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Nobel Prize Nominee Launches World Upshift Forum in London

Inspired by the work of the Hungarian philosopher and systems theorist Ervin Laszlo, twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, an international group of NGOs, thought leaders, and campaign groups has come together in London to create the World Upshift Forum.

The Forum is part of the World Upshift Movement, a global network of people, partner organisations and projects working for change from the heart.

Plans for the Forum include a one week annual event in Lerici, Italy, known as the Gulf of Poets, the small coastal resort in Liguria made famous by the English Romantic poets Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley (who died there in a drowning accident).

By creating an international “feel, think and do tank” modelled on the World Economic Forum in Davos, the group aims to accelerate an upshift in public awareness about the challenges posed by conflict, democratic backsliding, migration, and climate change.

“We have a choice,” argues Ervin Laszlo: “Do we want to be the last generation on earth, or the first in a new generation which embraces more sustainable ways of living?”

The planned Forum will feature symposiums and citizens assemblies on issues such as peace-building, social inclusion and climate change, artificial intelligence and the future of work, big data and global consciousness, participation and democratic renewal.

The initiative has drawn support from a range of thought leaders and opinion formers, including Dr Justina Mutale, a former African Woman of the Year, who heads her own leadership foundation to empower women and girls and bridge the gender gap.

Speaking at a launch event for the Forum at the House of Lords, Justina Mutale said: “Peace-building starts with the heart, with an awareness of our common humanity. The world needs such an upshift. There are things we can all do in our daily lives to bring this about.”

As well as fostering dialogue and debate, the World Upshift Forum will encourage participants to develop self-awareness through meditation, mindfulness and other techniques.

The Forum is partnering with UNIFY, a US-based NGO that organises mass global meditations. Tammy Scarlett, CEO said: “Upshift is a powerful idea and needed - we look forward to working on joint initiatives such as Earth Day and the International Day of Peace.”

Climate activist Jarvis Smith, who convenes the World Upshift Forum's advisory council, believes "The initiative will resonate with all who are looking not just for a deeper purpose in life but also for innovative and practical ways to address the world's problems."

The Forum will also act as an incubator for collaborative social impact projects such as Retake. The project works with teams of young people who organise clean up actions in local neighbourhoods in Italy which suffer from social and environmental degradation.

Sveva Milano and Alejandra Alfaro Alfieri, activists with Retake Roma, travelled to London for the launch of the World Upshift Forum to share their experiences and show their support.

"People don't just thank us for the work we do to improve their neighbourhood - they look after the public spaces after we leave. That change in awareness, when people realise they can be part of the solution to the crises and challenges we face is what Upshift is all about."

The World Upshift Movement includes figures such as the New York Times best-selling author Deepak Chopra and Tao Grandmaster Dr Sha who is based in Toronto.

A calligraphic work of art created by Master Sha was unveiled at the House of Lords in London. The work characterises the values of the World Upshift initiative, serving to unite the movement and encourage people to come together to change the world from the heart.

The initiative is led by the award-winning civil rights campaigner and former Labour MP, Roger Casale and chaired by Maria Antinori, a special educational needs teacher based in Rome.

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