

# INTERIM REPORT

July 2006

Middle East Peace Initiative  
UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION / IIFWP

# innovation

The Security Council continues to meet, nations negotiate, hopes rise and fall, and lives begin and end in cycles of violence. The victims of war wordlessly demand a response of those who remain. But what?

Since early 2003, over 10,000 *Ambassadors for Peace* from the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) have journeyed to the Middle East from near and far seeking to respond, seeking to make a difference, an innovative contribution to peace.

The innovation is not so obvious at first, especially when anything other than political, military, diplomatic, economic and humanitarian endeavors tend not to qualify as “tangible contributions.”

One innovative aspect of UPF’s Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) lies with the premise that today’s waves of violence and the shifting sands of our economies, politics and public opinion are inextricably linked with the deep invisible propensities and habits of the human heart and soul. That is, recognizing that religions seek to shape a better future by cultivating and elevating the “intangible” yet significant area of human life, MEPI is working to enhance the contributions to peacemaking and building that religions can make.



# UPF-MEPI



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# *Preface*

The Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) is an undertaking of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF). Originally known as the “Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace” (IIFWP), UPF is a global alliance of religious, academic, political and civic leaders, and organizations which, acknowledging particular operational “principles of peace,” work together to promote harmony, cooperation, global security and co-prosperity.

Since the launch of MEPI in January 2003, UPF has held many conferences, international meetings, briefings, symposia and peace missions to the Middle East (see the appendix) engaging an unusually wide array of stakeholders from more than 120 nations.

Because of the special nature of the Holy Land MEPI resonates with so many. And MEPI’s projects and programs serve to facilitate a spectrum of responses to the pervasive truth captured in the motto of UPF: “To fulfill the hope of all ages—a unified world of peace—we must live for the sake of others.”

The crisis this summer in the Middle East has tragically turned the lives of so many innocents in Lebanon, Palestine and Israel upside down. And the consequent reverberations and recriminations disrespect all man-made boundaries of nation, language and religion. People from all nations and sectors of society are affected.

This presents us anew with the age old question: “What is it that I, just one person can do to help stop such violence and confusion? What can I do to help prevent such violence in the future?”

Those who join the MEPI peace missions, dialogues and service projects have not only asked the question. They have responded, not backing away from the tremendous amounts of urgent work ahead to prevent a relapse into aggression,

resentment and expanding violence.

So even as this work lies before us, MEPI participants have continued to find tangible ways to contribute to the betterment of people's lives and to the restoration of hope in the face of a history that allows only slender odds.

In the end, it is the nobility of the human spirit that inspires and changes many MEPI participants. And it is the full restoration of human dignity that is the core agenda of MEPI.

Tageldin Hamad  
Co-chair

Michael W. Jenkins  
Co-chair

# *Acknowledgments*

This report presents the findings and recommendations of a Working Group formed by UPF's Department of United Nations Relations (the Working Group). It participated in UPF's eighteenth peace mission (MEPI XVIII) of Ambassadors for Peace in the Middle East.

While MEPI has been made possible by the unique commitment, skills and convictions of its advisors, co-chairs, coordinators, and especially through the insight, force of spirit and encouragement of UPF's Founders, the Reverend and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, this report and the ongoing work relies upon the unswerving commitment of UPF's Chairman, Dr. Chung-hwan Kwak and Secretary General Thomas G. Walsh. We also thank the MEPI Senior Advisor Dr. Chang-shik Yang and its Co-Chairs, Rev. Dr. Michael W. Jenkins and Mr. Tageldin Hamad whose investment of heart, experience and energies in this mission are truly notable.

The report itself is the culmination of contributions of time, sage interventions and support in many forms: by the Working Group, Ambassadors for Peace from the region, Delegation leaders and those in UPF's Secretariat and Department of United Nations Relations.

Ambassadors for Peace gave of their time and insights, briefing the Working Group forthrightly and constructively. Regional Delegation Leaders likewise provided input and commentary on the progress of the work along with recommendations and commitments of effort for future Peace Missions.

During MEPI XVIII, the NY and Amman Offices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilitated the visit of an international delegation to a Refugee Camp and provided a briefing on its work and the issues before the Agency.

I had the distinct honor of coordinating the Working

Group consisting of: Heiner Handschin (Switzerland), Ambassador Ousmane Moutari (Niger), Nosh Nalavala (India), Bertil Pearson (Sweden) and Ricardo de Sena (Argentina).

Finally we express our appreciation and respect for UPF's Deputy Secretary General for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Mr. Shunichiro Yoshida and all those who provided the financial resources needed to complete this work.

Karen Judd Smith  
Director, Department of UN Relations

## *About MEPI*

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When MEPI began, even the streets were empty of people. But MEPI mobilized and stirred up the spirit of peace in Palestinians, Israelis, Americans, and people from all continents...

## MEPI Goals

The initial **goals** of the Middle East Peace Initiative outlined at the first international conference held in Washington, D.C. February 27 - March 2, 2003 entitled: "Beyond Coexistence Toward a New Culture of Peace" were to:

- 🌱 **Gain** a deeper understanding of the issues, identifying both intransigent points of impasse and windows of opportunity unique to the present moment
- 🌱 **Develop** with concrete, incremental actions, which can contribute to solving troubles in the region.
- 🌱 **Establish** a network of committed, mutually supportive persons from all vocations, dedicated, for the long term, to peace in the region.

## Guiding Principles

The **guiding principles** for this work articulated the basis for an integrated spiritual/physical work that inextricably linked the work and capacities for peace with individuals' abilities to love (live for the sake of others):

- 🌱 Lasting solutions will integrate the spiritual and physical dimensions of human life.
- 🌱 An Original Cause created this physical, relational, ordered, harmonious world, imbued with meaning and value rooted in and expressed, above all, through love.
- 🌱 Love means "living for the sake of others." The family is the "school of love," where spouses, parents, children,

and siblings learn all forms of ideal love which can be extended throughout society.

🌱 Evil is not eternal or inevitable, but rather is a tragic condition that can be overturned and transformed.

🌱 Solutions to problems must involve all aspects of life, including morality, the family, society, politics, sports, culture, the economy, religious and spiritual life, and so forth.

## MEPI and the UN

During the 60th Session of the United Nations' General Assembly, the Universal Peace Federation's Department of UN Relations organized a series of colloquia, programs and working groups dedicated to the promotion of new alliances for peace in the 21st century. One of these working groups (UN Working Group) was tasked with observing and evaluating the notable alliances being forged "in the fires of the Middle East" through UPF's MEPI.

As the United Nations continues to strive to enhance its capacity to prevent conflict, civil society continues to emerge as an important ally in this work. Furthermore, religion and faith-based organizations are increasingly recognized as contributing greatly to reconciliation, peacebuilding and development even while others primarily see religions as instigators of conflict. Either way, religion cannot be ignored as a significant factor in issues of development, peace and security.

The MEPI work clearly recognizes religions as significant contributors to the peace process where there are advances in interreligious dialogue and cooperative action underwritten with an awareness of the common humanity of all and the peaceful purposes of the world's religions.

UPF also recognizes the centrality of the Question of Palestine to many complex multi-faceted and multi-layered international tensions, and therefore, despite the enormity of the task,

brings its unique approach to bear on this area of work.

The hallmark of MEPI's peace strategy lies in the practice of the "parental heart." That is, MEPI promotes peacemaking and peacebuilding grounded in:

**1. a vision for peace** that is rational and considerate of the political concerns tempered by the global ethic that the purpose of each person, group or nation is to live in productive relationship with and service to other individuals, communities or nations, and;

**2. actions that cultivate** human capacities for peace. That is, while MEPI's Ambassadors for Peace are fully aware of the grave injustices present in most disputes, they also see that without actions capable of ensuring a peaceful future together, no amount of justification of violence can ensure peace. Therefore MEPI works to strengthen awareness of all people's common desires for justice, dignity and respect, and the fact of the interrelatedness of our futures.

Thus MEPI works to elevate the thinking, leadership and planning at the international as well as grassroots, people-to-people levels so as to result in actions that genuinely work in the best interest of all parties—beyond blame, fault-finding and the tendency to take sides. This is extremely difficult work, but without such contributions, durable solutions will remain political rhetoric and the high-minded vision of the world community embodied in the United Nations Charter will remain a dream.

In light of UPF's agenda to support and stimulate UN reform, MEPI's work therefore naturally and consciously augments the strengths of the United Nations. In fact, UPF envisions that a successful United Nations would more accurately be called a "Peace United Nations." But to get there, the UN will need to reform itself to such a degree that it will need to form an Interreligious Council in addition to its existing Security Council and Economic and Social Council to complete its capacity to address all dimensions of the root causes of

conflict and violence.

Meanwhile, MEPI is in keeping with a number of significant areas of concern of the United Nations, including:

🌱 The need for constructive dialogue among people of different faiths and traditions based on mutual understanding and respect (Alliance of Civilizations)

🌱 The prevention of armed conflict through religious and religiously minded communities that "activate their moral authority ... and culturally based advantage ... by emphasizing the common humanity of all parties (and) ... mobilizing non-violent alternative ways of expressing dissent." [para. 147, 2001 Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict.]

In line with this, MEPI's efforts are premised upon the relevance and necessity of grassroots interreligious people-

# *The MEPI XVIII working group*

MEPI Peace Missions,  
whether small groups or large,  
are invaluable in calming the  
tense atmosphere in the Holy  
Land. It is only us who live here  
that witness and experience this  
reality and truth.

to-people efforts needed to diminish tensions, attitudes, feelings of powerlessness (re. desired outcomes either personal or communal) and the deep-rooted sense of injustice that sustains the lack of hope for genuine peace in the region and the violence that often follows.

## Objectives

Acknowledging religion's capacity to recognize and strengthen human dignity, rights and responsibilities, a small delegation was tasked to observe MEPI XVIII (May 18 - 24, 2006) and to assess and provide feedback on this phase of MEPI's larger and developing work.

Also, recognizing the potential for creative partnerships among governments, religions, faith-based organizations, NGOs, media and the private sector, the MEPI UN Working Group (UNWG) was tasked with:

**1. Reviewing** and providing an assessment of accomplishments to date for the purpose of improving the efforts being made. The review was conducted through a series of interviews with:

-  Israeli/Jewish Ambassadors for Peace
-  Palestinian Ambassadors for Peace
-  Jordanian Ambassadors for Peace
-  Participants and coordinators of MEPI XVIII

**2. Identifying** through a series of interviews the points of convergence of vision and desires of the two main parties so as to help bridge the "heart and trust gap" through confidence building.

**3. Connecting** effective efforts underway to appropriate sectors of the UN system that could benefit from being aware of this civil society contribution.

**4. Recommending** ways in which the initiative might move forward to optimize its effectiveness in its peacebuilding and peacemaking efforts

**5. Bringing** to the attention of the UN and the Alliance of Civilizations the unique contribution of interreligious efforts to the work of peace.

## The Process

The report was coordinated by UPF's Department of United Nations Relations and reviewed by all parties who participated in the development of the report.

The report is the result of a series of interviews and discussions by the UNWG. The UNWG organized from the information provided an:

**1. Overall assessment** of the impact of the MEPI work at the various levels in the region and as delegates returned to their own nations.

**2. Points of convergence** of the various groups interviewed regarding the future of peace in the region and the contribution of MEPI.

**3. Recommendations** for future MEPI's, noting ways in which the initiative might optimize its effectiveness and adjust some of its focus as the Middle East situation continually shifts with current affairs.

## Expected Output

The report from this UNWG has been transmitted to the Secretary General of the Universal Peace Federation and the Steering Committee of the Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI) and will be made available to UPF's Ambassadors for Peace, the United Nations' ECOSOC, UNRWA, the Committee

## *The report*

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MEPI has continued to stir the pot, to energize and to challenge the “stuck thinking” surrounding peace in the Middle East.

## Overview

In the course of the interviews, the UNWG heard from local Ambassadors for Peace passionate concern that MEPI continue. They also noted aspects of the work for which they desired improvement. Overall, there was strong consensus that:

- 👉 Above all else, MEPI should maintain its momentum.
- 👉 What is being accomplished through dedication, dialogue and good will is significant.
- 👉 MEPI brings a new spirit into the Middle East, and encourages spiritual people to work better together.
- 👉 The peace missions and pilgrimages impact grassroots groups, tapping into these under utilized, uncoordinated energies and helping to strengthen them.
- 👉 MEPI is impacting lives by giving people experiences of what they thought at first was not possible.
- 👉 MEPI is very successful in advocacy, showing how people can come together on a common platform of peace, harmonious living and religious unity.
- 👉 The MEPI forays provide all parties with a fresh, new perspective on the Middle East process and the implications for the road to peace.
- 👉 MEPI is building a constituency of people serious about peacebuilding through interreligious dialogue and cooperation.
- 👉 While MEPI was launched in early 2003, the preparations for the elements needed to fully address root causes were being made years before.

🌱 MEPI premises and principles challenges decision-makers, activists, youth, educators and the media to think differently about peace. As such, MEPI is at times difficult for people with more traditional mind sets to understand and connect to.

🌱 MEPI gives Ambassadors for Peace in the Middle East a way to coalesce their efforts and to strengthen their peacebuilding capacities.

🌱 Having international delegations come regularly to the region creates new opportunities for engagement both in Israeli and Palestinian communities.

🌱 The people-to-people opportunities created through MEPI are most beneficial to both parties.

# Key points of convergence

🌱 **MEPI is effecting changes** that are more like the changes in the deep running currents of the ocean, very real, yet not at all obvious to the casual ocean traveller.

🌱 While even more attention needs to be paid to dialogue between and among people of the region themselves, and the Israelis and Palestinians in particular, the **strategy** of bringing in international delegations to foster and facilitate dialogue and understanding is, for this region, a wise strategy that nevertheless requires patience from all quarters.

🌱 MEPI **builds confidence** in two ways: i) through the ongoing nature of this series of Peace Missions and Pilgrimages, and ii) through the personal investment made by individuals who travel to the Middle East to work in outreach, people-to-people efforts and service.

🌱 **Media** efforts that look beyond sensationalism and engage with the “substance of the human spirit” are greatly needed to help magnify the quiet but profound contribution being made to peace and development. With media attention being given to the possibilities and ways of peace, then peace becomes more than a passing idea. It becomes palpable through people’s experiences together and their commitments to one another.

## 7 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Pre-Mission Orientation

Where possible, an initial orientation regarding MEPI's mandate, methodology and vision needs to be done at the regional level before people arrive in Jerusalem for the Peace Mission, to ensure that the time spent during the Peace Mission can focus on the specifics of the Mission.

### Recommendation 2: Methodology

Given that a key innovation of MEPI lies in its peace principles and methodology, more focus needs to be given to this aspect during orientation as the Ambassadors for Peace arrive. The core principles and the unique "restoration" methodology underpinning the Peace Missions needs to be explained and/or reviewed each time.

Each Peace Mission needs to provide ongoing opportunities for Ambassadors for Peace to address these age-old problems in new ways. These discussions ideally take place in small groups.

### Recommendation 3: Working Groups

Participants benefit greatly from engaging in meaningful discussions throughout the Mission as they face new experiences and challenges. Small working groups can help participants develop practical and innovative ways to carry out their peacemaking and peacebuilding work drawing on the expertise of each participant.

Working groups thus create opportunities for delegates with common areas of interest or expertise to contribute to the larger MEPI Mission. This would require recruiting and orienting group leaders who are familiar with MEPI's work and

have expertise in a specific area.

Suggested working groups:

 **Media Working Group:** Writing daily press releases and articles for publication in participants' nations.

 **Religions for Peace:** Facilitating discussions among the delegates about some of the “hard issues” of religions’ and religious people’s responsibilities in the work of peace. This dialogue should be conducted in the MEPI spirit of seeking solutions and accepting responsibility rather than efforts to justify one religion or religious position over another. This would be not be another political nor academic dialogue, but a “sacred dialogue” as those so engaged would be challenged to call upon their own religious disciplines to inform their responses.

 **Youth and Service:** Engaging delegates associated with youth and service groups in participating in existing projects or planning new ones.

 **Women:** Strengthening women’s unique potential to contribute to the peace process and their natural emphasis on family values, building on existing efforts and seeking new opportunities.

 **Refugees:** The situation of the Palestinian refugees remains a issue in the Middle East. Working groups can explore how the extraordinary educational resources within the Ambassadors for Peace network and UPF can provide essential “human development” educational components.

 **Humanitarian Aid:** During periods of increased violence and confusion, political posturing and more, appeals for assistance are particularly urgent. Working groups could strategize ways in which delegates can augment existing work, projects and programs.

## Recommendation 4: Mission

Each delegate on a Peace Mission should:

-  Choose a working group through which to contribute.
-  Develop individual objectives for the Mission.

This will help each delegate contribute to the overall outcomes of each Peace Mission as well as their expression of faith and service.

## Recommendation 5: Media

As an advocacy initiative, MEPI brings together Ambassadors for Peace from different countries on a common platform of peace, harmonious living and religious unity. The tangible contributions made through this kind of interfaith and international cooperation warrants increased public awareness.

Similarly, the humanitarian plight of both the Palestinian and Israeli people well deserves to be better understood in order to be better addressed.

MEPI could assist both through awareness and appeals campaigns as well as expanded work with the media community such as through partnerships with the UN's 'Global Media Compact'.

## Recommendation 6: Stakeholders

MEPI can encourage more program input by key stakeholders.

In some instances, it is critical that the international leadership more fully integrate the concerns and issues of the local Ambassadors for Peace so as to avoid additional problems

when the Missions end. When international leaders keep the local leaders informed of the perspectives and concerns of the international delegations, it elevates the perspectives of both parties and facilitates transformation.

## Recommendation 7: MEPI Alumni

From its inception, MEPI aimed to form an interreligious and international network of committed, mutually supportive persons. This large group of activists who collectively have undertaken more than 12,000 Peace Missions to the Holy Land can be better utilized, especially between Peace Missions, as resources for peacebuilding and communicating to others about the growing work.

# *Appendix*

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# List of Programs, UN Briefings and Peace Missions

## **International Conference**

- Date: October 19-22, 2001  
Venue: New York, USA  
Theme: Global Violence: Crisis and Hope—The Search for Solutions to Critical Global Problems

Convened immediately after the September 11, 2001 events, original plans were re-designed in response to the ensuing chain of events. At the center was the effort to bridge the gap that divides and alienates religions, culture and civilizations from each other. More than 400 leaders from 100 nations convened to address the root causes and potential solutions to global violence.

## **International Conference**

- Date: December 20-23, 2001  
Venue: Jakarta, Indonesia  
Theme: World Summit of Muslim Leaders: Islam and the Future of World Peace

An international inquiry into the crucial contemporary issues for Muslims through frank, open and constructive dialogue and conversation. The program design was not value neutral. The bias of the organizers and conveners was for a future world of peace, with a particular interest into the unique role Islam can play in promoting such an ideal.

## **International Conference**

- Date: August 3-5, 2002  
Venue: London, United Kingdom  
Theme: World Summit of Muslim Leaders: The State of the Muslim World Today

A large array of Muslim representation from all races, nationalities, and communities and systems, large and small, engaged in discussing some of the most important matters that face the community of Muslim believers taking on the sensitive issues causing division in Muslim communities. The discussions in-

cluded: Religion and Spirituality, Social Responsibilities and National Stability, and Interreligious and International Relations.

### **International Convocation**

**Date:** September 20-23, 2002  
**Venue:** New York, USA  
**Theme:** Governance and the Role of Religion in Peace and Security

This Convocation had three main focii: (i) on the universality of the human quest for peace that transcends culture, nationality, religion, race, ideology, class and historical time period; (ii) on commemorating the "International Day of Peace"; and (iii) the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations to establish peaceful relations among all people through cooperation of religions in peacemaking and peacebuilding.

### **International Conference**

**Date:** December 26-29, 2002  
**Venue:** Washington, DC  
**Theme:** God and World Peace: An Exploration of the Significance of God for a World in Crisis

Urgently convened in the closing days of 2002 in order to create a foundation for the 2003 launching of the Middle East Peace Initiative, this conference was an historic gathering of world leaders from all fields to reflect and consider the need for widespread transformation in our world and the relevance of an enlightened awareness of universal principles and the relevance of their origin (God) to human efforts for peace.

### **International Conference**

**Date:** February 4-7, 2003  
**Venue:** Seoul, Korea  
**Theme:** World Summit on Leadership and Governance

A high-level roundtable for former Heads of State to discuss the global perspective of the complex issues underlying the questions of Israel and Palestine and the prospects for solutions by including consideration of the religious dimensions both as a challenge and resource.

### **International Conference**

Date: February 27-March 2, 2003

Venue: Washington, DC

Theme: Middle East Peace Initiative Consultations

This consultation, with over 150 people from more than 40 nations resulted in measured, but committed response to supporting the exploration of peaceful solutions that take an inter-religious approach in an effort to directly address the religious dimensions of the ongoing conflict. The fruits of these decisions were articulated in the Arlington Resolution of March 2, 2003.

### **UN Briefing**

Date: May 8, 2003

Venue: UNHQ, New York

Theme: Briefing on Washington Consultations

Member States were given the opportunity to hear from participants in the DC Consultations and so begin to consider the pros and cons of such innovative approaches to the Middle East.

### **Peace Mission I**

Date: May 15-19, 2003

Venue: Rome and Jerusalem

Theme: A Mission for Peace and Reconciliation

This pilgrimage by 132 American Christian leaders began with tours of holy sites of Christian history in Rome and ended with a day of repentance and reconciliation with their Jewish "elder brothers" in Jerusalem. These members of the clergy reflected on the misuse of the cross as a symbol of conquest and in Jerusalem, they "buried the cross" as a way to sincerely reach out to rabbis in repentance and reconciliation. The Jerusalem Declaration expressed their deep repentance for mistakes of the past, and set forth a new foundation for interfaith unity and solidarity. This became the foundation for future peace initiatives in the region.

### **UN Briefing**

Date: June 19, 2003

Venue: UNHQ, NY

Theme: Briefing on MEPI Outcomes in Jerusalem to UN Missions

### **International Conference**

- Date: June 27-29, 2003  
Venue: Washington, DC  
Theme: Consultations on Innovative Proposals for Peace, Cooperation and Co-prosperity in the Middle East.

These consultations built upon the February consultations, further exploring how interreligious initiatives might augment the faltering political Road Map. A briefing on the results of the Jerusalem meeting led to an expanded interreligious framework established in the Washington Declaration.

### **International Conference**

- Date: July, 2003  
Venue: Asan, Korea  
Theme: Assembly 2003: Governance at a Turning Point.

The role of religion in governance and new approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **International Conference**

- Date: August 11-16, 2003  
Venue: Seoul, Korea  
Theme: Summit of World Leaders: The World at a Turning Point: Focus on Religion and Governance

This Summit continued discussions on the Middle East ranging from political disputes to deeper matters of the spirit, such as how Israelis and Palestinians can walk in each other's shoes, how Jews, Christians and Muslims can better appreciate the work of God in each other's religions, and the nature of the problems in one's own faith that causes people of other faiths to take offense.

### **Peace Mission II**

- Date: September 16-24, 2003  
Venue: Jerusalem & Gaza  
Theme: Peace Under One God

A second pilgrimage of 122 American religious and political leaders climaxed with a day of activism and community with Jews and Muslims from Israel. With the theme, "Peace Under One God," over

500 people participated in an unprecedented interfaith peace walk through the Old City of Jerusalem, stopping at the Western Wall and the al-Aqsa Mosque. This was the first time that the authorities at the al-Aqsa Mosque welcomed an interfaith group since the beginning of the second intifada in October 2001. Delegates were welcomed at Gaza and the West Bank.

### **Briefing**

**Date:** September 30, 2003  
**Venue:** New York, New York  
**Theme:** The Second Interreligious & International Peace Mission

### **International Conference and Peace Rally**

**Date:** October 3, 2003  
**Venue:** Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York  
**Theme:** Peace Under One God

An international conference and rally of more than 10,000 people launched the proposal for Interreligious and International Peace Councils as innovative mechanisms to strengthen the work of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

### **Peace Mission III**

**Date:** October 18-24, 2003  
**Venue:** Jerusalem & Gaza  
**Theme:** God's Ideal Family—the Model for World Peace

This mission included European as well as American clergy. A second interfaith peace walk was held, again through the Old City of Jerusalem, stopping briefly at the Western Wall and concluding with a rally at the al-Aqsa Mosque. This was followed by an interfaith peace rally, attended by approximately 2000 people, conducted in Hebrew and Arabic and including prayers and readings from all the religions of the region. Its purpose was to build confidence in interfaith cooperation, to show that interfaith activities do not have conversion as a goal but rather are opportunities to strengthen genuine religious intervention so as to build trust in the role of religion in the work of peace. A second delegation to Gaza witnessed the opening of a children's center equipped with 50 computers donated by the UPF/IIFWP for the children of Gaza.

### **Peace Mission IV and Peace Rally**

- Date: December 1-23, 2003  
Venue: Jerusalem & Gaza  
Theme: Heart to Heart for Peace in the Middle East and the World

An international task force of over one hundred individuals from 84 nations and many faith backgrounds participated in youth service projects, door-to-door outreach, and various meetings in Jerusalem, Bethlehem. An international symposium involving Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities communicated the sincere concern to the international representatives. The work continued for three weeks, culminating in a rally of more than 20,000 in Independence Park in Jerusalem. This rally focused on the need for reconciliation that transcends the "horizontal" concerns and current circumstances (whether secular or religious) by addressing their historic and religious/ideological roots.

### **International Conference**

- Date: December 19-23, 2003  
Venue: Jerusalem & Gaza  
Theme: Considering Roots Causes of Conflict and Forging a Path to Lasting Peace

One hundred and eighteen people from thirty nations met in Jerusalem for an international conference assessing current Middle East peace initiatives. Participants joined the rally and ceremonies in Independence Park on December 22, 2003.

### **UN Briefing**

- Date: January 19, 2004  
Venue: United Nations Headquarters  
Theme: Update on the development of MEPI and the international conference outcomes.

### **Peace Mission V**

- Date: March 30 - April 6, 2004  
Venue: Israel, Jordan and Gaza  
Theme: Peace Under One God: A Mission of Peace & Reconciliation

Symposia in Amman and Jerusalem were attended by 120 clergy from the USA who prayed and discussed areas of concern common to the ministers, rabbis and imams of the region. They also travelled together to al-Aqsa Mosque and Gaza during these times of heightened tensions to help defuse potential crises.

### **UN Briefing**

Date: April 21, 2004  
Venue: United Nations Headquarters  
Theme: Update on recent MEPI Peace Mission

### **Peace Mission VI**

Date: May 21-28, 2004  
Venue: Jerusalem & Gaza  
Theme: Women of Peace

An international delegation of 526 women from 41 nations and representing all faiths, religions, and cultures gathered for one week in the Holy Land to do extensive person-to-person outreach, small meetings, a Bridge of Peace reconciliation ceremony and much more. A Festival for Peace was held in Jerusalem on May 27 to celebrate a global culture of heart as the foundation for a world of lasting peace. The international delegates marched through Old Jerusalem and assembled at Independence Park. Grieving mothers opened their hearts expressing joint concern for loved ones lost through violence.

### **Peace Mission VII**

Date: July 16-29, 2004  
Venue: Jerusalem & Gaza  
Theme: Forging a Path to Peace & Reconciliation in the Middle East

Three hundred and seven Ambassadors for Peace from 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries met with community and national leaders in the Holy Land, discussed common concerns, held a Bridge of Peace reconciliation ceremony, engaged in door-to-door outreach to Israelis regarding the current situation, participated in service projects, marched for peace, and held an international symposium.

## **Overlapping Peace Missions VIII & IX**

**Date:** August 7 - 20, 2004  
**Venue:** Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramallah  
**Theme:** Forging a Path to Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

Two overlapping international task forces from 34 nations in Oceania and Africa brought more than 300 individuals from many faith backgrounds to the Holy Land to: march for peace through the Old City of Jerusalem to the Western Wall of the Temple; meet with members of the Greek Orthodox church in the West Bank city of Ramallah; support the blessing of marriage of Iranian Jews in Jerusalem; walk through the streets of Nazareth with members of the Catholic Diocese of Jerusalem on the feast day of Mother Mary, engage in service projects, and participate in fact-finding and inter-faith and cross-cultural exchange.

## **Peace Mission X**

**Date:** Sept 2 - 15, 2004  
**Venue:** Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramallah  
**Theme:** Pilgrimage for Peace in the Middle East

Five hundred and eighty three Ambassadors for Peace from 45 nations of Europe, Eurasia and North America gathered in the Holy Land for high-level briefings and fact-finding tours to key religious and civic sites in Israel and Palestine. Participants traveled to different areas of Israel including Galilee, the Negev, Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv. On September 11, delegates and local citizens gathered in Independence Park for a candle prayer vigil.

## **Peace Mission XI**

**Date:** 9 – 23, 2004.  
**Venue:** Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramallah  
**Theme:** Forging a Path to Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

Five hundred and eleven US and Canadian Ambassadors for Peace—legislators, religious and political leaders, members of the media and outstanding citizens—continued to build bridges of peace in the Middle East. Going door-to-door, connecting person-to-person and heart-to-heart with Israelis and Palestinians, Jews,

Christians, secular people and Muslim. The intentional delegates become better informed of the reality of the challenges and are able to address more accurately the concerns of the Middle East within their national context.

### **Peace Mission XII**

- Date: Oct. 15 – 28, 2004  
Venue: Israel  
Theme: Forging a Path to Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

Four-hundred and nine Ambassadors for Peace from 21 Asian and Eurasian nations met counterparts in the Knesset, Palestinian legislature and local Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities.

### **Peace Mission XIII**

- Date: Nov. 5 – 18, 2004  
Venue: Israel, Ramallah, Gaza  
Theme: Forging a Path to Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

Some of the 138 Ambassadors for Peace from 38 nations, primarily from Africa and Oceania as well as Turkey and the USA participated in high-level meetings in Israel and Palestine, including Ramallah and Gaza. Experts in the fields of social sciences, religion, media, history, and politics met with the Ambassadors for Peace to exchange ideas and information about the historical and contemporary issues facing the Middle East.

### **Peace Mission XIV**

- Date: Mar. 29 – Ap. 5, 2005  
Venue: Jordan and Israel  
Theme: Forging a Path to Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

The program began in Jordan with a symposium involving 80 participants from four nations on the theme, "The Role of Jordan: Realizing Enduring Peace in the Middle East," and the signing of the Jordan Declaration. The group traveled to Israel and met with parliamentarians at the Knesset, visited holy sites, and held a conference in Gaza. Participants had the opportunity to discuss

and comprehend the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the point of view of Jordan, which often serves as a neutral mediator between various sides of the peace process.

### **Peace Mission XV**

- Date:** May 10- 16, 2005  
**Venue:** Jerusalem, Gaza and Ramallah  
**Theme:** Innovative Approaches to Lasting Peace and Stability in the Middle East

One hundred and seventy-seven Ambassadors for Peace from 26 nations gathered for a Symposium at the Notre Dame Pontifical Institute in Jerusalem on "Governance in the 21st Century and 'Peace Councils' as an Innovative Approach to Peace." Briefings focused on a "spiritual road map" and MEPI's impact on the Middle East. Delegates visited: al-Aqsa Mosque, Western Wall, the separation wall, Yad Vashem, and holy sites in Jerusalem, Galilee, and Bethlehem. In Gaza, participants visited the Moon Cultural Center and attended a symposium on "Prospects for Nation-Building and Peace-Building in Palestine." A symposium in Ramallah looked at "Innovative Approaches to Peace." The Jerusalem Peace Commitment was signed on May 15.

### **Peace Mission XVI**

- Date:** Nov. 15 – 21, 2005  
**Venue:** Israel and Jordan  
**Theme:** Forging a Path to Peace and Reconciliation in the Middle East

One hundred and twenty Ambassadors for Peace and religious leaders reviewed the MEPI philosophy and its focus on addressing a collective world view that shapes people's approach to peace, opinions and actions. This was done in the context of visits to holy sites including Gethsemane, Caiaphas' house, the Upper Room and Yad Vashem. Delegates visited the Druze community, Nazareth and crossed into Jordan. A national chapter of the Universal Peace Federation was inaugurated in Jordan.

### **Peace Mission XVII**

**Date:** Mar. 14 – 21, 2006  
**Venue:** Israel, Jordan and Palestine  
**Theme:** God's Ideal Family: The Model for World Peace

One hundred and twenty Ambassadors for Peace, including religious leaders and theologians engaged in Jewish-Christian dialogue focused on the role of religious leaders in guiding international relations aiming for peace in the Holy Land. A symposium was held for European Ambassadors for Peace on "The New Political Landscape and the Prospects for Peace." In Jordan, a symposium focused on "The Role of Jordan in Creating Peace" and "the Faith Community and the Secular World."

### **Peace Mission XVIII**

**Date:** May 18 – 24, 2006  
**Venue:** Israel, Jordan, Palestine  
**Theme:** Peace Building and Human Development in the Middle East

Three hundred Ambassadors for Peace from USA, Europe, Korea and Japan gathered in the Holy Land to consider the path to peace for Israel and Palestine. Various projects and initiatives between Israel and Palestine were presented. Visits included: Yad Vashem, Bethlehem, a Prayer-Walk for Peace in the Old City, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Western Wall, al-Aksa Mosque, Upper Room and Gethsemane. A symposium considered various topics including Current Relations of the Palestinian Authority and the Quartet: The Role of Religious Leaders in Assisting the Process; US, EU, Israel and Palestine: The Path to Peace; and Israeli/Palestinian Dialogue: The New Political Landscape and the Prospects for Peace. In Amman a proclamation was issued after a symposium considering the Role of Jordan in Peace Building and Human Development. Activities included a charity lunch at the Jordan Psychiatric Rehabilitation Society as well as visits to the King Hussein Mosque, Women's Federation for World Peace Skills Training Center and a UNRWA refugee camp near Amman.

## Small Delegations

From October, 2003 until recent times, in addition to symposia, conferences and peace missions, MEPI has sent many small delegations to Gaza, Ramallah and the West Bank.

These small delegations met with religious, political, media and judicial leaders, resulting in the establishment of the Moon Culture Center in Gaza which provides computer and language education, visits to hospitals, religious sites, youth service projects and sports such as the "Play Soccer Make Peace" tournaments. Delegations also observed elections.

