

## **Dr. Hyun Jin Moon: Interfaith Cooperation, Protection of Human Rights and Dignity**

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### **A Symposium in Celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

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Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a privilege and a high honor to speak to you here at the United Nations today. I'd like to thank the missions of Guinea, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nepal for their support of this precedent-setting initiative.

For the last month the eyes of the world have been on Barack Obama, President-elect of the United States, and his preparations to take office. Each new appointment to his cabinet team is being scrutinized hopefully for evidence that we are about to witness a new era in this country with new policies that can bring about peace and prosperity for all people.

“Change, yes we can!” has become the slogan of not only a successful campaign but also a message of hope at a time of national and global crisis. Of course, change for the sake of change is not enough. The goal and direction of that change is far more important. This is therefore a very good time for the United Nations to reflect upon its own strategies and policies to create peace, and to consider options that will help the UN gain greater support from all the nations and peoples of the world.

Eight years ago, my father, the Reverend Dr. Sun Myung Moon, speaking right here in this room, predicted that the greatest challenge to peace in the 21st century would come from conflict between religions and their followers.

For that reason, he urged the UN to quickly create an “Interreligious Council” that would bring together the leaders of the world’s great faiths.

There are several reasons why this is so important. Firstly, the UN certainly needs to pay a lot of attention to the voices of the faith communities of the world. More than 90 percent of the world is religious, and spiritual passions are a fundamental source of meaning and purpose for most people on the planet. Religions, at their best, must bring their wisdom to bear on the great problems facing humanity.

The second and equally important reason is that the creation of such an Interreligious Council will allow the United Nations to play a coordinating and mediating role when conflict and dispute arises. Moreover, the religious leaders and the communities they represent could be better held to account for their actions when they become part of the formal UN structure.

When my father first made these recommendations in 2000, there was considerable skepticism that religion and religious issues were really that significant. 9/11 has changed all that.

If, as seems likely, the recent atrocities in Mumbai, India, prove to have had a religious as well as a political motive, this will only serve to underline that religion has become one of the most important peace issues of our time.

Of course the religions of the world should not just be waiting for the United Nations to act. All of them must urgently find ways to come into closer relationships with each other. We need to focus on the vast areas of common ground, rather than obsess on the much smaller areas of difference.

We need a new, spiritual vision of peace for the 21st century that can bring all people of faith together as one. That vision, I believe, is “One Family Under God.”

Relations between faith traditions are about much more than mere toleration of one another's prayers and rituals. A true interfaith experience is a celebration of the core principles that bind all God-affirming people together as one family.

The family is universal. Regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion, we are all members of families. The family represents the most intimate of relationships. When we feel close to someone, we use familial terms, saying “that person is like my father, my mother, my brother, my sister.” In the family we are meant to learn to love humanity in all its richness and diversity.

However, although all religions agree that marriage and family are the fundamental building blocks of any society, the reality is that the United States and all other nations are in danger of losing these most valuable traditions and institutions. Divorce and family breakdown are at an all time high. Sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise, even among the youngest teenagers. Violence and crime among young people are on the rise, and many say they have little hope of securing dignified, meaningful jobs to support their future families. The social and economic cost of this breakdown of the family is staggering. The breakdown of the family contributes directly to poverty, disease, child mortality and is possibly the single most significant obstacle to the fulfillment of the UN Millennium Development Goals. If we are to realize “One Family Under God” we must invest, “one family at a time.”

Another immediate practical task of all religions is to create a global culture of service, or “living for the sake of others.” Imagine if young people from enemy nations worked side by side in service! Any misunderstandings and hatred that existed would fade away as they sweat, cry, and laugh together with a common purpose and cause.

To this end, I would like to see the United Nations encourage every nation’s faith-based and community partners to join with those of other countries to establish a Global Peace Corps that will be more than just an American or European effort.

Finally, I want say that the best way to solve the ongoing problem of human rights violations is through creating “One Family Under God.”

When the Global Peace Festival visited Ottawa, Canada, in October, we took a moment to participate in a simple ceremony to honor John Humphries, the Canadian statesman who was the principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The head of the Canada Human Rights Commission reminded us that the Declaration of Human Rights, like the United Nations itself, was never intended to be entirely secular. The authors had in mind the claims of the American Declaration of Independence, which states that all people have "inalienable rights, endowed by their Creator."

Unfortunately, the ability of the UN to honor these religious and spiritual concerns was largely taken hostage by Cold War tensions and the desire to keep the communist nations at the negotiating table.

The world today, however, is very different. We must return to the original ideal and dream of the founders of the United Nations, to create one human family that will never again know the scourge of war.

In order to do this, we must recognize the need to break new ground in order to establish a path to peace. It must be rooted in a spiritual vision which can bring people of faith together as "One Family Under God."

Imagine the power of one human family united! It can quell the turmoil of conflict throughout the world, from the strife and poverty of Africa, to the conflict in the Middle East, and the final remnant of the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula.

As citizens of the world, let us make a solemn pledge to dream the greatest dream of all, to lead the world to peace at last through the vision of "One Family Under God."

Thank you very much.