

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE SPANS TWO DAY COMMEMORATION AT THE UNITED NATIONS WITH STEVIE WONDER, JANE GOODALL, MICHAEL DOUGLAS, GOODWILL AMBASSADORS AND UN YOUTH CHAMPION

September 15, 2011, by Richard Jordan

New York

The last 24 hours at UN Headquarters has seen a mushrooming of events and ceremonies around the International Day of Peace.

When one thinks of peace at the United Nations, one immediately associates the concept with the profoundly impactful work in bridge building evidenced by **Sally Kader**, founder and President of the **US Federation for Mideast Peace**. Her presence at events this morning, especially her ability to deal with young people from around the world, was mirrored by the interest and participation of hundreds of young people in the standing-room only audience in Conference Room 4.

Last night, the UN Department of Communications and Public Administration hosted Dr. Inwon Choue, President of Kyung Hee University, who delivered a keynote speech entitled "On Peace, Another Dream Ever Onward". Dr. Choue said that universities today face a new challenge, they must go beyond the ivory tower to narrow the gap between 'destitution and affluence,' 'alienation and tolerance,' and 'sufferings and compassion.

Universities must open a new intellectual space for reflective humans while leading the way to scholarly pursuit and dialogue within an open universe. Dr. Choue went on to say that the harmonious bonding of academia and global practice as well as each person's "transcendental engagement" should lie at the heart of all peaceful endeavors.

In the UN Rose Garden this morning, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was the first to ring the Peace Bell in the presence of many UN officials, Peace Messengers, and Goodwill Ambassadors. The Secretary-General stated that today marks the Day of Peace and the International Day of Democracy, significant due to the fact that peace and democracy are the foundations from which people help to shape societies and their futures.

The next to the podium in the Rose Garden, and to strike the Peace Bell, was the President of the Sixty-sixth session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. The President, who only this week has begun his term of office, immediately articulated a way forward into the cause of peace: he stated that he would "work hard to further the vital mission of peace and security, focusing on the peaceful settlement of disputes, UN reform, disaster prevention and response, sustainable development and global prosperity in the spirit of cooperation, and on promotion of South-South and triangular development, emphasizing full and effective implementation of the Culture of Peace, in full cooperation with the Secretary-General

and civil society, using the UN Charter as a guide."

Participants immediately left the UN Rose Garden and went to Conference Room 4, where Peace Messengers Stevie Wonder, Jane Goodall, and Michael Douglas, along with UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors Ishmael Beah, former child soldier, and Yuna Kim, Olympic Gold Medal figure skater, were seated on the dais with Monique Coleman, UN Youth Champion, who, in her very customary style, made a poised, articulate reflection about peace and humanity.

Chris Bashinelli, NGO Youth Representative from Brooklyn, NY, and founder of the socially-conscious production company, Bridge the Gap, created the proper energy to keep the dialogue moving with energy befitting his 24 years and unabashed "hometown" spirit.

Ishmael Beah emphasized the need to acknowledge the value of every human life.

Monique Coleman, speaking in a spirit reminiscent of "Dream for the Earth: A Celebration", an event some 20 years ago at the UN during the Preparatory meetings for the Earth Summit, stated that those who have a voice are sometimes the only way to bring the concerns of the poorest to attention internationally. Ms. Coleman urged youth and all present to "tap into your inner source of power" and to use the communication apps now being created within the UN to understand the bigger picture of peace.

Jane Goodall said that conflicts eventually are resolved even after decades, but it is "our job to resolve them faster."

Olympic Champion Yuna Kim emphasized that sports brings people together and creates social integration and economic empowerment.

Michael Douglas spoke truth to power and stated that it is imperative in moving into peace by reducing stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

Stevie Wonder lightly wore the eloquence we know from his artistry, and recited the lyrics of his newest song, 10 Billion Hearts, and summed up the entire day by saying that all people must "speak peace with their voice, and we can only judge a person by the content of her or his character."

This International Day of Peace had tremendous potential to reconnect hearts with their humanity in moving to eliminate hatred and war from our vocabulary and replacing them with the words: Culture of Peace. Today we saw the UN at its best, exercising its convening power to unite diplomats, civil society, performing artists and youth of all ages to promote peace 24/7, every day of the year.