

UPF International Peace Summit 2023: Session VI-C: IAYSP

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Seoul, South Korea -- The International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) held a session at the Peace Summit 2023 with a focus on "Climate Crisis and Education." Hundreds of young members of IAYSP came from 48 countries to assist with the week-long activities. Opening remarks were given by **Mr. Koji Matsuda**, the international president of IAYSP. He reminded everyone that IAYSP was launched six years ago by Mother Moon to raise responsible young leaders who can become model leaders and go to the front lines and create peaceful communities, nations and the world. Since that time, IAYSP has gained consultative status with ECOSOC at the United Nations as a youth organization. Young members are carrying out activities across the world, cultivating a responsible heart toward the planet and humanity. He expressed deep gratitude for everyone's efforts.



Two former recipients of the Sunhak Peace Prize gave stirring keynote addresses to the assembly, one on the climate crisis and one on the necessity for equitable access to education for young people. Two other presentations were given by young leaders from Korea. The session concluded with eight panelists discussing the twin urgent topics of climate crisis and educational inequality.

Sunhak Peace Prize recipient **H.E. Anote Tong**, former president of Kiribati, spoke about his experience

as leader of that island country in Oceania where climate change is damaging the environment and threatening the future life on the island. The warming of the planet and other aspects of climate change will cause mass migration of peoples as their old ways of life will be unsustainable. He said the hard reality is that some people will lose everything and be forced to leave their homes for foreign lands and cultures. He called this mass migration the greatest moral challenge to humanity. It took him years to accept the reality that the necessary changes to our lifestyles -- such as cutting back on the use of fossil fuels -- would not be happening soon enough. He is now calling for the world to be prepared as everyone everywhere will be impacted. He half-jokingly suggested that universities offer a "Migration with Dignity" degree in order to study the best ways for adapting to the facts of mass migration. People should be able to move into their new countries and homes with dignity, not on the bottom, living in slums as outcast peoples. It will require conscious intention.



Mr. Hyeontae Kim, a member of the Seoul Metropolitan City Energy Policy Committee in Korea, related his story as a young environmentalist and founder of youth groups and other organizations to raise awareness of the urgent need for action in the face of the climate crisis. He told of his life-changing experience going to China and seeing first-hand a large desert area that once was a fertile grassland. He has participated in a three-party climate summit between Korea, Japan and China to search for practical policies that could improve the environmental health of the northeast Asia region.



The second Sunhak Peace Prize speaker was **Dr. Sakena Yacoobi** of Afghanistan, executive director of Afghan Institute of Learning. Her message was deeply personal and moving. Being a refugee herself at one point, she was able to gain an education and accepted as her life calling to bring education to those being denied. She understood that the first step in escaping refugee (or impoverished) status is education. This is a matter of justice since we are all creatures of the same God. But overcoming the barriers of

unequal access to education requires action, she told the group. She had to fight through many naysayers, skeptics and outright opposition to achieve the accomplishments for which she is recognized globally. Her work has resulted in the education of 15,000 young people beyond 6th grade. She fought for teachers to be paid a salary, not as volunteers. Her organization currently has over 2,000 paid teachers in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. With barriers to public education in Afghanistan, she quietly engineered over 80 home schools. Her work grew to include medical facilities.



Her message to the IAYSP group was to never give up. She applauded the work of the UPF foundation of Father and Mother Moon as one that goes beyond borders and divisions to create unity among people and believes in the power of education. "We must invest in our youth," she said, as they are the future leaders. Although she embraces technology, she said that many in the world are forgetting to teach the central importance of morality, compassion and the deep appreciation that we are one human family. We need to pass down human wisdom. We need to listen to the youth and teach critical thinking skills. We must show that there is but one God to whom we all pray. This is the main point of education.

After the keynote speakers, there was a lively panel discussion with the following panelists:

Hon. Silvia Nobre Waiapi, *Congresswoman, Brazil*

Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, *Executive Director, Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL); Sunhak Peace Prize Laureate (2017)*

Ms. Jung-eun Choi, *Mentors without Borders*

Ms. Mica Amanlaman Camara, *President, IAYSP-Africa*

Mr. Mounkaila Goumandakoye, *Senior Consultant and Expert of the CEN-SAD Regional Youth Programme*

H.E. Anote Tong, *President (2003-2016), Kiribati; Sunhak Peace Prize Laureate (2015)*

Mr. Hyeontae Kim, *Member of the Seoul Metropolitan City Energy Policy Committee, Korea*

To conclude the session there was a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between YSP-Korea and the SAKENA FUND. The Sakena Fund (formerly known as Creating Hope International) is the fiscal sponsor for the Afghan Institute of Learning and other NGOs.