

## UPF Nepal Webinar Series: Covid 19 - The Role of Faith based Organizations

Piya Ratna Maharjan

June 10, 2020



The Universal Peace Federation Nepal (UPF-Nepal) successfully held its Peace Talks Webinar Series on the theme "Covid 19: The Role of Faith based Organizations and Religious Leaders" This Virtual Event took place on Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 11:00 am – 12:30 pm. This was participated by 82 registered participants and 5 panelists speakers a moderator; total 150 attendees. The participants included top religious leaders, faith-based organizations, religious institutes, members of the academy, government officials and Ambassadors for Peace who have attended UPF's events in the past.

Opening Prayer led by Prof. Dr. Milan Ratna Shakya, President, Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development- Nepal (IAPD-Nepal) with Sanskrit Sloka.

Prof. Dr. Milan Ratna Shakya, the Moderator delivered his remarks where he encouraged the cooperation of religious leaders to be the lighthouse that the world needs during this challenging time. He said that it is now time to let the religious leaders fulfill their roles to become the conscience of the people and to let this crisis become an opportunity for the revival of faith and conviction "Especially during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic where many people had lost their lives, in state of confusion and going through tremendous pain and grieving, the role of religions and religious leaders become more paramount," he stressed. stands for prayer, interreligious harmony and unity, and finally, education of universal family values. He said that this is the time to pray and humble ourselves in front of the living God.

He emphasized, "The role of religious leaders during this time is to advocate the values of world religious teachings and be the public's voice and conscience to speak out on social and moral issues that plagues our society." He highlighted that we need to focus on this matter today.

Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, Chairman of International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) gave the Welcoming Remarks by highly commending the active role of UPF-Nepal, in organizing the series of

virtual meetings. And further thanking Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD-Nepal) for hosting the webinar bringing all religious leaders together for addressing current Covid-19 issues and roles of faith-based organizations and religious leaders.

He further emphasized the UPF ideas of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values that were discussed during the recent World Summit 2020 held in February in Seoul, Korea and thousands of faith based organizations and different religions leaders participated to show their solidarity which have become more relevant as we go through this global crisis. He shared that in midst of this crisis, UPF encourages the following best practices: unity, cooperation, dialogue and compassion.

Dr. K. B Rokaya, President, National Council of Churches Nepal the first panelist stressed the need of all religious leaders to reflect their own religious traditions and teachings and come out with the common and mutual understanding the depth crisis of current pandemic Covid 19 and the role of religious in comforting the people who are deeply distressed and grieving due to the current pandemic crisis.

He further emphasized the pivotal role of religious leaders and stronger voices of religious should come out to be heard by the suffering people.

Also pointed out to local government to open up religious sites and temples so that people can come for spiritual guidance to bring the calm, tranquility and harmony. Due to lockdown the religious leaders could not serve the needy people for their spiritual salvation and prayers

Dr. K.B Rokaya reminded us that he prayed for the safety of all the participants who attended during the recent concluded World Summit 2020 was held in Feb 2020 in Korea. He also addressed the IAPD Session and the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) pointing out the importance roles of faith-based organizations and religious leaders to join together for World Peace promulgated by the True Parents.

The second panelist to give his reaction was Hindu Leader Pandit Keshab Prasad Chaulagain, Secretary General- Interreligious Council Nepal said that this pandemic reminds us of our interconnectedness as everyone is affected by this especially with the interfaith group and friends around the world. This ignites the spirit of compassion, care and generosity of one another and this goes beyond race, religion and nationality. He further went on saying that all religious leaders should act more responsibility He also said that on the bright side, this pandemic has given the earth time to heal. Lastly, he shared that this reminded us that despite the advancement of our science and technology, we are not in charge; God is always in charge. That is why this is the best time to give thanks and reverence to Him.

Most Venerable Bhikkhu Maitri, President All Nepal Buddhist Association of Nepal started his reaction by saying that in the past and even during the Buddha's time there were serious pandemic that killed many thousand people. The mystical story says that Buddha with his entourage of disciples went to the city of Baisali where the pandemic spread, to chant Ratana Sutra (Sutra of Blessings) to eradicate the pandemic. After his chanting and spiritual compassionate healing, it cured the pandemic. He further added the important issues is that today the world is so much materialistic and forgetting the spiritual values. Hence, he stressed the importance of spiritual values, religious teaching and True Parents guidance.

He shared that he has been volunteering and providing goods to front-liners and people in the community in need. "If we live a life with peace and harmony in our hearts, we should always remind ourselves that we are not living it for myself or for my family, but for the entire society, nation and world. When we apply this, we can impact the lives of many others and others will be feeling genuine love from you."

Moulana Nazrul Hussain Falahi, a Muslim Leader, President, Assalam Society Nepal, said, "In this

pandemic, the best thing for us to do, is to begin to see what we can do as religious leaders for our brothers and how do we become a blessing to them."



He shared that government should allowed all religious sites such as masjid, temples, churches, synagogue and monastery to be opened during the lockdown so that these spiritual places can render services to needy people. we should rediscover our spiritual relationship with God and that this is the best time to transition from deviating from the material things of the world to ascending to spiritual consciousness. "A strong faith should not fear. Only God can heal our state of depression amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

Further he recommends the important points on the role of religious leaders during the coronavirus pandemic. "We need to give people a healing" he started.

Rev. Santosh Kumar Paudel, Director FFWPU South Asia, with regards to interreligious harmony, he urged religious leaders to work alongside national leaders in forming religious assemblies or council of religious representatives within the structure of the United Nations. We took granted of our lives before and this pandemic situation taught us not to take for granted anymore.

Rev. Binod Dangi, Secretary General, UPF Nepal, gave Vote of Thanks by expressing his gratitude and thankfulness to all panelist who are presented at the webinar, and other religious leaders, faith- based organizations and audience for their valuable timing and sharing.

Mr. Piya Ratna Maharjan, Secretary General IAPD Nepal read out the Q and A session from the audience to the panelists.

The webinar ended with a Closing Remarks by Dr. Milan Ratna Shakya the Moderator of the webinar session and exchanging greetings and thanking again.