

July Newsletter from UPF International

Tageldin Ibrahim Hamad
July 31, 2026



UNIVERSAL PEACE FEDERATION

July 2026

As global tensions proliferate, UPF is increasingly working together with government, interfaith and civil society partners to advance a culture of peace and harmony in communities around the world. In the face of multifaceted challenges, such work grows ever more relevant and critical. A few programs are highlighted here; for additional activities and further information about UPF, please visit www.upf.org.

Restoring Trust for Peace Now

UPF launched Summer Events 2026, a series of programs under the theme “Restoring Trust: What Can Be Done for Peace Now?” ahead of the opening of the 81st UN General Assembly in September 2026. This series supports collaboration among the UN system, governments, civil society, faith communities, educators, media professionals, families and youth, in strengthening conditions favorable to a culture of peace.



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Kinshasa Conference Launches DRC Chapter of IAPP

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo – UPF’s work in the DRC took an important step forward with the official launch of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace on July 4, 2026. Two hundred participants joined the inaugural conference at the People’s Palace in Kinshasa, including members of Parliament, ambassadors for peace, youth leaders and distinguished guests.

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Knesset Caucus for Israel-Lebanon Peace Offers Hope

Jerusalem, Israel – A historic and inspiring chapter in Middle Eastern diplomacy unfolded at the Israeli Knesset on June 29, 2026, with the inaugural meeting of the official Knesset Caucus for the Promotion of Peace and Normal-ization between the State of Israel and Lebanon. UPF-Israel was among the representatives of faith communities and civil society invited to participate.



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Latin American Panel: Youth Need Skills Like Empathy & Cooperation

South and Central America – A panel of young leaders from South and Central America and the Caribbean met in a webinar on July 17, to commemorate the UN World Youth Skills Day on the theme "Skills to Build Bridges and Break Down Barriers for Peace." The panel stressed the importance

of soft skills as well as knowledge and technical know-how.

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National Parents' Day Celebrations Held Across USA

United States – Across the United States, UPF chapters celebrated National Parents' Day in July, with programs honoring exemplary parents, strengthening community partnerships, and promoting the family as the cornerstone of peaceful societies. Twenty-one local chapters held events from July 18 to 26, 2026, recognizing outstanding families and community leaders.

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Balkan Leaders Address Media Freedom & Digital Governance

Tirana, Albania – The Albanian Parliament hosted the Balkan Leadership Conference on "Media Freedom, Democracy and Digital Governance in the Western Balkans" on June 26, 2026. Co-sponsored by the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), the Albanian Parliament, the Washington Times Foundation and other partners, the conference addressed challenges to global media at a time of geopolitical tensions, widespread disinformation, and declining public trust in institutions.

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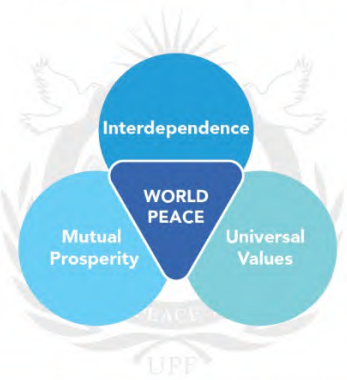
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MISSION

We envision a world of permanent peace, home to a harmonious global community, based on interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universally shared values.



Our mission, together with our network of peacebuilders, is to research, practice and advocate the principles of living and working cooperatively while striving to meet one another's material and spiritual needs (interdependence); sharing material resources, as well as knowledge and opportunity (mutual prosperity); respecting, protecting and caring for one another and the natural world, as members of one human family with a common divine origin (universally shared values).

OUR AREAS OF WORK



Jul 15 · 2 min read

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RESTORING TRUST FOR PEACE NOW



UPF Summer Events 2026 invite practical contributions from regions, associations, and national chapters ahead of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The [Universal Peace Federation](#) has launched UPF Summer Events 2026, a series of programs under the public theme “Restoring Trust: What Can Be Done for Peace Now?” ahead of the opening of the 81st session of the [UN General Assembly](#) in September 2026. The series invites UPF regions, associations, national chapters and peace initiatives to offer short reflections based on local experience, moral responsibility and UPF’s peace vision.

The series began on June 18, 2026, with the [International Summit Council for Peace](#) (ISCP) webinar on “[The Future of the Rules-based World Order](#)”. The webinar examined the emerging global order, multilateral governance, artificial intelligence, environmental accountability and moral leadership. In that setting, Dr. Tageldin Hamad, president of UPF-International, emphasized that institutions gain legitimacy when rooted in service and that leadership gains credibility when guided by conscience and public responsibility. That standard guides the kind of examples UPF is asking its regions and associations to share this summer: evidence from their work that peace grows where justice, service, conscience and public responsibility are made visible.

The United Nations remains the central global framework for this effort. [Sustainable Development Goal 16](#) (SDG 16) calls for peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Aligning with the [2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) and the lead-up to the 81st session of the UN General Assembly, this series can illustrate how institutional trust, justice and inclusive decision-making reinforce each other. This is especially relevant as member states continue implementation of the [Pact for the Future](#) and the broader reform agenda for multilateral cooperation, with the partnership logic of [Sustainable Development Goal 17](#) as a practical reference.

Trust in public life grows when people practice dialogue, fair treatment, restraint in conflict, service to others and respect for human dignity. Parliamentarians and local government leaders, faith communities, youth networks, women’s associations, educators, media professionals, families and local leaders can contribute to peacebuilding and responsible governance through these practices.

The founders of UPF, [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and the late [Rev. Sun Myung Moon](#), taught that lasting peace begins with a vision of humanity as one family under God. For UPF, this vision functions as a public ethic that connects family, community and global responsibility. UPF connects this vision to public life through three ideals: interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values. Interdependence takes practical form through shared security. Mutual prosperity takes practical form through equitable participation. Universal values take practical form through institutions that protect dignity and responsibility.

UPF invites its regions and associations to bring forward concrete examples from their own work, showing how values become public action. Contributions may include conflict mediation, interfaith service, youth leadership, community recovery after crises and public education for peace. Interfaith dialogue can demonstrate how religious communities build trust across differences.

Through this summer series, UPF supports continued collaboration among the United Nations system, governments, civil society, faith communities, educators, media professionals, families and youth, in strengthening the conditions that make a culture of peace possible.

UPF International
July 15, 2026

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KINSHASA CONFERENCE LAUNCHES DRC CHAPTER OF IAPP



Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo – UPF’s work in the DRC took an important step forward with the official launch of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace on July 4, 2026. The inaugural conference, organized by UPF-Africa, UPF-DRC and the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was held at the People’s Palace in Kinshasa, with approximately 200 participants, including senior parliamentary leaders, members of Parliament, UPF representatives, ambassadors for peace, youth leaders and distinguished guests.

The DRC continues to face significant challenges related to peace, security, national cohesion and sustainable development. In this context, strengthening parliamentary diplomacy and promoting cooperation across political parties are essential for preventing conflict and fostering reconciliation.

Dr. Michael Jenkins, global coordinator of IAPP, delivered the opening message, emphasizing the global mission of IAPP and the important role parliamentarians play in building peaceful and prosperous societies. The official opening address was delivered by **H.E. Aimé Boji Sangara**, president of the National Assembly, who welcomed the participants and highlighted Parliament’s responsibility to promote peace, national unity, democratic governance and social justice.

Dr. Paterne Zinsou presented the conference theme and explained the vision and mission of IAPP as a global platform that promotes parliamentary diplomacy, conflict prevention, interfaith cooperation, family values and sustainable development.

One of the strongest messages of the conference was that lasting peace cannot be the responsibility of government alone. It requires the participation of parliamentarians, families, religious communities, civil society, educators, young people and citizens.

Four foundational principles were highlighted to guide the work of IAPP-DRC:

- Political neutrality: Serving peace beyond party affiliation and ideological division
- Love and dialogue: Building cooperation through respect, trust and constructive engagement
- Respect for religions: Recognizing the contribution of faith communities to reconciliation and social harmony
- Strengthening the family: Promoting the family as a foundation for responsible citizenship, moral education and a culture of peace

The conference included a video message of congratulations from former **US Congressman Dan Burton**, global chairman of IAPP, followed by the reading of the Manifesto for Non-Violence and Peace by a youth leader and the investiture of new ambassadors for peace.

National Assembly President **H.E. Aimé Boji Sangara** and Senate President **H.E. Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge** were both appointed to the Regional Consultative Council of IAPP-Africa and recognized as honorary co-chairs of IAPP-DRC. **Hon. Isaac Jean-Claude Tshilumbayi Musawu**, first vice president of the National Assembly, was appointed president of the National Executive Bureau of IAPP-DRC.

The ceremonial presentation of the IAPP flag symbolized the responsibility entrusted to parliamentary leaders to advance dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy in service to the Congolese people.

The conference concluded with the signing of the IAPP-DRC Resolution, reaffirming the commitment of parliamentary leaders to peace, dialogue, unity, ethical leadership and sustainable human development.

Dr. Paterne Zinsou, Secretary General, UPF-Africa
July 4, 2026

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Jun 29 · 3 min read



KNESSET CAUCUS FOR ISRAEL-LEBANON PEACE OFFERS HOPE



Jerusalem, Israel – A historic and inspiring chapter in Middle Eastern diplomacy unfolded at the Israeli Knesset on June 29, 2026, with the inaugural meeting of the official Knesset Caucus for the Promotion of Peace and Normalization between the State of Israel and Lebanon. UPF-Israel was among the representatives of faith communities and civil society invited to participate.

Founded by Knesset member **Dr. Akram Hasson**, and established with the official blessing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the caucus serves as a powerful platform bridging faith diplomacy, people-to-people connections, and grassroots social action.

The landmark event brought together an influential assembly of members of the Knesset, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, and senior international diplomats – including the ambassador of China, the consul of Belarus, and the consul of Vietnam. Joining them were members of the global media, prominent journalists, social media influencers and thought leaders.

A defining highlight of the inauguration was the vibrant presence of women and youth leaders. Pioneering female figures, social entrepreneurs and dynamic young activists infused the room with a driving spirit of action and a broad global outlook. Despite the diverse backgrounds of those present, the room resonated with a single, profound voice: a shared yearning for genuine human connection and lasting peace.

The atmosphere of the conference beautifully bridged historical memory with forward-looking hope. Participants reflected with deep longing on the heritage of Lebanon prior to the devastation of foreign interventions and civil conflict – recalling a time when the nation was celebrated as the "Switzerland of the Middle East" and Beirut shone as its jewel. In stark contrast to the hardships of the past, speakers highlighted Israel's immense potential to contribute meaningfully to its northern neighbor's prosperity once true peace is realized.

The inaugural meeting featured a rich tapestry of expert analyses and deeply moving personal insights, divided into three categories: international organizations and Track II diplomacy; the voices of youth and media; and heritage and shared history.

In the first category, representing UPF-Israel, **Mr. Hod Ben Zvi**, who serves as coordinator of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace for Europe and the Middle East, a UPF affiliate, presented a comprehensive, visionary position paper outlining the strategic path forward for regional stability. Advocate **Ms. Tamar Senesh**, representing the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, delivered a warm greeting on behalf of her organization and highlighted the legal and humanitarian dimensions of coexistence.

Representing youth, **Mr. Lourd Atia**, an 18-year-old Arab-Muslim social activist, powerfully embodied the courage and vision of the younger generation, while **Ms. Salana**, a journalist for a Lebanese social media platform, shared fascinating insights into existing digital and ground-level initiatives that already connect Lebanese and Israeli citizens daily.

Reminding participants of their shared history, the event was graced by the presence of South Lebanon Army (SLA) veteran families who have resided in Israel for decades. Moving testimonies were shared by **Mr. Jonathan El-Khoury**, representing the Christian community in Israel; **Mr. Latif Ibrahim**, former head of the SLA Military Affairs Bureau; and **Ms. Miriam Younes**, a Christian evacuee from the Lebanese town of Debel.

Other speakers offered institutional and spiritual insights. Valuable perspectives were shared by Knesset member **Mr. Osher Shkalim**, **Rabbi Pinto**, regional expert **Dr. Hanizadeh**, and **Mr. Ehab Joulner** from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. **Mr. Fayez Sarhan** from Hurfeish, a renowned lecturer on coexistence, deeply moved the audience by reminding everyone that mutual respect and human dignity must precede all doctrines.

The conference concluded with inspiring remarks from the caucus chair, Dr. Akram Hasson. He emphasized that forging peace requires immense courage and mutual investment from both sides. While true reconciliation demands effort and sacrifice, dedicated cross-border investment can build a warm, prosperous and durable shared reality.

The ultimate vision of the newly formed caucus is to foster a peace that does not merely exist on paper between governments and diplomats, but a living, breathing relationship of fraternity between the Lebanese and Israeli peoples.

By Adi Sasaki, Secretary General, UPF-Israel
June 29, 2026

IAPP International Association of Parliamentarians for PeaceLebanonIsrael

MEPI Middle East Peace ProgramsPeace Initiative

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Jul 17 · 4 min read



LATIN AMERICAN PANEL: YOUTH NEED SKILLS LIKE EMPATHY, COOPERATION



South and Central America – A panel of young leaders from South and Central America and the Caribbean met in a webinar on July 17, to commemorate the United Nations World Youth Skills Day on the theme “Skills to Build Bridges and Break Down Barriers for Peace.”

The moderator, **Mr. Mario Salinas**, UPF secretary general for Latin America and the Caribbean, greeted the guests and panelists and shared the concept of the event. He explained that the UN agenda includes reducing the percentage of young people worldwide who are neither in education nor employment by teaching them skills to increase their productivity in the socio-economic sphere. “UPF, through this forum, also seeks to showcase young people who have made significant contributions in various fields at the national and international levels,” he explained.

UPF regional president for Latin America and the Caribbean, **Mr. Elicécer Araya**, then addressed the panel. “The skills of young people are more than technical abilities: they are bridges that unite hearts and barriers that are broken down with values, service and cooperation. He added, “UPF reaffirms that young people are not only the future, but also the living present of our communities. With their energy, creativity, and commitment, young people are protagonists of history and bearers of hope for humanity. Strengthening and validating the skills of young people is essential for UPF because it connects directly with its mission to build peace and promote integral human development.”

The first panelist was an engineer, **Mr. Luis Somarriba Rivas**, academic director of the University Institute of Energy in Nicaragua. “The most important bridges we build aren’t made of steel or concrete; they’re the ones we build between people,” he said. “They’re the bridges we build between two languages, between two cultures, or even between two people who don’t understand each other... being in the middle isn’t a problem; it’s an opportunity. It’s being able to be a bridge.”

The second panelist, **Dr. Celso Ramón Vázquez Denis**, is a professor, psychologist and research coordinator at the Faculty of Health Research Sciences of Universidad Gran in Asunción, Paraguay. “I want to talk about those very personal situations that, in some way, even if no one applauds them, also build a world of hope and peace,” he said. “Peace doesn’t mean that we will never have differences, that we will never face problems or difficult times...Peace is how we choose to act when things don’t go as planned. Peace is how we respond when someone thinks differently than we do.”

Dr. María Alejandra Rodríguez Pedraza, an attorney and member of the Inter-American Bar Association, addressed the topic from an educational perspective, stating: “Today, a young person can learn any subject from a cell phone, start a business from their bedroom, or generate social impact using only a computer and an internet connection. However, paradoxically, we also face a crisis of values, empathy and purpose. Information has grown faster than human development.”

In educating young people, she said, “it is not enough to prepare competent professionals; we must develop well-rounded human beings – people capable of combining knowledge with ethics, leadership with humility, and personal success with a commitment to the collective good...We must teach our young people that competing doesn’t mean destroying others; that success isn’t solely about accumulating wealth; and that true progress is also measured by the positive impact we have on society.”

The next speaker, engineer **Mr. Emanuel García Barragán**, is the elected municipal youth councilor of Chía, Colombia. He opened his presentation with a music video, “Everything Can Change,” the song was written by his father for the visit of Pope Francis to the country in 2017. “It’s often said that change comes from the outside, from the decisions of a few,” he said in his speech. “But we young people know something different: change begins when we dare to take the first step. And that step is built on what we learn, on what we know how to do, on the skills we cultivate every day. Here is our voice: we’re not asking for change to be handed to us, we’re asking to be allowed to build it with our own hands.”

The final speaker, **Dr. Gustavo Pollet**, is a lawyer and professor of law at the University of Buenos Aires, where he teaches courses on law related to industrial property, market and competition, and regional integration. He also teaches at secondary schools. Two concepts guide his work: “To educate is an act of love” and “If you seek peace, sow justice.”

In his speech, he pointed out that young people are no longer educated primarily at school and in the home; they now learn from online messages, videos and music posted by unknown people. He warned that vulnerable young minds and hearts are at risk from “artificial intelligence, which generates and creates concepts that society, lacking a critical perspective based on prior knowledge, can take as absolute truth; and artificial emotion, comprised of all media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etc., which impart behavioral patterns that, according to images, lead to true happiness.”

He concluded, “Of course, AI and social media are not inherently bad if we know how to discern between good and bad and teach others to do so. If we fail to do so, the effect on society could be chaotic.”

By Mario Salinas, Secretary General, UPF-Latin America
July 17, 2026

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5 days ago · 2 min read



NATIONAL PARENTS’ DAY CELEBRATIONS HELD ACROSS USA



United States – Across the United States, UPF chapters celebrated National Parents' Day in July, with programs honoring exemplary parents, strengthening community partnerships, and promoting the family as the cornerstone of peaceful societies.

Twenty-one local chapters held events from July 18 to 26, 2026, recognizing outstanding families and community leaders. Many celebrations featured proclamations from elected officials, musical performances, family tributes, interfaith participation, and the appointment of new Ambassadors for Peace, reflecting broad support for strengthening marriage and family values.

One of the most memorable celebrations took place in Chicago, where UPF honored **Dan and Jennifer Davis**, parents of ten children who built a successful global software company while raising their family. Ms. Jennifer Davis, now the Republican nominee for Illinois' 8th Congressional District, was recognized for her commitment to faith, family and public service. A moving tribute by the couple's oldest daughter became the emotional highlight of the program and reflected the profound impact of strong parenting.

In Santa Clarita, the Parents' Day celebration received significant public attention through a feature article in Presence News. The event honored 13 outstanding families, welcomed **Mayor Laurene Weste** as keynote speaker, and appointed eight new Ambassadors for Peace, demonstrating UPF's growing influence through partnerships with civic and community leaders.

UPF Los Angeles celebrated National Parents' Day by recognizing 25 outstanding families for their commitment to family and community, with 18 families attending the ceremony at Pasadena City Hall. The event featured Pasadena **Police Chief Gene Harris** as keynote speaker, received recognition from the office of State Senator Sasha Renee Perez, and brought together civic, faith and community leaders while introducing many new guests to UPF's work.

In combination, there were over 750 participants in Parents' Day activities across the country.

By Kyra Moyer, UPF-United States
July 26, 2026

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Jun 26 · 3 min read



BALKAN LEADERS ADDRESS MEDIA FREEDOM & DIGITAL GOVERNANCE



Tirana, Albania – On the morning of June 26, 2026, the Albanian Parliament hosted the Balkan Leadership Conference on “Media Freedom, Democracy and Digital Governance in the Western Balkans.” The event was co-sponsored by UPF’s International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), the Albanian Parliament, the Washington Times Foundation, the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP), the International Media Association for Peace (IMAP) and several Balkan media organizations.

As the countries of the Western Balkans advance toward European Union integration, the media have an essential role to play in promoting democratization, transparency, and regional cooperation. At a time of global geopolitical tensions, widespread disinformation, and declining public trust in institutions – reflected in a wave of popular protests across the region – the conference addressed the challenges and opportunities facing both traditional and digital media.

Before a capacity audience, **Deputy Speaker Klodiana Sphiu** opened the conference with a keynote address. Welcoming remarks followed from **Mr. Jacques Marion**, president of UPF Europe and the Middle East (EUME); **Hon. Jorida Tabaku**, chair of the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Public Media; and **Mr. Defrim Methasani**, chairman of UPF-Albania.

The first panel was moderated by **Hon. Klajda Gjosh**, former Albanian minister of European Integration, chair of IAPP-Albania, and the conference organizer. The discussion examined how governments, parliaments and media stakeholders can strengthen media freedom and pluralism while responding to the challenges posed by artificial intelligence and digital platforms.

Panelists included **Hon. Iris Luarasi**, vice chair of the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Public Media; **Ms. Armela Krasniqi**, chairwoman of the Audiovisual Media Authority; and **Hon. Aleksandër Çipa**, president of the Union of Albanian Journalists. Distinguished guests from across the region included **Hon. Danijela Đurović**, former speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro; **Hon. Enver Hoxhaj**, former deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Kosovo; and **Hon. Jovan Jovanović**, former Serbian parliamentarian and former ambassador to Indonesia.

The second panel, moderated by **Ms. Mirilda Tili**, coordinator of the Media for Peace Committee of UPF-Albania, focused on “Media as a Bridge for Economic Cooperation in the Western Balkans.” The discussion explored how responsible journalism and regional media cooperation can contribute to economic development and cross-border partnerships.

Mr. Thomas McDevitt, chairman of the board of the Washington Times – one of the conference partners – delivered a video message encouraging greater cooperation between media and business leaders in the Western Balkans and the United States. Additional speakers included **Hon. Senida Mesi**, former deputy prime minister of Albania; **Prof. Afet Mamuti**, professor of law at Tetovo University in North Macedonia; and **Mr. Lutfi Dervishi**, chairman of the Albanian Center for Quality Journalism. The panel concluded with a presentation by **Mr. Peter Zoehrer**, executive director of the Forum for Religious Freedom (FOREF) Europe, introducing UPF’s International Media Association for Peace (IMAP), for which he serves as global coordinator.

Following the panel discussions, **Mr. Gani Rroshi**, secretary general of UPF-Balkans, invited Hon. Danijela Đurović of Montenegro and Hon. Jorida Tabaku of Albania to receive the UPF Ambassador for Peace Award in recognition of their contributions to peacebuilding and public service.

The conference concluded with closing remarks by Mr. Jacques Marion, who invited participants to support the second Mitrovica Youth Summit for Peace, to be held in Kosovo next October. The summit will bring together young Serbian and Albanian leaders from the communities of North and South Mitrovica, the symbolic dividing line at the heart of one of the Balkans’ most enduring conflicts.

The conference also provided an opportunity for a meeting of the Balkans Working Group, an initiative of IAPP Europe and the Middle East launched by IAPP Advisory Board Chairman **Hon. Keith Best** and Secretary General **Mr. Hod Ben Zvi**. The working groups bring together current and former parliamentarians around common policy challenges, fostering dialogue, developing practical solutions, and formulating recommendations for their respective national institutions.

The gathering in Tirana brought together working group members from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Looking ahead, participants agreed to continue their cooperation at a joint forum with youth leaders during the Mitrovica Youth Summit for Peace in October.

By Jacques Marion, President, UPF-EUME
June 26, 2026

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