

The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

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United Nations Culture of Peace DPI & NGO Briefing:
“Amplifying the Unseen and Unheard Voices of Peace”
A Report on the 19 January, 2012 Briefing
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New York City, 19th January 2012

The Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations held the first briefing of the new year on January 19 at the United Nations headquarters in New York City to discuss the role of the culture of peace in today’s world and emphasize the importance of peace for human development. The global movement for peace not only pushes for the end of war but also incorporates disarmament, the rejection of violence, and the prevention of conflict. A world of global peace will include gender equality, tolerance, freedom of expression, and respect for all individuals’ human rights. A panel of distinguished guests consisting of Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Dorothy J. Maver, Michael O’Malley, and Cora Weiss – who have all dedicated their lives to promoting peace and abolishing violence – spoke about the changes that are happening worldwide and their expectations for pushing this peace movement further.

Renowned diplomat and former Ambassador of Bangladesh Anwarul K. Chowdhury had the honor of being the first to address the more than 200 attendees and the dozens who were watching online. He recounted the past accomplishments of global leaders who have pushed for nonviolence and the promotion of peace through program actions and doctrines. He stated, “Waging peace is and should be at the center of all human endeavor,” and he proclaimed that peace leaders should engage the youth because, “They are the present. They will shape the world in the days and years to come.” Additionally he said peace education and cultural peace studies should be included in all educational institutions around the world. “We must be agents of peace ourselves before we can teach others to be peaceful,” was one of his concluding statements.

Dr. Dorothy J. Maver, an educator and peacebuilder as well as the coordinator of a non-governmental organization called Push4Peace, spoke about the evident presence of a culture of peace already existing in our world. “We all shift from living in a culture wrought with violence and dysfunction, where people’s needs are not truly met, to a culture where peace, justice, love, understanding, truth, reconciliation, and sharing prevail – where all people’s needs are met and there is true equity,” Maver eagerly

proclaimed to the audience. The achievements of spreading cultural peace are apparent: Countries such as Costa Rica, Romania, South Sudan, Canada, Kenya, Rwanda, and Nepal have peace academies, and universities are now offering PhD programs to academics in the study of peacebuilding. Maver added, “We are moving from a system based on competition, separation, and individualization to a system based on cooperation, unity, group work, and sharing on behalf of the common good.”

Michael O’Malley is an associate at the United Nations Liaison Office of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). He pointed out in his speech that culture is determined and influenced by attitudes and beliefs, and in order for a culture of peace to remain alive and thrive, “Individuals must uphold their values and treat others with dignity.” Peace encompasses education, gender equality, tolerance, nonviolence, democratic participation, freedom of information, and sustainable development. Following O’Malley’s speech, Cora Weiss, the United Nations representative for the International Peace Bureau, presented. Weiss promoted World Without War, a non-governmental organization striving to make war illegal. She also noted that we as citizens of the world should not glorify war and stated that all of us must point out global problems and live nonviolently. She introduced the concept of traditional peace practices, which are the practices our ancestors used to resolve differences. The culture of peace movement is a revolution in the thinking of the global community. It is a revolution that shapes the mind and heart of all 7 billion people walking the Earth today.

Following the speakers’ presentations there was an extensive open discussion in which many NGOs participated. Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Founder of the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP), and I attended the briefing and represented ATOP at the United Nations. Dr. Kalayjian shared her observations and raised this question: “In the 22 years that ATOP has been helping people globally and domestically, it has been noted that many of the conflicts have been based on ancestral and generational transmission of trauma. How much effort has been placed by your organizations on helping those self-healing from trauma? Scientific research shows that when people are traumatized, they have tunnel vision and are narrow-minded, their focus is on their own pain, and they’re unable to empathize with others. What have your organizations done to heal generational trauma?” In response to her statement, the panel had this to say: “You have put your finger on the pulse of the issue. Without healing trauma, it’s almost impossible to learn something new or to hear or take in something.” Weiss noted that those coming home from war who have witnessed horrendous atrocities or torture usually suppress these images and keep them to themselves. “Many commit suicide or homicide, can’t get a job, and are in deep emotional trouble,” she said. Her message to us all is, to prevent these sad outcomes, war and torture must end, and help must be provided.

A culture of peace is a vision built on certain universal understandings, and we must all do our part in society to end violence and promote a culture of peace so the generations to come will not experience war, torture, starvation, inequality, and injustice. We must heal ourselves before we can heal others and heal the globe. We must have peace

within ourselves so we can share it with the world. In closing, Ambassador Chowdhury made this final remark: "Share the information you gained with your family and others."

If you are interested to learn more about what the UN has done to promote a global culture of peace visit their website at www.un.org. If you want to help in addressing generational trauma or want to know more about it visit www.meaningfulworld.com or contact Dr. Kalayjian at drkalayjian@Meaningfulworld.com

Founded in 1990, the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) partners of Meaningfulword.com has achieved international recognition as a leader in training humanitarian outreach volunteers as well as responding to two decades of global and local disasters. ATOP is committed to global education promoting state-of-the-art scientific theory, peace and consciousness research, and the development of technical skills to train mental health professionals, teachers, psychologists, art therapists, nutritionists, alternative medicine practitioners, clergy, nurses, mediators, interfaith ministers, and lay persons committed to service. Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach teams make a daily difference in people's lives helping to transform tragedy and trauma into healing through post trauma growth, guidance and meaning-making through a new world view. Ask yourself ...Ask your friends...What makes your world more meaningful?