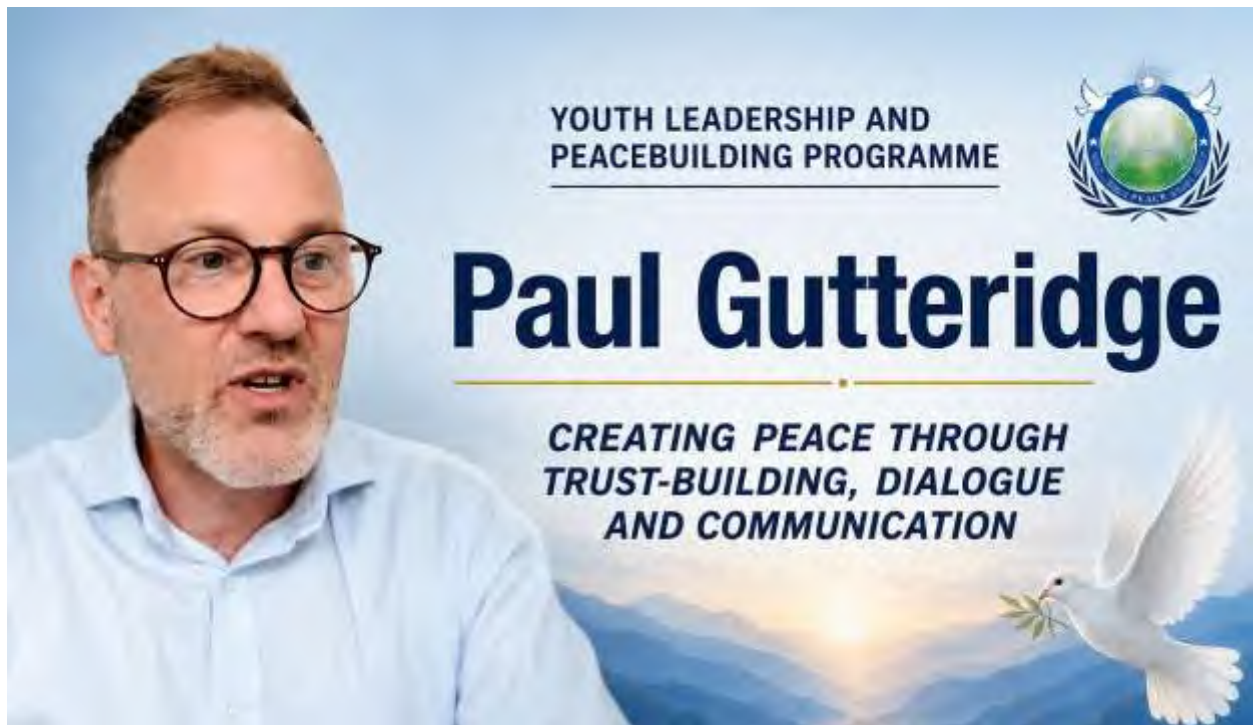


UPF UK: UK Youth Examine Ethical Challenges in the Age of AI

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London, United Kingdom – Young people explored the challenges of ethical leadership in the age of artificial intelligence alongside practical approaches to peacebuilding, dialogue and conflict resolution during a UPF-UK youth leadership program on August 8, 2026.

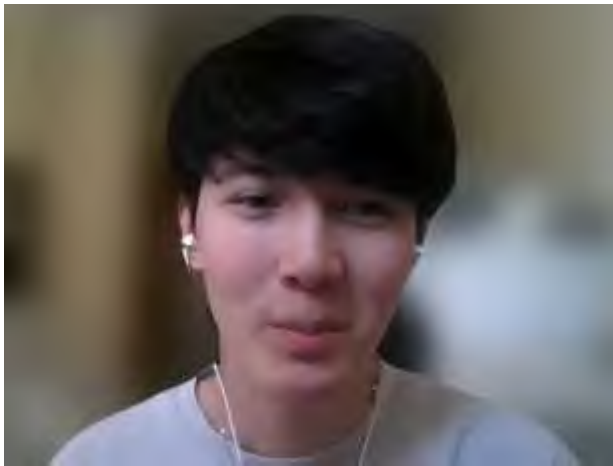
The online session included presentations from **Dr. Lance Gardiner** and **Mr. David Fraser-Harris** of UPF-UK, and **Mr. Paul Gutteridge**, founder of Track 2 Talks and an honorary fellow at the University of Birmingham's Edward Cadbury Centre. The presentations were followed by questions, discussion and breakout groups in which participants considered how the ideas could be applied in their own lives and communities. Moderated by **Mr. Brendan Gardiner**, the program connected two rapidly developing areas of leadership: understanding the opportunities and ethical challenges created by artificial intelligence, and developing the trust, communication and relationships required to prevent and resolve conflict.

Opening the program, **Dr. Lance Gardiner**, director of UPF-South London, examined the growing influence of artificial intelligence across four areas: the environment, education, employment and the creative arts. Acknowledging that AI offers enormous potential to increase productivity, expand access to knowledge and support innovation, Dr. Gardiner highlighted some of the ethical questions accompanying its rapid development. He drew attention to the significant energy and water requirements associated with AI infrastructure and data centers, as well as the potential impact of automation on employment.

Education presents another challenge. Dr. Gardiner referred to research indicating that students can perform considerably better while using AI tools, but may struggle when those tools are subsequently removed. This raised an important question for young people: How can AI enhance learning without replacing the development of knowledge, judgement and independent thinking?



During an interactive poll, participants were evenly divided between feeling positive about AI and being undecided. Deepfakes and misinformation emerged as the greatest ethical concern. Responding to a question about becoming overly dependent on AI, Dr. Gardiner emphasized the importance of maintaining and testing foundational knowledge independently of technology. The discussion also considered whether innovation, greater energy efficiency and renewable-powered data centers could reduce AI's environmental impact.



Mr. David Fraser-Harris, secretary general of UPF-Europe and Middle East, then introduced participants to UPF's approach to peacebuilding and its experience of bringing people together across political, religious and cultural divisions. Guided by UPF's co-founders, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han, this approach, he explained, is relatively simple. It involves human qualities: friendliness, genuine concern for others, listening, and creating opportunities for dialogue. These are the natural implications of UPF's vision of interdependence, mutual prosperity and shared universal values.



Drawing on examples from UPF's international work, he referred to peace and reconciliation initiatives involving Nepal, Liberia, Syria and the Middle East, as well as decades of interfaith cooperation. UPF initiatives have ranged from dialogue among religious and political leaders to youth service programs, character education and sport-based peacebuilding.

One principle running through these different approaches is the importance of identifying a shared higher purpose. Dialogue becomes difficult when participants focus only on competing interests. Trust can grow when

people recognize a goal or value that transcends those differences.

Questions from participants demonstrated how international concerns connect with practical peacebuilding. One participant raised the experience of the people of Somaliland and the need for greater recognition and justice. Another described humanitarian initiatives involving water projects in Yemen and mental health support for women. Mr. Fraser-Harris encouraged participants to make use of networks and relationships that can help connect local initiatives with people capable of supporting them.

The third presentation was a recorded contribution from leadership expert **Mr. Paul Gutteridge**. His presentation focused on Track II diplomacy, which creates spaces where relationships and conversations

can develop outside formal governmental negotiations. He described trust as the currency of conflict resolution. Before difficult political or community disagreements can be addressed, peacebuilders often need to identify influential individuals on different sides, reduce the risks associated with meeting and create neutral environments in which conversations can begin. Trust, Mr. Gutteridge explained, can sometimes grow through surprisingly ordinary things: proximity, sharing food and spending time together. Entering another person's community or territory as their guest can itself communicate respect and vulnerability.

Track II diplomacy can therefore enable conversations that government officials or political leaders may find difficult to conduct publicly. Ideas and relationships developed informally can later contribute to official diplomatic or decision-making processes.

Mr. Fraser-Harris noted the close connection between this approach and UPF's own experience: Rather than beginning with areas of disagreement, peacebuilders can search for a higher value or common objective around which relationships can develop. Participants then moved into breakout groups to consider what the presentations meant for their own leadership. Several common themes emerged.

Young people recognized that using AI ethically requires critical thinking and verification, rather than automatically trusting information generated by technology. Participants also suggested that ethical leadership means maintaining consistent values regardless of who is watching. Leadership is demonstrated through example rather than position alone.

The discussions emphasized that peacebuilding does not always begin with governments or large organizations. Checking on a neighbor, volunteering, bringing people together or taking responsibility for a problem within one's community can all contribute to creating greater trust.



Another important conclusion was that young leaders do not need to solve every problem by themselves. Networks, partnerships and relationships allow people with complementary skills and resources to work together. The session ultimately connected technological change with one of the oldest challenges of leadership: how human beings build relationships of trust. Whether responding to artificial intelligence, community tensions or international conflict, participants were encouraged to develop critical judgement, personal integrity, empathy and the ability to communicate across differences. These qualities will be increasingly important for a generation of young leaders navigating a world in which technological capabilities are advancing rapidly, while the need for dialogue, trust and human connection remains as important as ever.