

Visions of Peace Initiative Celebrates International Children's Day

UNITED STATES, December 6, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Visions of Peace Initiative (VOPI), the Indonesian NGO that focuses on promoting the lessons of tolerance and civility to youth ages 5 to 18, inaugurated its 6th anniversary year in November. The VOPI commenced its new year of engagement with Indonesia's youth in recognition of the United Nations International Children's Day. Events were held in West Java that included several thousand students from a number of schools and across the age spectrum.

Princess Cheryl Halpern, the international co-founder of the VOPI flew from New York City to Jakarta for these events and noted, "We are living in a time when so much of the world is immersed in violence, discrimination, intolerance, corruption and abuse. On November 20th, which happens to be my birthday, the United Nations annually recognizes International Children's Day. International Children's Day was meant to be regarded as a day to celebrate the gains made in the quality of children's lives since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child in 1989. This year, however, the International Children's Day was a somber acknowledgement that approximately 20% of the world's children are living in armed conflict zones including in the



Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, India, Haiti, Sudan, Mali, Ethiopia, Columbia, Somalia, Gaza, Israel, Iran, Nigeria, and the Republic of the Congo, to name but a few. The children living in these violent areas are not only victims, but many are being trained to become the perpetrators of heinous crimes against others.”

At the West Java commencement events, Princess Cheryl, together with her VOPI co-founders, HRH Dr. Damien Dematra and Princess Natasha Dematra, reflected on how Indonesia provides a unique foundation from which to promote tolerance, peace and respect for humanity for all of its citizens and for the world. Regardless of the different forms of government that have existed, Indonesia has a national motto that has endured throughout and dates back to the 14th century. “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” is a motto that proclaims unity with respect for diversity. The implementation of this national vision of multi ethnic, multi cultural coexistence is a goal that requires a constant commitment by every Indonesian regardless of age, ethnicity or personal circumstances. This is a challenge that is not easy to achieve and cannot be taken for granted especially here in Indonesia where there are so many ethnic populations with diverse religious affiliations, diverse languages, diverse social and cultural orientations, and diverse socio-economic platforms. Indonesia’s youth, the “pemuda,” are the vanguard for the future and for continuing the commitment to this national vision of “unity in diversity”.

Princess Cheryl remarked that, “Tolerance, the willingness to accept behavior and beliefs that are different from your own is essential in order to achieve civility and respect for diversity. Unfortunately, tolerance is not included in the human genome. Tolerance must be taught to our children. It must be learned. We need to provide the education and support to enable our children to reject the intolerance, disunity and extremism to which they are exposed. This is the mission of the Visions of Peace Initiative of which I am proud to be one of the founders.”

Since its founding, the Visions of Peace Initiative has been committed to motivating young Indonesians to use their artistic talents to spread ideas and share perspectives on tolerance, peace and respect for humanity. Schools, orphanages and religious organizations, representing all denominations, have participated in the Visions of Peace Initiative programs. By encouraging the youth to express their visions for peaceful coexistence through the arts, the VOPI has helped identify areas of alienation and distrust between the young and has nurtured an attitude of greater openness and candor from the participants. Through the VOPI programs they have learned to embrace the universal value of interfaith and social civility known as the Golden Rule , “Do unto others as you would want done to you.” Recognition for the success of the VOPI has been forthcoming through the multiple nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize that have been made.

Additional international appreciation for the VOPI programs was received earlier this year during the Women’s Power Breakfast held on the opening day of the 78th General Assembly at the United Nations. The “Art of Peace” volume published by the VOPI highlighting the art created by the Indonesian youth was showcased at this milestone event. This VOPI presentation has resulted in interest regarding the potential adaptation of the VOPI programs for youth living in

other nations.

In reflecting on her personal involvement, Princess Cheryl commented,

"During each of my visits to Indonesia, I look forward to acknowledging the art, the stories, the poetry, the films, the music, and the dances that the young people have created. It has been a humbling experience to have engaged for more than five years with the Indonesian youth through the VOPI and to have achieved international appreciation for their efforts. As we begin the 6th anniversary year of the Visions of Peace Initiative I hope that we will continue working together and expand our outreach in order to promote the Golden Rule and make the vision of a more peaceful tomorrow a reality. "

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