

## Interreligious Association for Peace and Development launched in Lebanon

Hermine Schellen  
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Bhamdoun, Lebanon -- Nearly 30 religious leaders and clergy attended the national inauguration of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD).

The event was held at the Le Telegraphe Hôtel in Bhamdoun, a historic town near Beirut, on December 10, 2020. The participants -- Sunna, Shia, Maronite, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Coptic Church (Egypt and Syria), and Druze -- represented the main denominations of Lebanon.



After Muslim and Christian representatives offered an opening prayer, UPF-Lebanon President Thomas Schellen, as emcee, welcomed all the participants and gave a brief introduction to UPF activities.

Umberto Angelucci, the president of UPF for the Middle East, gave a powerful message about the purpose and goals of IAPD, a UPF association that was founded in 2017. He mentioned the UPF World Summit which was held in February 2020 in Seoul, South Korea, and the launch of IAPD.

Then the religious leaders were invited to give a short speech.



They were very eager to talk about their convictions and beliefs. At the same time, they agreed that collaboration and interreligious harmony are necessary for building a peaceful, prosperous nation. In other words, the IAPD vision and goals truly resonated with their own beliefs.

Marilyn Angelucci, the co-president of UPF for the Middle East, gave an inspiring presentation about the Sunhak Peace Prize. She encouraged the religious leaders to invest in a better future through peacebuilding and even to strive become a Sunhak Peace Prize recipient.

After the conference, several leaders expressed their appreciation for the conference and their willingness to collaborate with IAPD. One such testimony came from Sheikh Sayed Ali Youssef Qassem, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Mary in the Vatican and a teacher of Islamic studies who is responsible for the center of religious and cultural communication in Lebanon. He sent the following message: "I am blessed for your efforts in spreading thought and dialogue and to more brilliance, creativity and attendance. We are pleased to communicate with you constantly."

Our IAPD launch concluded with a beautiful prayer by Jong In Park, the national representative of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization that is affiliated with UPF.

Overall, the IAPD launch was truly a great success and opened a path for a much better collaboration with the clergy leaders.