

## UPF Auckland, New Zealand inaugurated the IAPD at the Mt. Eden Memorial Hall

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April 13, 2019



Auckland, New Zealand -- The New Zealand chapter of UPF inaugurated the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) on April 13, 2019, at the Mt. Eden Memorial Hall. About 70 guests from various backgrounds such as religious, faith-based organizations and some political leaders attended with a beautiful spirit and sense of unity. The theme of the assembly was "Addressing the Critical Challenge of Our Time to Create A Vibrant Community: The Contribution of Religious and Faith-Based Organizations."

The concept of the IAPD is rooted in the statement of the UPF founders, "World peace can be fully accomplished only when the wisdom and efforts of the world's religious leaders are combined cooperatively and respectfully with the endeavors of national political leaders."



New Zealand experienced the darkest historical tragedy less than a month ago as 50 followers of Islam were killed by a confused criminal. The brutal act brought international attention, for nobody expected such an attack would happen in the peaceful society of New Zealand. Hence launching the IAPD became more urgent and the topic more relevant.

The program started with welcome remarks by Mr. Geoffrey Fyers, secretary general of UPF-New Zealand, followed by an opening prayer offered by Pastor Bill Tangariki, an Ambassador for Peace.

Mr. Fyers led a moment of silence to honor the victims of the Christchurch shootings and their families.

After a video presentation of the inter-religious work of UPF and its co-founders, Mr. Adel Jamati, the director of UPF-New Zealand, highlighted the universal and profound spirituality embedded in all religions as a unifying factor for world peace.

**First Panel Discussion: "A Vibrant Community for Family, Peace, and Human Development"**

The speakers of the first panel were leaders from some of the main religious and spiritual affiliations in New Zealand. Each gave a brief talk, followed by questions and answers.

Gul Zaman, President of Auckland City Multi Ethnic Council (Islam)

Ram Dharma Nand, Ambassador for Sanatan (Hinduism)

David Rankin, Ngapuhi elder (Maori Spirituality)

Elder Suamalie NT Iosefa Naisali, United Reformed Christian Church (Christianity)



### **Second Panel Discussion: "Religious and Political Leaders: Exploring Ways to Cooperate for Lasting Peace"**

The panel speakers for the afternoon session were selected from the political sphere and faith-based organizations. They included the following:

Anne Degia-Pala, Founder of EthNix Links Networks (Queen's Service Medal)

Ross Robertson (Former Member of Parliament)

Daud Azimullah, Executive (Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand)

Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi (Current Member of Parliament)

### **Conclusion**

The assembly ended with a grand finale, the Peace Water Ceremony, in which religious and civic representatives poured sacred water into one large bowl, symbolizing unity. Reverend Iosefa, who attended the international and Asia Pacific inauguration of the IAPD in Korea and Nepal, read the resolution and asked the participants to sign the IAPD Resolution.

A congratulatory song was offered by a young couple, Andrew Halim and Tomoyo Moriwaki, who participated in a World Peace Blessing in 2018, followed by a group photo. The closing prayer was offered by Ruth Clever, Auckland Inter-faith Council chairwoman.

The inaugural assembly of the IAPD brought a new level of unity among interreligious communities in cooperation with political leaders to work together in order to create a vibrant community, society, and nation.

