

UPF Conference at Sri Lankan Parliament Calls for Regional Cooperation

Ek Nath Dhakal
December 6, 2023



Colombo, Sri Lanka—The Parliament of Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP) and the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), co-organized a Parliamentarians Leadership Conference at the Sri Lankan Parliament with the theme, "Accountability in Action: Fostering Transparency and Good Governance Among Parliamentarians." The conference, sponsored by UPF, was attended by over 150 participants from six Asian countries.



During the event, Sri Lankan Prime Minister **Dinesh Gunawardena** and Speaker **Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana** were honored as Ambassadors for Peace.

Addressing the conference, President **Ranil Wickremesinghe** commended the organizers for choosing Sri Lanka to host the peace conference at a time of escalating conflict in the Middle East and Europe. The president stressed that transparency and good governance are needed for securing peace. He also highlighted his government's forming of oversight committees to ensure transparency in the country.

President Wickremesinghe emphasized the necessity of implementing measures that ensure accountability. "Legislation and accountability in action are needed," he said. He explained the Sri Lankan government's strategies, including diagnostic evaluations, rigorous auditing, and parliamentary oversight in managing public funds, setting a benchmark for transparent governance and responsible

resource allocation in the country.

UPF International Chairman Dr. **Charles S. Yang** conveyed the UPF co-founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's good wishes to the participants and people of Sri Lanka. He acknowledged the contributions of the Sri Lankan government and Parliament in collaboration with UPF, describing the relationship between UPF and Sri Lanka as "deep, wide and historical."



Dr. Yang urged parliamentarians to contribute to creating healthy and transparent economic systems within their country. Sharing the example of his home country, Korea, in overcoming the 1997 Asian financial crisis, he encouraged the Sri Lankan people to unite to overcome their current economic crisis. Dr. Yang also called for a cultural shift, returning to universal values and traditions. He said that the core teachings of UPF's co-founders, Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon -- unselfishness, living for the sake of others, public-mindedness, altruism, delayed gratification, and the willingness to sacrifice -- are key to creating a culture of peace.



Dr. Yang introduced Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's proposal for the establishment of an Asia Pacific Union (APU), a broad-based, independent, non-political body of like-minded individuals and organizations from the community of Asia Pacific nations. The APU can be a venue to share best practices, encourage economic growth, promote tourism, and advance peace.

Parliament Speaker **Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena** greeted participants, and expressed appreciation for

Dr. Moon's focus on promoting peace and dialogue throughout the world.

Former President **Maithripala Sirisena** also spoke, saying that peace is the only way to a better future for humanity and urging participants to become peacemakers. He expressed concern about the heavy expenditure of resources on wars and conflicts globally, with no concern for the disadvantaged people of the world.

Lawmaker from Nepal and Chair of IAPP Asia Pacific **Ek Nath Dhakal** said that the credibility of democratic institutions hinges on the trust citizens place in their elected officials. Hon. Dhakal noted that in the Asia-Pacific region, where diverse cultures and political systems coexist, the call for accountability resonates deeply. It is the linchpin for sustainable development and regional stability, he said.



Hon. Dhakal lamented the passivity of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and called for member states to uphold its founding ideals for creating a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient South Asia. He described his home country of Nepal as a nation with a rich tapestry of history and a commitment to democratic values, saying, "The citizens of Nepal, like those around the world, demand transparency and accountability from their government and elected representatives."



Malaysian lawmaker Hon. **Ganabathirau Veraman** emphasized the rule of law as an important component of good governance. He added that Malaysia's successful growth is due to accountability in action.

Other Sri Lankan speakers included Minister of Education Hon. **Susil Premajayantha** and parliamentarian Hon. Mrs. **Thalatha Athukorale**. Asia Pacific regional leader of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), Rev. **Masaichi Hori** from Japan, emphasized that only by practicing true love can we bring positive change in society. Dr. **Edgar Tanate** from the Philippines gave an overview of the activities of UPF, IAPP and affiliated organizations in contributing to peace and the welfare of humanity. UPF-South Asia Director Rev. **Santosh Paudel** and Secretary General of UPF-Sri Lanka Dr. **Chula Senaratne** moderated the event.



The co-chair of IAPP, former US Congressman **Dan Burton**, addressed the conference by video. He extended the solidarity of the worldwide IAPP network to the Sri Lankan Parliament and encouraged lawmakers to foster transparency and good governance. International Coordinator of IAPP Dr. **Michael Jenkins** (USA), Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Commission of the National Assembly of Cambodia Hon. **Suos Yara** (Cambodia), Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare of the Indian Parliament Hon. **Bhubaneswar Kalita** (India) and Member of Parliament of Indonesia, Hon. **Dave Fikarno Laksono** were among the lawmakers from the Asia Pacific region who presented their perspectives on accountability, transparency and good governance.





Prime Minister of Sri Lanka **Dinesh Gunawardena** was among four eminent personalities who were honored as Ambassadors for Peace. The other recipients were Speaker of Parliament **Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena**, Minister of Education Dr. **Susil Premajyantha**, and Secretary General of Parliament **Kushani Anusha Rohanadheera**.



Ambassadors for Peace belong to the largest and most diverse network of peace leaders. They are from all walks of life; represent many races, religions, nationalities, and cultures; and are committed to building a world of lasting peace and harmony.

The visiting high-level UPF delegation, led by International Chairman Dr. Charles Yang, called on former President **Mahinda Rajapaksa** and opposition leader **Sajith Premadasa**. Dr. Yang also paid a visit to the Buddhist temple Bellanwila Rajamaha Viharaya, and met Venerable Dr. **Bellanwila Dhammaratana Nayaka Thera**.