

Sun Myung Moon Inaugurates Interreligious and International Peace Council

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New York, USA - "The Interreligious and International Peace Council (IIPC)," said Mrs. Debbie H. Remengesau, First Lady of the Republic of Palau, "can improve existing methods and practices for addressing critical global problems by being the leader in the moral or spiritual conscience in leadership governance." She further explained that the eternal values derived from religious teachings not only establish a strong moral value system for this life, but also prepare people for the eternal life in the spiritual world.

The IIPC was founded on October 3rd in New York City where 304 delegates, including 52 guests from the United Nations--all together representing 149 nations--attended the 4-day Inaugural Assembly with the theme, "Global Governance for a New Realm of Peace." The Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP), founded by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, sponsored the event.

This was seen as the pinnacle of the Founder's lifelong work and undying quest for world peace. Notwithstanding his more than half century of public life, the more immediate underpinning for launching the Peace Council was laid during this past summer. IIFWP held both broad-based and grassroots programs. One-day seminars in 158 nations around the world were held during a two month period while the Federation simultaneously carried out international conferences in three strategic areas of global concern: Jerusalem, Israel; Washington DC, USA, and Seoul, Korea. In essence, both the grassroots as well as the international nature of IIFWP could be observed. But even more important, and more than just a show of strength, this demonstrated the serious investment, financial sacrifice, and unshakable commitment this organization and its Founder has to creating world peace.

At the end of this Assembly, the Hon. Sam H. Zakhem, the Former U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain concluded, "Rev. Moon has built a strong following throughout the world. He now has a great reservoir of good will that could help bring about harmony between people and friendships among nations." But, Ambassador Zakhem cautioned, "We should be planning for the next stage, namely the implementation stage. We need to reach out to our respective governments to espouse the principles of IIPC."

His advice was heeded. Within two weeks after the its inauguration, a selected number of delegates reconvened in New York City for an IIPC Consultation--a planning session lasting three days.

They will be reviewing, among other things, the "Inaugural Declaration" drafted and signed by delegates of the IIPC inauguration. The heart and spirit of the proclamation was not to point fingers or lay blame, although it did begin by calling for serious self-reflection. The purpose was to learn from shortcomings, identify areas that can be improved, and refocus on the vital task of establishing models of good governance. The declaration began:

Whereas, we are going through a most critical time in history that requires each of us to re-examine both ourselves and our institutions of global governance, including the United Nations, and to search for ways and means to go beyond past achievements in a renewed effort to prevent the suffering and despair caused by inhumane violence and to alleviate poverty that affects the lives of hundreds of millions of our fellow

human beings around the world...

It also called "upon governments, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to expand their capacity to resolve conflict, by integrating interreligious and intercultural dimensions in their projects and programs."

The fact that the United Nations was specifically named in the resolution was understandable. Just 12 days before the conference began, on September 19th, the New York Times ran a front page article titled "U.N. Senses It Must Change, Fast." In it, Secretary General Kofi Annan was quoted calling for "radical" revisions in the U.N. in order for this international body to survive.

The Chairman of the IIFWP, Rev. Dr. Chung Hwan Kwak, in his Keynote Address highlighted the role religion plays in social change and development, explaining why it must be a partner in the governing process:

Ultimately, it is not technological transformation alone that will lead us to peace. Spiritual development is also necessary. In this respect, the role of religion is critical, for human beings are shaped by religion in profound and important ways. Moreover, throughout history religion has frequently been a primary agent of significant moral and social transformation. Thus, we should not ignore the core principles taught by all religions.

Roundtable discussions were held in the afternoon on October 2nd. Among the topics delegates could attend were:

- * Human Development
- * The Quartet, the Road Map and Peace in the Middle East
- * Civil Society and the Creation of an Ethical and Caring Global Community
- * Continental and Regional Alliances in a Global Age
- * The Major Powers and the Korean Peninsula
- * America: Challenges Facing the World's Sole Superpower
- * Addressing Critical Issues Facing Africa
- * Address the Critical Issues Facing Island Nations

During the morning session on October 3rd, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, the Founder of IIFWP addressed the delegates and day-guests totaling 1,200 people. The Founder's Address, which Rev. Moon called his "gift" to the Assembly, dealt with the topic, The New Elimination of Boundaries and World Peace. He said that people have to overcome self-imposed barriers of race, religion and culture and that there are three things each person has to know for certainty: the existence of God, the existence of the spiritual world, and the practice of "true love for the sake of others." This level of oneness of heart creates the unbreakable "link in the lineage between parent and child." Once you reach this level of maturity and spirituality, you are ultimately qualified to refer to God as your "Father," not by faith alone but now aided with unquestionable, experiential convictions as well.

Following the Inaugural Session and lunch, participants attended the "Peace Under One God" rally. This was held at the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, just opposite the United Nations. But it was not a protest! It was a rally of support for the august world body. On a cool autumn day, with a jumbotron behind the stage and 10,000 men, women and children gathered to support new and innovative approaches to global governance, the program outlined four steps to world peace:

1. Living for the sake of others
2. Building families of true love
3. Interreligious reconciliation and cooperation, and
4. The proper role and function of the United Nations

Media coverage, electronic and print, drew more than 20 newsmen and women from nine nations. United Press International quoted H.E. Abdurrahman Wahid, former president of Indonesia as saying, "The idea of establishing the IIPC is an excellent idea."