

ILC2021 Asia Pacific, August 19: Opening Session

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August 19, 2021



Asia Pacific -- The opening session of the August 19-20 International Leadership Conference 2021 (ILC2021) and Think Tank 2022 Global Forum for UPF's Asia Pacific region was held on August 19, on the theme, "Toward Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: Prospects for Economic Development and Peace."

Over 1,050 people registered for the event. A total of 548 participants watched it live on Zoom while thousands did so on YouTube and Facebook Live.

The program began with invocations offered by leaders of four faiths: representing Buddhism was Ven. Sobhita; Christianity, Rev. Sonny Ramilo Tandaguen; Hinduism, H.H. Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji; and Islam, Dr. H. Imam Addaruqutni.

Rev. Demian Dunkley, regional president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) Asia Pacific 1, gave the opening remarks in which he highlighted the importance of forgiving the unforgivable and loving the unlovable, as UPF founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon did when they visited North Korea. Rev. Dunkley also made a call-to-action, stating that everyone must learn how to live for the sake of others.

Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, chairman of UPF-Asia Pacific, gave the chairman's remarks. He recalled his visits to North and South Korea and said: "We should encourage people-to-people relations to create an environment for government-to-government reconciliation."

Hon. Sher Dhan Rai, chief minister of Province No. 1 in Nepal, expressed his gratitude to UPF's founders and underlined the importance of initiatives such as UPF's Think Tank 2022 and the ILC's in rediscovering the potential possibilities of reunifying the Korean Peninsula. Hon. Rai also affirmed Nepal's support of Korean reunification not only for the betterment of both Koreas but also for peace in Northeast Asia and the world.

Amb. Luis T. Cruz, former ambassador of the Philippines to the Republic of Korea (2008-2014), cited the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as an example of how a regional organization could still be formed despite political conflicts. Amb. Cruz also said that any regional economic arrangement in Northeast Asia should include engagement with North Korea.

Dr. Thomas Walsh, chairman of UPF International, in his keynote address, said that despite the challenges the world faces, applying the restorative principles that UPF upholds can help establish a paradigm of peace in the world. Dr. Walsh also named several initiatives UPF is involved in, such as the Mekong River project, Korea-Japan Undersea Tunnel Project and the Bering Strait Project, among others, that can profoundly affect economic development.

The opening session concluded with a beautiful performance of a traditional dance from Northeast Thailand.

Dr. Venus Agustin, vice chair of UPF-Asia Pacific, served as the moderator.