

UPF's Delegation to Niger welcomed by President Mahamadou Issoufou

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Dr. Walsh, speaking at the founding of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace in Niger in the nation's unicameral National Assembly

A delegation from the Universal Peace Federation comprising Dr. Thomas Walsh, chairman of UPF International, me, in my capacity as sub-regional director of UPF for West Africa, and Mr. Seka Philbert, president of Youth and Students for Peace-Africa is visiting heads of state on the African continent. Given what was at stake in meeting government figures in Niger, I had to go to Niamey on June 12, a few days before the arrival of Dr. Walsh, who was both the head of the delegation and a special envoy representing our Mother. I had to coordinate all the steps and orientate the main figures in relation to the results expected for this mission in Niger.

Niger's minister of Justice, Marou Amadou, who would be out of the country during the UPF mission, along with a group of parliamentarians and ambassadors for peace welcomed me. Dr. Walsh arrived on the morning of June 15 and received a warm welcome to Niamey, the nation's capital, population 1.21 million. A car with a PRN registration plate, signifying the office of the president and one with a PAN plate associated with the National Assembly were available to us during our stay.

Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Kassoum Yacouba Maiga and a retired colonel, Abdoul Ramane Seydou (minister of Youth and Sports 2005–2008) were able to mobilize and involve the government of Niger in organizing various activities in the country. A committee headed by MNA Yacouba assisted by a youthful team of our members led by Anara Zéinoudine, national leader of FFWPU- Niger, implemented the various initiatives and decisions made. Indeed, all the arrangements made displayed total national commitment. All stages of the mission in Niger were a great success.

June 16, a historic day

The president of the Republic of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou (2011– present), postponed until the following day the audience we were to have had with him on the evening of June 15. To Brigi Rafini, prime minister of Niger (2001–present) who accepts UPF and True Mother's vision and to MNA Yacouba, who attended the Dakar Summit and the ILC in February, President Issoufou explained his reasons for preferring to meet with us on June 16.

First, the president preferred having the meeting at the Presidential Palace, where he lives, rather than in his office because we would have more time there. He also felt that in the same way that MNA Yacouba is a member of the UPF family, he is too. With that in mind, he wanted to receive the UPF delegation with his own family. He added that because UPF focuses on the family, he prefers to welcome the delegation into a family environment.

President Issoufou expressed the wish that we hold the official launching of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace before our audience with him. Therefore, he instructed the prime minister that not only should the launching of IAPP be a great success, but he stressed that leaders of all major institutions throughout the nation ought to attend the launch in the National Assembly building.

Launching IAPP

On Saturday, June 12, we conducted the official launching of IAPP Niger in Niamey at the National Assembly of Niger under the patronage of Ousseini Tinni, Speaker of the National Assembly. Nearly two hundred people attended this launch held in the presence of Prime Minister Brigi Rafini, various leaders of institutions in Niger, fifteen government ministers, the parliamentarians, the members of the Youth Parliament Bureau, several ex-ministers and ex-parliamentarians, religious leaders, traditional chiefs, woman leaders and artists.

Thirteen television stations covered the establishment of IAPP-Niger (including two that broadcast internationally) as did four national radio stations. Amina Balla Kalto, fifth vice-president of Niger's National Assembly delivered the welcoming address. MNA Yacouba, national coordinator of IAPP and chairman of the Organizing Committee followed him. I then spoke, explaining the history and function of IAPP. Dr. Thomas Walsh, international chairman of UPF gave the keynote address.

Then the officers of IAPP-Niger, thirteen in number, officially presented themselves to Prime Minister Rafini and to the Bureau of the National Assembly of Niger. They took an oath that the president of IAPP-Niger, Mr. Iro Sani, first vice-president of the National Assembly, read out.

Nana Fassouma Oumarou, one of more than two dozen women in Niger's National Assembly, then made public the IAPP Resolution by reading it aloud to the assemblage. Esteemed figures in society joined the parliamentarians in signing it.

The launching of IAPP Niger expressed the mobilization of a people and its government, members of which attended the launch. UPF appointed several dignitaries as ambassadors for peace on this occasion. For each of them, a road map for their future activities read like a mandate for a new mission. These were the president of the National Assembly, the prime minister, the minister in charge of Relations with Institutions and the minister of Tourism and Craftsmanship, as well as MNA Yacouba and the first vice-president of the National Assembly, who is in charge of the coordination of IAPP Niger. All the other parliamentarians, members of IAPP Niger bureau received this distinction during the gala evening held on the same day in the garden of the National Assembly. All the participants appeared satisfied with the ceremony. The parliamentarians seemed delighted by the establishment of this parliamentary institution, which they will officially register among the Parliament of Niger Networks. All major authority figures in the country were present at the National Assembly.



From left to right: Kassoum Maiga, first vice-president of IAPP-Niger; Dr Paterne Zinsou; Mr Barkai Issouf (the minister who relates with institutions), Dr Thomas Walsh, Philbert Seka (YSP Africa) Ahmed Boto, minister of Tourism and Craftsmanship, and former minister Abdul Ramane Seydou

Meeting the president

The president of the Republic, Mahamadou Issoufou, received the special delegation of the founder of UPF led by the international chairman, Dr. Thomas Walsh, at the president's residence, the Presidential Palace on June 16. This meeting lasted about forty-five minutes, was friendly and took place in a family atmosphere. Barkai Issouf, the minister in charge of relations with state institutions accompanied the delegation. Several ministers had received invitations to greet the UPF delegation. The staff offered snacks to the delegation and to the government ministers and dignitaries that President Issoufou had invited to this family meeting. After the reception, the president entered and we moved to the VIP room.

On hand were the UPF delegation, MNA Kassoum Yacouba Maiga, who became the first vice-president of IAPP-Niger, in charge of the coordination of IAPP activities; an ex-minister -- Colonel Abdul Ramane Seydou, the FFWPU-Niger national leader Anara Zéinoudine, the minister in charge of Relations with Institutions and the minister-director of the Cabinet.

After a photo session and some national television media coverage, MNA Kassoum presented the delegation to President Issoufou. He reported about the participation of the highest authorities of the nation headed by the prime minister at the IAPP launching. After thanking the president, Dr. Walsh presented the Heavenly Africa Package True Mother had initiated to help and to support the leaders of some African countries, including Niger, to achieve the goals of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

After his explanation, Dr. Walsh introduced me to present some specific points to President Issoufou. I had to hand over a package of documents prepared for this occasion to the president who asked that the media cover this, given the importance and significance of the act. Thus, the minister-director of the Cabinet called on the national television journalists to film the deli of the documents on projects to the president. Mahamadou Issoufou thanked the founder of UPF, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, for her great love for and interest in the development of Africa in general and Niger in particular. He also praised the summit held in Dakar, Senegal.

He explained his new Cultural Renaissance program and his vision for the modernization of Niger's economy and politics. His vision is similar to that of UPF. He said that he fully supports the vision of the founders and is willing to work together with UPF for the realization of all projects. The president was interested in the agricultural project, education, the promotion of family values, health, infrastructure, well drilling and all the other projects for which he hopes for active cooperation.

Informed of the holding in South Africa in November 2018 of the second African Summit and global events in February 2019 in South Korea, President Issoufou has shown great interest in all these meetings in which he wishes to take part. He asked that we send official invitations to him as soon as possible so that state-level planning can begin.

President Issoufou referred to a portion of one of the documents referring to the four high-growth industrial states in the second half of the twentieth century, namely South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. Speaking of South Korea, he said he hoped that the Korean special representative (Dr. Yun Young-ho) would be present because for him, Korea embodies a model of development and change of mentality necessary for Niger to prosper. In a friendly atmosphere, we took part in an official photograph with President Issoufou.

Niger government–UPF MOU

On Saturday, June 16, after the audience with the president, the UPF delegation went to the prime minister to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Niger government and UPF. Thanks to Mr. Brigi Rafini, prime minister of Niger, representatives of the two parties signed an agreement committing themselves to implementing the projects contained in the Heavenly Africa Package in Niger.

The two parties exchanged the official agreement and the partnership document during a simple ceremony held on June 16 in the meeting room of the prime minister's office. The signing of the MOU took place in two stages: between the minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Cooperation and Overseas Nigeriens and UPF on the one hand and between the minister in charge of Relations with the Institutions, who replaced the Foreign Affairs minister, who had been called away for an emergency, and UPF. This ceremony, which sealed the official link between the state and the government of Niger and UPF, took place in the presence of another Government representative, the Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts.

Gala dinner

The National Assembly put on a gala dinner to thank UPF's founder and the UPF delegation on the evening of June 16. It took place in the garden of the National Assembly and included several government ministers and vice-presidents and other members of the National Assembly. Performances of a national band added to the graceful atmosphere. The members of the IAPP office received the attributes of ambassadors of peace on this occasion. Several other dignitaries and ambassadors for peace were invited to this meeting, which concluded this historic day during which several acts of a providential scale took place.