

International Leadership Conference

London, UK, September 7 to 9, 2016



Westminster Hall at the UK Parliament

By Jacques Marion

From September 7 to 9, 2016, the Universal Peace Federation held an International Leadership Conference in London, the third in a series of events held this year to launch worldwide the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP). With the theme “Interregional Dialogue Addressing Critical Challenges: Europe,

Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa,” the London conference represented the official launch of IAPP in these three regions. About 150 participants gathered from 40 nations, including political and religious leaders, women leaders and representatives of civil society.

Thirty members of parliament from 15 nations attended the event and signed the proposal to establish an International

Association of Parliamentarians for Peace in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East. Also in attendance were two former European heads of state and ten former members of parliament.

The conference began on September 7 with a session on “**A Vision for Peacebuilding in the Global Era.**” The UPF peacebuilding principles and practices were presented by Mr. Jack Corley and Mr. Jacques Marion, the regional chair and regional secretary general, respectively, of UPF-Europe. Three UPF Ambassadors for Peace then commented on the presentations and gave their views on the theme of the conference: Professor Martin Ramirez, chair of the Center for Conflict Studies at Nebrija University in Spain; Hon. Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, the former speaker of the Luxembourg Parliament; and Mr. Robert Vandemeulebroucke, a former ambassador from Belgium’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.





At the Opening Dinner, participants were warmly welcomed by **Baroness Sandip Verma** from the House of Lords and by Dr. Edwin Shuker, the vice president of the European Jewish Congress. Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke, the president of the World Congress of Faiths, and Sheikh Dr. Hojjat Ramzy, an executive member of the Muslim Council of Britain, gave the invocations. The evening closed with Dr. Thomas Walsh, the president of UPF International, who spoke about the worldwide IAPP inauguration



Hon. Paulo Pisco, a member of parliament from Portugal;

The second morning session was devoted to the theme: **“Addressing Peace and Security Challenges through Trade and Economic Integration.”** The session dealt with economic integration plans between Europe and Eurasia, and the Chinese project of a “New Silk Road” connecting Asia and Europe, and it shed light on the UPF founders’ project of an International Highway for Peace connecting the world to foster economic equality and intercultural exchange and implying the creation of tunnels between Korea and Japan and at the Bering Strait between Russia and the United States. The panel’s members were:



Dr. Victor Razbegin, the director of the Interdepartmental Center for Integrated Regional Transport Projects at the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, who studied and promoted the Bering Strait Tunnel project;

Dr. Vladimir Petrovsky from the Russian International Affairs Council and a specialist on Far Eastern studies;

Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, UPF-Eurasia regional chair and a former president of the Corporation for Building the Japan-Korea Tunnel;

Ms. Madi Sharma, the UK representative at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels;



conference series, and former **President Alfred Moisiu** of Albania (2002-2007), who emphasized how significant such a conference and themes were for their nations.

The second day began with a session on “Peace and Migration: Cross Regional Perspectives.” The presentations and discussion focused on the compelling issue of refugees, their integration into their new communities and the various factors behind migrations. The speakers were:



Dr. Werner Fasslabend, former Austrian minister of defense (1999-2000) and current president of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES);

Hon. Ulla Sandbaek, a member of parliament from Denmark;

Dr. Mohammad Al Antaki, a medical doctor attached to Palestinian refugee camps and secretary general of the Integrated Community Based Initiative in Jordan;

Dr. Antonio Stango, secretary general of the Italian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights.



Mr. Keith Bennett from the UK group “The Icebreakers,” specializing in China’s foreign economic policy.

Then began a session introducing the “Peace Road 2016” project, aimed at actualizing the vision of the International Peace Highway by promoting symbolic marches or bi cycle rides for peace throughout the world. The session was moderated by Mr. Matthew Huish, national director of the U.K. chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization, and organizer of the Peace Road in the United Kingdom. After a video describing Peace Road events held around the world in 2015 and 2016 in support of the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and world peace, three participants representing Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East expressed their support for the project:



Hon. Gerardo Giovagnoli, member of the San Marino Parliament;

Mr. Maxim Misko, chair of the Belarus Peace Fund;



and **Hon. Issawi Frej**, member of Israel’s Knesset.

In the afternoon, all the participants moved to the British Parliament for two afternoon sessions that were held in Committee Room 14 of the House of Commons.

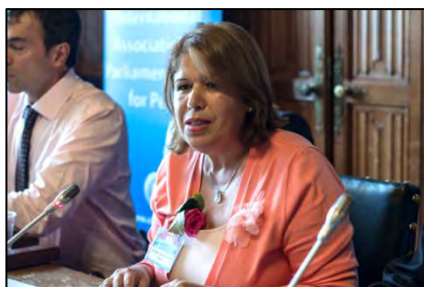
The first session at the Parliament had the theme of “Overcoming Extremism and Promoting the Peaceful Resolution of Conflict: The Contribution of Religious Leadership” and was hosted by the Rt. Hon. Tom Brake, a member of the House of Commons. Lord Nazir Ahmed of Rotherham, the first person to be appointed to the House of Lords after swearing on the Holy Quran, greeted the audience. The session focused on the role that religious leaders and faith-based organizations could play, in cooperation with political leaders, in bringing effective solutions to violent religious extremism. The panel comprised several prominent speakers:



Lord Robin Eames, the former primate of All Ireland, well known for his role in the peace process in Ireland;



H.E. Fatmir Sejdiu, former president of Kosovo (2006-2010), involved for many years at the highest level in the process of his country’s independence;



Sen. Latifa Gahouchi, member of the Belgian Parliament and head of the Commission on Education of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation;

Dr. Afzal Ashraf, a consultant fellow at the United Kingdom’s Royal United Services and an expert on terrorism and radicalization.



The second session at Parliament, where the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace was launched for Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East, was hosted by **Hon. Virendra Sharma**, a member of the House of Commons and the patron of UPF-UK, who greeted the participants. Moderating the session, Dr. Thomas Walsh explained the purpose of this world-level association of parliamentarians as a forum through which to work together for peace and human development by going beyond differences of ideology, race, nationality, and religion. He then gave the floor to Lord Rajinder Loomba, founder of the well-known U.K. charity Loomba Foundation, which supports widows around the world, who greeted the participants and supported the UPF initiative.



[The UPF Co-Founder’s Address](#) from Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon was delivered by her daughter **Dr. Sun Jin Moon**. “I will do my best to convey the warmth of love and the hopes for peace that she has in her heart,” Dr. Sun Jin Moon said, “and I invite you to all pay close attention to her message.”

In the address Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon recalled that when she spoke at the United Nations in Vienna in 2015, she called for a spiritual awakening and urged each member state to serve the whole, looking beyond national self-interests. She also asked the audience to consider establishing a fifth UN Office on the Korean Peninsula in order to work for peace in the Asia Pacific Region.

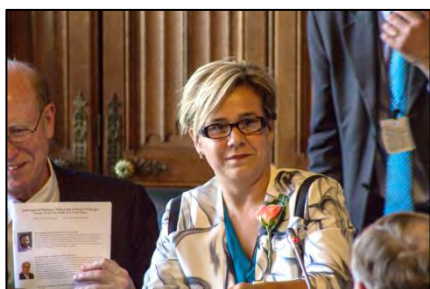
“I want to emphasize the importance of the role of parliamentarians,” Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon said in her address. “You represent the people. You are entrusted by the people with a great responsibility. If parliamentarians of the world join together in harmony and cooperation for the sake of peace, we can transform the current reality of our world, creating a world of joy, harmony and lasting peace.”

Representative members of parliament from Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East then took the floor and gave brief statements of support for the new association, starting with:



Hon. Nina Novakova, member of the Czech Parliament;

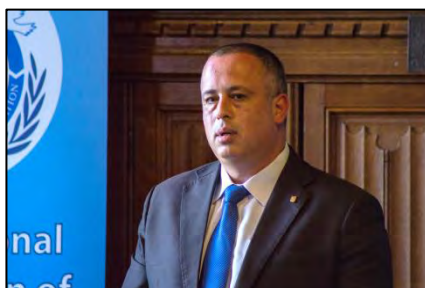
Gen. Karlis Kreslins, member of the Latvian Parliament;



Hon. Eleonora Bechis, member of the Italian Parliament;



Hon. Silvio Parnis, member of the Maltese Parliament;



and ending with **Hon. Hilik Bar**, deputy speaker of Israel’s Knesset, who closed the session with a rousing speech calling for peace in the Middle East.

Unable to attend, Sen. Ahmed Palankoev of the Committee on International Affairs at the Russian Senate, had sent a message of support to the conference.

All the panelists then signed the displayed proposal for the foundation of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace, joined by the former presidents of Albania and Kosovo, the former Austrian defense minister and his wife, and the three UPF regional chairs. All the participants separately signed the proposal, then added their signature on the board.

The evening concluded with a wonderful dinner-cruise on the River Thames, during which the participants could admire famous sights of London while enjoying music, songs and dance.

On the closing day of the conference, Friday, September 9, participants had the opportunity to choose between four breakout sessions in the morning.

The session on “**Family, Peace and Sustainable Development**” discussed the role of the family in peacebuilding, its impact on social stability and prosperity, and the challenge to define family policies for sustainable development. The panel was composed of members of parliament and prominent supporters of family values in Europe:



Lord Rajinder Loomba from the House of Lords, whose Loomba Foundation supports widows and their families throughout the world; Mr. Harry Benson, the research director of the UK-based Marriage Foundation and a regular voice on the issue of the family on UK local and national media;



Hon. Inga Bite, a member of the Latvian Parliament;



Hon. Ulviyya Aghayeva, a member of the Azerbaijan Parliament;

Mr. Antoine Renard, the French president of the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations.



A concurrent session on **“Media and Peacebuilding: The Impact of Social Media”** discussed the influence of social media in current societies, their role in relation to conflicts and to what extent they should be regulated by the law. Moderated by Mr. Humphrey Hawksley, a BBC world affairs correspondent from the United Kingdom, it brought together media professionals from Europe and the Middle East:

Professor Simon Holberton, a lecturer in journalism at Deakin University in Australia, from the United Kingdom;

Professor Predrag Vujovic, the founder and president of the Public Relations Business School in Serbia and a leading communications expert in the ex-Yugoslavia region;

Mr. Kiriakos Pierides, a journalist and founding member of the Association for Social Reform (OPEK) in Cyprus;

Hon. Zuheir Bahloul, a member of the Knesset and a well-known TV and radio sports broadcaster in Israel.

In the second morning period, the session on **“Women’s Leadership in the Prevention of Radicalization”** brought together women parliament members from Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East who discussed the role of women’s empowerment and leadership in countering extremism and resisting radicalization. The panel was composed of:



Hon. Alenka Jeraj, the vice president of the Slovenian Democratic Party and president of its Women’s Committee;



Hon. Dilara Jabrayilova, a member of the Azerbaijan Parliament;

Hon. Ksenia Svetlova, a journalist and member of the Knesset in Israel;

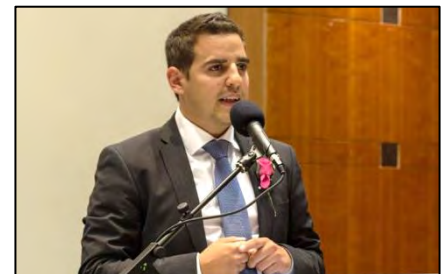
Hon. Flora Brovina, a poet, pediatrician, women’s rights activist and member of the Kosovo Parliament.

Since the “man representative” on the panel, Hon. Roberto Rampi, a member of the Italian Parliament, had to depart unexpectedly, Dr. Thomas Walsh joined the panel and offered his views on the interactive and complementary role of men and women in overcoming conflict.

The concurrent session’s theme was **“Resolving and Preventing Conflict: Reconciling Secular and Religious Perspectives.”** The panelists discussed the interplay of religious and secular perspectives in conflict resolution and prevention, in view of searching for lasting, democratic solutions to contemporary conflicts. The panel was composed of:

Dr. Emmanuel Dupuy, the president of the Paris-based Institute for European Prospective Studies, who served as advisor to the French secretary of defense;

Dr. Roman Joch, the president of the Civic Institute from the Czech Republic, former advisor to the Czech prime minister on human rights and foreign policy;



Hon. Asdin El Habbassi, a member of the Austrian Parliament and a deputy of the Austrian People’s Party youth organization.

Dr. Edwin Shuker, vice president of the European Jewish Congress, who concluded the session with heartfelt words on Jewish spirituality’s role in implementing peace.

A final luncheon ended the three-day conference, preceded by an Ambassadors for Peace award ceremony in which 32 participants received a certificate from Dr. Thomas Walsh. One participant from each region offered a moving testimony on their experience throughout the conference, and two farewell songs from a professional soul singer sent off the participants.

In their evaluations, participants described their good impressions of the conference, appreciating the high quality of the speakers and the relevance of the themes discussed. They were particularly impressed by the sessions at the Parliament, by the support from prominent members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and by the variety of political and religious views represented in the audience. Several members of parliament expressed their desire to join the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace and to participate in UPF activities.

Reports of the conference made the news on TV channels and some major newspapers around the world.

[View more pictures](#)

