

**Disarmament Seminar at the United Nations  
to mark the International Day of Peace 2009**

*Raising awareness for tomorrow's leaders  
in an interfaith and intercultural environment*

United Nations, Geneva

September 23, 2009

The Universal Peace Federation in joint sponsorship with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the UN in Geneva, and the Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance (GIIA) organized an important seminar on disarmament at the United Nations in Geneva. It brought together government, UN and NGO experts in the field of disarmament with the Model UN Interreligious Youth Council of GIIA, including nearly 70 students from Lausanne and Geneva universities.

Responding to **Secretary General Ban Ki Moon**'s call "WMD, we must disarm" on this year's International Day of Peace (IDP), this interactive program was launched in order to educate about current issues of disarmament, non proliferation and arms control in an attempt to encourage further discussions and actions from civil society- especially through an interreligious and intercultural cooperation.



Panel of speakers of Seminar on Disarmament sponsored by UNIDIR, Perm. Mission of Indonesia to the UN in Geneva, UPF and GIIA

Conference Chair, UPF Secretary General, **Mr. Heiner Handschin**, opened the meeting by explaining about this year's chosen theme, whose abbreviation also refers to **w**eapons of **m**ass **d**estruction. The world is unreasonably over-armed and it becomes increasingly unacceptable that the world's governments are spending more in recent years than ever for defence and national security purposes (1.5 Trillion US\$).



The keynote opening speech was given by **H.E. Amb. Dian Triansyah Djani**, former President of Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, current Vice-President of the Human Rights Council (2009-2010), and candidate for Chairman of Conference on Disarmament, the UN's sole disarmament negotiating body that is located in Geneva.

He described the Indonesian situation as the nation with the largest Muslim population. He noted that GIIA and its interreligious model UN Peace Council corresponds well to the spirit of Indonesia with its great tradition of interreligious tolerance and peaceful coexistence of diverse religions and ethnic communities.







In contrast to Government perspectives, **Ms. Anisha Pabari**, Hindu Delegate of The GIIA Model UN Interreligious Council expressed in her statement the hopes of civil society that a consensus to substantially dismantle weapons arsenals will be agreed upon soon. She went on to say that what is needed is that leaders replace existing stockpiles with arms of righteousness whereby the root of insecurity and mistrust can be replaced. Youth leaders, especially from the interreligious sphere can be catalysts to speed up this process by bringing interreligious, intercultural peace and cooperation among communities.



## Geneva Office of Disarmament Affairs: Director Dr. Sareva



**Mr. Jarmo Sareva**, (1<sup>st</sup> Chairman of the Conference on Disarmament CD)  
Current Deputy Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament (CD)

The Deputy Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) **Mr. Jarmo Sareva**, who is the new Director of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva, a renowned expert on disarmament issues gave a very sombre but realistic picture of the deadlocks of the past decades of the CD and related bodies and the need for a re-launching and re-thinking of these important issues. He mentioned that there are signs that “fresh air” seems to be coming into the debate especially through the new U.S. administration and an increasing interest of civil society in disarmament matters.





# UNIDIR

(United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research). Main partner in organizing the Geneva Seminar on Disarmament.

**Dr. Christiane Agboton Johnson, Deputy Director of UNIDIR**



**Dr. Christiane Agboton Johnson of UNIDIR and Min. Dr. Jesus Domingo**

**UNIDIR**, the main co-sponsor of the event, Deputy Director, **Mrs. Christiane Agboton Johnson** explained very thoroughly the issue of “small arms” as the “weapons that are constantly used all around the world” and by its massive numbers have become weapons of mass destruction (WMD). She traced the resolutions and treaties of the UN and the programs of UNIDIR to harness the proliferation and even successfully eliminate massive amounts of small weapons over the decades. She however pointed out the many difficulties that remain, especially due to an absence of standards in the national reports on disarmament issues. The support to their mandate from civil society through GIIA’s Model UN Interreligious Peace Council was very much appreciated- with discussion of further cooperation.

**Ms. Susi Snyder**, Secretary General of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. (WILPF) a well known expert and activist on disarmament, representing Civil Society and NGOs, showed vividly the possibilities to influence the issue of disarmament by civil society. Especially in the “hot” nuclear issue, she showed to what extent civil society can support and push through world wide efforts for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. She described several encouraging and very successful examples of civil society campaigns for disarmament, like Global Zero, I CAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nukes), Mayors for Peace, by the Mayor of Hiroshima etc.



**Ms. Susi Snyder, Secretary General of WILPF**  
(Expert on Disarmament, Civil society)



Representing UPF International, **Rev. Dr. Joong Hyun Pak**, theologian and religious leader as well as Dean of the World Peace Academy, Seoul Korea, a native Korean himself, could connect the audience to the troubling reality of the present nuclear standoff in his homeland South Korea and the need for religious- and civil society leaders to actively and in consensus to support disarmament issues. He presented an interesting new concept of the creation of a 5<sup>th</sup> major UN – Headquarters, in Asia, reminding participants that the Asian continent with the largest global population and vast land and ocean surfaces does not have a major UN-Headquarters.



**Rev. Dr. Joong Hyun Pak, Honorary President UPF Switzerland**

He suggested that in the DMZ at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel that divides the Korean peninsula could be converted into a Peace Zone/Peace Park that could become the seat of appropriate agencies or councils, including possibly a religious peace council, a family peace council, disarmament council and even the currently discussed women's agency. In the framework of the geopolitics and its related tensions there, as well as strong family values and the remarkable work of women's NGO's in Asia, the proposal brought applause.



The concluding remarks of the panel were given by **Minister Jesus Domingo**, minister of disarmament and humanitarian affairs of the Philippine Mission to the UN in Geneva and co-founder of GIIA. Minister Domingo emphasized the need for civil society's greater involvement in disarmament and other issues that have been hidden in the halls of the UN. The Model UN Interreligious Council and interreligious cooperation for peace building in general will increase security and mutual trust among communities and other stakeholders. He emphasized the need for citizens' creative initiatives, taking responsibility to educate and inform ourselves so as to be able to speak out knowledgeably in at least one sector of broader fields- like small arms for disarmament. In this way, the international ongoing disarmament efforts can be supported and our communities can be kept informed. Min. Domingo also spoke on behalf of the GIIA bureau in calling for a broader alliance of youth through inviting other Model UN associations in the Geneva and Lausanne area to prepare events at the UN together.



**Minister Dr. Jesus Domingo**, Permanent Representative of the Philippine Mission of Disarmament and Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations in Geneva – Switzerland, Co-founder Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance (GIIA)





After a lively debate, eight youth delegates of seven different faiths were presented with Interfaith Ambassador for Peace Certificates and reminded that they should see this as an encouragement in their continuous efforts through cooperation beyond barriers for lasting peace in the world.







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