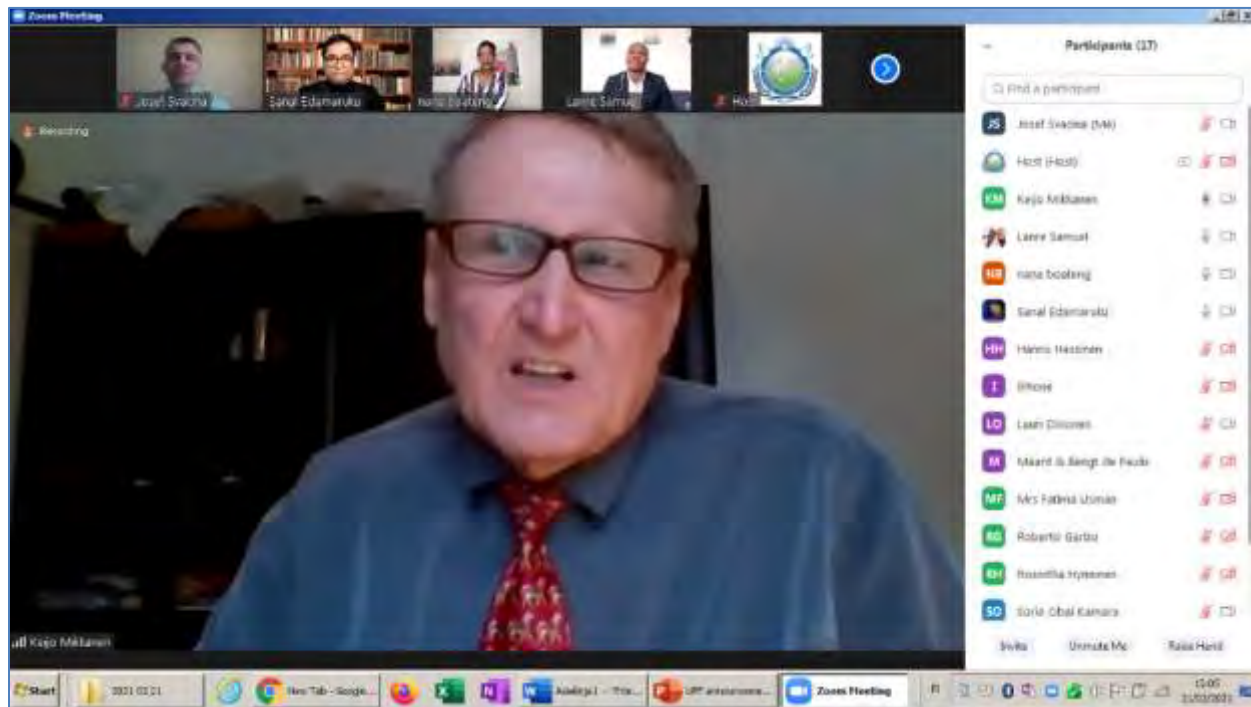


UPF Helsinki, Finland's webinar on Interfaith Cooperation as a Tool for Peace

Keijo Mikkanen
February 21, 2021

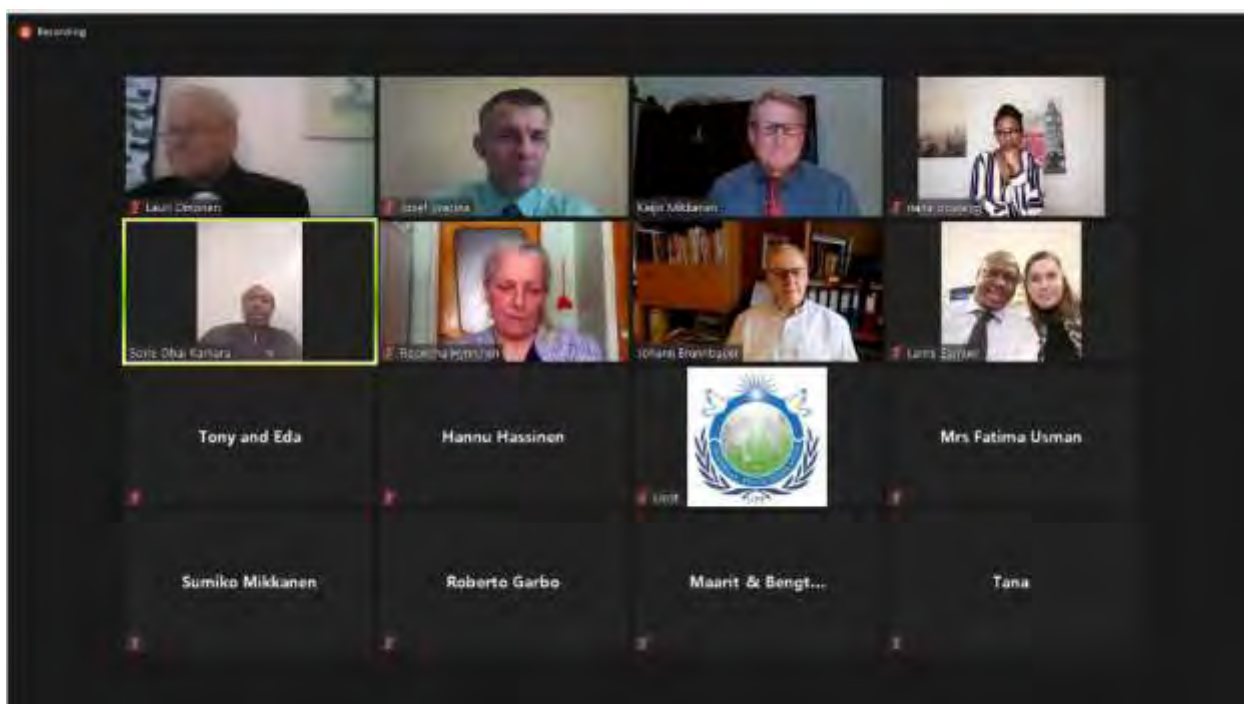


Helsinki, Finland -- In observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week, UPF-Finland co-hosted a webinar on the theme "Interfaith Cooperation as a Tool for Peace."

The online conference was held on February 21, 2021, in cooperation with Nana TV International, an English-language online TV channel for migrants in Finland.

Nana TV International hostess Nana Boateng opened the webinar and welcomed the audience, including those who were participating through YouTube and Facebook.

As the moderator, UPF-Finland Secretary General Keijo Mikkanen connected the session with a most significant interfaith event of recent times, the World Summit 2020 held by UPF one year ago in Seoul, Korea.



He also referred to the proposal made in 2000 by UPF co-founders Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for an interreligious peace council to be established at the United Nations. This proposal demonstrated their ongoing commitment to realizing interfaith understanding and cooperation, Mr. Mikkanen said.

The webinar's first presenter was Sanal Edamaruku, an Indian-born author and the chair of Rationalist International. He brought up the need for mutual respect in finding a better world, saying that humanity now has more serious challenges to tackle than to fight about faith. We need to work together in order to survive, he said. Scientific knowledge is the most important. There are many countries where a person can be sentenced to death for not believing in the majority religion of the country or in anything at all. "I am an atheist, that is my faith," he said.



The next speaker, Evangelist Samuel Osinnaike, encouraged the audience to learn the way of peace from children. They play with each other irrespective of nationality or skin color, he said. Jesus taught that is the way to Heaven. We can choose whether we build or destroy. The Bible teaches us to love our neighbor. Who is my neighbor? It is the person next to me. To unite means to respect each other, he said.

Sorie Obai Kamara, the cultural ambassador of Sierra Leone to Europe, was the next presenter. Peace is the ultimate goal; it transcends this world into eternity, he said. Christ is the Prince of Peace. We have various views and we are different, but still peaceful coexistence in this world is better than conflicts. Faith-based ideology respects life and brings tolerance.

Rev. Lauri Oinonen of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, who is a UPF Ambassador for Peace, defined compactly what is needed for peace: love and goodness. These qualities sometimes are missing in those who are talking and pushing for peace, he said.

Finally the moderator asked the panelists: "What, in your view, is practically the primary factor as a tool toward interreligious cooperation?" The answers varied from becoming an image of God the Creator, to being a good example, and to removing prejudice.

In conclusion, the webinar participants recognized and thanked UPF and Nana TV International for providing this platform for such a fruitful sharing beyond borders.