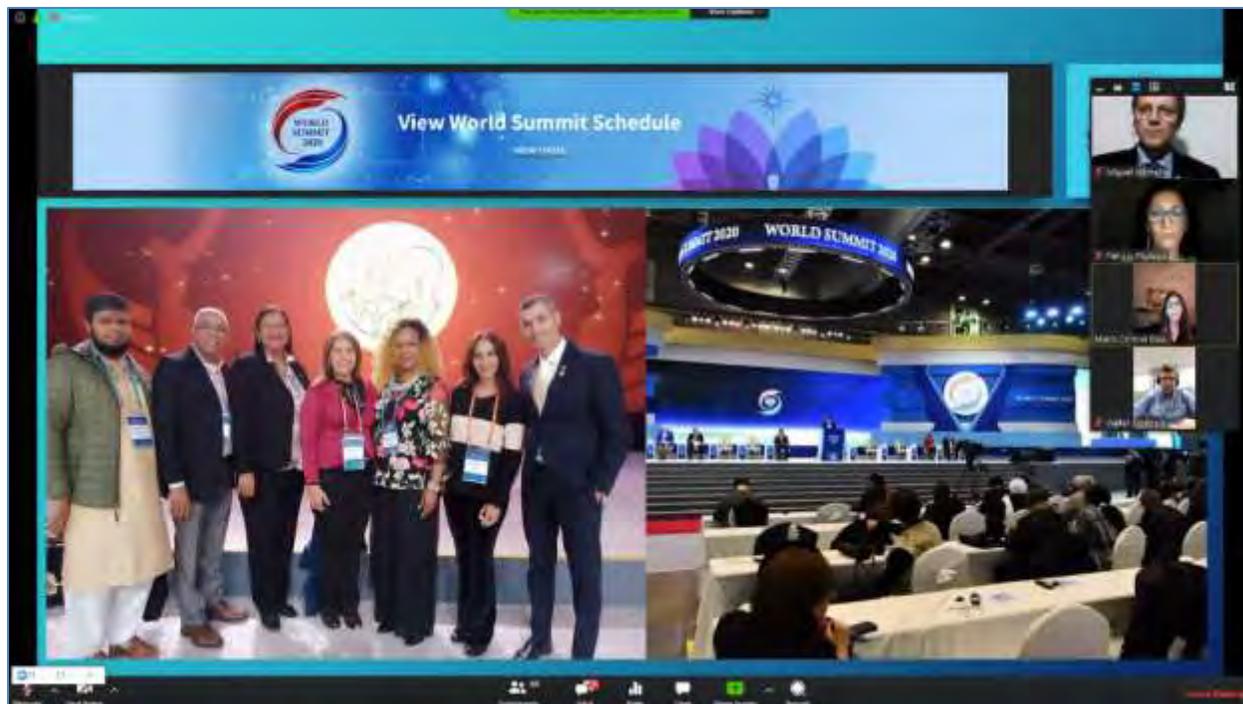


UPF Buenos Aires, Argentina: Challenges of Peace and Sustainable Development

Miguel Werner
April 29, 2020



Buenos Aires, Argentina -- "Challenges for Peace and Sustainable Development" was the theme of an online meeting on April 29, 2020, in which Argentinian participants shared their experiences of UPF's World Summit 2020, held in February in Korea (1). The Zoom webinar was watched directly by over 70 people, and the corresponding YouTube video has had more than 200 views as of mid-June.

The guests at the World Summit who shared on the webcast were Walter Nostrala, Mercosur parliamentarian – National District (Córdoba); Dr. María Cristina Elías, councilor and current legal adviser of the Rosario de la Frontera Municipality – Province of Salta; Mons. Juan Habib Chamieh, bishop of the Maronite Eparchy in Argentina and member of the Commission of Ecumenism and Relations With Judaism, Islam, and Religions of the CEA (Argentine Episcopal Conference); writer and international lecturer Alejandra Stamateas, pastor at the Ministry of Presencia de Dios (Presence of God); and journalist Cecilia Luchía-Puig, host of the program "Líderes TV" and president of Mañana Profesional, SA.

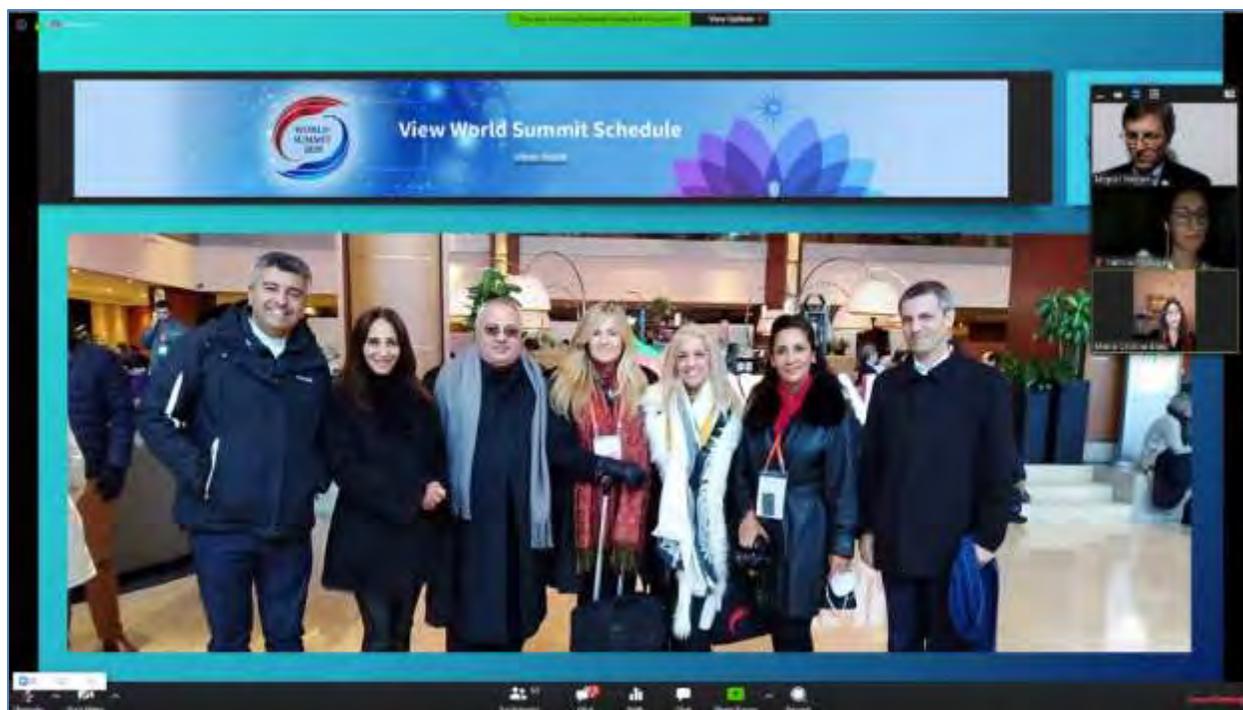


A video of the webinar can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3gJQJtQBpQ

The following is an extract of what was shared about the intercultural and interreligious summit in order to create further commitment for peace, common good, and sustainable development.

Legislator Walter Nostrala, Mercosur parliamentarian – National District (Córdoba):

Actually, Korea's summit allowed us to share debates, presentations and perspectives about a harsh reality we are facing, with political leaders, religious people, parliamentarians, and scholars from all around the world. We might have our differences, but I am sure we all share an ideal focused on achieving an equal society, a healthier planet, and peace among peoples. It is appropriate to value events like these, such as the events hosted by UPF all around the world. The task of raising awareness is essential. It is impossible to face any challenge, especially this one, which is one of the most difficult humanity has faced, achieving world peace and having a healthier planet. If we do not raise awareness, we cannot begin. We also need to take concrete action in order to achieve everlasting world peace.



I want to highlight something that moved me. I was able to join a meeting with an interreligious dialogue commission. I know politicians. Those with the power to decide are the ones who contributed to this worldwide situation. This is why politics and politicians have to solve it. I have no doubts about this, but I want to highlight the importance of interreligious dialogue to follow the path and achieve world peace. This is irreplaceable. Such an instrument should be used by politicians and politics as a whole. I attended that meeting where religious leaders around the world shared their vision and where I had the honor to listen to Monsignor Juan Habib Chamieh, representing Argentina.

We have to avoid wanting to feel important in order to be useful; we need to work together. The challenge is tough, and, I insist, if the world had issues already, with this current pandemic, things are even worse. Pandemics do not distinguish social classes, religions or ideologies. They affect all of us and will cause enormous damage. Thus, I believe this will cause more poverty, inequality, discrimination, and violation of human rights. Also, as an excuse to jump-start the economy, we will once again contribute to climate change and harming the environment. I do not want to expand on this, so I will finish by saying that UPF's work is immeasurable. I give my testimony because it is very important to keep raising awareness."

Complete presentation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYRTHqAcMSo

Dr. María Cristina Elías, councilor and legal adviser of the Rosario de la Frontera Municipality – Province of Salta:

During the summit, I attended interreligious conferences, and I learned a different way of perceiving things I had in my mind. When we see religions, we see closed, protocol, almost sectarian entities. This is not what I saw in this conference. I noticed religious leaders who have moral authority based on the principle that we are a family created by God. They also have a key role in the reconstruction of torn societies, offering their humanitarian services to alleviate traumas caused by war, abuse, sexual exploitation, crime, hunger, terrorism, and illness, among other things. It felt good to know that not only our own religion sees this. Religious leaders are capable of solving the concerns of the community and have an essential role in building a peace culture."

The conference of businesspeople had sensitive, friendly people. Among participants were owners of multimillion-dollar corporations, with thousands of employees, sharing as equals, since the UPF treated us equally. We met businesspeople committed to international cooperation to achieve world peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula.

Parliamentarians is a particularly special area for me. On two occasions, I was a parliamentarian (councilor) in my city. I have been surrounded by former and current presidents, former and current secretaries of state, former and current legislators from 190 nations; and I witnessed that leaders, men and women, apply their expertise because there is no time to lose. We need to move forward with all we have learned. This is the process of comprehending in order to avoid repetition of negative consequences for humanity, such as wars and corruption, the consequences of inequality and human exploitation. My profession taught me about legal matters, but attending such a magnificent meeting, learning everything I heard, greatly exceeded my expectations."

Complete presentation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOW_4IVHcWQ



Mons. Juan Habib Chamieh, bishop of the Maronite Eparchy in Argentina – member of the Commission of Ecumenism and Relations With Judaism, Islam, and Religions of the CEA:

The moment to travel arrived, and the coronavirus issue appeared: "Should we go?" I said, "Yes, we are going. If God wants me to go, everything is going to be okay." Thank God we travelled and they (the hosts) also took the necessary precautions. They had a heat detector in the hotel. We were well received: the stay, the hotel, the food, the transport, the huge conference halls, the translation. It was well organized, so I congratulate them. This creates a great impact, particularly at first. I liked the tribute to the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, whom I did not know was South Korean; as well as the bishop (Arab-Israeli emeritus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Munib Younan) and the African president (head of state of Senegal, Macky Sall). These three people have achieved goals related to peace.

I had the opportunity to join one of the interreligious panels. Here, I talked about inner, individual peace. Although the summit's theme was about international and world peace, I believe there cannot be international and world peace without individual, inner peace. I talked about my experience of peace (...) which made me experience individual peace with people and nature (...) and such experience had an impact in my personal life, which made me devote myself to religion, to the priestly and episcopal life.

After this majestic environment, we might ask, "Where does the money to do all of this come from?" I do not know, but my opinion was simple; what is important is they are using (the resources) to do good for humankind and international peace. That is why we had a truly enriching experience at a cultural level. We met a new country, a new people and their traditions; this is great and nice. Then, I found out the UPF has followers around the world, and here in Argentina there are many followers as well. Also, they (the organization) highlight the importance of marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. So I thank all of you and send you blessings to all of you who work here.

Complete presentation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHgQJM3yoeY

Writer and lecturer Alejandra Stamateas, pastor at the Ministry of Presencia de Dios (Presence of God):

I had the opportunity to participate in the clergy meeting, where they read a passage that for us Christians is a key passage of God's word and our beliefs. John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The focus of the clerics gathered there was that God loves the world. Not only does He love Christians or

clerics, God also loves the world. And the concern of us involved in the spirit world was what we could do to transmit more clearly God's love to the world. This is why God does not possess love, God is love and constantly wants to pour his love. This is God's interest in humanity. How can we transmit this?

Notice how interesting this is. In times of pandemic, many messages declared this pandemic was God's punishment. There has always been a belief that God is an evil God who punishes human beings and is waiting to punish all humankind. However, not many people mention a world-loving God. This was addressed during the clergy conference. Thus, I came back with the homework of how we can spread this love and erase the bad reputation that churches and religious people have created about God: the punishing, evil God who brings guilt to people.



How are we going to do it? This is the second point I want to share: spreading this message through more women. We need more women. Why? Not because women are superior than men, but because we are equal and possess a perspective that the world needs. To name some of these differences: we are very empathetic. The countries that accept more refugees are those with female leaders. Women are very creative. We have used creativity to be present in the absence of opportunity. Women are very sensitive to human sorrow, since we have endured all changes. Vital crises in our lives go through our bodies. Women suffer these changes and understand what pain is. Women are farsighted, very democratic and sympathetic, due to spending a lot of time focused on the private world. We practice values, and for this reason more women are in churches, because we are more sensitive to God's love and the intangible. Thus, when Jesus resurrected, he appeared to a woman and gave her the task of evangelizing. He said, "Go home to your own people and tell them." We need more women spreading the message of God's love, which is the urgent message for worn-out nations.

Complete presentation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=02IBYpyWyzk

Journalist Cecilia Luchía-Puig, host of the program "Líderes TV" and president of Mañana Profesional SA:

I think UPF's role of promoting peace is essential. The reason is that we know, more than ever, that peace does not only come from respect, but also from interreligious respect, knowledge, education, interaction among sciences and the media -- as well as the perspective they take from society and communicate to the audience. I want to say that this was my first time in Seoul, and it was very interesting to have the opportunity to be in the group we had at the Argentinian table, where we experienced solidarity, empathy, good spirits, and joy (...) It was my first time visiting South Korea, and I could see why this country, in the midst of the covid-19 crisis, had good results. We could see they checked every person, that social distancing was respected, that they take their rules very seriously. This was a learning process for us.

To summarize, I want to say that the experience was enriching; I loved meeting very interesting people from whom I got to learn so much. I also want to tell you that, as host of a program called "Líderes TV," I deeply consider the role of leaders, and the close relation between leadership and service. I also understand the relation between the generation of economic value and the development of inclusive policies, because when political and economic leaders develop inclusive policies, we see less poverty and more peace practices.

I want to finish with a quote by Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "He who does not live to serve, does not

deserve to live." In this sense, when leaders and we -- who also have a leadership responsibility -- assume our service role, respecting others, we are going to achieve a peaceful, fair, inclusive society.

Complete presentation: www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJ2CJDmEx7s

Hosts and moderators of the webinar "Challenges for Peace and Sustainable Development" on the UPF World Summit 2020 in Korea were Patricia Pitaluga, president of the civic association "Acercando Naciones;" and Miguel Werner, secretary general of UPF-Argentina. Technical coordination was in the charge of Prof. Emanuel Sayavedra, member of UPF-Argentina's governing board and director of Youth and Students for Peace (YSP) Argentina.

At the end of the presentations, we had contributions, comments, answers and questions suggested by the audience members, who were connected from various cities, provinces and countries, thanks to this new method of online meetings. Although we are geographically and socially separated, technology allows us to interact with each other. United by universal values, we can become one community.

Quote:

1) "Realizing World Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula through Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universal Values" was the theme of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) World Summit 2020, which took place on February 2–8 in South Korea. The event had around 6,000 participants from more than 170 countries. In the midst of old paradigms that cause more conflict and threaten more social and global upheaval, UPF addresses innovative alternatives for sustainable development from the perspective of Peace.



Information on the UPF World Summit 2020:

Website: www.worldsummit.or.kr

Photos: photos.app.goo.gl/Jgepfvh1sSJLnFsCA

Speeches: www.upf.org/conferences-2/364-world-summit/8772-world-summit-2020-schedule

Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DT4ZuPK1K2A

Media coverage: Acercando Naciones:

acercandonaciones.com/cumbre-de-paz-word-summit-2020-en-korea-16022020_Aagkyjz3w6

Crónica: www.cronica.com.ar/mundo/Las-naciones-unidas-por-la-Paz-Mundial-20200229-0013.html

UPF International website: www.upf.org