

Tutu, Moon vet call for peace at conference

I Wayan Juniarta, The Jakarta Post//Ubud

A Nobel Peace Prize winner and a former astronaut were among prominent activists and religious leaders from around the world who met to call for global tolerance, universal spirituality and a new world order, in the Balinese town of Ubud this week.

Around 400 social workers and peace activists, scholars and religious leaders from 25 countries gathered in what participants said could be the one of the most defining conferences ever held on the island.

Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his nonviolent struggle against South Africa's apartheid regime, and astronaut Edgar Mitchell, the sixth man to set foot on the Moon, were prominent speakers.

Others included former director of Amnesty International's Washington office James O'Dea, the director of the Center for Global Peace, Abdul Aziz Said, and outspoken social activist and leading Balinese psychiatrist LK Suryani.

The Quest for Global Healing, a five-day gathering, was organized by California-based Jaffe Enterprises and the Cross-Cultural Journeys Foundation.

The conference was held in the spacious, beautiful compound of the Agung Rai Museum of Art from Saturday to Wednesday this week. In conjunction with the conference, a solo exhibition of one of Bali's leading painters, I Made Sumadiyasa, *One World, One Heart*, opened at the same venue.

"We are concerned that the world is now moving in the wrong direction, that man is increasingly out of balance and at war with the natural world and each other," conference co-organizer Wilford Welch said.

Bali was selected as the venue of the gathering because, as Welch pointed out, the island and its people had devoted a lot of time and energy to be in balance with nature, fellow human beings and with God.

Moreover, as Tutu acknowledged, the Balinese experienced a terrible shock two years ago when terrorists detonated powerful bombs at two packed nightclubs in the island's popular Kuta resort area.

At least 202 people were killed, mostly tourists, in the attack. It also caused the island's economy to slump, putting thousands out of work.

However, as Tutu noted, the Balinese had managed to respond to the tragedy in peaceful, spiritual ways instead of resorting to violence and militancy.

"Bali is (therefore) the best place to hold a conference on how to heal the world," he said.

The conference organizers generously provided 150 scholarships to enable Balinese people from various walks of life to participate.

The scholarships gave them with an opportunity to share the traditional values and wisdom of the island, which has long been known for its religious tolerance and peaceful way of life.

Speakers noted that the U.S.-sponsored global war on terror had increasingly polarized the world into two potentially opposing camps -- the predominantly Muslim developing nations and the predominantly Christian developed ones -- and relations between religions was an important issue discussed during the conference.

"We use whatever reason to separate one human being from another. We use race, we demonize each other. We use religion in the same way.

"Religion is like a knife. You can use one to cut bread or you can stab someone. It can make us either good or awful people. It is what we do with religion that is important, not what religion is in itself," Tutu said in response to a question on whether organized religion was part of the problem or the solution.

On the war on terror, Tutu stated that unless a shift in attitude took place from one of violence to one of peace, it would be impossible for the world to win that war.

"We are not going to win the war against terror as long as there are conditions in various parts of the world that make people desperate. If someone is hungry or people live in poverty, they will get to the point where they will get desperate," he said.

"Desperate people do desperate things," he said.

In order to win the war, people should deal with the root causes of terrorism. Social injustice, poverty and religious ignorance were some of those causes, he said.

During the conference gala evening, Dr. AAM Djelantik from Bali was awarded the first Global Healing Award for his lifetime of service. Born into the powerful Karangasem royal family, Djelantik pursued a career as a medical doctor.

He served as a United Nations tropical diseases specialist, spending many long years in isolated parts of Africa and Asia. Upon his retirement, Djelantik returned to Bali and became a respected figure in the island's art and education circles. He was a founder of the Udayana University School of Medicine, and the Institute of Fine Arts in Denpasar.