

# Asia Pacific Union

## A Concept Brief

The proposed Asia Pacific Union (APU) will be a broad-based, independent, non-political body that draws together like-minded individuals and organizations (government, NGO and FBO) from among the community of Asia Pacific nations. It will address common challenges and concerns, not unique to this region, such as: corruption, terrorism, clashing civilizations, poverty, illiteracy, moral decline of families, environmental exploitation, climate change, etc. However, unique to the Asia Pacific region, the APU will draw on the region's common cultural values—filial piety, family and faith—to seek answers to the critical challenges we all face together.

The cooperation between government and civil society is indispensable for creating social harmony and economic sustainability. Each body plays a different, yet, vitally important role. Governments govern. They have administrative and financial management responsibilities. They have the power to act through their executive, legislative and judicial branches. Surprising to many, governments also have responsibility to protect and defend the institution of the family. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16.3, calls the family “the natural and fundamental group unit of society” and says that it is “entitled to protection by society and the State.” But how can a State or government do that?

This is where cooperation between government and civil society is essential. Civil society, especially organizations of faith, have the responsibility to give the moral and ethical standards which are foundational to, and deeply impact, human relationships. It is, for example, the job of civil societies to provide character education for youth, promote marriage and strengthen families. The key is that these initiatives must be interreligious in nature. Governments cannot and should not favor one faith tradition over another.

Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon is proposing the establishment of the APU. As co-founder of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), she is asking UPF to support and promote this initiative. UPF has general consultative status with the United Nations and a global network of peace advocates. The unquestioned need for an interreligious approach to address critical challenges of our times, plays to one of UPF's unique strengths. In fact, the co-founder of UPF, the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, advocated for a bicameral system at the United Nations, with the second wing of the UN body made up of representatives from the world's great spiritual traditions. The Philippines took the lead in bringing this proposal to the UN and raised the issue three times at the General Assembly.

As the APU develops and takes on a formal structure (which it will during the World Summit in Seoul, Korea in 2020) it can be a venue to share best practices, encourage economic growth, promote tourism, and impart to nations and regions a renewed hope for a unified world of peace. It will work in collaboration with already existing inter-governmental organizations, UN agencies and civil society. The APU can be a think tank for innovative concepts that help reshape the world priorities, grounded in the traditions of the Asian value system. A union of Asia Pacific nations, the APU, can help prepare this region to lead the 21<sup>st</sup> century.