

International Association of Academicians for Peace inaugurated in Oceania

Gregory Stone
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Melbourne, Australia -- The International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP), an initiative of UPF, was inaugurated in Oceania through a "Peace Talks" webinar on the theme, "US-China Relations – Implications for Oceania: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universally Shared Values." The event, which took place on July 18, 2020 over Zoom, featured a panel comprised of distinguished scholars and academicians from six different time zones encompassing the U.S., Europe, Asia and Oceania, and drew 384 participants from around the world.

Mr. Gregory Stone, secretary general of UPF-Oceania, welcomed the panelists and participants. Mr. Stone said that the geographic region of Oceania is strategically vital for many nations such as the U.S., its regional allies and China. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as its economic implications have exacerbated U.S.-China relations, and this webinar offers a wide range of views and insights from academicians on this important topic.



Dr. Thomas Selover, international co-coordinator of the IAAP, expressed his thanks and congratulations to the organizers for addressing a critical issue. He commended the multidisciplinary characteristic of this webinar, with its wide representation of nationalities focused on the ideals of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values, fitting for the launch of the IAAP.

Mr. Yutaka Yamada, chairman of UPF-Oceania, extended a welcome to the panelists and participants, on behalf of the regional chapter. He added that many people are not aware of the investment UPF co-founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, made over many years in promoting the importance of the academics in contributing to world peace. He explained the importance of harmonizing

knowledge to overcome divisions.

The first panelist, Prof. Christopher Hill, is the chief adviser to the chancellor for global engagement and a professor of diplomacy at the University of Denver. He also is a former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, South Korea, Macedonia and Poland. He said that there have been tensions between the U.S. and China and this year's presidential election in the U.S. will be important in this regard. Tensions exist because there are perceptions that China has taken advantage of the U.S. and also because of China's human rights violations, the situation in Hong Kong and the mismanagement of the COVID-19 crisis. The United States believes that China is out to displace America from the world leadership. Prof. Hill maintains that the U.S. and China have much in common and need to find ways to cooperate. The solution is more dialogue and a focus on finding common goals. The U.S., as a Pacific power, is engaged and has a great tradition of working with its partners in the region.



Prof. Biman Prasad was the second speaker. He is a former professor of economics and dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University of South Pacific. He explained that nations in the Pacific have historically aligned with Western powers. These countries have also had economic, cultural and diplomatic ties with China. For a long time, Australia and New Zealand have been the undisputed powers in the Pacific. China is now challenging that hegemony through soft and hard power as well as aid and cheap loans -- what is called "chequebook diplomacy". There was also news that China was going to build its own naval base in Vanuatu, which China and Vanuatu denied. The Solomon Islands severed its diplomatic ties with Taiwan, in favor of China. Another area of tension is the climate change commitment of Western powers. Lastly, China needs to be sensitive to Pacific Islands and other countries that have a relationship with Taiwan, a close ally of Western powers. Prof. Prasad emphasized that China needs to understand that most Pacific Islands value the democratic ideals of accountability, transparency, media freedom and human rights. Additionally, the U.S. needs to recognize that China has provided support to Pacific Islands that has been mutually beneficial.

Dr. Anoop Swarup, vice chancellor of Jagran Lakecity University and a commissioner with the government of India, complimented UPF-Oceania for having a webinar on this very important topic that is challenging the region and world. He argued that since peace and aggression starts in the minds of men, this type of activity helps to build bridges. He said that what is happening in the South China Sea is intimidation by China and the reinvigoration of the "Quad" alliance (U.S., Australia, Japan and India). Peace requires creative approaches based on the pillars of mutual respect, mutual coexistence, sustainable development and shared prosperity. The Pacific Islands must come together and find innovative approaches to address issues such as energy security, good governance, global warming and development. The Centre for Global Nonkilling, which Dr. Swarup chairs, believes that positive peace is possible. Instead of mutually assured destruction (MAD), there must be mutually assured peace and prosperity (MAPP). Dr. Swarup ended with a quote from Gandhi, "If we do not fight the darkness with light, then the whole world will become dark."

Prof. Osman Softic, was the final panelist to present. He is a senior research fellow with the Islamic Renaissance Front; a coordinator of the Foreign Relations Council, Bosnia and Herzegovina; and an Ambassador for Peace. He expressed his concern about China's human rights violations of the Muslim population in China's far-western Xinjiang province. Another concern is the U.S.-China competition and the impact of China's economic, political, military rise in East Asia. In the past, China dominated this region and one scholar has predicted that China will again dominate this region. Often, students of international relations do not recognize China's use of initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Maritime Silk Route to present itself to the world, especially to the third world countries. While China has done great work uplifting 600 million people out of poverty, we must not idealize China. In the Pacific, China has found its way into Melanesian countries that have held grudges towards the West and embraced "Melanesian socialism," an ideological perspective that is sympathetic to China. There is

also a significant interference of China into Australia's affairs. If China continues to rise, then it will dominate the region and expel the U.S. There is no better alternative to addressing this than through diplomacy, building bridges, reconciliation, coexistence and discussion. Different civilizations must find common ground -- universal values of peace, freedom and dignity. We should not abandon our religious values because economics, development and infrastructure alone cannot sustain our society. There must be a deeper meaning to and more significant values to complement economic development.

Dr. John Bellavance, vice president of UPF-Australia, gave the closing remarks. He discussed the role of academics in fostering universal values, interdependence and mutual prosperity. He pointed out that the UPF co-founders have been emphasizing these values in academic conferences since 1974. We face global challenges that require a global response. First, there is a lack of values perspective to guide scientific, technological, economic and political development. Adhering to scientific neutrality without values is not helping. Additionally, materialist values perspective or selfish individualism, and the lack of a global identity or consciousness are also issues. UPF's IAAP has a global mindset, not being against any nation, but being a friend to both the U.S. and China to help them on their journey as global citizens. The UPF co-founders have invested funds to help China's development. Interdisciplinary approaches are needed to find solutions to global problems. In our global village, it takes a village to develop tools as well as to cure diseases. Mutual prosperity is actualized when developed nations not only think about profit or their economies, but are also concerned about the suffering of other countries and work to share technology.



Ambassadors for Peace Awards

UPF-Oceania presented Ambassadors for Peace awards to Dr. Swarup and Mr. Roland Jabbour OAM Esq.

In addition to serving as the vice chancellor of Jagran Lakecity University in India and chairperson of the Centre of Global Nonkilling, Dr. Swarup is the founder and chairman of the Global Knowledge Alliance and is the recipient of Hiroshima Peace Prize; the Presidential Award of the Republic of India; and several honorary doctorates, fellowships and other awards.

Mr. Roland Jabbour OAM Esq. is the president and national chairman of the Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AACCI) and the honorary consul general of the Kingdom of Morocco in the state of Victoria, Australia. Mr. Jabbour's vision and leadership over many years has achieved wide-ranging successful partnerships between Australia and the Arab region that have facilitated business and trade relations and that have promoted stronger ties between both Australia and the Arab world. He has developed a high profile as a community leader through his longstanding commitment to public service and community initiatives.

The awards were presented by the UPF-Oceania secretary general.

Mr. Jabbour thanked UPF-Oceania for the award and congratulated them on a timely webinar theme and an excellent program.

A recording of the webinar can be viewed at:
www.facebook.com/upfpeacetalks/videos/2327918480850311.