

URI eUpdate for September 2007

Our Periodic Electronic Newsletter

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1. International Day of Peace

URI Cooperation Circle members around the world enthusiastically celebrated the United Nations' International Day of Peace (IDP) in many diverse and creative ways.



IDP – Amman, Jordan

Our story has chapters so far from Denmark, Finland, Pakistan, Jordan, USA, Argentina, Malaysia, The Philippines, Tajikistan, and India.



IDP – Warispora, Pakistan

For the full story with photos, please check it out now, and several more times this month. We'll continue to add chapters to this story as we receive them.

[Go to IDP 2007 story.](#)

2. Reflections from Executive Director on URI's first Peace Center

On the morning of 9 September, a group of URI leaders from India, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Bangladesh and the United States, with a group of new URI friends from Australia climbed on a bus and drove to Thiruvalla, a town in the lush countryside of Kerala state in southern India. Our large bus navigated a maze of narrow lanes – populated with small dwellings, each unique and surrounded by the rich variety of trees and flowering plants that are everywhere here – seemingly taking us deeper and deeper into the heart of this part of India.



The vision of the center came about when a local resident, Joseph Chaco, generously donated a small plot of land. A grant of \$2500 from URI's global budget was enough to build a modest building that will be a center for activities designed to make Thiruvalla a more peaceful community through interfaith cooperation, and to address a growing intra-Christian conflict in Kerala that threatens to erupt in violence.



I wish everyone in the URI community around the world could have joined us for this inauguration. Could have experienced the surge of joy when the ribbon was cut and people poured into this small and already sacred and safe space. . . Could have shared the simple, gracious hospitality. . . Could have witnessed the unveiling of the plaque embedded in the wall of the Peace Centre that identifies it as a project of the URI . . .

It felt as though we were given a taste of heaven or nirvana – a taste of the world as it might be, as it must be. A taste of the world made possible through interfaith cooperation dedicated to creating cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

[Read Charles' photo-journal here.](#)

3. URI group addresses climate change at UN

URI Global Trustee Deborah Moldow reports that the United Religions Initiative and the World Peace Prayer Society hosted a most successful midday workshop on "The Ethical and Spiritual Response to Climate Change" at the annual UN DPI/NGO Conference on September 7, 2007

The wonderful panel speakers were from four different faith traditions, and included the head of the NY office of the UN Environment Programme. We began with gratitude to nature and "May Peace Prevail on Earth," and ended with a gentleman representing an NGO who came up to me to say, "I just want to thank you. This workshop was the heart of the whole conference."



Monica Willard, Yuel Bhatti, Deborah Moldow, Laurence Singer, and Diane Williams

The URI was well represented at the workshop by UN Representative Monica Willard, Diane Williams of URI-UN, Laurence Singer of Global Family for Love and Peace CC, and overseas visitor Yuel Bhatti, of URI Pakistan.

4. URI Europe wins award

News has reached us through Karimah Stauch, URI Europe Regional Coordinator, that the URI Europe Assembly 2005 in Brussels will receive the Golden Star Award of the European Commission. This award honors the best 10 project which in 2005 have received funding under the Active European Citizenship programme of the European Commission. "It is a beautiful recognition and honor, which will benefit URI Europe for the future, God willing - insha'Allah," said Karimah.



URI Europe Leadership Team: Sheikh Bashir Dultz, Rashid Bockemuehl, Karimah Stauch

The Jury for the selection of the Golden Stars was chaired by Mr Hannu Takkula, member of the European Parliament and Vice Chairman of its Committee on Culture and Education. He commented: "I was personally impressed by the accomplishments of the projects, notably the commitment to concrete common goals, the zeal of their participants and the final outcomes, and to my mind such efforts could inevitably encourage others to emulate their success and culminate to the promotion of a community of values among the people concerned."

Mr. Jan Figel, European Union Commissioner for Education and Culture, will award the prize in a ceremony in Brussels on November 7-8, 2007.

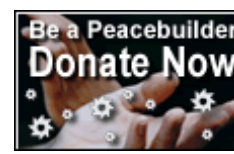
5. Philanthropy

Your commitment, persistence, and support have worked wonders!

Think about it. Ten years ago, URI was a germ of a powerful idea being born into existence. Today, URI is at work in 64 countries through nearly 400 Cooperation Circles, regional staff, and volunteers, organizing hundreds of interfaith actions each year.

To say that it couldn't have been done without all of you is an understatement. Your commitment, your sweat, your faith made it possible. Today, because of you, we are ready to take the next step – to radically expand our central work of building peace throughout the world. This will take URI several years to fully launch, but it's the right thing to do. And it's the right time.

The primary challenge is one of money. The URI is not funded at a sustainable level for an important international organization. We need to change that. We can do it together, just like we created the URI Charter and launched our work around the world. Every action counts. Please take the first step for a sustainable URI by clicking here or calling Regan Murphy at 415-561-2300 x 17. Every gift counts.



6. URI Granted Consultative status with United Nations

We have recently received official notice that the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has granted URI Special Consultative Status. This will raise the visibility and status of URI in the world and will open the doors for the voices of URI to be heard.

The role of ECOSOC NGO will allow URI more full participation than our former status as an NGO with the UN Department of Public Information. We will have additional representatives, and we may attend and present relevant input to hearings that are being held on topics of interest to the global URI community.

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The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.