

UPF's tour for a Heavenly Africa meets the Burundian President in Bujumbura

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June 26, 2018



June 25 turned out to be a special day for Burundi's providence in relation to Vision 2020. Several events happened that day as part of UPF's tour for a Heavenly Africa. The delegation comprised Dr. Thomas Walsh, UPF's international chairman, and me as sub-regional director of UPF for West Africa. The president of the Republic (2005–) Pierre Nkurunziza received us and a few moments later we met the Speaker of the National Assembly, Pascal Nyabenda. We would go on to found the official Burundi chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace.

Within this providential context of expectation and renewed hope for Burundi, a blessed child was born to the wife of the late national leader of Burundi, Ismael Ntawigiri. (He had ascended to the spiritual world during the period of the World Summit in Dakar.) This birth inaugurates a new era, begun by Our True Mother, who through her deep love and precious blessing bestowed upon the African continent, is the driving force of the present tour for a Heavenly Africa.

I was grateful to take part in this tour for a heavenly Africa, because we receive True Parents' grace and can use the protocol and security services of the office of the president and of the Parliament. Two houses comprise Burundi's Parliament, the Senate, which is the Upper House of Parliament and the National Assembly, the Lower House.

Reconnecting with the president

While we were expecting an audience at the National Assembly (the lower house of Parliament) early on the morning of June 25, as events transpired, the president of the Republic of Burundi received the UPF delegation first. The president met with Dr. Walsh and I, accompanied by the second vice-president of the *Inama Nkenguzamateka* (the Senate) Anicet Niyongabo, whom the president of the Senate had appointed to oversee the IAPP-Burundi session. The reception was warm. With an affectionate smile, Pierre Nkurunziza, president of the Republic of Burundi, welcomed the UPF delegation that he had been awaiting with fervor.

It was a reunion. When Dr. Walsh reminded him of his participation in the UPF inaugural meeting in New York in the United States in 2005, he admitted to being one of us. He expressed his keen interest in the peace advocated by UPF. Burundi is open to our movement and thus to our True Mother, he told us. He thanked True Mother and UPF for the Heavenly Africa Package projects. He hoped that UPF could support the ongoing development process in Burundi.

He added that he would arrange for the signing of the MOU. He expressed his concern for building a nation of peace and unity and spoke about the inter-religious meetings for unity and social cohesion in Burundi. While we were with President Nkurunziza, a battalion of the Burundian Army was training around the presidential compound. From the Presidential Palace, where we were, the sound of drumbeats was audible. He told us that they were preparing for the celebration of the anniversary of Burundi's July 1 Independence Day. The president appeared happy and open during our talk. We enjoyed the time with

him. He wished us success in our activities in general and in the launch of IAPP-Burundi in particular. He told us to visit Burundi regularly. He finally reiterated his attachment to the vision of UPF, with which he hopes to cooperate. The meeting ended with a group photograph, first with Dr. Walsh and then with all members of the delegation.



The president of Parliament

After the audience with the president, we headed to the Parliament Building in Bujumbura where the president of the Parliament, the two vice-presidents and other members of the Bureau of the Parliament of Burundi were waiting. Two other members of IAPP joined our delegation.

The second vice-president of the Senate and president of IAPP- Burundi introduced the purpose of the visit and presented the UPF delegation and the two other members of the National IAPP Committee before inviting Dr. Thomas Walsh and I to speak. We gave in-depth presentations on True Parents' vision and summarized the material in the Heavenly Africa Package projects, including the inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace.

Pascal Nyabenda, Speaker of Parliament followed with great interest the many explanations and agreed in principle with regard to his membership and his involvement. He said he was available to work with UPF and ready to support the development of IAPP Burundi.

He would reinforce his support by attending the inaugural IAPP Assembly scheduled for the following hours, in the afternoon. Though he was in parliamentary session, he said he would attend. He would also try to take part in international meetings and conferences organized by UPF.

As he saw it, all parliamentarians would join IAPP once they understand the objectives and vision of this important branch of UPF. He mobilized about a dozen journalists who were waiting for the end of the meeting for interviews with Chairman Walsh and the Speaker of the Parliament, Pascal Nyabenda.

A parliamentarian, member of the IAPP Committee, who was in Dakar and who is certainly a fervent believer explained to me that the name Burundi consists of seven letters, and seven conveys the concept of "completion." Thus, for her, for providential reasons, God was behind the choosing Burundi among the nations benefiting from the Heavenly Africa Package.

IAPP-Burundi takes form

The Speaker of the Parliament of Burundi, Pascal Nyabenda, led the inaugural session of IAPP Burundi in collaboration with the president of the Senate, Révérien Ndikuriyo. All the Presidents and Vice-presidents of both Houses of Parliament as well as several deputies and senators, the representative of the mayor of Bujumbura and other dignitaries attended the ceremony.

More than ninety participants including seventy parliamentarians attended the launching of IAPP-Burundi during a solemn ceremony marked by the Oath of Members of the National Committee of IAPP, the signing of the Resolution and the nomination of the president of the Parliament as an ambassador for peace.

The president of the Senate, the central figure of the IAPP-Burundi launching ceremony, testified to his commitment to UPF and announced the composition of IAPP Burundi Bureau. Anicet Niyongabo, second vice-president of the Senate, stood as Révérien Ndikuriyo, pronounced him chairman of thirteen-member committee making up the IAPP Burundi Bureau.

Several milestones marked the inauguration ceremony, which took on a solemn dimension. Among them was the presentation and official recognition of the members of the Bureau of IAPP Burundi by the presidents and vice-presidents of the Parliament and the Senate. Seven National Assembly deputies and six Parliamentary senators comprise the committee. The oath-taking ceremony of the members of the IAPP Bureau made a favorable impression on the parliamentarians as an act for peace and unity as it launches a politically neutral organization that aims to aid the common good, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, political party or ideology. The International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace is therefore, in a structural and functional way, an organ, a project, an extension of UPF.

The IAPP Oath of Office

Considering the need in the exercise of our mission to embrace universally shared values in order to build a society, a nation and a world of lasting peace,

Recognizing that through this ceremony, we receive a mandate to promote Social Peace, Unity, Solidarity and Sustainable Development, I, as a deputy or senator, a member of the IAPP Bureau of Burundi,

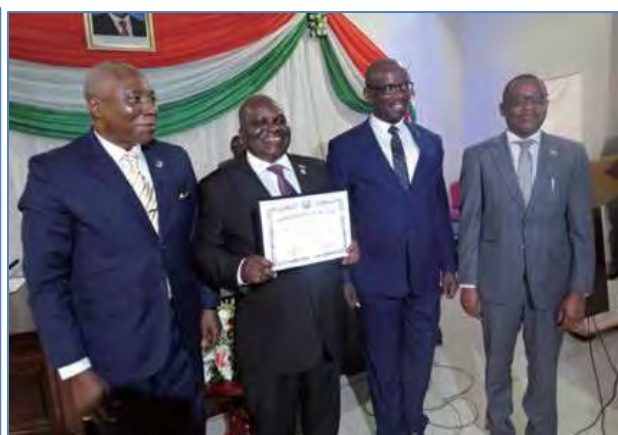
1) hereby affirm my commitment to respect the objectives and principles of IAPP, namely

- to arm myself with a new armor of love and peace;
- to promote principles and practices for peace, justice and good governance;
- to work for the common good of all without distinction of ethnicity, nationality, culture, race, gender, religion or political ideology;
- to seek sustainable solutions to the key challenges of our time: the loss of family values, territorial disputes, racial and religious conflicts, environmental degradation, climate change, violent extremism, poverty, hunger, corruption, etc.;
- and to contribute actively to building a sustainable world of peace by promoting gender equity, and improving educational systems and methods for young men and women.

2) We affirm today, our resolve to work for peace, to solve national, sub-regional, regional and international problems in order to build a world of peace rooted in universal and sustainable values.

"This I pledge."

I then appointed the Speaker of the Parliament, Pascal Nyabenda, as a UPF ambassador of peace on this occasion to the general satisfaction of the deputies and participants to the inaugural assembly. Both vice-presidents of the Parliament and both vice-presidents of the Senate took part in this ceremony. In his closing speech, the president of the Parliament of Burundi stressed his double mandate as honorary co-president of IAPP Burundi and ambassador for peace. Speaker Nyabenda promised to work with the Speaker of the Senate to make the Burundi chapter of IAPP one of the best models of IAPP in Africa. Lastly, he asked that the Africa UPF delegation visit Burundi more regularly in order to carry out the projects for Peace and Development.



The closing banquet

We took part in a special closing banquet for the UPF delegation in the evening. The gala dinner featured a professional band of musicians. Both of the Houses of Parliament in Burundi had initiated the dinner, which benefited from the presence of the presidents and vice-presidents of both institutions.