

UPF Int'l: IAPD - The Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development

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The inaugural event of the Inter-religious Association for Peace [and Development] took place during the November 10–14, 2017 Inter-religious Leadership Conference at the Lotte Hotel World Seoul in South Korea

UPF maintains that any successful strategy for peace must take into account the spiritual dimension of our human identity, experience and interactions. Based on this worldview, UPF initiated the Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development as a partner organization to the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace. Through inter-religious dialogue and exchange of viewpoints among the world's religions and faith-based organizations, terrorism, violent extremism and the world's ills can be proactively addressed. Religious leaders are well-situated to deal with community-based concerns and can play a significant role in reconciliation and building a culture of peace. Due to their moral authority and emphasis on human rights based on the principle that we are one family created by God, religious leaders can help rebuild divided societies and assist in humanitarian services for the alleviation of hunger, disease and trauma due to violence and war. The world's religions and faith-based organizations can provide a unique set of valuable resources for achieving a just and peaceful world.

The IAPD founding resolution

As participants in the Inter-religious Leadership Conference sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation and the American Clergy Leadership Conference on November 10–14, 2017, focused on the theme, "Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: The Role and Responsibility of Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations," we affirm the unique and essential role that religions are called to play in bringing about a world of lasting peace, a world in which people of all nationalities, ethnicities, races, cultures, and worldviews may live together in mutual respect, harmony and cooperation, as one family under God.

Throughout the ages religion has served as a guide to humanity, leading us from darkness to light, establishing the foundations of morality, and providing a vision of a good society. The teachings and scriptures of the great religious traditions are humanity's greatest treasures. We dishonor them at our peril.

We also recognize that persons within each of our religions have fallen short and failed to embody those universal ideals that are espoused within our traditions. Religion, too often, has given rise to conflict.

We resolve to overcome the divisive tendencies that have emerged within religion and to work to promote dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation so that we may more effectively work to solve the critical challenges of our time, including poverty, hunger, injustice, environmental degradation, family breakdown, corruption, conflict and violence.

Not only should religions cooperate with one another -- Christian, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and others -- they should also work together with the leaders of governments and civil society and the private sector, as partners for the sake of building the world envisioned by our founders, our ancestors, and, indeed, all people.

We applaud the leadership of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and her late husband Rev. Sun Myung Moon for their vision and work over many decades to establish one family under God. On this day, November 13, 2017, we endorse the proposal to establish a new inter-religious association, known provisionally as the Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development.

Response from religious leaders

In the November 2017 issue of this magazine, Dr. Walsh, chairman of the Universal Peace Federation, wrote about the great enthusiasm with which religious leaders welcomed the founding of the Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development.

"We experienced an enormous outpouring that indicates a hunger and a need for the Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development. We launched the IAPD on November 13. It was deeply significant and inspiring.

"Nearly twenty participants from all different religious groups testified at the launching ceremony. Due to limits of time and because so many insisted on saying something, I limited each of them to three minutes. This made them condense their remarks and, in a very short time, speak with heartfelt passion and insight, endorsing the IAPD initiative....

"The word "development" in IAPD indicates that we are not merely engaged in dialogue, but we are advocating and working for development at all levels: individual moral and spiritual development; development of strong, healthy, loving families; good, stable communities without drugs, crime or poverty; restored nations that are peaceful and prosperous; and sustainable development that includes preservation of our environment while also bringing an end to hunger, poverty and conflict. We have been awakened. We are ready to march forward and get to work."



Religious leaders from a great variety of faiths can come together for the sake of peace and development

IAPD programs and development

Dr. Tageldin Hamad, who among other posts is the vice-president of UPF International and is the international coordinator for IAPD, has spoken about IAPD's progress. What follows is a transcription of his insights.

Father and Mother Moon founded many organizations to contribute to the establishment of world peace, from the individual level to the worldwide level, building on decades of inter-religious conferences and dialogue, held worldwide by the American Clergy Leadership Conference, the World Clergy Leadership Conference and the International Religious Foundation....

Mother Moon founded, as a project of UPF, the Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development. In 2018, IAPD inaugural conventions were held on six continents around the world. Over twenty-three thousand religious leaders participated in IAPD events held in ninety-three nations. IAPD assembled global religious leaders and tapped into their profound wisdom, which is found in humanity's spiritual heritage. Religious leaders and faith-based organizations provide the moral compass to deal with the social problems in contemporary society -- family breakdown and divorce, racism and exploitation, crime, hunger, terrorism, environmental degradation and more. IAPD harnesses the good will and wisdom of the

religions that are called to play a unique and essential role in bringing about a world of lasting peace, a world in which people of all nationalities, ethnicities, races, culture and worldviews are called to live together in mutual respect, harmony and cooperation, a world that the founders of UPF call 'Heavenly Parent's Holy Community.' Peace is the hope of all ages, but it seems to be so distant, even now. 'Peace' is a magical word. It is emotional; it is like 'love.' You have to live for the sake of others [to have peace and love]. Of course, peace should start with me living for the sake of others in my family, community, society, nation, and ultimately, the world.

On the other hand, religion has an important role to play in promoting and contributing to peace and human development, especially morally. The great religions have been the foundation of ethics and culture in civilizations throughout the ages. Although inter-religious conflicts are prevalent in the world, we cannot fail to acknowledge the great contributions of religion and at the same time, we must repent for the mistakes and damage done in the name of religion.

Inter-religious dialog is important but even more important is to move beyond dialog to working together. Religious leaders need to work in partnership with each other and with the government and all other stakeholders. They are to be collaborators, not competitors. The "other," is not the enemy. The enemy now is COVID-19, which divides the world, separates peoples and creates insecurities, fear and loneliness. IAPD is needed to bring oneness, compassion, comfort and security, while nations are individually racing for the COVID-19 vaccine, IAPD could guide nations to race toward unity, togetherness and love -- the ultimate vaccine for all ills.

Plus, we reemphasize that by connecting and working together, we can overcome this COVID-19 crisis. Rightfully, against any other crisis we may face in the future, the combined contribution of religions will once again make religion relevant in the daily affairs of humankind.

The wisdom of religions is needed in almost all multilateral institutions, especially at the United Nations, where God, the origin of peace, is rarely mentioned or called to help create the peace that the UN was originally created to achieve. This is a good opportunity for IAPD to work in partnership with the UN. After all, the role of religious leaders is to be peace builders, peacemakers and peace-givers.... We applaud Mother Moon for her loving, embracing heart and we fondly remember Father Moon, who still lives in our hearts.

Conclusion

IAPD harnesses the goodwill and wisdom of religions and faith-based organizations which are called to play a unique and essential role in bringing about a world of lasting peace, a world in which people of all nationalities, ethnicities, races, cultures and worldviews are called to live together in mutual respect, harmony and cooperation. UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon describes the ideal world as "one family under God," and, teaching by example, says that the path to such a society is through people leading a life of true love and living for the sake of others.