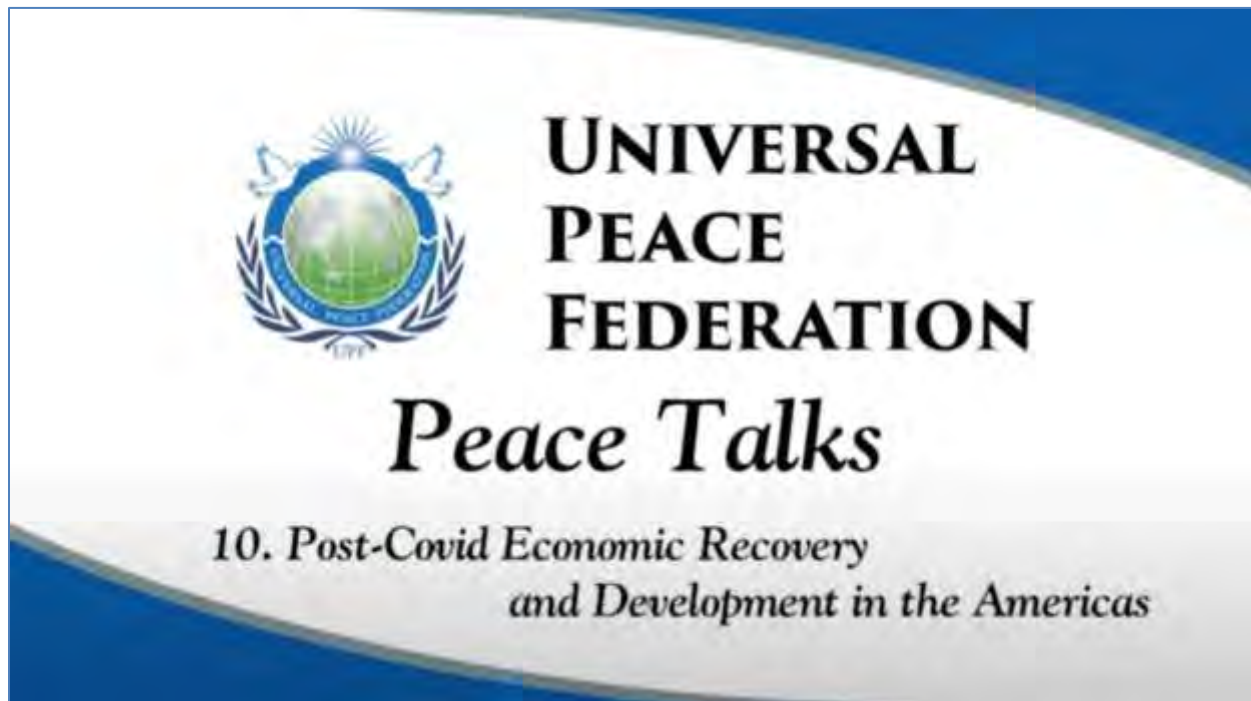


UPF Webinar Looks at Post-Covid Economic Outlook for the Americas

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United States -- On June 27, 2020, an International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP) webinar titled "Post-Covid Economic Recovery and Development in the Americas" was co-hosted by UPF North America, UPF Latin America, and UPF International. The conference had about 350 attendees from 53 countries.

Dr. Thomas Walsh (Chair, UPF International) gave the opening remarks. The COVID-19 crisis has had enormous impact on our world, he said, and has given rise to a wide range of political, economic, and social challenges. For leaders of nations the role in peace building is critical as it requires building stable, peaceful, productive societies. Current and former heads of state and leaders with global influence have a unique vantage point and set of experiences that are of immense value as we search for solutions to the current crisis and prepare to avert ones in the future, he observed. This webinar offers reflections from key political and media experts on the importance of cooperation among the Americas -- North, South and the Caribbean.



Panelists

Hon. Dan Burton (Congressman, U.S. House of Representatives, 1983–2013) led the panel and introduced the speakers.

H.E. Anthony Carmona (President of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013–2018) spoke first. Caribbean countries are mostly middle-income nations but are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters like hurricanes, which are becoming more common and more extreme due to climate change. H.E. Carmona highlighted the importance of continued support for international institutions like the World Health Organization. The pandemic has the potential to devastate the tourism-based economies of the Caribbean, he pointed out to the audience. Measures to ease the illiquidity of these industries in this region must be taken in order to avert a long-term economic disaster. H.E. Carmona called for efforts to increase access to the internet: About half the world's population has no access to the internet and can therefore miss key information, especially about pandemics. He further called for progressive debt relief for countries whose economies have been severely damaged by the pandemic.

H.E. Jaime Paz Zamora (President of Bolivia, 1989–1993) followed with his remarks. He called for a new Pan-Americanism based on the new realities that the two continents are facing in the modern age. The Americas span the two poles, he observed, touching the two great oceans of our planet. Love is the greatest technology of the 21st century, he said; it is the center of solidarity, cooperation, family, charity, and many other concepts that will be key to a successful century. He encouraged men and women to work together for human development.

Hon. Newt Gingrich (Speaker of U.S. House of Representatives, 1995–1999) spoke next. He reiterated H.E. Carmona's point that this is not a time for institutions to blindly follow the pre-pandemic rules: The engineered halt of the global economy is completely unprecedented. He agreed that there needs to be debt relief to stop countries from being bankrupted. The United States has the ability to expand investment in Central and South America, which would help it develop more sustainable and resilient supply lines. In his conclusion, he pointed out the creativity of responses to the pandemic and lockdown as a point of optimism for future innovation.

Dr. Michael Jenkins (President, Universal Peace Federation) was the final panelist. He pointed to the shared Christian heritage of the Americas, which can be the basis for a stable and productive interchange. Argentina has defaulted on its debt to China, he noted, and there is a danger that the Chinese government will leverage this default to increase its influence in the Americas. The United States can take a more active role to ensure that the sovereignty of the Americas is not compromised by this economic disaster.



QandA and closing statements followed:

Honorable. Gingrich advocated greater economic and security assistance from the United States; one reason for this is that modern organized crime operates at a scale and sophistication that many countries struggle to counter. H.E. Carmona called for greater hemispheric participation in the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to reduce criminal groups' access to weapons. H.E. Paz Zamora reiterated his encouragement of Pan-Americanism; the nations of the hemisphere must see one-another as members of a single community, he said. He further suggested that there be a collaborative hemispheric health system. H.E. Carmona called out the apathy of richer nations with regard to poorer nations. Honorable Burton called for future vigilance for future pandemics on the part of global parliamentarians; if potential outbreaks can be caught earlier, pandemics can be prevented.