

UPF Helsinki, Finland Interfaith Forum: Longing for Peace is Universal

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Helsinki, Finland – The Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) in Finland, in cooperation with CANIP-Finland, held an Interreligious Forum for Peace on April 18, 2026. Three speakers delivered keynote messages, each highlighting different dimensions of peace, faith and human dignity.



Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Asghar, the first speaker, emphasized the universal values shared across

cultures by linking religion and science. Drawing on his experiences in Japan, the United States and Finland, he underscored the importance of peace, diversity and mutual respect. He explained Islamic perspectives supported by scientific reasoning, while also acknowledging the limits of modern science.



The second speaker, **Pastor Linus Anyamele**, highlighted the deep human longing for peace. He stressed that inner spiritual peace forms the foundation for social peace rooted in justice and compassion. He called for cooperation among different religions to face a rapidly changing world with courage, dignity and a commitment to building harmonious communities.

The final message, delivered on behalf of Dr. Sheik Imam Mohammed Ahmed Nazir, was read by **Imam Abdoul Majid Tahirou Varjonen**. The message emphasized shared human values such as peace, family, faith and hope. He explained that

religious teachings provide “meaning, hope, community, practice and values,” forming the inner strength needed to endure hardship. He called for restoring inner and social peace, strengthening families, practicing patience and compassion, and building a hopeful future grounded in cooperation and shared humanity.



At the conclusion of the program, **Mr. Umberto Angelucci**, vice president of FFWPU-Europe and Middle East, shared his personal experience of witnessing the devastation of war in Afghanistan. This experience led him to dedicate his life to peacebuilding. He described his work with religious leaders and political figures across the Middle East to promote dialogue and reconciliation, emphasizing that peace is not something to wait for but something to create through action. He urged participants to treat one another as members of a single human family, beyond religious or national boundaries.

Following the formal program, participants continued their discussions informally. A couple from Syria expressed that attending the forum had deep meaning for them.