

The United Nations International Year of Reconciliation 2009

Reconciliation Awards To Outstanding Participating Projects under the S.E.R. Action Plan

In November 2006, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2009 as International Reconciliation Year to emphasize the necessity of reconciliation processes as basic foundation upon which global sustainable peace and order must be achieved.

In pursuance of this UN Vision, the S.E.R. Foundation, an NGO with Special Consultative Status at the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC, designed an Action Plan that, in addition, supports the implementation of the EIGHT (8) MDGs, by calling upon all NGOs and Civil Societies, to undertake in their respective areas of operations reconciliation projects or similar magnanimous projects under the Motto: "Unity in Diversity." These projects were called upon to register and, are listed down, under www.global-balance.org, the website of the co-sponsoring Foundation.

There are One Hundred Fifty Seven (157) Projects from Twenty Two (22) countries who registered. Three Prizes will be awarded on each of the following categories:

- a) Political, Socio-Economic Projects
- b) Creative Projects
- c) Educational / Indigenous /Athletic Projects
- d) Spiritual / Health Care Projects

a) Political, Socio-Economic Projects

1) Nr. 28 "The Voice" - Pakistan

This organization provides help for those who are unable to help themselves i.e. the poorest of the poor: orphans, handicapped children and street children in particular. The assistance includes educational training, health and social programmes. They also work for the rights of women in Pakistan, offering them free access to legal aid. Furthermore, they help brick kiln bonded labourers by freeing them from their bondage, offering their assistance with micro-business financing. They also extend help to persecuted Christians in Pakistan.

2) Nr. 97 "Peace Week in Beit Jala" – Palestine Nat. Auth.

The Peace Week in Beit Jala was organized by the "Children of Abraham", consisting of Christians, Muslims and Jews, who are longing for peace and aiming at enhancing peace processes between Israel and Palestine. There were different events, with the peace march representing the highlight of this week, in which Christian, Muslim and Jewish clerics walked arm in arm through the streets of Beit Jala, a small town near Bethlehem.

The Peace Week has shown that reconciliation is possible, even under extremely difficult situations, whenever people are prepared to see not what divides them, but rather what unites them and to recognize the right of existence of both sides, in this case of the Israelis as well as of the Palestinians.

3) Nr. 159 "Belgrade Summit" – Serbia and Montenegro

This Summit was organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in order to enhance the cooperation between young human rights activists and civil society representatives, as well as between young future political leaders from the Western Balkans and officials from the European Union. The summit promoted the existing regional initiative for the establishment of the Regional Commission for Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling about War Crimes, thus demanding an admission of war crimes by the policy. They also emphasized the importance

of youth participation in decision-making processes. A declaration was set up calling among other things for the support of establishing the Regional War Crimes Facts Commission, which was sent to all institutions concerned in the Western Balkans and in the European Union.

The young people have realized that an enhanced cooperation between their countries is necessary for a sustainable peace in this area and that dealing with the past is an indispensable precondition for reconciliation and peace.

b) Creative Projects

1) Nr. 103 “Neighbourhood Meetings” Teatro La Luna – Argentina

The Teatro La Luna is situated in a poor quarter of the city of Cordoba and works especially with children and young people who, to a large extent, live on the streets. They learn such things as: acting, painting, drawing, juggling, carpentry, and they also get yoga lessons.

The project of the international reconciliation year is aimed at the inhabitants of the poor quarter. Members of the Teatro La Luna visited about 100 families in their houses, where stories were read to the residents, they sang together and listened to the stories of the inhabitants. The aim was to enhance the dialogue within the family but also between the inhabitants, to reduce aggressions and to promote respect and understanding for each other.

2) Nr. 146 “Africa in Motion” – UK

“Africa in motion” is a Film Festival in Scotland, the main goal of which is, on the one hand, to grant the Scottish audience access to the brilliant African film scene, and, on the other hand, to help African films gain a wider recognition by the British film scene. In appreciation of the International Reconciliation Year 2009 the focus was on the subject of “trauma, conflict and reconciliation”. At the same time there was a symposium at the University of Edinburgh with the title “trauma through conflicts and wars of post-colonial African states, and the efforts made by reconciliation committees to find truth, justice, reconciliation, and peace”.

3) Nr. 160/163 “Choir of Nations” – Switzerland

The Choir was founded 2006 in Solothurn and it actually includes 80 members from 27 nations. The goal of the choir is to promote integration and exchange through the medium of music. The members learn together songs from their native countries and from Switzerland, and have common public performances at smaller or larger occasions. On November 1st, 2009, the concert “Music for Peace” took place at the onset of the “Week of Religions”. Following their example choirs of nations have already originated in Luzern and Glarus.

c) Educational / Indigenous / Athletic Projects

1) Nr. 31 “Daily on the Way and active on the Subject of Reconciliation” - RadioChico Switzerland

RadioChico Switzerland, a non-profit-making-internet radio, gives an opportunity to children and young people to learn everything around broadcasting in mostly mobile studios at different schools, as well as in the main studio at Goldbach. With their signing of the code of Ethics, they undertake to publish constructive news only and to stand by journalistic principles, such as responsible research, interviews and reports.

During the International Reconciliation Year the main focus of their broadcasting was on the subject of “reconciliation”. The children and young people interviewed different people and collected and published interesting personal statements about forgiveness and reconciliation. A selection of these interviews was produced on a CD-Rom.

The conclusion of their recognition was that the first step towards global reconciliation and peace must start with oneself in jumping over one’s own shadow or rather over the shadow of an enemy.

2) Nr. 32 – 37 “8th Aachen Peace Run” – Germany

The Peace Run was organized by an alliance consisting of 8 peace organizations, among others by Pax Christi. Its motto was: “Run for diversity – against Violence and Racism”. More than 4200 children and young people from 37 local schools participated. They formulated their wishes as follows: “We want to live in a colourful, diverse and tolerant city of Aachen in which all people have the same rights and can live without fear”. The primary aim of the preceding accompanying peace educational programme, lasting several weeks and consisting of theatre and pantomime performances, anti-violence-training, creative workshops etc. was to sensitize the children and young people to the subject of peace and peaceful conflict resolutions, in order to get them “ready for peace and reconciliation”. With the donations amounting to € 50.000 the organizers supported numerous peace projects all over the world.

3) Nr. 128 “Future Leaders Forum” – Switzerland

The Lassalle-Institute was founded in Bad Schönbrunn/Switzerland in 1995. Through seminars, lectures etc. the institute promotes a culture of values, the ethic of which is founded in their holistic approach and it is aimed at leaders in economic, political and other areas. Object and purpose of their work are, in their own words: “Zen, Ethics, Leadership”. With a special forum – the Future Leaders Forum - the Lassalle-Institute, in cooperation with universities and academies, is offering complementary training for young future leaders. In addition to promoting the mental intelligence, the emotional and spiritual intelligence are also included in the training. The participants of the Future Leaders Forum 2009, entitled “Power of Leadership for Humanity” was among others searching for answers to the question “What leadership qualities does mankind of the 21st century need at a global level?” They extended their perception for future challenges at global level and took advantage of both, modern psychology as well as the ancient traditions of East and West. At this forum young future leaders who are willing to take responsibility get to know the foundations for peace promoting work.

d) Spiritual / Health Care Projects

1) Nr. 90 “Reconciliation Week at Mount Sion Gikungu” – Burundi

The Foundation MARIYA ARAFASHA organized a Reconciliation-Week for the International Reconciliation Year 2009 at Mount Sion Gikungu in Bujumbura. On this occasion 5 young foreigners from Northern Ireland, Israel, South Africa and the United States were invited, too. These young people reported on conflicts in their own countries and they shared their personal difficult experiences with their audience. They reported impressively on their own path of reconciliation. This path is often not easy when, as a child, you had to see how your own parents were killed.

Each day was enriched through the multifarious cultural events and religious ceremonies.

2) Nr. 101 “Earth is our common Home” – Siberia/Russia

This project was organized by the “Siberian Centre of Eurasian Projects”, an organization which is about to establish a network of international youth villages in the Altai Mountains and at the Baikal Sea in Russia, where young people can meet and learn to live together peacefully, collectively creating visions of the future and setting up an action plan to make these visions come true.

During the International Reconciliation Year, various events took place at different healing places in Russia, such as in the Altai Mountains, at the Baikal Sea etc., where people from all over Eurasia met, in order to practice a peaceful coexistence, using creative activities as a means to making “unity in diversity” visible and perceptible. The goal of these events was to contribute to reconciliation between each other and with mother earth.

3) Nr. 129 “Foster Health Care and Education of youngsters” – Morocco

The organizer of this project, called PSEJ, was SUNHOP, an association of medical doctors, taking care of 400'000 people living in Morocco in poverty and very difficult health conditions. This project is aimed at about 2000 young people, in order to improve their situation in the areas of health, social and economic, namely as follows:

A group of about 100 young people will get training and these youngsters will pass on the information to other youngsters. The subjects taught are from the sector health care and education. These young people will set examples for other young people and learn to take responsibility for themselves and others. They can reconcile themselves to their own, often-difficult situation by getting to know and follow a new path.

These 12 projects are representative of the 157 registered projects, which, actually all deserve, prizes and accolades; they call on all people to campaign for human ideals and to realize them. Reconciliation is an invitation to dialogue, in fostering reciprocity and responsible inter-action. The well being of Men and Nations has to be the main concern in establishing the basis for a sustainable global peace.

Although the International Reconciliation Year 2009 has come to an end, the subject of reconciliation will remain the challenge of our time. Therefore the Foundation Of Subjective Experience and Research, S.E.R. Foundation, approached the Missions of the UN Member States to call for a “Global Reconciliation Decade 2011-2020”, to keep the idea of reconciliation alive and find solace into the mainstream of human consciousness. For this reason, the S.E.R. Foundation has established a new Project List 2010 at www.global-balance.org designed to make reconciliation activities worldwide visible, viable and vigorous.

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