

Jacques Marion
September 2, 2026



Activities

All times are in CET.

Webinar: Peace in the Middle East: The Contribution of Religions



See the flyer for the event.
Live on Zoom: us06web.zoom.us/j/85951058363
Moderator:
Mr. Jacques Marion, President, UPF Europe and Middle East
Invited Speakers:

- **Dr. Androniki Barla**, Orthodox theologian and canon lawyer, Austria
- **Dr. Mohammad Habash**, Chairman, Human Fraternity Center; Associate Professor, Abu Dhabi University, UAE
- **Dr. Afsar Rathor**, Vice President, Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations; former UN diplomat
- **Father Joseph Saghbini**, Archimandrite of the Greek Melkite Catholic Church, Lebanon

...

Thursday, 3 September 2026 19:00 - 20:30
[Read more](#)

International Day of Peace



On 21 September, the world marks the International Day of Peace.
The 2026 Theme is "Invest in Peace - For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day".
Go to www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace for more details.

Monday, 21 September 2026
[Read more](#)

Second Balkan International Youth Summit for Peace



Applications are now open for the second edition of the Balkan International Youth Summit for Peace 2026, an international gathering that brings together young leaders, students, practitioners, civil society representatives, and peacebuilders from around the world. Following the successful first edition, which welcomed more than 120 participants from over 33 countries, the Summit will once again transform Mitrovica into a platform for dialogue, cooperation, intercultural exchange, and youth-led action. Go to www.ysp-balkan.org/international-youth-summit-for-peace/2026-edition for more information.

Thursday, 1 October 2026 - Sunday, 4 October 2026
Address Mitrovica, Kosovo
[Read more](#)

Highlights

UPF Israel and San Marino Revive "Soccer for Peace"



San Marino, 23–29 August 2026 - An Israeli-Palestinian youth delegation revived the tradition of "Soccer for Peace:" in San Marino.
[Read more](#)

Peace Road

Peace Road Held to Austria-Germany-Czech Republic Tri-Border Area



On August 8, 2026, the participants set out on the well-marked Peace Road along the border between Germany and the Czech Republic.
[Read more](#)

Sport for Peace

UPF Czechia Participates in Peace Cup 2026



The International Peace Cup project took place in Prague from 13 to 16 August, 2026.

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Other Activities

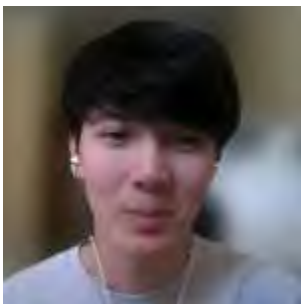
UPF Düsseldorf Experience A Firsthand Encounter with China



On August 8, 2026, UPF Düsseldorf hosted a special event dedicated to intercultural dialogue and personal encounter.

[Read more](#)

UPF UK Continues its Youth Leadership and Peacebuilding Programme



London, 8 August 2026 - Young Leaders came together to consider AI Ethics, Peacebuilding and the Power of Trust.

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UPF France Welcomes the Mayor of Gorée



Paris, August 9, 2026 — Mr. Augustin Senghor, Mayor of Gorée and lawyer, accompanied by his wife and daughter.

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Webinar: Peace in the Middle East: The Contribution of Religions

Thursday, 03 September 2026, 19:00 CET - 20:30 CET

Hits : 91

by [Webmaster](#)



[See the flyer for the event.](#)

Live on Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85951058363>

Moderator:

Mr. Jacques Marion, President, UPF Europe and Middle East

Invited Speakers:

- **Dr. Androniki Barla**, Orthodox theologian and canon lawyer, Austria
- **Dr. Mohammad Habash**, Chairman, Human Fraternity Center; Associate Professor, Abu Dhabi University, UAE
- **Dr. Afsar Rathor**, Vice President, Coalition of Faith-Based Organizations; former UN diplomat
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Concept Note:

The continuing conflicts in the Middle East, with their profound humanitarian, social and political consequences, underline the urgent need for complementary approaches to peacebuilding. While official diplomacy and political negotiations remain indispensable, sustainable peace also requires rebuilding trust, promoting reconciliation and addressing the human and social dimensions of conflict.

In this context, Track II diplomacy—informal dialogue involving religious leaders, academics, civil society and other respected non-governmental actors—can provide valuable spaces for dialogue and confidence-building, particularly when official channels are constrained.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all rooted in the Middle East, share important ethical principles—including human dignity, compassion, justice, forgiveness and the sanctity of life—that can serve as foundations for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Religious leaders and faith-based organizations can also draw on their moral influence, community networks and local presence to counter narratives of hatred, encourage dialogue and support reconciliation.

This webinar will explore questions such as:

- How can interreligious dialogue move beyond mutual understanding and declarations to produce tangible contributions to reconciliation, conflict reduction and ultimately political peace in the Middle East?
- How can religious leaders help communities move beyond the deeply entrenched narratives of “we are right” and “we are the victims,” and encourage recognition of the suffering and legitimate concerns of the other side?
- What can religious actors bring to peacebuilding that conventional diplomacy cannot—particularly in terms of trust, moral authority, forgiveness and reconciliation—and what are the limitations or risks of involving religion in Track II diplomacy?
- What would it take for interreligious Track II diplomacy to become a meaningful catalyst for political negotiations and lasting reconciliation?



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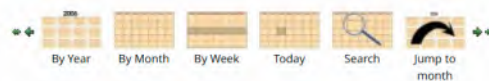
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International Day of Peace

Monday, 21 September 2026

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Everywhere,
Every Day**

On 21 September, the world marks the International Day of Peace.

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Go to <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace/> for more details.

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Second Balkan International Youth Summit for Peace

From Thursday, 01 October 2026
To Sunday, 04 October 2026

Hits : 69

by [Webmaster](#) Contact office@eume.upf.org


Applications are now open for the second edition of the Balkan International Youth Summit for Peace 2026, an international gathering that brings together young leaders, students, practitioners, civil society representatives, and peacebuilders from around the world.

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Go to <https://www.ysp-balkan.org/international-youth-summit-for-peace/2026-edition/> for more information.

Location Mitrovica, Kosovo

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/ UPF Israel and San Marino Revive "Soccer for Peace"

Sport

UPF Israel and San Marino Revive "Soccer for Peace"

Written by: Hod Ben Zvi, Chair, UPF Israel

29 August 2026



The Captains Regent, Alice Mina and Vladimiro Selva, San Marino's Heads of State, enter the atrium of the Parliament.(Photo©FPP/Filippo Pruccoli)

The *Soccer for Peace* initiative was originally conceived as a joint venture between three UPF chapters: Italy, Israel, and San Marino. Its core concept is bringing Jewish and Arab children together for a week of friendly football matches, recreation, and shared adventures in Italy and San Marino. The program creates a unique space for youth to build genuine friendships and foster a peaceful dialogue between themselves and with local children in the host nation.

The inaugural project took place in Turin in 2015, followed by annual editions in the Republic of San Marino (RSM) from 2016 through 2019. The initiative was subsequently paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the regional war. Finally, after dedicated efforts by partners across all regions, the project was revived this year. Today, San Marino has become renowned in Israel precisely for this pioneering initiative.

Preparation and Delegation Structure

Prior to departure, a joint orientation meeting took place at Givat Haviva, bringing together Jewish and Arab parents and youth to establish trust, address logistics, and distribute UPF sports kit.

The 22-person delegation comprised equal numbers of Jewish and Arab participants: nine Jewish children and nine Muslim children aged 12–13, along with two adult mentors from each community. The leadership team supporting the youth included football coaches Yazdi and Wasim, civics teacher Zakaria Mahameed, "Kicking Out Violence in Sports" project manager Roei, and UPF Israel Chair Hod Ben Zvi.

A Journey of Athletics, Culture, and Human Connection

Traveling from Tel Aviv to Rome and continuing by bus to San Marino, the delegation spent an intensive and meaningful week together. The structured itinerary combined sports, dialogue, and cultural discovery:

- Daily Training & Tournament:** Daily two-hour football sessions at the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) central pitch culminated in a friendly match against the San Marino Academy U14 team. On the pitch, the 18 youths played together wearing the same jersey, demonstrating how sports can build bridges before formal treaties are

Enduring Friendships
Among Young Israelis and
Palestinians

Extending Hand of
Friendship through Health
Care

Young Football Players
Compete for Peace Trophy

Swiss and Italian Children
Vie for Peace Cup

UPF-San Marino's Voices
for Peace Latest Edition



signed.

- **Evening Dialogue & Bonding:** Evening sessions focused on personal reflection and mutual understanding, allowing the children's natural warmth to surface away from the heavy atmosphere of regional conflict.
- **Excursions & Recreation:** The group enjoyed guided tours of historic San Marino, a day trip to Rimini, swimming, and bowling.

Government Reception and Media Coverage

The initiative received widespread attention and institutional backing:

- **Audience with Heads of State:** On the final day, the delegation was honored with an official audience with the Captains Regent (Heads of State of San Marino) at the Parliament Building. During the exchange of warm greetings and official reports, Hod Ben Zvi, Chair of UPF Israel, expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the delegation, highlighting a central teaching of UPF Co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han: *"To achieve lasting peace, we must replace the logic of power with the logic of love."*

The Captains Regent responded with great enthusiasm and encouraging words. The meeting concluded with inspiring reflections by Member of Parliament Hon. Gerardo Giovagnoli, who played a key role in securing government approval and sponsorship.

- **National Media Feature (see below):** San Marino's national broadcaster, RTV, covered the delegation extensively. In television interviews, UPF representatives emphasized that true peace relies on genuine human relationships. As noted during the RTV coverage: *"Unless agreements are based on genuine human relationships between people, they cannot last... We have to shake the box in a positive way so that their hearts can unite."*

Institutional Gratitude and Looking Ahead

We extend our deepest gratitude to UPF San Marino, led by President Giorgio Gasperoni and Chief Organizer David Gasperoni, as well as the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC), the Ministry of Industry and Sport, and the Ministry of Tourism for their generous sponsorship.

A special vote of thanks goes to the international and regional organizations whose generous financial and organizational contributions made this project possible: UPF International and various local chapters.

From Israel, we also express deep appreciation to the parents, the Givat Haviva Institute, and the "Boatim" association.

Following the delegation's safe return, follow-up gatherings are being organized for participants and their families to continue building on these newly formed bonds locally.

Media reports on the "Soccer for Peace" program:





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Culture

Peace Road Held to Austria-Germany-Czech Republic Tri-Border Area

Written by: Mag. Maria Pammer, Secretary General, UPF Upper-Austria

08 August 2026



The event started with a typical Bavarian “Weißwurst”- breakfast at the Berggasthaus (mountain guesthouse) Dreisessel in Neureichenau.

In 2021, the Peace Road Initiative began at the tri-border area with a march from three directions. Participants set out from Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic, and over 100 peace walkers gathered for a peace celebration at the tri-border area. One of the underlying ideas was that people living along the 38th parallel in Korea would one day be able to meet just as amicably as we have here in Europe since the fall of the Iron Curtain.

In the years that followed, the UPF chapter in each country took the lead. With the help of the mayor of Schwarzenberg, who supported the initiative from the very beginning, an officially marked Peace Road was established in 2024 with the approval of the Bavarian State Forestry Department.

This year, we started again with a typical Bavarian “Weißwurst”- breakfast at the Berggasthaus (mountain guesthouse) Dreisessel in Neureichenau. Mag. Maria Pammer, Secretary General, UPF Upper-Austria, welcomed the guests from Austria and Germany. Mag. Michael Leitner, mayor of Schwarzenberg, speaking as an eyewitness, recounted the time when the Iron Curtain still ran along the Peace Road route.

Peter Deininger, president of Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) Austria, then introduced the participants to the Peace Designer project. He, along with his wife Polina, and Peter Wurzer, along with his wife Hanna, had prepared cards featuring thoughts on peace from various prominent figures. Each participant was able to take a card with a quote that particularly resonated with them.

The 3-kilometer-long, well-marked Peace Road runs directly along the border between Germany and the Czech Republic to the tri-border area, where Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic meet. Along the way, participants were not only able to enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings, greet many fellow hikers, and pick blueberries, but also engage in lively discussions about their thoughts and hopes for peace.

Once we arrived at the tri-state border, we arranged the cards—which, when placed back-to-back, form the Peace Road banner—like a puzzle, as a symbol that each of us can contribute a piece toward peace.

As the founder of this Peace Road Initiative, I was very pleased with the commitment shown by YSP Austria. May this

Session 4D: Peace
Initiatives in the Balkans
The Balkan Peace Road
Project
UPF-Austria Holds 2017
Year-End Meeting
Alpine Peace Road Unites
Three Nations
Austria 'Peace Road'

As the founder of this Peace Road initiative, I was very pleased with the commitment shown by 13F Austria. May this official Peace Road continue to be a destination for many generations to come, where they can experience God's beautiful nature and, in a family-like atmosphere, enjoy hiking together and sharing with one another.



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Sport

UPF Czechia Participates in Peace Cup 2026

Written by: Dr. Juraj Lajda, President, UPF-Czech Republic

16 August 2026



provided information about UPF's activities

European Culture and Sports Festival

From 13 to 16 August 2026, the International Peace Cup project organized by International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP), took place in Prague.

This event drew young people from many European countries to participate in sporting activities such as football and volleyball tournaments, relay races, frisbee and more. In addition, there were a broad range of other activities such as a fashion show, an intercultural music festival and competition, drawing sessions, and board games.

This year for the first time, UPF Czech Republic had its own stand at the sports complex to provide information about UPF's activities for young people and to offer an opportunity for discussion. The nature of conflict, how to resolve and transform it into peace, the idea that 'peace begins with me' and other topics of current interest to young people were all discussed. The presentation included two quizzes; some participants were awarded a medal, and every successful participant received a small prize.

The UPF stand was very well received and attracted more young people than expected, keen to discuss a deeper meaning and understanding of the nature of peace. Overall, our stand was visited by more than 30 people.

The aim was to bring spirit and heart into the culture of sport and to encourage deeper reflection on issues of peace, harmony and unity. We believe that in future this collaboration between IAYSP and UPF will deepen even further.



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Culture

UPF Düsseldorf Experience A Firsthand Encounter with China

Written by: Anja Brina, UPF-Düsseldorf

08 August 2026



Participants of the event.

On Saturday, August 8, 2026, the Universal Peace Federation Düsseldorf hosted a special event dedicated to intercultural dialogue and personal encounter. Held under the theme "Experiencing China Up Close," the gathering featured Peace Ambassador Gholam Bayat as guest speaker. Having lived and worked in China for more than ten years, including as a German teacher, Mr. Bayat offered a firsthand account of everyday life, social customs, and cultural impressions. His presentation took the audience from Beijing, where his journey began in 2014, to Nanjing and beyond.

Bayat painted a vivid picture of a society marked by organization, efficiency, and a strong sense of public order. Rental apartments, he explained, are often fully furnished, allowing newcomers to settle in quickly. Residential compounds are commonly gated, staffed with security personnel, and equipped with small shops and services for daily needs. He was particularly impressed by the friendliness of the people, the cleanliness of public spaces, and the punctuality of the railway system. He also noted the visible role of older people in urban communities, where many remain actively involved in everyday neighborhood life. At the same time, Bayat addressed more challenging aspects of life in China, including the widespread use of surveillance cameras in public areas and the state social credit system, both of which shape daily behavior in tangible ways.

The discussion also turned to education. While studying and living in China can be comparatively affordable, Bayat described student life as demanding, with many students sharing small rooms and facing intense academic pressure. High performance is expected throughout the school and university system, and private German-language instruction can be costly. Studying abroad is widely regarded as a valuable career advantage, though Bayat observed that such paths are often strongly influenced by parental expectations rather than by the students' own initiative. He also offered brief reflections on the geopolitical significance of the New Silk Road and on China's diverse religious landscape, which includes hundreds of millions of believers.

A further highlight of the presentation was Mr. Bayat's account of Qingdao, the coastal city shaped in part by its German colonial history. From 1898 to 1914, Qingdao was leased as a German colony, and traces of that period remain visible in its architecture. The old town still features notable European Art Nouveau buildings, including the former Governor's Residence, the granite-built Christ Church, and the historic railway station. Perhaps the city's best-kept legacy is the

UPF-Germany Highlights
Japan's Culture

UPF Germany celebrates
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'International Café'

UPF Düsseldorf Holds
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UPF-Germany Observes
Day of Conscience

residence, the granite-built Christ Church, and the historic railway station. Perhaps the city's best-known legacy is the Tsingtao Brewery, founded in 1903 by German brewmasters. Originally brewed according to the German Purity Law, Tsingtao has since become China's largest brewery. This distinctive blend of German historical influence, beer culture, and Chinese coastal atmosphere continues to give Qingdao its unique character.

Following the lecture, participants engaged in a lively question-and-answer session, raising numerous personal questions about daily life, cultural differences, and social realities in China. The event concluded with a shared meal of typical Chinese specialties, snacks, and drinks, providing an informal setting for further conversation and reflection.



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UPF UK Continues its Youth Leadership and Peacebuilding Programme

Written by: Robin Marsh, secretary general, UPF-United Kingdom

08 August 2026



Paul Gutteridge's presentation focused on Track II diplomacy

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 [Universal Peace Federation UK](#) youth leadership programme on 8 August 2026.

The online session brought together presentations from **Dr Lance Gardiner**, **David Fraser-Harris** and **Paul Gutteridge**, 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 **Brendan Gardiner**, the programme 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.

Ethical Leadership in the AI Age

Opening the programme, **Dr Lance Gardiner** examined the growing influence of artificial intelligence across four areas: the environment, education, employment and the creative arts.

While 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 centres, 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?**

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Southeast London Branch

Sunhak Laureate Speaks to
Full House in UK

UK Ambassadors for Peace
Enjoy Weekend Retreat

Ambassadors for Peace
Deepen Bonds at UK
Retreat

An "Evening With" Two U.K.
Media Figures



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 emphasised the importance of maintaining and testing foundational knowledge independently of technology.

The discussion also considered whether innovation, greater energy efficiency and renewable-powered data centres could reduce AI's environmental impact.

Peacebuilding Through Relationships

David Fraser-Harris, Secretary General of UPF Europe and the Middle East, then introduced the 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 Dr Sun Myung Moon](#) and [Dr Hak Ja Han](#), this approach, he explained, are relatively simple human qualities: being friendly, showing genuine concern for others, listening and creating opportunities for dialogue. These are the natural implications of UPF's peace building 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 programmes, 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 recognise 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 the participants to make use of networks and relationships that can help connect local initiatives with people capable of supporting them.

Trust as the Currency of Conflict Resolution

The third presentation featured a recorded contribution from **Paul Gutteridge**, founder of Track 2 Talks and an Honorary Fellow at the University of Birmingham's Edward Cadbury Centre.

His presentation focused on **Track II diplomacy** — creating spaces where relationships and conversations can develop outside formal governmental negotiations.

Mr Gutteridge 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, he 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.

From Global Challenges to Personal Leadership

The participants then moved into breakout groups to consider what the presentations meant for their own leadership.

Several common themes emerged.

Young people recognised that using AI ethically requires **critical thinking and verification**, rather than automatically trusting information generated by technology.

Some 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 emphasised that peacebuilding does not always begin with governments or large organisations. Checking on a neighbour, 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

Another important consideration 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.

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