

UPF and WFWP Rome, Italy's celebration of 2018 UN International Day of Peace

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Rome, Italy -- The beautiful and historic Sala Zuccari was the setting of a UPF celebration of the 2018 UN International Day of Peace.

Working together with Women's Federation for World Peace, an affiliated organization, UPF held a conference titled "The Right to Peace: Italy Bridge of Peace for a Stronger and Stable Europe." The September 21 event, which received the patronage of the Senate, took place in the Sala Zuccari of Palazzo Giustiniani at the invitation of Sen. Roberto Rampi, coordinator of the Italian chapter of International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), a UPF initiative.

The 120 conference participants represented various nationalities and faiths, as well the academic, political, judicial, and journalistic worlds.

UPF used the occasion of International Day of Peace to introduce the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), the newest of the many peacebuilding organizations established by the UPF founders.

The conference started with the reading of messages of greeting from Rome Mayor Virginia Raggi; Member of the European Parliament Silvia Costa; Dr. Alessandra Liquori of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute; and Minister Plenipotentiary Dr. Fabrizio Petri, president of the Human Rights Interministerial Committee.

On the occasion of the IAPD introduction in the Senate, three of the founding members of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), another UPF initiative, were present: Sen. Roberto Rampi; former Sen. Albertina Soliani, "godmother" of IAPP-Italy; and Hon. Eleonora Bechis, with whom the IAPP path began two years ago at the Chamber of Deputies.

In his presentation, Senator Rampi emphasized two words present in the title of the conference: "right" and "bridge." The right to peace is something specific, which is conquered like all rights and defends itself like all rights, he said. The word "bridge," he said, recalls Italy's destiny to unite different cultures. Referring to the extraordinary title given to the conference, Senator Rampi explained the role and work that UPF is doing with both parliamentarians and faith leaders.

Carlo Zonato, the president of UPF-Italy, expressed his hope that the conference would provide all the participants with food for thought and something significant to animate their heart and character.

Cristina Alunni, representing the Municipality of Rome for the Gemma Guerrini Equal Opportunities advisor, pointed out that the municipal administration is attentive and sensitive to issues related to peacebuilding.

In his opening speech, Mr. Zonato of UPF-Italy emphasized the right to peace as a universal right par excellence. Peace is inherent in our spiritual DNA, which drives humanity to become a family with God at the center, he said. Our task is to get in tune with this goal and to respond freely and responsibly to make this revolution of heart and conscience.

Sen. Albertina Soliani reminded everyone of our responsibility to collect the 70-year-old legacy of the fathers and mothers of the Italian constitution -- that is, the fundamental values of humanity: human rights, the dignity of the person, freedom, equality, solidarity, peace. Senator Soliani spoke about the responsibility of parliamentarians to identify themselves with the people who elected them. Peace has a popular dimension because it is the greatest good that people can have, and their representatives are the closest to this aspiration, she said.

The surprise visit of former Minister of Education Valeria Fedeli reminded the audience of the function of education to build daily the conditions of peace, by teaching children that "the other is us."

Antonio Stango, president of the Italian Federation for Human Rights, reminded the audience that the Constitution of the Italian Republic had been signed at Palazzo Giustiniani, the same building in which they were sitting. He said we are now living at the center of a dynamic story of hope.

Marco Ricceri, secretary general of the Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies, asked how the International Day of Peace and the 70th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be celebrated, now that we have entered the Fourth Industrial Revolution. To overcome the disorientation that has been created in all fields, he said, it is necessary to recover a spirit of collaboration between the worlds of science, politics, economy and society. One of the tasks of politics is to propose a vision, a path. Cooperation between the worlds of science, politics and economics has become mandatory, he said.

The first session ended with words from Dr. Fadi El Kheir, a Lebanese, who publicly thanked Italy for the contribution it is making to peace processes, with the Italian army in the Lebanese refugee camps. He called Italy one of the few states that can truly be the guarantor and promoter of peace.

The second session emphasized how the inner, spiritual aspects are indispensable for an individual, family and social balance that leads to peace.

Giuseppe Calì, the UPF coordinator for Southern Europe, introduced the IAPD. What can the IAPD give more than interreligious dialogue? With an overview of the sacred texts of the major religious confessions, the enormous potential for mediation, tolerance, dialogue and peace at the base of their foundations emerged. The IAPD was created to bring true justice, shared prosperity and social life aimed at happiness and well-being, he said. Politics, religion and civil society can work together to resolve conflicts and divisions through encouraging new generations to have a vision, spirit of sacrifice, and love for humanity.

The passionate talk of Raffaella di Marzio, director of the Center for Studies of Freedom of Religion, Belief and Conscience, emphasized that religion can be a positive factor for society, as there is a direct and strong connection between religious freedom and peace. All religions must have the same dignity and the same opportunities, she said. There is a need for a new generation of young people trained in these values to enter politics, a new class of leaders who really believe, she said.

With Dora Bognandi, head of the Federation of Evangelical Women in Italy, the audience perceived the passion of peace in a profoundly female spiritual context. She said that if we feel the need to talk about peace, it is because we miss it. She said that the two aspects that most impressed in her the need for peace were the relationships between people who profess different faiths and the relationships between men and women. To face and solve these problems, it is necessary to verify and stay awake. Also praying for peace has a social value.

Elisabetta Nistri, president of the Italian chapter of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), gave a moving talk about the role of women in peacebuilding and how peace can spread only if it is already within us: a very strong inner condition that prevents us from faltering in the face of difficulties; a fundamental right which, to be real, requires commitment on the part of everyone and respect for rules and duties. Peace comes from investing oneself for others by giving true love. Living this principle, we generate prosperity, which multiplies in time and space. Understanding our role and our value with the uniqueness of our characteristics leads us to the realization of peace and harmony. To be well and at peace with oneself, it is necessary to love one another, and we can generate love by drawing from God's inexhaustible source of love. Hence the fundamental role of the woman who can emerge in society with a motherly heart who knows how to take care of the neighbor and of the common good.

During the morning, certificates were awarded to eight new Ambassadors of Peace who have distinguished themselves in their activities for a better society.