distinguished delegates, it is a pleasure to welcome you to this European Leadership Conference on Multiculturalism at the United Nations in Geneva.

Multiculturalism has for several decades provided the primary strategy relied upon by liberal Western society to promote mutual respect between people from different cultures, who find themselves living side by side in our increasingly globalised urban societies. However, several European leaders have in the last months referred to the failure of multiculturalism. David Cameron stated in Munich last February: 'We have encouraged different cultures to live separate livesWe have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong.' In response the Muslim Council of Britain expressed that their community are still being treated "as part of the problem as opposed to part of the solution."

Our world cultures today spring in the main from religious roots. UPF has played a significant global role in facilitating dialogue between different cultures and in particular dialogue between religions. Through these experiences we are confident that people of diverse cultures can share a vision to which all feel they belong, in which we are all part of the solution rather than each other's problem.

To promote peace and cooperation we need a dialogue which brings us close enough to discover that which is best in the other; rather than maintaining the distance of ignorance, fear and mistrust through which we magnify each other's failings and become ever more estranged. Our struggle to live in peace is not a result of the clash of irreconcilable cultural differences, but rather our inadequate practice of the central moral guidelines which all the great religions and cultures hold in common. By identifying these essential values and constructing a common vision around them we can share a solution rather than our cultural diversity being perceived as a problem. Founders, faiths and cultures hold as central that by practicing living for the sake of others, we become other-centred rather than self-centred. They all agree that the essence of good character is true love expressed through unselfish actions.

In August 2000, at the UN in New York, UPF's Founder made a very important suggestion as to how we can re-balance our institutions and show a positive example of unity and cooperation beyond religious and cultural difference. The key is that we build unity on shared values and then apply those values to others beyond the limits of our own culture, race, nation or even religion.

Let me summarise what he said:

It is time that international organizations, which support the ideal of world peace, reconsider their relationship with the great religious traditions of the world and encourage mutual respect and increased cooperation between the world's political and religious leaders.

At their root, human problems are not entirely social or political, and so social and political approaches will always be of limited effectiveness.

Although secular authorities rule most human societies, religion lies at the heart of most national and cultural identities and has far greater importance in most people's hearts than do political loyalties.

Religious people have not always been good examples in the practice of love and living for the sake of others, especially beyond the limits of their own culture. For this reason they should engage in deep self-reflection. It is time for religious people to repent for their preoccupation with individual salvation and narrow denominational interests. Religious leaders, who represent the internal concerns of the spirit should work cooperatively and respectfully with political leaders who have much practical wisdom and worldly experience about external material reality.

The existing United Nations structure, composed of national representatives, may be regarded as a congress where the interests of each member nation are represented. I propose that each nation, in addition to its current UN ambassador, sends a religious ambassador to the United Nations to serve as a member of an Interreligious Council, or UN Senate. The mission of the representatives to this UN Senate would require that they have a genuinely ecumenical or interreligious consciousness and that they have the training and ability to teach a universal, transnational ideal of peace.

Such Ambassadors can provide a long term vision rooted in spiritual values which can complement the role of UN diplomats who often have relatively short periods of office and focus only on political approaches. They would promote movements dedicated to the realization of peace and social welfare and serve as conscientious guardians of high ideals such as justice, security, and peace.

I am delighted that in our next session youth delegates will be voicing their hopes for a peaceful future by enacting the work of such a UN Senate or Interreligious Council. We will not create world peace just through tolerance of others, guided alone by pragmatism, or motivated only by the desire for personal advancement. When young people dialogue from the foundation of love for the best in their own cultures and as a result discover that they share their most fundamental ideals and hopes with those from other religions and cultures, we do indeed feel hope for our multicultural future.

Such an Interreligious Council can become a role model for our multicultural society by demonstrating the ability to serve the other, recognize the view of the other, respect and love the other, listen to the other and learn from the other. The Interreligious Council can be a reservoir of humanity's great cultural heritage, a shining light of human maturity and an example of practical virtue; a Council of the wise, righteous and just, representing a shared vision and showing a substantial example of intercultural cooperation which can support political leadership by being the solution rather than the problem.

I commend this proposal for your consideration and suggest that you read Rev. Dr Moon's full speech to the UN in 2000 which our staff will make available to you all.

Thank you for your kind attention.