

## **We are all precious gifts of life created by God**

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Excellencies. Distinguished delegates from around the world. Ambassadors for Peace. Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted and honored to have the opportunity to address you today at the outset of this International Leadership Conference sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation, in cooperation with The Washington Times and the Segye Ilbo.

On behalf of my mother, I want to express special appreciation to all of you for attending yesterday's program in honor of my parents' birthdays.

I know it meant a lot to my mother, and to our entire family. Thank you!

I am very pleased that we are addressing the topic of climate change on this special occasion.

In fact, I see our forum as a great birthday present that we are presenting to my parents.

All of you are true gifts of sincere care, concern, and commitment to preserve and protect all forms of life on this planet. This is the essential gift we can offer to the world at this time.

So I deeply thank you from the bottom of my heart. (bow)

Throughout their lives, my parents dedicated themselves to the goal of building a world of lasting peace, a world in which all people and creation live consciously together in harmony, cooperation and mutual prosperity.

They have always taught that in order for peace to be achieved, every individual must, first of all, transform their consciousness and become people of honorable character and sincere heart, whose actions are guided by moral and spiritual principles.

Secondly, the family unit must be made healthy, stable and loving; for family is the school of love.

It is within the family that the core virtues of love, goodness, compassion, caring, faith and responsibility are learned.

The upright and decent behavioral qualities of our children are learned and formed by the wholesome and loving example of each parent.

Thirdly, all human beings must develop greater awareness and sensitivity to the way we think, speak and act, not only in relation to other members of the human family, but also in relation to all beings and the world around us.

We are all precious gifts of life created by God.

In other words, for my parents, a love of creation is an essential component of their spiritual, moral and theological vision. We cannot imagine achieving peace without having a loving respect for the world around us, our environment.

In fact, according to the world's religions, human beings are created with a responsibility to take care of the earth, to be good stewards of the earth, and to view the earth, including all natural things and all living things, as expressions of God.

Some of my earliest memories as a child are of my parents' love for the natural world.

They spent much of their time exploring the natural world, from Kodiak, Alaska, to the Amazon jungles and the Pantanal Region of South America, to the waters of the Hudson River Valley in New York, and even this area around Cheong Pyeong Lake in Korea.

Nature was their second home. I spent many a summer's day with them on a fishing boat.

Now looking back, I have nothing but admiration for their love of nature as a sacred gift of God. I will cherish these memories for eternity.

But, what pains my heart is that this is an experience many of our future generations will never have, unless we change how we live today.

In my father's autobiography, *A Peace-Loving Global Citizen*, he pleads for humanity to wake up, stating that

“Human selfishness is destroying nature. Competition for the shortest route to economic success is the main reason that the earth's environment has been damaged. We cannot allow the earth to be damaged any further. Religious people must lead the way in the effort to save nature. Nature is God's creation and His gift to humankind. We must work quickly to awaken people to the preciousness of nature and the urgent need to restore it to the rich and free state it enjoyed at the time of creation.” (310)

He knew that when natural resources come to be seen merely as commodities, no longer sacred, the consequences are imbalance, suffering, fighting and war. He warns,

“We must stop waging war and forcing people to suffer. It is perverse to start wars and squander hundreds of billion dollars. The time has come for us to beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks... It refers to an equalization of the world's standard of living. When someone monopolizes a technology and keeps profits for himself the balance of the world is upset... This will require sacrifice from those with greater material possession or knowledge. Building a world of peace cannot be done with onetime charitable acts or donations. Only sincere love and continuous sacrifice are capable of creating a world of peace. We must be willing to offer everything. The world can be completely unified only when there is both physical communication and communication of the heart.” (341-2).

As you know, virtually all religions teach respect for the earth. Throughout history, our greatest spiritual teachers and traditions envisioned the earth, all things and all people as sacred.

Moreover, religions teach that human beings are endowed with not only blessings, but also responsibilities, especially the responsibility to care for the earth, our planet; that is, to be good stewards of the earth and every living and every natural thing.

Of course, the sacred scriptures not only speak of the ideal, but also of humanity's fall away from the original ideal.

The legacy of the Fall of Adam and Eve is expressed not only in the murder of Abel by Cain, but also in our disrespect for the entire natural world, which we too often approach with arrogance, greed and selfishness. Too few of us see the creation as infused with the love of God.

As we lose our connection to God, our Heavenly Parent, we lose connection with the world around us.

This is our sad reality as we face so many devastating consequences of our abuse of one another and of the earth. We have lost our center; we have lost perspective.

All around us we see the disheartening effects of climate change: global warming, sea levels rising, acidification, mass extinction of marine and animal life, deforestation, food shortages and extreme fluctuation of weather patterns, and even an increase of new “super bugs”, viruses and disease.

These tragic developments are exacerbated by fracking, unsustainable energy consumption, and unnatural and unsustainable food production.

Our world is out of balance, resulting from the way we live, often unconsciously and without a larger awareness that all life must be respected and honored for the sake of the world and one another, and not just our own convenience.

If we really open our eyes we will see that our food, our water, our air, our lands, our bodies, and the basic life-elements are being polluted at an alarming rate. We are even polluting outer space with what is called “space junk!”

At the same time we observe so many other indicators of human beings being “out of balance”, for example, over-consumption leading to obesity and chronic illness are at one end of spectrum, and food shortage, poverty, and more illness are at the other end.

We have lost touch with nature, as GMOs proliferate, and inhumanely treated animals are horrifically processed and chemically engineered. Are these manufactured food products meant to keep our human family healthy? No!

Rather it causes more illness and a greater reliance on more costly chemicals, treatments and drugs to cure the ailments, and the downward cycle ensues.

There is a new generation of children that may not outlive their parents. What is happening to our world, our families, and all creation is devastating!

In order to regain our health we need to fundamentally change our orientation to life.

I like the concept of salutogenesis which means “the origin of health.”

We have lost the way to true health, as individuals, as families, as societies, and as a planet. We seek health and happiness, but find ourselves racing forward into deeper levels of stress, illness, and insecurity.

It is time for a global wake-up call. Humanity needs to change!

All the environmental issues we discuss today are interconnected. They are related to and derive from the many conscious and unconscious choices we make each and every day.

What we consume, what we dispose of, and the way we live, either contributes to the destruction of the earth or it helps save the earth.

If we make the conscious effort to educate ourselves, our family, and our communities to choose health and sustainable prosperity, then an upward cycle of positive change can arise.

My father and mother love humanity and nature, and in their lifelong ministry they have taught that all human beings need to live together as one family, in harmony with God, with each other, and with all of creation.

This has been their platform for realizing a world of peace and prosperity. They have invested all their human and monetary resources to educate the world about how to live in unity and goodwill with all forms of life.

Since my father ascended three years ago, I have accompanied my mother on speaking tours around the world as she strives to raise awareness of the need for all of us to care for God’s creation.

My mother founded the Sunhak Peace Prize to honor those who practice true stewardship and respect for all life on this planet; people who have dedicated their lives for the sake of future generations.

Life as we know it is shared and sustained by our Mother earth. If we abuse and destroy our planet we threaten our very existence and that of future generations.

To prevent global conflict and destruction, my parents always taught that how we live our lives, how we join in marriage and raise our families, and how we interact and act in this world must be centered on True love, living for the sake of others.

With every breath, at every moment, they worked tirelessly to create a moral, spiritual, social, and political shift towards the true path of enlightened consciousness, responsibility, and right action.

This is why the vision of UPF and the Sunhak Peace Prize underscores the importance of respect for the natural world, the planet, the oceans, and all living beings.



I also appreciate the work of the United Nations and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change” which has taken direct action to seek to mitigate the impact of climate change.

The COP 21 Summit, convened in Paris last December, was encouraging in so far as the entire world, including 195 nations, is becoming increasingly concerned and engaged.

Moreover, not only governments are on board, but also many civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, municipalities, and corporations. There is a growing awareness of the problem and an increasing demand for solutions.

During the inaugural Sunhak Peace Prize award ceremony, held in August 2015, President Anote Tong spoke of the devastating impact that rising seas levels are having on small island states such as the Marshall Islands, the Maldives, Vanuatu, and his beautiful, but threatened country of Kiribati.

President Tong spoke of the growing problem of “climate change” refugees. Quoting from his speech on that occasion, he said,

As responsible global citizens of this planet we call home, it is our moral obligation to ensure its preservation. For the sake of humanity, let us all move forward together.”

We must do everything we can to restore our planet, and to restore ourselves.

However, it will not be by government policy alone that the kind of changes that are required will be implemented effectively.

We often hear the term “political will” applied to situations which require widespread commitment and decisive action. Even when policies may be in place, when political will is lacking, the results fall short of the desired goal.

This is why it is so important that we draw on the great spiritual and moral traditions for inspiration, guidance and direction at this time.

While fear of the threats provides a great incentive for action, it often leads to action that is both too late and too little.

Spiritual inspiration, on the other hand, has most often been able to guide humanity to go beyond self-

interest, and to avoid what is called the “free rider” problem.

Pope Francis’s encyclical from last year, “Our Common Home” is an example of the way religion can guide us to restore balance to our lives.

Finally, one of the great challenges of our time is rooted in the ways we are divided and at odds with one another, separated by nationality, religion, sect, ethnicity, culture, and political ideologies.

Too seldom do we rise above these differences to bind our hearts and minds together, as one family under God.

It is precisely such action that is desperately needed at this time.

I hope this ILC we make a substantial contribution to the effort to prevent, avoid, and mitigate the effects of climate change. There is hope.

If we deepen our connection to our Heavenly Parent and to one another, we will find a way. This is the goal that my parents have lived for.

Let us work together to achieve that vision of sustainable peace, health and prosperity, and stewardship of our “common home” and practice true love for all beings and creation.

Thank you. Kamsahamnida. Salanghamnida. Namaste.