

Asian Leadership Conference, Bangkok, Thailand - 18 participants from 7 nations

Kamol Thananopavarn
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Bangkok, Thailand -- An Asian Leadership Conference (ALC) was held from July 26 to 29, 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand with 18 participants from seven nations representing government, faith groups and civil society. Six came from Laos; four from Malaysia; two from Myanmar, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan; and one from Nepal and Uzbekistan. The theme of the four-day conference was "Providing Vision and Leadership for Nation-building and Peace."



The delegation from Laos was led by Dr. Viphavanh Phomvihane, chair of the Lao Front for National Development, who brought key government leaders to the conference. In personal meetings she had with Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, co-chair of the Asia Pacific branch of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) and UPF, and other UPF leaders, she expressed her desire to collaborate closely with UPF.

The opening session began with a presentation, given by Hon. Dhakal, on the vision and mission of the IAPP and how it is contributing to peace-building around the world. Dr. Edgar Tanate, education director of UPF-South Asia, gave an introductory presentation on "The Need for Universal Principles."

Dr. Tanate and Mrs. Ursula McLackland, secretary general of UPF-Asia Pacific, shared UPF co-Founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon's vision for peace. Mrs. McLackland also spoke about Rev. Moon's suffering life

and the many initiatives for peace he and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, started together, which are now being carried forward by Mrs. Moon.

Rev. Kamol Thananopavarn, national director of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU)-Thailand, explained in his presentation on the "True Family and Pure Love Movement in Thailand" how UPF and the Thai government are working together at the grassroots level to solve critical issues such as domestic violence, family breakdown and youth immorality.



The emcees, Mrs. Theresia Kittel and Rev. Pasit Sirimalai, kept the program flowing, which was interspersed with cultural presentations by staff of the Universal Peace Academy (UPA) and the participants themselves.

At the end of the conference, an Interfaith Peace Blessing Ceremony was held, which was officiated by Dr. Lek and Mrs. Vipa Thaveetermsakul, vice chair of UPF-Asia Pacific. A Baptist pastor from Myanmar was deeply impressed by his experience participating in the ALC, including the Peace Blessing, and together with his wife will be introducing the Blessing to their congregation.

Dr. Thaveetermsakul led the closing session and presented Ambassador for Peace awards to 10 dignitaries who are eager to spread the message of UPF in their nation.

Reflections from participants:

Alagesan Ayaru, founder and president, Charity Foundation Association of Penang in Malaysia, found the conference enlightening and very different from any other conference he has attended so far.

Khamtoun Saiyasing, director general, Lao Front for National Development, said she realized the importance of uniting all religions and ethnic groups for peace in the nation and that she hopes to work with UPF in the near future.

Sabitova Sagadat from Kazakhstan, who has been working on domestic violence issues in the country over the last two years, was inspired with new ideas for how to prevent domestic violence and said she wants to work with UPF to strengthen families and the nation.

Hon. Gulandom Norkulov, a member of parliament from Tajikistan, was surprised that the presenters used quotes from various holy books and by doing so demonstrated their deep respect towards all religions. On behalf of all the participants, she thanked the staff of the event.