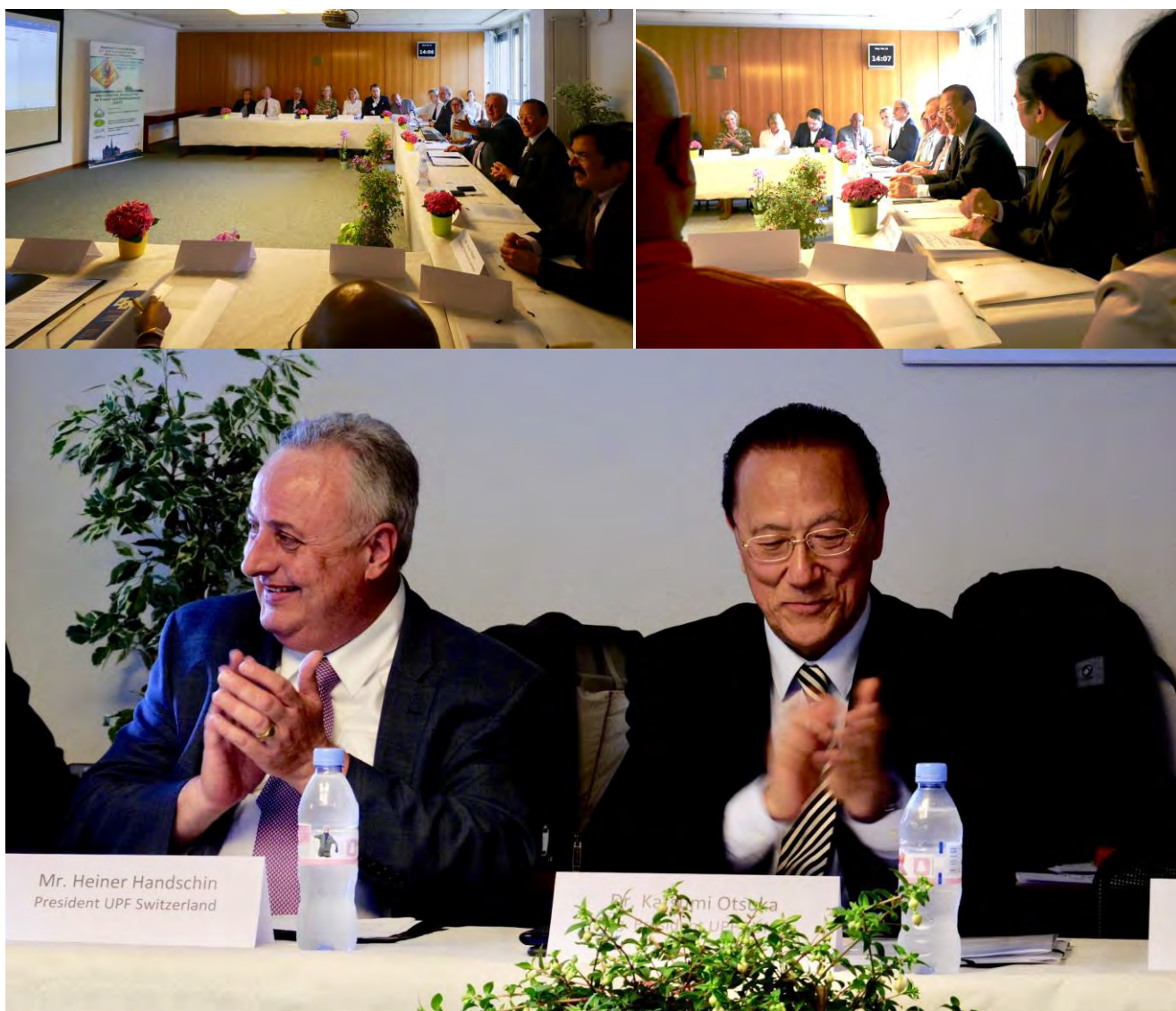


Special Consultation on the Creation of a Chapter of the “Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD)” in Geneva – Switzerland

World Council of Churches May 31, 2018 Geneva, Switzerland

On May 31, 2018 a half day special consultation on the creation of a chapter of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) was held at the World Council of Churches offices in Geneva Switzerland. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the background and reasons for the creation of such an organization and to what extent a future launch of this project in Geneva was of particular interest. The gathering brought together around 40 personalities, from Geneva and abroad, experts and representatives of various organizations, different faiths, academia and even politics.



Mr. Heiner Handschin, Director UPF Office for UN relations, started the meeting with a general welcome and presentation of the Regional Chair of UPF, **Dr. Kazumi Otsuka**, who welcomed the participants indicating the need for such a consultation in order to start this important initiative inspired by Dr. Hak Ja Han – Moon, wife of the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and co-founder of UPF and affiliated organizations. After a few comments and reflections on the significance of Geneva as a city of a great interaction between the religious and political spheres, the first session and panel started.

Ms. Chantal Chételat Komagata, Secretary General of UPF Switzerland introduced the title and topic of the panel: Beyond differences of Ideology, Religion and Politics – IAPD a timely initiative dealing with the Challenges of an increasingly interdependent world. She mentioned the fact that all our societies become increasingly multi-cultural and that increased challenges become evident. The panel featured leaders of international organizations, religion and civil society who shared their thoughts and experiences in surmounting the obstacles along the way.



The first speaker, **Dr. Elmar Kuhn**, Dean of World Religions at the European Academy of Arts and Sciences, came especially from Vienna for this consultation, after the successful inauguration of IAPD in Vienna, a month ago. Dr. Kuhn emphasized the need for an organization like the IAPD as a lighthouse providing the guiding light in the current dark and dysfunctional world. He also mentioned the need for a vision especially for the future generation who will have to deal with the fallout from the current problems. In a detailed presentation he made a call for action, in contrast to interreligious dialogue for the sake of dialogue. The time is right and there shouldn't be any further delay in addressing the fundamental issue of working together from all sectors for the realization of a peaceful world.





Mr. Jacques Marion, Vice-President of UPF Europe & Middle East started out referring to the latest inaugurations of IAPD in Seoul Korea, last year, as well as Vienna, a month ago where more than 250 key leaders attended, mentioning this timely initiative that UPF together with other partners was able to successfully introduce to large gatherings. He recognized the need for partnerships, greater cooperation beyond borders and fields of expertise -as a framework to create such a sustainable body that could foster world peace and human development. **Dr. Astrid Stuckelberger**, health expert, author and lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Geneva, remembered the various encounters with the late Dr. Sun Myung Moon at the time of his visits in Geneva from 2005 to 2011. She expressed her appreciation to UPF for its work for interreligious harmony and the protection of Human rights and dignity. Mentioning ongoing interfaith activities, she expressed her interest and support for the new initiative of IAPD. She stressed the need for a scientific approach to solve differences, creating patterns that can be applied in various parts of the world or situations.



The final speaker of the panel was **Maggid Kevin De-Carli** MA des, Assistant Rabbi of the Israelite Community of Baden.



In a very enlightening presentation he showed the “tragedy” of Interfaith Dialogue showing the until now, unreconcilable differences (unnecessary barriers) between various religions in understanding common and fundamental points like, the Divinity, the Human Image and basic life goals. He emphasized that IAPD could represent the holistic approach needed in order to bring religions, politics, academia and the private sector together for the realization of the common goal of world peace.

During the break of after the first session, some refreshments were served and discussions continued among the participants.



The 2nd session with the title, **Religious leaders and Politicians as peacemakers: The significance of Geneva as a Hub for Harmony, Development and Prosperity in the World.** Mr. Michel Reymond, Vice-President of UPF Switzerland led the panel and first suggested that all participants of the consultation introduce themselves and share briefly their interest in the theme. It was clear that all have deeply reflected and share deep concern for the vision.

He then gave the floor to the first speaker **Mr. Hafid Ouardiri**, President and Founder of the Fondation de l'Entre-Connaissance (Interknowing Foundation) and member of the Plateforme Interreligieuse de Genève. Mr. Ouardiri, gave a few examples of the local interfaith cooperation that he lived as spokesperson of the Islamic Center of Geneva, cooperating with the key person of the Protestant Cathedrale Rev. William McComish. Their shared concerns and activities brought them to a point of such understanding that they would be able to preach to each other's community on a regular base. He also testified to the ongoing cooperation with UPF and would like to be involved with a future IAPD, representing Islam.



As a 2nd speaker in the panel **Mrs. Carolyn Handschin**, International Vice President of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFP) and Director of WFP's offices for UN relations.



She suggested possible activities for a future IAPD in the Model UN Interreligious Youth Council project that has been organized and co-sponsored by the Geneva Interfaith Cultural Alliance in joint cooperation with UPF and WFP. Among the various critical themes that were addressed within this program, emphasis was put on areas where religion and politics share responsibility. Each "Council" session was a real-life demonstration of how an interfaith body could cooperate within the UN system to solve global problems acted out with brilliance by the young representatives of faiths.



In a concluding session, Dr. Michael Balcomb, Chairperson of FFWPU in Europe and the Middle East as well as Dr. Elmar Kuhn launched a general debate about IAPD and the potential action steps to be taken. Future projects and mission statements were emphasized, as well as the need for partnerships in order to create an Interreligious Association with its own dynamics. On a Geneva level, the suggestion was made that the people gathered in the audience be considered as a “Steering Committee” for the actual launch of IAPD on September 21, 2018, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace. The World Council of Churches was approved as a Venue and plans began to create a full day program with around 300 participants in the majestic large hall of the WCC building.

To close the event a group picture was taken and the meeting ended at 18h00. *(report by H. Handschin)*

