

**SPEECHES GIVEN AT THE AFRICAN UNION COMMEMORATING  
THE UN WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK  
AND THE U DAY FESTIVAL 2018  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2018, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**BEN BOWLER**

Executive Director, Unity Earth and serial entrepreneur with a  
background in sales and marketing.

Your Excellency Dr. Mualtu Teshome, President of Ethiopia

Your excellences

Respected Religious Leaders

Distinguished Delegates to the African Union, fellow U Day participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Unity Earth, U DAY Festival, our partners at URI and The Ethiopian Experience, I would like to convey what an honor it is to address this assembly on this most auspicious occasion of UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

I would like to thank the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia for hosting of this event and for their strong and willing partnership in making U Day Festival 2018 in Ethiopia, such a great success. I would like to personally honour and thank Ambassador Mussie Hailu for his tireless work and vision to make this day a reality.

As this time all over our world, gatherings with intentions such as this one are becoming more important than ever before, as we strive towards intercultural respect, and understanding, leading us to right relationship based upon universal human dignity and a culture of peace.

From this gathering of more than 60 Cultural Delegates from 10 countries, from many various cultures and spiritual traditions, leaders, artists, visionaries coming together to celebrate and embody Peace, Compassion and Unity, we take great hope for the future and for our collective road ahead.

We congratulate the African Union for your ongoing efforts towards interfaith harmony, through the good work of CIDO and other bodies.

Based upon the universal human family, we seek a new and comprehensive spiritual unity, which is needed for us to navigate through the many challenges before us, this spiritual renaissance of the heart involves and includes all cultures, all traditions, all religions, and all nations. We look to Africa to be an inspirational leader in this great work, building harmony, fostering peace and uplifting humanity, on this great holy Continent as across the world.

Blessings of peace upon the Nations of Africa

May Peace Prevail on Earth

(Continue below for more speeches)

**MONICA WILLIARD**  
United Religions Initiative (URI)  
Representative to the United Nations

Your Excellencies. President Teshome, Distinguished Delegates to the African Union, fellow U Day participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here in Ethiopia, the land of origins, addressing this distinguished gathering at the African Union during World Interfaith Harmony Week. Thank you for welcoming the U Day Team.

The United Nations General Assembly designated the first week in February annually as World Interfaith Harmony Week. The Resolution was introduced by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in the fall of 2010 and the Week was first observed in February 2011.

As the United Religions Initiative's Representative to the United Nations, this resolution has personal and organizational resonance for me. I served as President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations from 2011 to 2013 and worked to establish the annual observances at the United Nations. In 2011, the Committee of Religious NGOs anchored this resolution at an Interfaith Breakfast with the Department of Public Information, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFPA. In 2012 and 2013, World Interfaith Harmony Week events were held in the United Nations General Assembly with the 66<sup>th</sup> and 67<sup>th</sup> Presidents of the General Assembly as sponsors and participants.

Since 2014, The Alliance of Civilizations, under the leadership of the High Representative Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, has partnered with the Committee of Religious NGOs for an annual World Interfaith Harmony Week event at the United Nations. The 2018 event will be held on February 7.

Thousands of other events, including this special meeting at the African Union, will honor World Interfaith Harmony Week throughout the world. Observance of this UN Resolution promotes peacebuilding at the community level.

I would like to quote several key portions from the UN resolution that established World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The resolution recognizes "the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions in enhancing mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people."

It recognizes that the moral imperatives of all religions, convictions and beliefs call for peace, tolerance and mutual understanding and it reaffirms that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace.

The resolution goes on to “encourage all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week based on love of God and love of one’s neighbour or on love of the good and love of one’s neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions.”

The UN World Interfaith Harmony Week Resolution uses the word love four times. To give it a strong theological basis, the resolution references the two Great Commandments shared by the Abrahamic traditions, the Love of God and the Love of Neighbour. It expands the call to include “the love of good and the love of neighbour” to encourage participation by people of “goodwill,” including those who may not have a specific faith or tradition.

Our U Day delegation is here with representatives from 10 countries from Aboriginal, Spiritual and Indigenous traditions, along with Sikhs, Baha’is, Sufis, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Christians.

To be with you at the African Union expands our journey together.

We deeply appreciate your daily work for peace and harmony on the great continent of Africa. We encourage you to promote World Interfaith Harmony Week in your respective countries by upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and living by the Golden Rule. Join with us in building a worldwide culture of peace by igniting the values of Unity, Peace and Compassion in the Global Fire of One Love.

May Peace Prevail on Earth!

(Continue below for more speeches)

## RABBI GABRIEL HAGAI

Orthodox Rabbi, lecturer, linguist, philologist, paleographer, codicologist,  
mediator, poet, calligrapher and singer.

Your Excellency **Dr. Mulatu Teshome**, President of Ethiopia,

Your Excellencies,

Respected Religious Leaders,

Distinguished Delegates to the African Union,

Fellow U-Day Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, Sisters and Brothers,

My traditional greetings in Hebrew: *Hash-Shalôm 'alêkhem we-Raḥmê Adônây wu-Virkatô* – May Peace, the Mercy of God and His Blessing be upon you all.

As part of the commemoration of World Interfaith Harmony Week and U DAY Festival, it is with great honor that I stand here before you all to share some of the wisdom of our holly *Tôra*, our sacred text – *i.e.* the Jewish Bible. For it is written there (Deuteronomy 4:6): “*Kî hî ḥokhmatkhem wu-vînatkhem le-’ênê ha-’ammîm* (for she – *i.e.* the *Tôra* – is your wisdom and your intelligence before the eyes of the peoples).” So I had to ask myself what type of wisdom the *Tôra* contains that would be relevant to share with the AU?

**Firstly**, I stand before you all not only as Gabriel – son of Daniel, son of Yôḥanan, son of Meyuḥas, son of Mehullal – an Orthodox Jew, a Sephardic rabbi, a university professor, a spiritual teacher and a peacemaker, but I stand primarily before you all as a brother in humanity.

For we are all created in God’s image, after His likeness, as it is written (Genesis 1:26): “*Na’ase Adam be-šalmeNu ki-dmuteNu* (let Us make Adam in Our image, according to Our likeness).” The fact we are descending all of us from Adam “the First” should put in ourselves an acute sense of kinship, of unity, with all others. The other is just another self, and I am no more myself than the other is, but no less neither. This should equally plant in ourselves an active sense of responsibility towards God’s creation – the animals, the plants, the air, the water and the earth.

Sacredness of Life is the highest principle in the holly *Tôra*. As it is written (Deuteronomy 30:15-19): “*Wu-vaḥarta ba-ḥayyîm* (you will choose Life).” Incidentally, one of God’s names in Hebrew is *Ḥay* – *i.e.* “The [eternal] Living”.

Is it not stated in the *Midrash (Bemidbar Rabba 23, Eliyyahu Rabba 10)* and the *Mishna (M. Sanhedrîn 4:5)*: “He who saves a person, it is as if he had saved the world.”? And its opposite (*ibid.*): “He who kills a person, it is as if he had destroyed the world.” Thus, we are all related, all linked, all united by our bonds of humanity. When a human being dies, it is all of us who die.

**Secondly**, our wise Teachers said in the *Mishna*, in the tractate *Avôt*, called ‘*The Wisdom of our Fathers*’ (1:18): “On three things stands the World, ‘*al had-Dîn, ‘al ha-Emet we-‘al hash-Shalom* (on Rule of Law, on Truth and on Peace).”

Distinguished Assembly, true **Peace** is based on Justice. Since I stand here at the AU without any political agenda, I found especially important to declare as a Jew, as an Israeli citizen and as a

rabbi, that there cannot be Peace in my country without Justice and equal rights for my Palestinians sisters and brothers. I demand Justice for my Palestinians sisters and brothers, victims to the Israeli Government! True Judaism is not nationalism! Jewish identity cannot be the excuse of an apartheid excluding non-Jews from any citizenship! For it is written (Deuteronomy 16:20): “*Şedeq Şedeq tirdof* (Justice, you shall pursue Justice)!”

By the way, about the too-often-misunderstood concept of “Chosen People” applied to us, I would like to explain that we Jews weren’t chosen exclusively – for every nation on Earth is chosen by God. We have been chosen specifically for observing the *Tôra*, that is why it is us who are written in it and no others. But as for being chosen, every human family is to fulfil its own divine master plan. There’s no judgement of superiority or exclusiveness by it. By example, the Ethiopians are chosen by God to embody the values, the culture and the spirituality of Ethiopia. And so the French are to the values, the culture and the spirituality of France. I hope I made myself clear.

Peace is a divine virtue. God only praised Aaron (Moses’s brother) because of Peace, as the *Wisdom of our Fathers* reiterates (1:12): “Be a disciple of Aaron, who loves Peace, who pursues Peace, who loves the creatures and brings them to the *Tôra*.” On Aaron, it has been said in Malachi (2: 6): “He walked with Me in Peace and Uprightness, and turned many away from sin.”

**Thirdly**, the innermost message of the *Tôra* is a message of **Love**, as it is written (Leviticus 19:18): “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” And similarly (Deuteronomy 10:19): “You shall love the stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” One cannot truly love another person unless one can genuinely love oneself unconditionally as God loves him.

Why this duty of love? It reflects the Love that feels our Creator towards us, manifested by His very Act of Creation. A story from the *Talmûd* (T. *Sanhedrîn* 39 b) tells that at the time of crossing the Red Sea, when the Israelites intoned a song – the famous Canticle of the Sea (Exodus 15:1-19) – the Angels also wanted to sing. God said to them: “The work of My hands is drowning in the Sea, and you want to intone a song?!” Love is a divine deed. To love one another, is to realize one’s own divine nature and recognize it in the other.

This essential biblical message emerges from a Talmudic story about Hillel the Elder (T. *Shabbat* 31a): Someone asked Hillel to summarize the Torah by standing on one foot. The Elder said then: “*Da’alakh sene le-ḥavrah la ta’aved* (what you hate, do not do to your neighbor). This is the whole *Tôra*, the rest is only its commentary. *Zel gemor* (go study)!” Meaning that there is no difference between self and other, both are equally the work of God’s hands. Harming your neighbor is harming yourself; it is harming the *Shekhîna* (the Divine Presence). This is the *Golden Rule* shared by all spiritual traditions of humankind on Earth. Not harming the other is the more reachable version of the commandment to love the other as oneself.

Furthermore it is known in our prophecies that the final Redemption will be established on “unconditional Love (*Ahavat ḥinnam*)”. Only after this eschatological requirement is fulfilled that the *Mashîaḥ* (Messiah) will reveal himself.

Parenthetically, contrary to what people think about the Jews, we don’t wait for the Messiah, he is waiting for us. As the Talmudic story goes (T. *Sanhedrîn* 98a): Upon Prophet Elijah’s advice, Rabbi Yehôshûa’ ben Lewî (first half of the 3rd century CE) went to find the Messiah at the gates

of Rome, among the lepers. After respectfully greeting him, the Rabbi asks: “When will you come, Master?” The *Mashîaḥ* answers: “Today (*hayyôm*)”. When the deadline has passed and the Messiah didn’t arrive, Rabbi Yehôshûa’ complained to Elijah: “He lied to me, he said he would come today, but he didn’t!” The Prophet replied: “In fact, what the Messiah told you, is [quoting a verse]: *Today*, if you hear His voice (Psalms 95:7).” Meaning that the Messiah will come only when the generation is deserving, *i.e.* when global human consciousness has raised to a sufficient level.

**Lastly**, in order to fulfill our messianic destiny, **Unity** is the key. The image given by our mystical Rabbis is one of a global orchestra: each nation possesses a musical instrument and a score. We all just have to play together, without judgement – no instrument is more important than the other, no score is better than the other. No need to force others to play one’s instrument or one’s tune – this would be just loss of beauty. Let’s just play in unison, with all our diversities, so that can be heard a symphony instead of a cacophony. This symbolic orchestra piece played by the entire humankind is called “the Heavenly Symphony” – *han-Niggûn ha-‘Elyôn* (the Celestial Melody). It is the music of the Messiah. This harmonized togetherness is what makes the difference between a live body and a corpse – when all the organs function together: Life – when each one functions separately: Death.

In **conclusion**, I’ve been surprised (in a very positive way) for my first time in Ethiopia how well-behaved and well-educated the people are here. And especially after visiting the Holy City of Lalibela, I was amazed by the spiritual devotion and the religious practice of the pilgrims. We know that in less than a hundred years, it will be Africa’s time to become the world’s leading continent. And I say – without being a prophet neither the son of one – that in the next century, Ethiopia will be one of the leading countries of the world.

A deep connection exists between Ethiopia and **the House of King David** (*Bêt-Dawîd*). This is a reality that I can feel here strongly, being myself a descendant of **King Joas** (*Yô’ash*) – 8th generation after King David on the Throne of Jerusalem – through Nathanael the Elder of Jarteph (*Yartef*), two thousand years ago. Ethiopia feels like a second home to me – like finding a lost cousin.

Loving-Kindness and Compassion (*Hesed we-Raḥamîm*) will be the everlasting cement of the global about-to-emerge Messianic Paradigm. Let this verse be accomplished in us (Psalms 133:1): “*Hinne maṭ-ṭôv wu-man-na’îm shevet aḥîm gam yaḥad* (how good and how pleasant it is for [sisters and] brothers to dwell together in unity).”

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

(Continue below for more speeches)

**Dr. A.K. MERCHANT**

General Secretary, Temple of Understanding India Foundation; Trustee, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India & Lotus Temple

Your Excellency, Dr. Mulatu Teshome, the President of Ethiopia, Excellences'! Organizers of 2018 U Day Festival & World Interfaith Harmony Week in Ethiopia, Spiritual Leaders, Peace Ambassadors, Artists, Ladies, Gentlemen & my Baha'i Friends in Ethiopia!

Warm salutations and greetings to all for making this historic gathering possible, and sincere gratitude to the African Union in Addis Ababa and H.E. Ambassador Mussie Hailu, our host for the occasion!

It gives me great joy, as a member of the Bahá'í Faith, and General Secretary, Temple of Understanding India Foundation, to share my thoughts on a theme very dear to my heart: "Unity in Diversity". I come from India which has the motto *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* "the world is one family". In the words of Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í Faith, whose 200<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary was recently celebrated, this would be understood as *"the earth is but one country, and humankind its citizens"*. The bedrock of a strategy that can engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny must be the consciousness of the oneness of humankind. The Golden Rule statement from each of the world's religious scriptures and the oral tradition of indigenous peoples read out at the beginning of this conference is an integral part of this strategy.

We just celebrated the super moon night, also known as the blood moon or blue moon, on 31<sup>st</sup> January evening so let me share what earthmen landing on the moon have perceived that poets, philosophers, and prophets have echoed through the centuries—the oneness of the human family, which is the overarching theme of the 2018 U—Day Festival. *"The view of the earth from the moon fascinated me—a small disk, 240,000 miles away,"* wrote an astronaut. *"It was hard to think that that little thing held so many problems, so many frustrations. Raging nationalistic interests, famines, wars, pestilence [and what have you] don't show from that distance. I'm convinced that some wayward stranger in a spacecraft, coming from another part of the heavens, could look at earth and never know that it was inhabited at all. But the same wayward stranger would certainly know instinctively that if the earth were inhabited, then the destinies of all who lived on it must be inevitably interwoven and joined. We are one hunk of ground, water, air, clouds, floating around in space. From out there it is really one world."*

Bahá'u'lláh compared the world to the human body and offered a model of world order, synonymous in interfaith parlance with the establishment of the "Kingdom of God on earth" or



the “*Ram Rajya*”, that holds convincing promise for the organisation of a planetary society. Because human society is composed not a mass of merely differentiated cells but of associations of individuals, each one of whom is endowed with intelligence and will, and the modes of operation that characterize man’s biological nature illustrate fundamental principles of existence. Chief among these is that of unity in diversity.

Paradoxically, it is precisely the wholeness and complexity of the order constituting the human body that permits the full realization of the distinctive capacities inherent in each of these component elements. No cell lives apart from the body, whether in contributing to its functioning or in deriving its share from the well-being of the whole. The physical well-being thus achieved finds its purpose in making possible the expression of human consciousness; that is to say, the purpose of biological development transcends the mere existence of the body and its parts.

That human consciousness necessarily operates through an infinite diversity of individual minds and motivations detracts in no way from its essential unity. Indeed, it is precisely an inhering diversity that distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity. What the peoples of the world are today experiencing Bahá’u’lláh said, is their collective coming-of-age, and it is through this emerging maturity of the human race that the principle of unity in diversity will find full expression. From its earliest beginnings in the consolidation of family life, the process of social organisation has successively moved from the simple structures of clan and tribe, through multitudinous forms of urban society, to the eventual emergence of the nation-state, each stage opening up a wealth of new opportunities for the exercise of human capacity.

Significant advances have been made in terms of educational access and the creation of environments for women to thrive alongside men; nevertheless, far more remains to be accomplished. Systemic and structural injustice continues to suppress women’s potential, plunging humanity into crisis after crisis. Until these inequalities are thoroughly uprooted from the fabric of society, humanity will remain mired in the conflict, despair, confusion, and imbalance that have come to define much of modern life.

The world civilization to which humanity aspires is one where the material and spiritual dimensions of life are in harmony, and the materials aspects of civilization, such as commerce and governance, are suffused with spiritual principles, such as equity and justice. Naturally, the potency and vigour of a civilization is contingent upon the strength of its component parts. In this regard there is much to say about the qualities governing the relationships among the individuals, institutions, and other constituents that comprise present-day society.

The prevailing economic and geopolitical orders are characterized by conflict and aggression to such an extent that many have succumbed to the view that these qualities represent inescapable features of human nature. While humans are capable of violence, selfishness, cowardice, and competition, they have also repeatedly demonstrated their ability to be kind, to prefer others over themselves, to carry out acts of valour at immense personal cost, and to cooperate when competition is the norm. How much more would these noble tendencies prevail if governments allocated substantial resources to cultivating the higher nature of their citizens, focusing vigorous learning processes around how the latent spiritual and moral powers of their inhabitants can be developed and released? What is more, the dynamics that have come to define relationships of power must be reimaged in the light of a genuine understanding of the oneness of humanity in order for all people to have an opportunity to lead meaningful lives. Understandably, changes of this magnitude will be hard won, requiring vision and sacrifice, and the long-term commitment of the leaders and citizens of the world.

However great the turmoil, the worldwide Bahá'í community believes that the period into which humanity is moving will open to every individual, every institution, and every community on earth unprecedented opportunities to participate in the writing of the planet's future. *"The tabernacle of unity hath been raised,"* Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed, *"regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch."* Let me conclude with an African word and tremendous gratitude to the peoples of Ethiopia, the land of origins. Ubuntu, Ubuntu, Ubuntu! *(the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity*

(Continue below for more speeches)

## **MINDAHI BASTIDA**

Director, Original Caretakers Program, Center for Earth Ethics at  
Union Theological Seminary and descendant of the Otomi-Toltec Peoples of México.

My name is Mindahi Bastida, of the Otomi-Toltec ancestral Peoples of Mexico. I am representing the Center for Earth Ethics and its Original Caretakers Program. It is a big honor to greet Ethiopia, Land of Origins. We pay respect to the original peoples and territories and also to the African Union.

We greet the original peoples of Ethiopia and all of Africa as an important continent that can give light to the world in times of Climate Change and concerning biocultural erosion.

According to our prophecies and ancestral knowledge, 7000 years ago some human beings began to go in another direction and began to take over Nature. Others remained as caretakers, in a collective way, of what original peoples call Mother Earth, living in harmony and balance with divine creation. But in many places harmony was broken, and this situation prevails until today, deeply affecting the material and spiritual compounds of life.

Furthermore, due to invasions and colonization of the world bio-cultures were affected and many species and cultures disappeared provoking imbalance of the good living. In spite of the devastating effects of global colonialism, many Original Peoples, also known as Indigenous Peoples, have successfully kept their ancestral practices, cosmologies and philosophies. An ancient basis of wisdom is known collectively as the *life originating principles*, through which we continue to interact with the sacred-spiritual, nature-material and with other cultures. This original counsel, based in the original instructions, brings together our ancestral wisdom, our current perception of the endangered world and our actions.

People, who have acted as allies of ancestral cultures and wisdom for the permanence of life and of original peoples, are aware of the mounting crisis that all beings face in many levels. The world is experiencing the end result of a different kind of knowledge whose implementation has been provoking a des-harmonious, fragmented and highly destructive way of interaction and relationship with nature, cultures and celestial bodies.

More and more, it becomes evident that the recovery of harmony, peace, unity and dignity lies in our return to the sacred origins of the ancestral wisdom, where human beings are an integral part of creation and not the peak of creation.

The recovery of harmony is not just tangible but also intangible, and collective consciousness is vital to address harmony in the spiritual and material worlds. This harmony and balance must be reflected among all beings, according to time and space order.

Then, peace can be achieved not just among human beings but also with Nature and Mother Earth. It is urgent to restrict the anthropocentric thought and return to the original principles. We need to make peace with Mother Earth and her sacred elements and nature.

Peace and Dignity are intertwined principles; we as human beings can achieve dignity if we go beyond the greed and commodification of “things” and respect life through reciprocal actions. We want to strengthen families, communities, biocultures, Mother Earth and our relationship with all beings working together and pulling together. We want an integrated world based on dialogue, reciprocity and complementarity that will carry all through far more than just seven generations.

For us unity is all about the Unification Process. This process is a mandate from indigenous spiritual leaders to respond to our planetary and civilizational crisis, emphasizing that all beings, including the celestial bodies are integral components of the life systems, must be taken into account to produce balance and harmonization in the world.

In achieving **Harmony, Peace, Unity and Dignity** we should:

Strengthen the work of those who, in continuity with their “originating principles/law of origin”, sustain to this date the ancient wisdom and spiritual traditional practices that preserve the sacred balance of Earth.

Remind those who were given their “original instructions”, and that may have drifted from them due to their own historical processes, to revive their biocultural identity as a way back to their ancient ways, which will give them once again a sense of belonging and meaning in the sacred web of life.

Bring awareness to those who have completely lost, or never had, the understanding that they too are an integral part of the natural world and as such need to learn they are here to contribute to sustaining it for themselves and for those who are yet to come.

Practice tolerance, intercultural dialogue and mutual cooperation for the sake of biocultural diversity. These are among the strongest warranties of peace and security at local and international levels.

In sum, we, together, in a Process of Unification, need to be engaged in restoring harmony and balance of Mother Earth for the sake of human life and all beings. We need to think and act at local and global levels and think beyond intergenerational equity: we must leave a legacy of good generations for Mother Earth.

Kjamadi – May love and blessings be with us, the land of origins and your families.

(Continue below for more speeches)

## **CHIEF PHIL LANE, JR.**

Founder of the Four Worlds International Institute (FWII) and Chairman of Four Directions International and of Compassion Games International

Very Dearly Beloved and Respected Excellencies, Spiritual and Religious leaders, Fellow U Day Travellers and all Beloved Members of our Human Family, I want to extend a very warm, respectful, loving handshake and embrace to each and everyone of you on behalf of the Hinhnan Wicasa and Deloria Tiospayes, Magaska Ptesan Wicoti, White Swan People, Ihanktonwan Dakota, Oceti Sakowin, Seven Council Fires of the Sioux Nation, and the many Indigenous peoples and allies we work with across the Americas and beyond. I am very honored, privileged and inspired to be here in Ethiopia, the Land of Origins and in the Room in which the African Union addresses security challenges to the Nation States of the African Union.

When I arrived in this beautiful and sacred land of Ethiopia, I felt the spirit of our Creator. When I traveled to Lalibela, I felt the Spirit and Power of God, the Creator of All Good Things,. When I prayed at the Mosque of Aqsa in Jerusalem, I felt the Spirit of God, the Ever Forgiving.! When I went to the Western Wall and prayed, I felt the Spirit of God. When I walked along the Via Dolorosa where Jesus walked and suffered and in the Garden of Gethsemane I felt the Spirit of God. When I visited the Baha'i Holy Places on Mount Carmel, I felt our Beloved Creator. When I traveled through Asia, I felt the spirit of God, the Spirit of Love and Compassion in the Holy Places of our Buddhist and our Hindu relatives. And, of course, our Indigenous peoples know that all of that all life is one, interrelated and that the hurt of one is the hurt of all! As is revealed in the Koran by the Prophet of God, Mohammed, we all come from the same clot of blood. All of us. We are One Human Family.

Each of us is a sovereignty, ancient, imperishable and everlasting. Each of us, a spiritual representative of all of those who have gone before us. That's who we are. Sacred beings. Each and every one of us.

And I'm so thankful to have returned to Mother Africa. Because right from here, whether people want to accept it or not, we know scientifically, the entire human family emerged from Mother Africa. That is truth. So I have come home to my Mother.

And I want to say, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas understand what happened very, very well to our relatives of Africa over the past 500 years . This is not the time to go into it now, but we have also suffered. But we know our Beloved Creator does not give us any test or difficulty except for our own spiritual growth and perfection. Now we are stronger than we have ever been!

And so I reach out with great love and affection to each and every one of you as my Family members. When Jesus says "my Father's house has many rooms", this verse has many meanings. We know that Messengers from God were sent to the Indigenous Peoples of the

Americas, too. The Creator would never leave alone our indigenous peoples across the Americas or anyone on our Mother Earth without spiritual teachings and guidance. We received our Sacred Teachings as well. All of us do. No one is left out.

So I want to conclude with a description in English of some of the spiritual teachings of our Indigenous Peoples by the Blessed Beauty. I found these same teachings in the hearts and souls of our Indigenous Peoples everywhere on Mother Earth. In fact, every single one of us sitting and standing here, we are all Indigenous Peoples of Mother Earth, each and every one of us. All of us have been born from the breast of our Mother Earth and so we all shall return, each in our own time!

“ Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of your friends and relatives, and look upon them with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of your pledge. Be fair in your judgment, and guarded in your speech. Be unjust to no man, and show respect to all men. Be as a lamp to them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all your acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light to the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a breath of life to the body of humankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a shining light in the firmament of your generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.”

I will close with words for these wonderful young people of Africa who have been so quietly and respectfully sitting in the balcony. Over fifty percent of our Global Population is under thirty years old. My father use to say this to me on many occasions, “Son, When the young people stop singing the old songs and there are no more dreams and visions of greatness, there is no more power. So as your vision is, so shall your power be. So as your faith is, so shall your success be!”

I have complete faith that our great Mother Africa is going to continue to rise up and is going to be a light to all Members of our Beloved Human Family.

Shunkmanu He Miye Yedo!

Chanupa Sapa He Miye Yedo!

My sacred names are, A Leader of Warriors Who Takes the Enemies Best Horses and a Sacred Black Pipe Born of Thunder, Lightning, and Rain  
and I Stand Fully Responsible Before the Creator For All My Words and Actions.

(Continue below for more speeches)

## **SAM COOK**

Aboriginal leader and activist and a playwright, writer, visual artist and graphic designer.

Sisters and Brothers,  
I am from the Nyikina Nation,  
One of the 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Nations of the land mass now known as Australia.

I come in delegation,  
With my brothers, the descendants of the Ancestors  
Mungo Man and Mungo Lady.

We represent our collective nations,  
Whose sovereignty never ceded.  
Whose treaty not yet attained.

WE STAND in recognition of your independence.  
Affirmed in diverse cultural traditions  
And leylines of ancestral story.

WE STAND for our cultural continuum,  
Eternally entwined from the origin  
Of Humanity.

WE STAND in the shadow of your sovereignty,  
A freedom that we both mourn,  
And celebrate  
For in our lands,  
We are tested  
Through colonial agendas  
Of extinguishment and denial.

When we Indigenous people have asked for:  
RESPECT  
We were gifted hate.

When we sought:  
COMPASSION



We were granted intolerance.

When we pleaded for:

HARMONY

with the land and its spirit

The World was led toward instability

And climate change.

When Indigenous people cried for our

RIGHTS and JUSTICE

We were met with theft, incarceration and poverty.

When we begged for

PEACE

We received war.

And when we pleaded for

LOVE

We were given genocide.

We have endured the worst example of humankind.

The worst.

Yet here we stand.

Bathed in the spirit of our Ancestors,

Our Elders,

Our Brothers,

Our Sisters,

Our future leaders.

And as the sun rose this morning across the land of Origin,

It brought forth a new day.

An historical day.

A day of renewal.

A day of hope.

This hurt ends today.

For we have converged in the best possible way.

In Respect.  
Compassion.  
Harmony.  
Peace.  
Unity.  
And in Love.

We are here, so full of potential  
and cultural prosperity.  
Enriched by one another.  
As sisters and brothers.

The time is NOW  
To stand in POWER.

The power of humanity.

(Continue below for more speeches)

**THE REV. VICTOR H. KAZANJIAN JR.**

Executive Director, United Religions Initiative

Greetings Sisters and Brothers gathering in Ethiopia for Interfaith Harmony Week.

Greetings, His Excellency Dr. Mulatu Teshome, President of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and thank you from all of us who seek peace in this world for your support and for your words of welcome for this celebration.

Greetings and deep gratitude to all who organized these extraordinary events, U-Day Festival, African Union Commission Department of Civil Society Diaspora Directorate, the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association, the Interreligious Council of Ethiopia, The World Peace Prayer Society, Unity Earth and its Director and my dear friend Ben Bowler, and to the United Religions Initiative in Africa and my brother Amb. Mussie Hailu, Global Envoy and Africa Regional Director of the United Religions Initiative.

Dear friends, the world is blessed by all of your work and by this convergence of peacemakers from different religions, cultures and nations. At a time of deepening divisions and escalating violence between people throughout the world, Interfaith Harmony Week reminds us of the vision of a world in which our differences are seen not as barriers to peace but as essential resources for weaving together the fabric of our common humanity.

For so many, the world is characterized by nightmares rather than dreams, discord rather than harmony. There is so much suffering. There is so much war, poverty, disease, displacement, environmental degradation, violence against women and children. In too many places, inequality and injustice abound.

And yet into the terror of this nightmare, come your voices, spiritual people of all beliefs, speaking and singing words of compassion and hope, forgiveness and love; moral people who can imagine a world with no poverty, no hunger, accessible healthcare, quality education, gender equality, clean water... a world where the vision of peace and justice is no longer a distant dream but a reality in the life of our children and of children's children.

My sisters and brothers, on this Interfaith Harmony Week may the power of our convictions infuse purpose into our actions that we may be part of extending the reality of peace to all the peoples of this precious planet. And may your gathering be filled with deep connection to one another and to this great movement towards peace, justice and human dignity of which we are a part. In Peace,

**HAJI SYED SALMAN CHISHTY -**  
Gaddi Nashin - Dargah Ajmer Sharif, India  
Chairman - Chishty Foundation  
Gaddi Nashin (Hereditary Custodians) 26th Generation

“Love Towards All, Malice towards None”  
The Philosophy of Unconditional Love as per Spiritual Traditions

Theme: “Harmony, Peace, Unity and Compassion.”

*Surah Nooh [71:15]*

***"See ye not how Allah hath created seven heavens in harmony"***

God says in the Holy Qur'an says:

There is no good in much of their secret conferences save (in) whosoever enjoineeth charity and fairness and peace-making among the people and whoso doeth that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a vast reward.

*(Al-Nisa,4:114)*

First of all, we must try to understand that Human being occupies a unique position in this world, and is at the axis and centre of the cosmic milieu. By being taught the names of all things, we are given the keys to knowledge of all things, and thus gains an understanding of all those sacred and secret knowledge.

In fact Human Being are the channel of grace for nature; through our active participation in the spiritual world we brings light into the world of nature. Because of our intimate connection with nature, our inner state is reflected in the external order. This explains why, when our inner being turns to darkness and chaos, nature is also turned from harmony and beauty to disequilibrium and disorder. Human Being sees in nature what we are ourself, and penetrates into the inner meaning of nature only by being able to delve into the inner depths of our own being. Those who live only on the surface of their being can study nature as something to be manipulated and dominated; only those who have turned toward the inward dimension of their existence can recognize nature as a symbol, and come to understand it in the real sense.

Peace indicates tranquility, mental calm, silence, serenity, reconciliation, amity, accord, concord, friendliness, harmony, on the one hand and, absence of or cessation of war, state of reconciliation after strife and enmity, freedom from mental agitation or anxiety, freedom from civil disorder, strife on the other.

There is a very close relation between peace and harmony at personal and societal levels.

Peace creates concord, balance, consistency, unanimity, compatibility and stability at individual and collective levels and helps to effect accord in facts, views and it acts and helps in making sympathetic relationships and mutual similarities the focal point of human concern. When peace and harmony is achieved in this real inter-related manner, the expectation for a trustful, promising, secure, and faithful existence of human beings becomes possible which, in other words, can be called hope in harmony and peace.

Islamic Spirituality insist on total social harmony which includes religious harmony that the whole world needs. Despite our age of information, geographical unification of countries and internationalization of learning and economics, the world badly requires a strong movement to dispel aggression in the name of race and creed.

Allah epitomizes religious understandings in Al Quran e Karim in a nutshell:

*"Lakum deenukunm wa liya deen --- Your religion is for you and my religion for me (109:6)".*

**Hazrat Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti (RA)** is a shining Sufi luminary and a great Spiritual Master whose final resting place in Ajmer Sharif - India has become an abode of eternal Peace among all. The light of his personality has dispelled darkness, and has illuminated thousands of hearts throughout the world.

He is not only respected ,esteemed ,honored, implored ,but in fact is the focus of attention ,and a center of hope to myriads of people ,belonging as they do to different castes ,creed ,religions and nationalities .

Today the Sufi Dargah at Ajmer Sharif continues to draw people irrespective of caste and creed and nobody goes back deprived of blessings.

***"He indeed is a true devotee blessed with the love of God who is gifted with the following three tributes –***

***River like Generosity***

***Sun like Bounty***

***Earth like Hospitality"***

**Khawaja Gharib Nawaz**

Al Quran e Karim says: "La Ikra Hafiddeen - There is no compulsion in religion" (2 : 256)

Pope John Paul II, 1985. From a speech delivered to over 80,000 Muslims in Casablanca :  
*"We believe in the one God, the Living God who created the world... In a world which desires unity and peace, but experiences a thousand tensions and conflicts, should not believers favor*

*friendship between the men and the peoples who form one single community on earth?... We must respect each other and we must stimulate each other in good works on the path to righteousness."*

Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a great deal in common. They are all based on monotheism and are committed to increase justice in the world, and the accountability before God. Their historic roots go back to Prophet Abraham and, as such, they are often described as 'Abrahamic Faith'. They are also the basis of great world civilizations.

Humanism, Harmony, love and brotherhood is the essence of all religions. Islam stands for human brotherhood, harmony, peace, compassion, tolerance and social justice.

Al Quran e Karim says, "*Al khalqu Aayatullah*" which means the entire mankind is God's family.

As per from the Vedantic Traditions from India its mentioned in Upanishad : "***Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam***" is a Sanskrit phrase which means "***the world is one family***".

Finally I would like to end my remarks with

***The blessed last sermon of  
Hazret Khawaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishty(ra)***

*"Love all and hate none.  
Mere talk of peace will avail you naught.  
Mere talk of God and religion will not take you far.  
Bring out all the latent powers of your being  
and reveal the full magnificence of your immortal self.*

*Be surcharged with peace and joy,  
and scatter them wherever you are  
and wherever you go.*

*Be a blazing fire of truth,  
be a beauteous blossom of love  
and be a soothing balm of peace.*

*With your spiritual light,  
dispel the darkness of ignorance;  
dissolve the clouds of discord and war  
and spread goodwill, peace, and harmony among the people.*

*Never seek any help, charity, or favors  
from anybody except God.*

*Never go the court of kings,  
but never refuse to bless and help the needy and the poor,  
the widow, and the orphan, if they come to your door.*

*This is your mission, to serve the people.....  
Carry it out dutifully and courageously,  
So that I ,as your Pir-o-Murshid,  
May not be ashamed of any shortcomings on your part  
Before the Almighty God and our Holy predecessors in the Sufi order (silsilah)  
On the Day of Judgment.”*

***Hazret Khawaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti  
11<sup>th</sup> Century Chishti Sufi Grand Master***

(Continue below for more speeches)

## **PETER BLAZE CORCORAN**

Recently retired Professor of Environmental Studies and Environmental Education who has lectured worldwide on sustainability, educational philosophy, and the Earth Charter.

### **“Harmony and Beyond...”**

Your excellency Dr. Mulatu Teshome, President of Ethiopia; your excellencies; respected religious leaders; distinguished delegates to the African Union; students; fellow U Day participants; ladies and gentlemen;

All protocols observed...

It is an honor for us to be at the African Union — a family of nations that, in spite of great challenges, shines hope on the destiny of Africa... As a citizen of the United States, I am painfully aware of the recent disrespectful remarks by the American President regarding African nations and people of African origin. I applaud the timely, dignified, and forceful response of the African Union — which was heard and echoed across the world.

Brothers and sisters, we live in disharmonious times. We know the natural world is in agony — that God’s creation, as humankind has known it, is dangerously diminished by human activity.

We know the social world, too, is in agony — that poverty, injustice, and war characterize daily life for millions around the planet.

This makes the work of the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week all the more critical and the more urgent — because we can bring our interfaith work to bear on these conditions.

So what is our work? Especially as it relates to intergovernmental contexts such as the United Nations and the African Union? Surely the commitments of governments and intergovernmental bodies to peace-keeping, to interfaith harmony, and to aspirational agreements such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Earth Charter are promising. There is much that government can do — and there is much that each of us can do to influence our governments and to support intergovernmental bodies. Yet we know that governments have limits. We know that we must go deeper than citizenship.

I believe our spiritual work is to create harmony, starting with ecological harmony, which is, of necessity, a foundation for other harmonies. The late, great Wangari Maathai, Nobel Prize Laureate from neighboring Kenya, wrote, “Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking so that humanity stops threatening its life support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process to heal our own — indeed to embrace the whole of creation.”

This compassionate embrace is an agency for harmony with all life. Love, too, is an agency for this harmony. Saint Paul writes in the Christian New Testament: “Above all, clothe yourselves



with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Colossians, Chapter 3, Verse 14).

We can find harmony among differences, because within all life there dwells a unity beyond difference. So this is our work – this week and beyond – to build harmony using all great religious, faith, and spiritual traditions. But we need to go even beyond harmony to search for the unity, the Earth unity if I may call it that, that is the divine order.

And in this way, transform our world toward a just, humane, peaceful, sustainable one for all living things. And I might call that a unity Earth. And if I may be allowed, I would like to thank the organization “Unity Earth” for bringing the U Day Festival to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Āmeseginalehu! Thank you...

(Continue below for more speeches)

## **REV. DEBORAH MOLDOW**

Founder, Garden of Light

Core Team, Unity Earth

Your Excellencies, sisters and brothers in the spirit:

We come from many faith traditions and many countries of the world to be with you at the African Union in commemoration of World Interfaith Harmony Week, to share our light with you.

I want to invite all of those invited to Ethiopia by Unity Earth to come forward so that you can see all of us in our great diversity. We are a living embodiment of World Interfaith Harmony Week.

We have brought with us the light of three flames, representing universal values essential to the future of humanity and the implementation of the Golden Rule: compassion, peace and unity. We lit the Torches of Compassion and Peace together with the Lamp of Unity at the sacred UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lalibela two nights ago in a Convergence of Fire ceremony, in deep acknowledgement of Ethiopia as the “Land of Origins.”

- The Torch of Compassion was raised by Hereditary Chief Phil Lane, Jr. of Canada. This torch is being passed symbolically throughout the world during World Interfaith Harmony Week.
- The Torch of Peace, borne by American songstress Kristin Hoffmann, circled the globe to 45 countries in 1986 during the First Earth Run, endorsed by UNICEF.
- The Lamp of Unity was brought from Thailand by Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, a senior Buddhist Monk from Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Unity Earth brings these torches to the African Union today to honor the rich history of Africa and the important role of the African Union in creating a future of compassion, peace and unity. We trust that this Convergence of Fire into a Global Flame of One Love will kindle the Divine spark in the hearts of all delegates today as a light that will shine forth from your hearts through the nations of Africa to all the world.

And we have one more brief presentation to offer. I would like to ask my dear friend and brother, Amb. Mussie Hailu to come forward, along with Ben Bowler of Unity Earth. We would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation you by presenting you with this award as a UNITY EARTH CHAMPION, KEEPER OF TH FLAME. We present this to Ambassador Mussie Hailu, Keeper of the Flame, we honor you!

Thank you very much.  
May Peace Prevail on Earth

(End)