

UPF Asia Pacific: Think Tank 2022 Forum Asia Pacific, Feb. 1: IAPD Session

Ursula McLackland
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Asia Pacific -- The Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) hosted the third session of the virtual *Think Tank 2022* Forum for UPF's Asia Pacific region on February 1, 2022, on the theme "Perspectives from Religious and Spiritual Leaders."

A total of 1,937 people registered for the event. One-hundred and seventy-nine (179) participants watched it live on Zoom, while it was viewed thousands of times on YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms.



The seven distinguished speakers were:

Dr. Tageldin Hamad, *IAPD international coordinator*, opened the session by saying that Korea cannot be complete until the Korean Peninsula is reunited. He also said that the reunification process should be led by Koreans. Dr. Hamad went on to express his deep appreciation to UPF founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for their advocacy of Korean reunification and world peace. He then encouraged everyone to find unity in diversity, stating that everyone is unique and that we must use our uniqueness to come together for peace.

The second speaker was **Mufti Muhammad Arshad**, *chief imam from Hong Kong*. He presented a Muslim perspective and emphasized that if there is peace on the Korean Peninsula, there will be peace in Asia and the world. He encouraged everyone to live with peace, to peacefully resolve issues and to accept each other.

Next to present was **Swami Hari Chaitanya Puri Ji Maharaj**, *shri hari kripa ashram from India*, who spoke from a Hindu perspective. He advocated peace through culture and values and underlined that great efforts produce great results.

Ven. Madagampitiye Vijithadhamma, *a professor of the department of Buddhist and Pali studies at the University of Sri Jayawardanapura in Sri Lanka*, gave his insights from a Buddhist perspective. He stated that religion is one factor that influences individuals in society and thus must be able to promote interreligious activities and dialogue to achieve unity. To achieve peace, appreciation and tolerance towards one another should be promoted, not religious exclusivism.



The next speaker was **Bishop Dr. Suraphol Boonpratham**, *president of the Thai Evangelical Alliance Association from Thailand*, presented a Protestant perspective. He urged Christians to seek sustainable solutions to spiritual barriers. He noted that if everyone joined hands together for the future, descendants would be truly blessed by God. He commended Rev. and Dr. Moon's work for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula and affirmed his belief that we are one family under God.

Dr. Andi M. Faisal Bakti, *a religious scholar and professor at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta in Indonesia*, provided a Muslim perspective. He highlighted areas of conflict in society that need addressing. He emphasized the importance of world peace and mutual respect: recognizing each other's nations, countries, organizations, parties, ethnicities, tribes, groups and gender differences. He concluded by expressing his support for the reunification of North and South Korea.

The final speaker was **Rev. Edwin A. De La Peña**, *chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Interreligious Dialogue, Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines*, who spoke from a Catholic perspective. He discussed the signing of the historic document "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" on February 4, 2019, by Pope Francis and the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyib, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The [UN General Assembly's resolution 75/200](#) proclaiming February 4 as the International Day of Human Fraternity, to be observed each year beginning in 2021, specifically refers to that momentous event in Christian-Muslim relations. This signifies the international acknowledgment of the joint efforts of the grand imam and Pope Francis in fostering interfaith and intercultural dialogue. He also pointed out that God gifted us with brothers and sisters. While we can unfriend those we do not like, we cannot "unbrother" one another as we come from the same Creator. He stated that reunification is possible because Korean people are more than brothers and sisters -- they are family, one in blood.

A lively and engaging Q and A session followed.

The event was moderated by **Mrs. Ursula McLackland**, *coordinator of IAPD-Asia Pacific*.