

Parliamentarians Association Launched in the Philippines

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Manila, Philippines -- The Philippines branch of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) was launched at a conference held in Manila on March 7, 2017. The theme of the event was “Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: The Role of Governments, Civil Society, and Faith-Based Organizations.”

IAPP

IAPP, an initiative of UPF, was founded as a worldwide association of parliamentarians which seeks to realize a world of lasting peace and advance the development of humankind toward a path of coexistence and mutual prosperity for future generations.

It is an international network created to take on critical issues such as territorial disputes, religious conflict, racial conflict, environmental degradation, climate change, and violent extremism and poverty through the common solidarity and cooperation of parliamentarians of the world.

On March 7, the IAPP was launched in the Philippines at the conference, “Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: The Role of Governments, Civil Society, and Faith-Based Organizations.”

Opening Dinner

International delegates and Philippines government officials arrived at the Manila Hotel and gathered in the Champagne Salon for networking and dinner together. The emcee, Mr. Richell Jalipa, opened the event. A prayer was offered by Archbishop Elias Soria, president of the Asian Clergy Leadership Conference. Afterwards, welcome remarks were given by Major Gen. Alfredo S. Cayton, president of the UPF-Philippines, and Hon. Leopoldo Bataoil, president of the IAPP Philippines.

A message from the president of the Philippines, H.E. Rodrigo Duterte, was delivered by Hon. Jesus G. Dureza, secretary of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process. This was followed by the appointment of Hon. Gwendolyn Garcia as the chairperson of IAPP Philippines, Hon. Leopoldo N. Bataoil as the president of IAPP Philippines, Hon. Christopher de Venecia as executive vice president of IAPP Philippines and Secretary Jesus G. Dureza as international adviser to IAPP Philippines.

March 7

Morning Session: Launch of the IAPP

The morning session on March 7 began with the master of ceremonies, Prof. Celestino Jose Navalta, Jr., greeting the dignitaries and delegates from more than 15 countries –including Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand -- in different languages.

Afterwards, a hymn was sung by the Kalinangan Singers of the Technical University of the Philippines (TUP), and was followed by the singing of the national anthem of the Philippines. A video about UPF and the IAPP initiative was shown.

UPF-Asia Chair Dr. Chung Sik Yong gave the welcome remarks in which he expressed gratitude for the representatives from 15 nations who are collaborating to bring the UPF founders' dream for world peace to reality. He also mentioned the founder's autobiography, "As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen," and encouraged the assembly to work together by reflecting on the founders' life course and struggles. He then congratulated the founding officers and ended his speech by saying, "May God bless you. Thank you, and Mabuhay (A Philippine term meaning, "Live great!")"

The president of UPF International, Dr. Thomas G. Walsh, spoke about UPF and explained its relationship with IAPP. Using a PowerPoint presentation, he highlighted the recent accomplishments of both UPF and the IAPP, namely World Summit 2017 held recently in Seoul, Korea.

Prof. Yeon Ah Moon, international president of Women Federation for World Peace delivered the Founder's message of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. She stressed the providence of God, saying that the founders devoted their entire lives to unite the world and now it's our turn to fulfill our portion of responsibility. Thus, she called on the assembly to support and expand the vision of the founders and work with UPF and IAPP to become an effective worldwide movement for peace.

Deputy speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, and chairperson of IAPP Philippines, Hon. Gwendolyn F. Garcia, gave the inaugural address. She said that she is honored to have been appointed as the chairperson of the IAPP and hopes for a world dedicated to the dignity of men and women and the fulfillment of our most cherished wishes for freedom, tolerance, justice and lasting universal peace.

Congratulatory messages were given by Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, co-chair of IAPP Asia, and Dr. Chang Shik Yang, secretary general of UPF International. The keynote speaker, Hon. Leopoldo N. Bataoil, president of IAPP Philippines, expressed his hope that IAPP and UPF events can help bring the world together where all individuals can live in peace and harmony.

Following the appointment of Hon. Pantaleon D. Alvarez as Asia adviser to IAPP, the resolution to launch the IAPP Philippines was signed by the founding officers and members. A gong was struck to formally inaugurate the IAPP in the Philippines. Speaker Jose C. De Venecia, Jr., co-chair of IAPP International, concluded the morning session and issued the call to action. He spoke about the significance of the IAPP and the IAPP launchings that have taken place around the world. The parliamentarians and lawmakers, he said, should initiate a resolution within their parliaments to mobilize their experience and resources. He also suggested outreach to the United Nations and to call on Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to support peace initiatives in our society.



Luncheon and Cultural Performances

The morning session was followed by a delicious lunch and cultural folk performances by the Lahing Batangan Dance Troupe.

Afternoon Program: Conference Sessions

The afternoon program featured four sessions, each with a moderator and panelists who offered their perspectives on the session theme for discussion.

Session 1: The Insurgency Challenges: Finding Common Ground for Peace

Attorney Rene V. Sarmiento, member of the Philippines Peace Panel, spoke about insurgency and nationalism in a globalized world. “In this new era, nation states must cooperate and adopt a reactive and adaptive approach to the tackling of insurgencies which will minimize the loss of life and property and bring about peaceful resolutions to conflicts,” he said, and continued, “this conference will contribute to our goal for peace, reconciliation and development.”

The panelists were Hon. Ashok Abeysinghe, deputy minister of Transport and Civil Aviation of Sri Lanka, and Hon. Bhubaneswar Kalita, a member of parliament of India.

Session 2: Federalism: Towards Mutual Prosperity and Sustainable Growth

Hon. Subodh Pakharel, a member of parliament of Nepal spoke about his nation’s new constitution. He focused on some of the major governing principles, such as, that Nepal is a republic in form and practices secular life where individuals are given the right to have the religion/faith of their own choosing. Also, that one-third (33 percent) of positions in all of Nepal’s state institutions are reserved for women. Hon. Angajan Ramanathan, a member of parliament of Sri Lanka spoke about the situation in his country.

Session 3: Fighting Transnational Crime: Drugs and Human Trafficking

Attorney Juvy R. Manwong, assistant secretary of the Department of Justice of the Philippines, gave a presentation on drug and human trafficking situation in the Philippines and also around the world. She explained how the drug trade and trafficking puts people lives in danger. She believes that an international organizations and initiatives such as the IAPP, with the cooperation of parliaments and governments, can make the world a better and safer place. The panelists were Hon. Zuraida Binti Kamaruddin, a member of parliament of Malaysia, and Hon. Heang Thul, advisor to the president of the National Assembly of Cambodia.

Session 4: Principles and Best Practices in Achieving Peace and Prosperity in Asia

Dr. Robert S. Kittel, international president of the International Association for Youth and Students for Peace, spoke about the family as a unit of society and the world. He emphasized love as a basic, yet powerful principle, and that love can bring the whole world into one global family under God where everybody can live in harmony and peace.

The panelists were Hon. Sultan Pax Mangudadatu, governor of Sultan Kudarat province, and Hon. Jong-Seong Lim, a member of the National Assembly of Korea.

At the end of the sessions, certificates of appreciation were given to the presenters. This was followed by closing remarks by Dr. Chang Shik Yang.

Awarding of Ambassadors for Peace

Ten new Ambassadors for Peace were appointed; among them were

Baby Nebrido (Philippines), Hon. Angajan Ramanathan (Sri Lanka), Hon. D.V. Dinushan Chanaka (Sri Lanka), Hon. Ashok Abeysinghe (Sri Lanka), Hon. Zuraida Binti Kamaruddin (Malaysia), Hon. Bikash Lamsal (Nepal), Hon. Subodh Kumar Pokharel (Nepal), Hon. Ram Hari Khatiwada (Nepal), Mr. Pieter Lambert Diaz Wattimeda (Indonesia), and Mr. Yasril Ananta Baharuddin (Indonesia).

March 8

Celebration at Manila Hotel

On March 8, local and international UPF representatives and guests celebrated the successful launching of the IAPP in the Philippines at the Manila Hotel with testimonies and reflections.