



The United Nations' University for Peace Partners with Zoryan Institute in Major International Conference

A major, international High Level Expert's Forum, titled "Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora," is taking place in Toronto on October 19 and 20, 2006, sponsored by the University for Peace, a United Nations-mandated agency, in partnership with the Zoryan Institute. The Forum will assemble over 70 international experts and leaders to reflect on the potential of diasporas to support, engage in and mobilize towards peace-building and development.

The keynote speaker at the opening plenary session will be H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President, UN General Assembly 61st Session. The Foreign Minister for Armenia, H.E. Vartan Oskanian, will speak at the Second Plenary Session. The opening speeches will be followed by five concurrent workshops, which will examine in depth the roles played and strategies used by various diasporan groups to strengthen peace-building and promote development in their countries of origin. The case studies focus on Afghanistan, Armenia, China, Colombia, and Ethiopia. The participants in the Armenian workshop will include Prof. Khachig Tölölyan of Wesleyan University, who is the editor of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* co-published by the Zoryan Institute, and Dr. Razmik Panossian, who is Director of Policy, Programs and Planning at Rights and Democracy in Montreal. Also participating in the conference will be senior representatives of the Canadian government, policy-makers, representatives of NGO's and scholars.

As communities worldwide have begun to focus more systematically on how to harness diversity as an asset rather than a liability, there has been increased interest from many quarters in tapping the creativity, energy and resources of diasporas to build peace and promote development.

"Not only is there a growing recognition of Diasporas as effective agents of peace and development in their home countries, but also a nuanced understanding of Diaspora is increasingly being recognized as fundamental to comprehending the multicultural fabric of Canada, the United States and other host countries," stated Torrey Swan, the Zoryan Institute's Project Manger for the conference, "as today there are over 190 million migrants worldwide."

The Chair of the conference, Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, who is Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the UN on Africa and Vice-President of the Council of the University, has stated, "The role of diasporas in peace-building, good governance, and economic development processes is an issue that I regard as significant, timely, and warranting more global attention. We are delighted to be convening this expert forum in Canada, which has played a pivotal role historically in fostering open debate on critical issues of international peace and development."



“We are very pleased to be working with the University for Peace in the realization of this conference,” stated K.M. (Greg) Sarkissian, President of the Zoryan Institute. For twenty-five years we have operated with the conviction that the potential of the Armenian Diaspora would be greatly enhanced through comparative study and dialogue with other diasporas. This high level expert’s forum is an excellent opportunity for Zoryan to continue to expand its reach beyond academia and share information and knowledge with many other experts and policy-makers.”

The Zoryan Institute, parent organization of the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, and co-publisher of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies and Genocide Studies* and *Prevention: An International Journal*. It is the first non-profit, international center devoted to the research and documentation of contemporary issues with a focus on Armenian social, political and cultural life, but with the concern for the human rights of all.