

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

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Asia Pacific -- The International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) hosted the second session of the virtual *Think Tank 2022* Forum for UPF's Asia Pacific region on February 1, 2022. The program featured four current parliamentarians and a former ambassador who shared their perspectives on the conference theme "Reunification of Korean Peninsula and World Peace."

A total of 1,942 people registered for the event. Two-hundred and forty-five (245) participants watched it live on Zoom, while it was viewed thousands of times on YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms.



In his opening remarks, **Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal**, *chair of UPF-Asia Pacific and a former minister of government of Nepal*, greeted the participants and called on all parliamentarians and government leaders to actively take part in contributing to the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. This can be done through dialogue, scholarly research, involving civil society and most importantly, through building personal connections. He said that UPF's initiatives supporting peace on the peninsula not only involves civil society leaders and lawmakers, but also extends to the political, military, economic, tourism and humanitarian sectors.

UPF has provided avenues for these and other sectors to collaborate and explore prospects for improved relations not only between the two Koreas, but all stakeholders in a region, he added.

Hon. Dhakal concluded his remarks by reminding the participants that the *Think Tank 2022* Forum and its

sessions are being held in preparation for the World Summit 2022, which will be convened in Seoul, South Korea from February 11 to 13.

Special greetings were delivered by **Dr. Michael Jenkins**, *coordinator of IAPP International and president of UPF International*. He delved into the crucial role of parliamentarians and the impact of them working together could create in the global community. Not only can the content of the session be communicated to the governments of the world, but also be conveyed to the people of their respective nations. He said, "As members of parliament on the national level, you are the ones who are closest to the hearts of the people." With an understanding of people's hearts, parliamentarians can take action to realize citizen's deepest longings, which is to see peace, prosperity, freedom and happiness.



Dr. Jenkin's remarks were followed by special greetings by **Hon. Dan Burton**, *U.S. congressman (1983-2013) and co-chair of IAPP International*. He emphasized the importance of parliamentarians to get the message across to their nations and people and ensure that we never see another war break out in Korea or in other parts of the world.

The IAPP Session had five panelists:

Hon. Suos Yara, *a member of the Parliament and 5th Commission Chair of the National Assembly of Cambodia*, stressed the importance of moving beyond the traditional frontiers of diplomacy, state-to-state diplomacy, to resolve conflicts and that more attention should be placed on multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Specifically, public diplomacy and people's diplomacy should be given more significance in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. UPF's *Think Tank 2022* is the best platform to connect different stakeholders to build a coherent and holistic approach towards Korean unification.

Hon. Alvick Maharaj, *a government whip of the Parliament of Fiji*, expressed his firm solidarity for the quest to achieve the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas. He said that UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon's initiative calling for peace between the two Koreas will not only benefit the peninsula, but will be equally important for the rest of the world.

He also noted that when barriers come down and peace and unity comes about, humanity must be prepared to face a void of a life that once was. Therefore, it is crucial that this void be filled with a unified Korea founded on freedom, a respect for fundamental rights and values for all its citizens to ensure there is lasting peace. For this to happen, support from the international community will be vital. "The international influence was part of the cause of division. Therefore, for the present and future we must now stand united as a cause of unification," he concluded.

Hon. Geeta Rana Chhetri, *a member of the Constituent Assembly of Nepal*, shed light on the different factors that have greatly affected the Korean reunification process, which will necessitate resources and economic, political and diplomatic adjustments.

Despite the complicated nature of the reunification process, there is great hope for the Korean Peninsula to experience lasting peace and stability when all parties, including powerful foreign neighbors, come together to find solutions and compromise. Hon. Chhetri said that on the global scale, a unified Korea will play a significant role in maintaining the status quo of peace in Asia and the rest of the world.

Amb. Luis T. Cruz, *ambassador of the Philippines to South Korea (2008-2014)*, gave an insightful presentation on the process to form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in pursuit of regional integration and peace. The purpose of the ASEAN Declaration, the founding document of the association, was to call for regional cooperation to promote peace and stability and to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region in the spirit of equality and mutual partnership.



He said that the process countries in Southeast Asia went through after WWII to achieve regional integration is similar to that of the process to unify the two Koreas. After several failed attempts, the ASEAN Declaration was eventually signed by five Southeast Asian nations in 1967. In the following year, they were joined by five more nations. He emphasized that this happened despite the extreme diversity of Southeast Asia, in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, social life and ideology.

Amb. Cruz added that ASEAN was able to achieve this level of success thanks to the pragmatic leadership of its member countries who have committed themselves to setting aside their differences so that they can bring about peace and focus on economic and socio-cultural cooperation.

Hon. Ajay Dutt, *a member of the Delhi Legislative Assembly and chair of IAPP-Delhi, India*, likened the grief and suffering of the divided Korean Peninsula to what India experienced after the partition of British India in 1947 into India and Pakistan.

He highlighted the efforts and initiative that have been made by Rev. and Mrs. Moon, which started nearly 30 years when they visited North Korea at the risk of their own lives, to see the realization of the reunification of the peninsula. They have not stopped since then and that is why there is greater hope for this dream to be actualized because the whole world is now involved.

Mr. Santosh K. Paudel, *director of IAPP-Asia Pacific*, served as the moderator.