

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam invited to the United Nations

Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, USA was invited to represent Hinduism at the United Nations in New York on March 12, 2020 to honor Rabbi Arthur Schneier on the occasion of his 90th birthday celebration.



From left to right are Archbishop Elpidophoros, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Rabbi Arthur Schneier, President and Founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation; United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres; High Representative Miguel Ángel Moratinos, of the UNAOC; Sheikh Musa Drammeh; Swami Jnanananda of Arsha Vidya Gurukulam; and Irinej Dabrijevic, Bishop of Eastern America The Serbian Orthodox Church. (Photo/Bawa Jain, March 12, 2020)

Swami Jnanananda attended this function representing the gurukulam. Rabbi Schneier, is an eminent member of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC). He spent almost his whole life working for reli-

religious freedom and human rights. He is a holocaust survivor.

In his speech he mentioned that he made a promise to God while in the concentration camp that if God would let him live, he would spend his whole life for the cause of religious freedom and human rights; which he did.

Pujya Swami Dayanandaji and Shri Bawa Jain worked together with Rabbi Arthur Schneier and other delegates who were present in the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, held in New York in August 2000 to prepare a Declaration at the end of the summit. They also worked together again in preparing a Charter at the World Council of Religious Leaders meeting in Bangkok in 2002. Pujya Swamiji convinced the religious leaders to remove the words "being tolerant to other religions" and replace them with "mutual understanding and respect". The final Declaration of the Millennium World Peace Summit which was presented to Secretary-General Kofi Annan had these wordings.

"Whereas there can be no real peace until all groups and communities acknowledge the cultural and religious diversity of the human family in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding."

The Article 5.1 (d) of Charter which was the outcome of the Bangkok meeting mentions:

"Work for the active promotion of mutual respect and the preservation of religious diversity."

Rabbi Schneier was so convinced by Pujya Swamiji's suggestion that in his address to the "High-Level Thematic Debate of the UN General Assembly Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation" in New York on April 22, 2015 he stated these words:

"I would, however, offer a comment. The word "tolerance" is really a misnomer. "I tolerate you" puts me in a superior position. I keep up with you. I tolerate you. You're a second-class citizen. You are not equal to me, so I would respectfully propose that instead of using the word "tolerance", we speak in terms mutual acceptance, mutual understanding."

In our recent March 12th gathering, Secretary-General of the United Nations

H.E. Antonio Guterres in his address paid tribute to Rabbi Schneier for his six decades of leadership on behalf of religious freedom, human rights and peaceful co-existence. The session concluded with prayers from the prominent religious leaders led by H.E. Archbishop Elpidophoros of America (the Greek Orthodox Church). Swami Jnanananda prayed for Rabbi Schneier with Pujya Swami Dayanandaji's blessings and Vedic prayers.



Summit Secretary-General Bawa Jain, accompanied by Pujya Swamiji and other leaders from the Summit, presents its Declaration to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (August 29, 2000) (UN photo/Eskinder Debebe

Report by **Swami Jnanananda Saraswati**

Jnanananda108@gmail.com

"I may have all the six ingredients (effort, initiative, courage, intelligence, resourcefulness and perseverance) for success but still there may be something that makes the difference between success and failure. By my prayer, I invoke daivam, the seventh factor, to take care of the unknown element".

- Swami Dayananda Saraswati