

Dominican Republic's chapter of IAPP launched in the National Congress Palace

Cesar Regalado

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Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic -- The Dominican Republic chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) was launched in the Senate Chamber of the Congress Palace in Santo Domingo on July 5, 2017.

A total of 150 people, including an international delegation of three senators and 20 congressmen and women, led by Hon. Jose Alberto Alfaro, former president and current member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica; Ambassadors for Peace; and leaders from civil society and academia participated.

The program began with a prayer, which was offered by minister Teodulo Silfa Casso, president of the Board Committee of the Dominican Religious Leadership Conference (CDLR), which was followed by welcoming remarks, given by Hon. Amarilis Santana, a member of the Senate of the Dominican Republic and president of the IAPP-Dominican Republic. Hon. Santana said that she was honored to be the first Dominican woman to give recognition to UPF co-founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, at the UPF World Summit in February 2015. Since then, she has been determined to work for world peace.

Rev. Sang Sook Kim, president of UPF-Central America and the Caribbean, spoke about the role of the IAPP and goal of opening chapters in every country in the region. These chapters can be bridges that foster communication and understanding between parliamentarians in the region, he said.

After a video about the launching of the IAPP in Nepal was shown, Dr. Chang Shik Yang, secretary general of UPF International, gave the keynote speech. He highlighted the achievements of the IAPP in different continents around the world and spoke about the founding vision and purpose of the IAPP.

Hon. Alfaro gave his congratulations for the launch of the IAPP-Dominican Republic and shared that he has been able to embrace and meet many parliamentarians since participating in the launch of the IAPP in 2015. He encouraged the parliamentarians in attendance to see the great potential of the IAPP to build a world of lasting peace and address the critical challenges of our time, such as the current situation between North and South Korea.

Mr. Cesar Regalado, secretary general of UPF-Dominican Republic, gave a presentation on the core principles of the IAPP and the UPF Principles of Peace, and spoke about the chapter's recent activities, including: the two resolutions that were given by both the Senate and Chamber of Deputies -- which comprise the Congress of the Dominican Republic -- in recognition of UPF's efforts for peace; the launching of the Dominican Religious Leadership Conference (CDLR), which took place on January 13, 2016 in La Romana province with 350 distinguished guests; and Pure Love rallies that were held in several cities.



Members of the Committee of the IAPP-Dominican Republic signed the resolution launching the IAPP.

During the Ambassadors for Peace awards ceremony, Hon. Lucia Alba, one of the honorees, expressed her gratitude to be a member of the newly-established IAPP in the Dominican Republic.

Afterwards, several parliamentarians shared their reflections on the event:

Hon. Rafael Mendez, a congressman from the Dominican Republic, said: "When I was a journalist, I wrote many articles for many newspapers, and a book about peace, but I realized that these were written from inspiration. Through UPF and by attending the International Leadership Conferences, I have come to know what real peace is. I think we should challenge our limitations and follow the IAPP principles we have learned at today's event."

Hon. Yojanny Mercedes Guzman said: "I have had experiences working for peace -- through welcoming many youth volunteers to my home. I have come to believe in the importance of a strong family, and I have come to realize that family is the most important block to building peace among us. It is a [great] pleasure to participate in this event because I now realize the true meaning of peace and it has empowered me and has given me different tools to work for peace. I commit to working with you on every effort toward building a world of lasting peace through the family."

Hon. Ana Mercedes Rodriguez asked several questions, including: What is our mission from now on? What do you expect us to do from today onwards? Hon. Alfaro answered the questions, and afterwards, Dr. Yang explained that parliamentarians should cooperate to build a world of peace through education. A better education system that provides character education to all citizens of this nation is needed, he said.