

## UPF Asia Pacific: Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Building a Unified World

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With the upsurge of modernization brought by technological advances in the 21st century, humanity is gradually losing sight of the wisdom found in spirituality. Moreover, a significant number of the greatest conflicts in history is brought about by our differences in faith and religion. With this in mind, the Universal Peace Federation Asia Pacific in partnership with International Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), convened a webinar for faith-based organization on December 12, 2020 to provide an avenue for faith leaders to come together and discuss ways to achieve a unified world of peace.

12,734 internet viewers from 35 nations in the Asia Pacific region participated in this 2-hour webinar on the theme "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in Building a Heavenly Unified World." 11 guest speakers from different faith organizations called on everybody to unite in order to provide solutions to the problems faced in these trying times.

Pres. Demian Dunkley, Co-chair UPF Asia Pacific – 1 spoke about the urgent need for religions and faith organizations to set aside their differences in order to attain a world of peace.

Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, Chairman of the Universal Peace Federation Asia Pacific, said that it is part of human nature to seek for a community with a higher purpose provided by faith. He remarked that this is the reason why faith-based organizations play an important role in supporting the people in times of crises.

Dr. Tageldin Hamad, Vice President of UPF International and International IAPD Coordinator, underscored that interreligious dialogues should develop into partnership and collaboration with the government and other stakeholders of society. He said that it is high time for IAPD to aid people of different faiths towards unity, togetherness and love-'the ultimate vaccine for all ills.'

Mrs. Ursula McLackland, Secretary General, UPF Asia Pacific delivered a presentation on the "Programs of IAPD Asia Pacific" showing the highlights of all events and activities convened by IAPD in this region since its inauguration in the year 2017.

Ven. Sobitha, President, International Buddhist Education Center, Myanmar shared his insights based on the Buddhist perspective. He emphasized the importance of cultivating common values and universal ethics in order to develop confidence, tolerance and harmony to avoid religious conflicts. Just like the Buddha welcomed all faiths, a peaceful discussion and exchange of different views on spiritual practice and liberation should be encouraged.

Rev. Fr. Edgardo C. de Jesus, Ph.D., Parish Priest of Archdiocese of Bulacan from the Philippines focused on the Roman Catholic perspective. He shared that in his encounter with other religions, he was bestowed with three gifts: understanding, enlightenment and prudence.

Dr. Tong Yun Kai, President, Hong Kong Confucian Academy, China spoke about the importance of self-control and benevolence towards others as the main teachings of Confucius, as they advocate moderation of human desire and cultivate respect for oneself and others. This should be applied first in the family and then extended to our society and nation.



Vachan Praveen Pundit Shree Deen Bandhu Pokhrel, renowned Hindu spiritual leader from Nepal, underscored that the role of all faith-based institutions is to create an environment for their devotees and followers to live in cosmopolitanism, companionship and cooperation. Hence, faith-based organizations must think in that way and act accordingly to create a heavenly integrated world.

Dr. Amir Farid Isahak, Chairman, Interfaith Spiritual Fellowship, Malaysia shared the Islamic perspective by saying that Islam teaches to respect others who are different from us and who have chosen other religions. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "No one is a true believer until he loves all of humanity, all of creation." Therefore, disagreements should be resolved in amicable and non-violent ways.

Mr Fouad Sobbi, President of the Mandaean World Congress, Australia thanked religious leaders for strengthening peace and love among people around the world. He commended UPF Founders, Father and Mother Moon, for their undying efforts and initiatives to connect different faiths and religions.

Dr. Charanjit Kaur, Assistant Professor at the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia, highlighted the central principles of Sikhism, which are selflessness and willingness to serve others. These basic values enable people to unite and live harmoniously, reduce inequality and preserve a nonviolent atmosphere.

Rev. Masaichi Hori, Co-chair, UPF Asia Pacific Region 2, emphasized the importance of religions to recognize the existence of one common God, who is also our parent. Just like young children sometimes quarrel with each other and resolve their problems by recognizing that they came from one parent, religions around the world should also resolve conflicts by recognizing their common root in God.

Dr. Robert Kittel, Co-Chair of UPF Asia Pacific moderated this online conference and Dr. Venus Agustin, Vice Chairman, UPF Asia Pacific, conducted the Question and Answer session the end of the program.