

UPF-Southeast Asia and IAAP-Asia Pacific's Northeast Asia Peace Initiative

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Bangkok, Thailand -- UPF-Southeast Asia and the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP)-Asia Pacific convened the Northeast Asia Peace Initiative (NEAPI) Virtual Conference on March 30, 2021, on the theme, "Towards Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: Academic and Cultural Perspectives."

A total of 417 participants joined the online program through Zoom, while 718 did so via YouTube. To date, more than 12,000 people have viewed the event on Facebook. Translation was provided in Thai and Indonesian.



This webinar is part of a series of NEAPI events UPF-Asia Pacific will be organizing in support of the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula and harmonious relations among the nations of Northeast Asia.

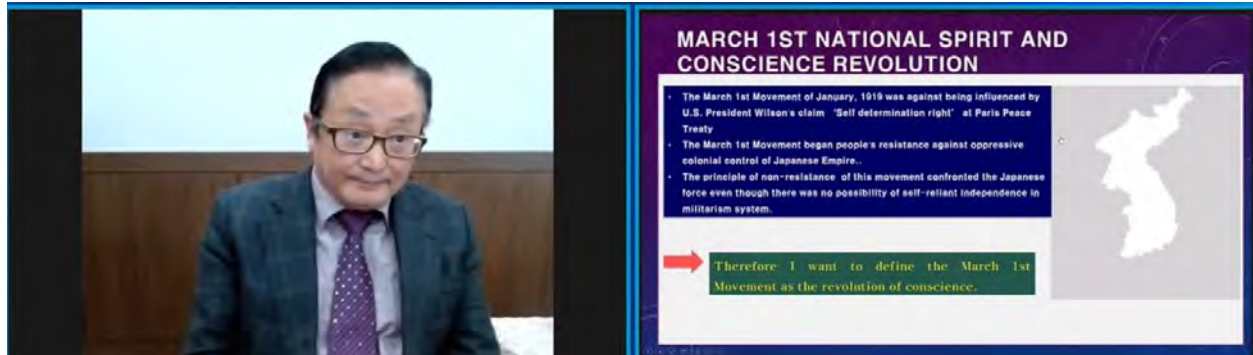
The program opened with **Dr. Julius Malicdem**, director of UPF-Southeast Asia, introducing the panelists and leaders who were present and welcoming all the participants.

Dr. Masaichi Hori, co-chair of UPF-Asia Pacific, gave the welcome remarks. He briefly touched on the significance of the efforts to reunify the Korean Peninsula and said that these efforts should be based on building permanent peace in the region.

Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, regional chairman of UPF-Asia Pacific, spoke about the importance of "track two" diplomatic efforts that UPF is undertaking to support the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. He

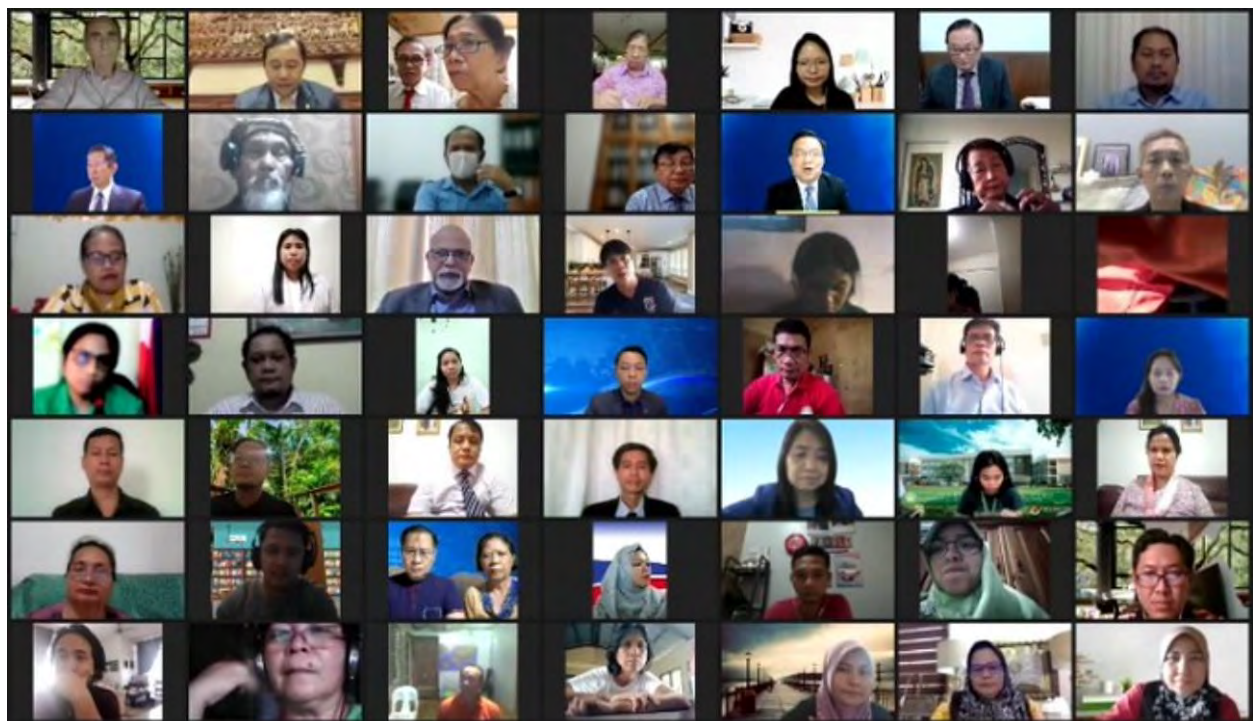
stressed that the arts and academics play a crucial role in making this happen. UPF encourages academicians from both Koreas to engage in constructive dialogue and organize cultural exchange programs that connect families from these two nations.

Dr. Thomas Selover, president of Sun Hak UP Graduate University, international president of the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA) and international coordinator of the IAAP, presented the concept of the Heavenly Unified Korea (*shin tongil hanguk* in Korean) to explain the inevitability and possibility of reunification. He expounded that the principles of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values (*gongseng, gongyong, gongeu*) that UPF promotes can be the basis for a vision of a new, heavenly unified Korea. He further explained that unification should be based on the "love heaven, love people, love the nation" motto taught by UPF co-founders Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon.



Next, **Dr. Jin Sung Bae**, chairman of the HJ Academy of Arts and Science and international coordinator of the IAAP, also gave an overview of the Heavenly Unified Korea concept. He elucidated that the 38th parallel between the two Koreas is not simply a military demarcation line but the confrontation line between communism and democracy, religion and anti-religion, idealism and materialism, and good and evil. He emphasized that just as the March 1st Movement came about as a revolution of conscience, the Unification Movement for a Heavenly Unified Korea needs to start as a conscience liberation movement. A heavenly unified Korea should build a new state of freedom, equality and justice based on conscience.

The presentations of the panelists followed. **Hon. Suos Yara**, vice chairman of the 5th Commission of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, remarked that the Korean Peninsula is a key security flashpoint in the region that needs to be addressed urgently and that preventive diplomacy and mediation are immensely critical at this stage. He proposed the use of cultural diplomacy to achieve reunification. According to him, reunification will be a long process, but we need to be patient and start to plant more seeds that foster cultural exchanges. Culture has no boundaries and can form bridges of dialogue and trust among countries and regions. Cultural diplomacy is a means to peace and prosperity.



Dr. Ravichandran Moorthy, associate professor in the International Relations and Strategic Studies Programme at the National University of Malaysia, spoke about the use of "soft power" or "track two" diplomacy to promote durable peace on the Korean Peninsula. He said that both may have limited success at this present juncture because North Korea is an unusual country in an unusual geopolitical situation, with an isolationist and self-reliant philosophy. He offered several scenarios in which hard and soft power mitigation might be able to assuage the DPRK to adopt a more peaceful approach. Any new international framework for the Korean Peninsula issue should be backed by the UN. In addition to that, "track-two" diplomacy (exchanges with civil society, faith and academic groups) and academic engagement could effectively engage different segments of society. However, this can be done only when there is adequate openness in the power structure.



Mrs. Cecile Guidote-Alvarez, UNESCO Artist for Peace and director of the Earthsavers, Philippines, gave a touching and insightful message on how the arts can be an effective instrument in contributing to the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. She mentioned that where politics divide, the arts can unite. She is confident that UNESCO, an agency of the UN that promotes world peace and security through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture, can be an initial platform through which we can come together and begin cultural dialogue that can reduce the impact of aggressive behavior. She added that through the persuasive power of the arts and media and united, coordinated action, will the reunification of Korea and a peaceful world be realized.

Dr. Hariyadi Wirawan, senior lecturer of international relations at the National University of Indonesia, suggested ways to ease tensions on and support the reunification of the peninsula. Both nations can start sending more exchange students to each other and organize more intergovernmental meetings. As well, nations supporting both North and South Korea should work on enhancing peace initiatives rather than engaging in power games.

Dr. Robert Kittel, Cheon Eui Won chair and co-chairman of UPF-Asia Pacific, facilitated the question-and-answer session and gave the closing remarks.

