

Report
for the World Council for Psychotherapy

***66th United Nations DPI/NGO
Conference***

The Republic of Korea, City of Gyeongju

***Representative for WCP:
Professor Stephen F. Myler***

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Introduction to the UN DPI/NGO Conference

The UN DPI/NGO conference occurs (generally) yearly in the summer as a gathering of NGO representatives from around the world, with other stakeholders, focusing on a topic of major global importance. Past conferences have taken place in New York UN headquarters, as well as in Mexico City on disarmament, in Paris on Human Rights, and in Melbourne on Health. See:
<http://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/conference/>

This year's conference focused on Sustainable Development Goal #4 on Education. The topic and main purpose was to promote and discuss "Global Citizenship through Education," in order to encourage a mind-set of peaceful cognitive approach to world conflict and economic stability.

To this end, speakers in workshops and presentations discussed the importance and challenges, of encouraging governments and societies to pay more attention to the social education of youth, rather than on meritocracy that has dominated an examination-driven curriculum with political overtones to measure and improve formal subjects over life skills.

This inclusion of citizenship is meant to provide a more rounded education, and to encourage tolerance and inclusiveness in a more secure world. This underlies the UN's focus on sustainable development for developing countries and inequalities suffered amongst many peoples from harsh and often dangerous life experiences.

The UN also encourages the use of the word "rights" as a prerequisite to all development issues, in the sense that governments must recognize that their future lies with the youth of today, must encourage better life skills training in schools, and must recognize global issues with a resolution that laws, policy and minds can be changed to bring about a more equitable state of a child's education.

The UN Under Secretary-General of DPI Ms. Cristina Gallach introduced the agenda and speakers, and led the initial opening/closing sessions. The conference was opened by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who greeted and thanked the guests, organizers and dignitaries and set the scene for the agenda and program. This was followed by various speakers who addressed the theme of the conference. Five roundtables were held for the whole conference's participation, with a variety of workshops that attendees could choose from, according to their interests and affiliations. In addition, an exhibition hall was set up for delegates to wander around at their pleasure to see efforts of various NGO and third party organizations, such as universities and publishers.

Interaction was encouraged from the floor, although this was often time-managed and most comments did not ask questions but made statements supporting their own agendas, organizations and views. These were not always constructive, with the result that the audience at this point shifted away to other areas such as the exhibition hall.

Purpose of WCP attendance

As an NGO accredited at the UN Economic and Social Council, the World Council for Psychotherapy was invited to attend the conference. The WCP UN main representative Dr. Judy Kuriansky and Co-Secretary-General Darlyne Nemeth appointed Dr Stephen F. Myler, noted psychologist from Shanghai, P.R. China, to represent WCP, as the original team unfortunately had commitments that prevented their travelling at the time of the conference. Dr. Kuriansky has represented WCP at all the prior DPI/NGO conferences; however, this year's teaching schedule at Columbia University Teachers College made her being able to get to Korea and back in time not possible; thus, she sent a videotaped presentation for the panel she was on, entitled "Educating Global Citizens about Mental Health, Well-Being, Empowerment, and Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development for All at All Ages." This panel was co-developed and moderated by a UN representative from the American Psychological Association (Dr. Juneau Gary), for which Dr. Kuriansky arranged for WCP to co-sponsor along with other psychology-related NGO members of the Psychology Coalition of NGOs accredited at the UN. UN interns also pre-taped a message about lessons learned from advocating at the UN about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under Dr. Kuriansky's supervision, during the two years of inter-governmental negotiations.

Dr Myler was formally requested to observe, listen, and network with other participants, and write a report to the WCP of his experience and useful insights.

As the arrangements were made in haste, there was no time for comprehensive pre-conference organization for further promoting the role of WCP in the conference and influencing. This was a slight missed opportunity in the fact we could not take flyers and mission statements, or arrange a stall in the exhibition hall. It is recommended that in the future we have a conference kit organized and distributed ahead of time to suit the theme and purpose of the WCP attendance and participation.

It is suggested that such preparation include name cards, flyers, posters, postcards (with the WCP mission statement), and display stands for impact. While there are costs involved, such funding should be included in the Executive Committee planning. Costs can be minimized through creative planning, e.g., donations of materials or printing in a developing country, thereby also helping the local economy and at the same time as allowing for economical production costs of materials.

The particular program for the UN at this conference can appear to have a limited scope for the promotion of psychotherapy and good mental health per se; however, psychology and psychotherapy, and mental health and well-being, are increasingly being recognized at the UN, and advocacy efforts have promoted these as being a cross-cutting issue (certainly for the SDG of education). This advocacy (including mental health and well-being in the UN global Agenda 2030 had been successfully accomplished in a campaign led by WCP's main UN representative, Dr. Judy

Kuriansky, in partnership with a UN Ambassador, Dr. Caleb Otto of the mission of Palau to the UN and supported by many countries. Thus, every opportunity was taken to talk about the contribution that counseling and insight therapies could be integrated into a global citizenship curriculum for the purpose of self-management and good cognitive functioning.

Outline of attendance to UN program and workshops

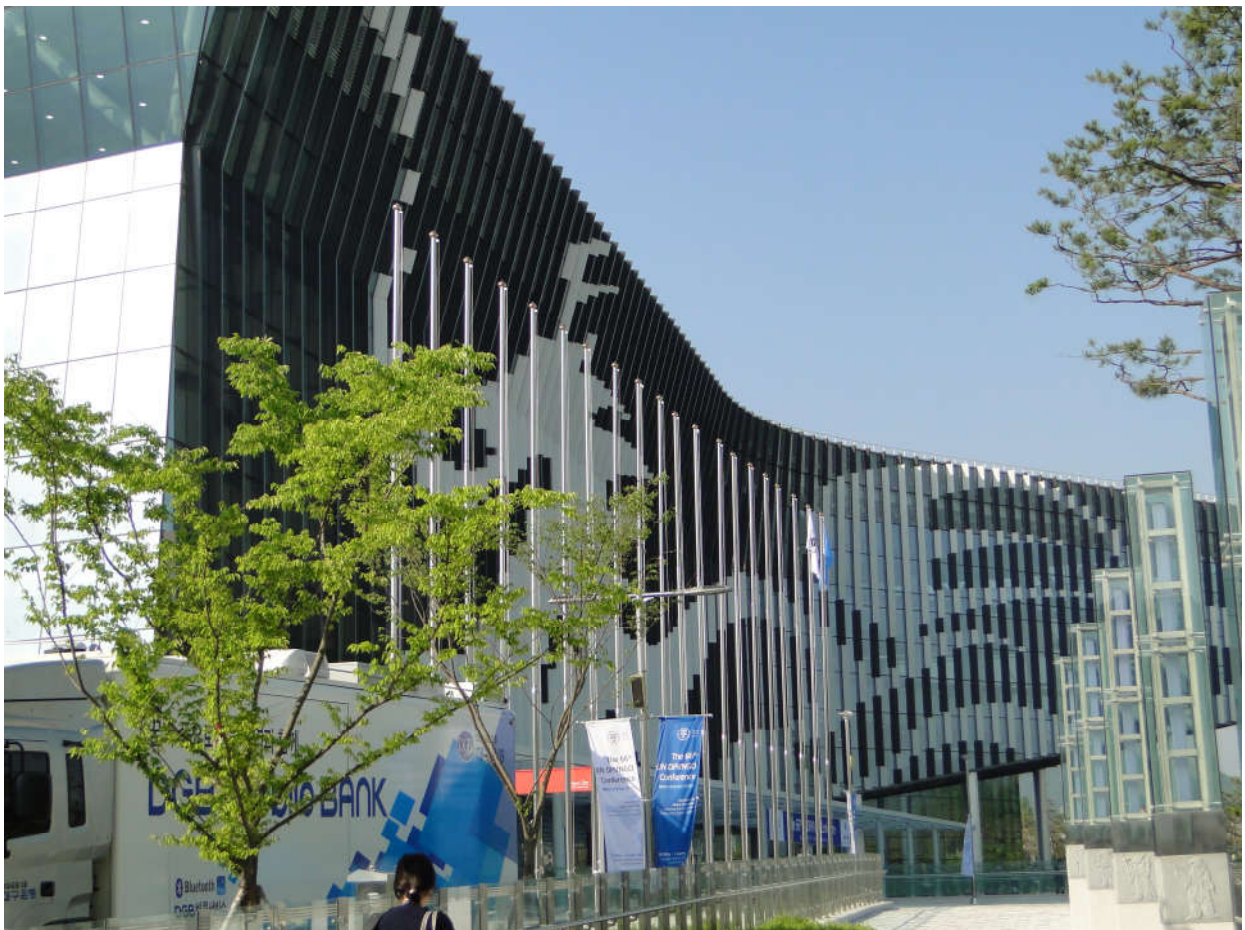
Apart from attending the opening session and roundtables, there were individual workshops. The decision to attend these was based on interest to WCP and its goals. Because of travel arrangements, I was unable to attend the American Psychological Association workshop noted above for which WCP was a co-sponsor, but however arranged the presentation slides to be sent on via email to the WCP representative.

The following parts of the program were attended.

1. Opening Session – as already noted, this consisted mainly of the dignitaries and scene- setting for the conference to follow.
2. Roundtable 1 – “The Right to Accessible, Safe and Inclusive Learning Spaces”. This session mainly covered a presentation concentrating on the more violent aspects of education, such as bullying, aggressions, gender-based violence and lack of facilities in classrooms. The main thrust was to influence national learning plans to include a more informal approach to learning such as coaching life skills, social mobility, public awareness and a review of existing problems in many countries.
3. Exhibition Hall – visiting many stands, and networking with organizations, to promote WCP’s interest in the mental health aspects of their work. This was achieved verbally, as there were not materials about WCP to distribute. Before attending the conference, a generic card in plastic was produced with main contact details for Dr. Myler in Shanghai – to allow any further interest to be relayed to WCP. There were 45 exhibitors; a full list is attached in the appendices.
4. Workshop 103 – “Foundation of UN NGO Centre for a Global Civil Society”. This workshop covered the UN school in Korea for training future global citizenship via social studies certification. Many projects from the students were discussed, and their involvement in third world support. It might be useful for WCP to produce some simple education support in this area, particularly helping with mental health support in areas of PTSD and trauma.
5. Roundtable 3 – “Children and Youth – Tomorrow's Global Citizens Today”. This was aimed at getting 12 years of free education worldwide for all children, that would be publicly funded by governments, and quality assurance can be put in place. Disparity of government funding on education was compared with military spending that takes priority over social needs.
6. Workshop 106 – “Globally Shared Educational Development”. This workshop concentrated on virtual connections with international and local schools for

better understanding of other cultures through student participation in virtual reality and conference video calls. Many examples were given with live connections to schools in the US, Africa and other nations. The future of psychotherapy has to accept the concept of a virtual world and many practitioners are now regularly treating clients and patients via conference video calls and the Internet. WCP may need to consider policy in the future regarding how it will promote and regulate such a explosion in communication technology for a more connected world.

7. Workshop 106 – “Effective Use of Non-Formal Education Tools”. This workshop promoted the idea of a less formal education that relies on exam-taking and a look at the role of Peace Studies as part of every school’s effort for global citizenship. This was the one workshop that the WCP representation was voiced in the promotion of deep-rooted cultural and developmental attitudes that pervade education and the family environment. Specifically, Dr. Myler voiced his opinion that (1) peace studies were not possible until nations gave up their obsession with the past for blaming all their present woes; (2) if nations cannot be taught to forgive past histories, reconcile to the fact that the horrors of the past are learning lessons and not points of continuing hatred and government propaganda; and (3) lessons in psychotherapy can be learned that letting the past control the present only leads to conflict and mistrust. The comments were warmly welcomed and after the session Dr. Myler was approached by many delegates agreeing with the sentiments expressed.



Networking

Business cards and promotional materials were collected over the course of the conference and follow-up emails will in due course be sent, thanking the contacts for listening to the WCP mission and expressing availability for consultation on matters of mental health and psychotherapy.

As there were very many people attending, it is not possible in this short report to include all the interesting exhibits and promotional organizations that were met.

Summary

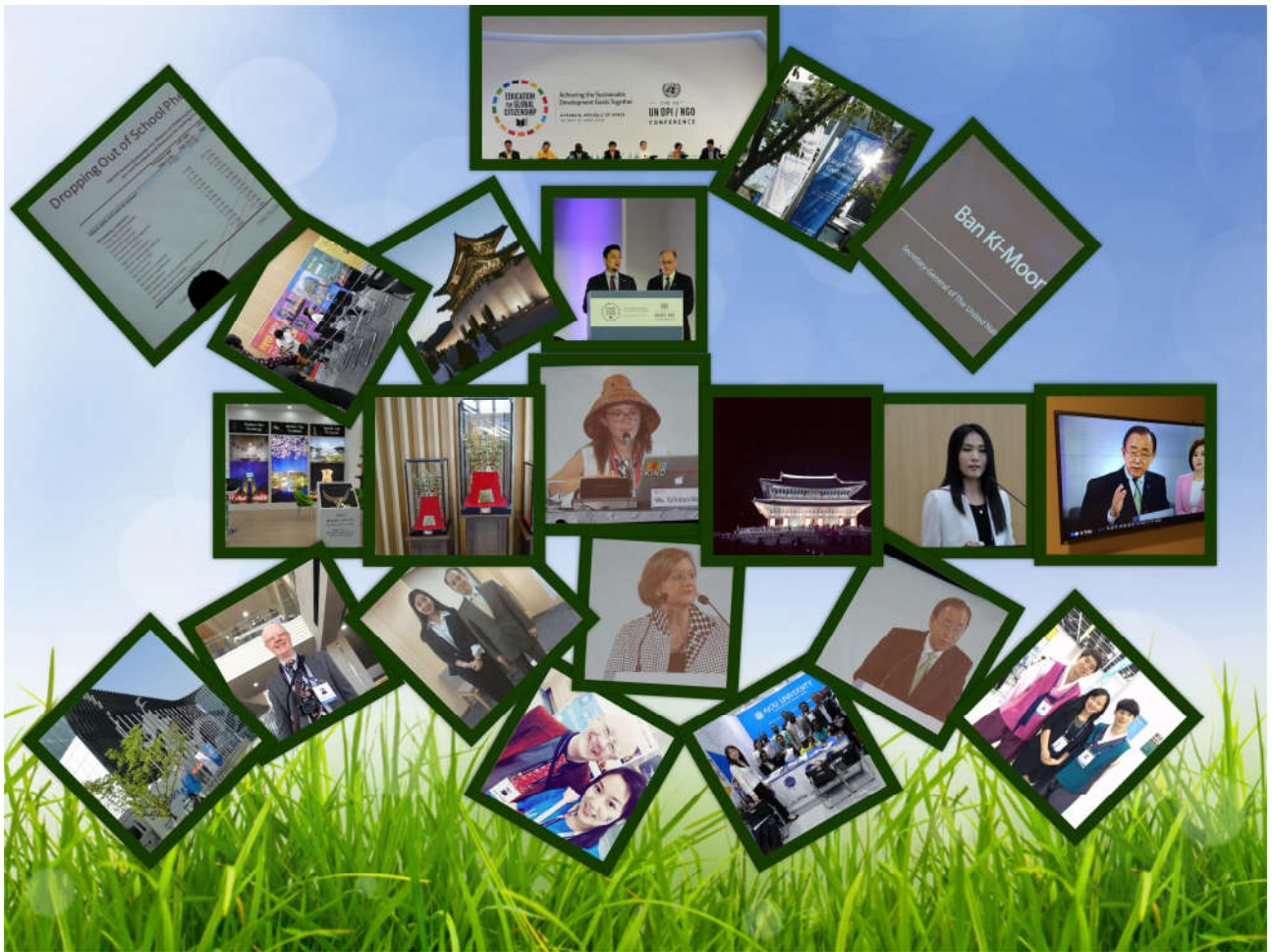
In summary, the conference concentrated on Global Citizenship through learning and education. While not directly concerned with WCP goals, opportunities to network with civil society leaders and organizations, and to join discussions about the global agenda and national projects, were plentiful. At every opportunity, Dr. Myler promoted the idea that WCP and mental health issues were of very real concern to any learning material for citizenship of tomorrow's generation as well as a major concern to governments dealing with PTSD and trauma through conflict and poor development.

Future Arrangements

It is hoped that many WCP members will attend such conferences. In addition, when WCP attends other conferences, it is recommended that we are better prepared with promotional materials. Apparently, WCP representatives have valuably participated in many conferences in the past, and collaborated with the psychology community at the UN. It is valuable to elaborate on this foundation and progress. We can continue to co-sponsor panels and workshops, and even take the lead on workshops at conferences to specifically target, for enlightenment of the general network, that we have a role to play in international affairs.

Appendices

The following pages include copies, photos and proceedings that may help to give a more visual clue to the conference.



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