

More Than 400 Attend World Summit 2017 Opening Banquet

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Seoul, Korea -- The fourth World Summit on “Peace, Security and Human Development” opened with a banquet attended by more than 400 dignitaries from 120 nations.

The Opening Banquet was held on February 1, 2017, at the Lotte Hotel World in the Chamshil section of Seoul. The participants include more than 400 current and former members of parliament as well as heads of state and government, prime ministers, civil society dignitaries, clergy and women leaders.

UPF International organized the summit together with its affiliated organizations the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation, the Women’s Federation for World Peace, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, the Washington Times Foundation, and the Segye Times.

In addition to the World Summit program, delegates were scheduled to attend four key events in the coming days:

- The Founders Celebration at the Cheongshim Peace World Center (February 2).
- The World Assembly of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace at the National Assembly (February 2)
- The Sunhak Peace Prize Award Ceremony (February 3)
- A program organized by the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS) (February 4 and 5). Co-hosted with the Hyo Jeong World Peace Foundation, the 23rd international conference has as its theme “Earth’s Environmental Crisis and the Role of Science.”

Acting as the emcee, **Mr. Richard de Sena**, the regional secretary general of UPF North America, welcomed the participants to the Opening Banquet. The invocation was given by **Dr. Wu-Hsien Chu**, the chair of the Taiwan Interfaith Foundation, who read “A Prayer for World Peace,” written by Ven. Master Hsing Yun, a Chinese Buddhist monk.

Dr. Thomas Walsh, the president of UPF International, thanked the participants for making the long trip to Korea. He reviewed the events leading up to the creation of the IAPP and the Sunhak Peace Prize. He praised UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for her leadership and for carrying on the legacy of her husband, the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, who passed away in 2012. In closing, Dr. Walsh called on the leaders to wholeheartedly contribute and share their individual and collective experience, wisdom and insight.

Two speakers offered reflections after dinner:

Hon. Cynthia Tarrago Diaz, a member of Congress from Paraguay, extended a warm welcome to the founders and gave her thoughts on the theme. Peace is not just the absence of conflict, she said; it is a sense of tranquility even in the midst of conflict. There is no single path to peace, because peace itself is a path if we practice “respect, tolerance, equality, solidarity and dialogue.” Peace begins with a smile, she said. The word is the sword, and reason is the shield. These are the armaments of peace. Peace is a duty and an obligation for everyone, she said. “If we unite our forces together, then we can make a better world, a world of peace.”

Ambassador Christopher R. Hill, a former U.S. ambassador to Korea, Iraq, Poland and Macedonia and a former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, spoke about Korean reunification and, in particular, the security challenges coming from North Korea.

“For all our desire to be inclusive and enjoy shared values, the people north of the 38th parallel have no rights and must endure life with a government that doesn’t respect its own people,” Ambassador Hill said. “While the World Summit is talking about peace, there is a government less than 30 miles away from Seoul that is carrying out tests of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The problems of the peninsula concern the entire world and not just the region. The vision of a unified and peaceful Korea can be fulfilled, but it won’t happen overnight. The circumstances found in Korea -- lack of dialogue, lack of tolerance, lack of peace -- can be found in many other areas of the world.” Ambassador Hill said that the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon provided a set of instruments for the path to peace -- dialogue, mutual understanding and common cause -- which, if sincerely implemented, can lead to peace.

The opening banquet featured beautiful entertainment and many opportunities for social networking. The participants, though exhausted from their long flights, ended the day in high hopes for the rest of the conference.

