

Concern for the Future Draws Leaders to International Leadership Conference in London, United Kingdom

Jacques Marion
September 9, 2013



Sun Jin Moon, on behalf of True Mother, addressed the audience at the launching of three new chapters of IAPP in the House of Commons. To her right are her husband and Dr. Walsh, president of UPF

September 7–9, the Universal Peace Federation held an International Leadership Conference in London, the third in a series of events held this year to launch worldwide the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP). With the theme "Interregional Dialogue Addressing Critical Challenges: Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa," the London conference represented the official launch of IAPP in these three regions (North Africa being part of our Middle East region). About a hundred and fifty people came from forty nations, including political and religious leaders, woman leaders and representatives of civil society.

Thirty members of parliament from fifteen nations attended the event and signed the proposal to establish an International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East. Also in attendance were two former European heads of state and ten former members of parliament.

The conference began on September 7 with a session on A Vision for Peace-Building in the Global Era. Dr. Jack Corley, the UPF regional chair; and I, the UPF regional secretary general; both of UPF-Europe, presented the UPF peace-building principles and practices.

On critical challenges

Three UPF ambassadors for peace then commented on the presentations and gave their views on the theme of the conference: Professor Martin Ramirez, chair of the Center for Conflict Studies at Nebrija University in Spain; Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, the former speaker of the Luxembourg Parliament; and Mr. Robert Vandemeulebroucke, a former ambassador from Belgium's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the Opening Dinner, Baroness Sandip Verma, from the House of Lords and Dr. Edwin Shuker, the vice-president of the European Jewish Congress, warmly welcomed the participants. Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, the president of the World Congress of Faiths, and Sheikh Dr. Hojjat Ramzy, an executive member of the Muslim Council of Britain, gave the invocations. The evening closed with Dr. Thomas Walsh, president of UPF.

International, speaking a few words about the worldwide IAPP inauguration conference series, and former President Alfred Moisiu of Albania (2002–2007), emphasizing how significant such a conference and themes were for their nations.

The immigrant issue

The second day began with a session on "Peace and Migration: Cross-Regional Perspectives." The presentations and discussion focused on the compelling issue of refugees, their integration into their new communities and the various factors behind migrations. The speakers were: Dr. Werner Fasslabend, Austrian minister of Defense (1999–2000) now president of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES); Ulla Sandbaek, from Denmark, a member of the European Parliament (1994–

2004); Dr. Mohammad Al Antaki, a medical doctor attached to Palestinian refugee camps and secretary-general of the Integrated Community Based Initiative in Jordan; and Dr. Antonio Stango, secretary-general of the Italian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and Paulo Pisco, a journalist and member of parliament from Portugal.



Participants of the ILC in the Palace of Westminster, where the House of Commons and House of Lords deliberate

Toward Economic Harmony

The second morning session was devoted to the theme: "Addressing Peace and Security Challenges through Trade and Economic Integration." The session dealt with economic integration plans between Europe and Eurasia, and the Chinese project of a "New Silk Road" connecting Asia and Europe. It shed light on the UPF founders' project of an international highway for peace connecting the world in order to foster economic equality and intercultural exchange, requiring the construction of tunnels between Korea and Japan and crossing the Bering Strait between Russia and the US State of Alaska. The panel's members were: Dr. Victor Razbegin, the director of the Interdepartmental Center for Integrated Regional Transport Projects at the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, who studied and promoted the Bering Strait Tunnel project; Dr. Vladimir Petrovsky from the Russian International Affairs Council and a specialist on Far Eastern studies; Dr. Katsumi Otsuka, UPF-Eurasia regional chair and a former president of the Corporation for Building the Japan-Korea Tunnel; Ms. Madi Sharma, the UK representative at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels; Mr. Keith Bennett from the UK group, "The Icebreakers," which specializes in China's foreign economic policy.



Presenting peace road

Following this was a session introducing the Peace Road 2016 project, aimed at actualizing the vision of the international peace highway by promoting symbolic marches or bicycle rides for peace throughout the world. Mr. Matthew Huish, national director of the U.K. chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization, and organizer of the Peace Road in the United Kingdom moderated the session. After a video describing Peace Road events held around the world in 2015 and 2016 in support of the reunification of the South Korea and North Korea and world peace, three participants representing Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East expressed their support for the project: Sun Jin Moon, daughter of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, read her mother's address. Gerardo Giovagnoli, member of the San Marino Parliament; Mr. Maxim Misko, chair of the Belarus Peace Fund; and Issawi Frej, member of Israel's Knesset also spoke.

The house of the people

In the afternoon, all the participants moved to the British Parliament for two afternoon sessions in Committee Room 14 of the House of Commons. The first session at the Parliament had the theme of Overcoming Extremism and Promoting the Peaceful Resolution of Conflict: The Contribution of

Religious Leadership. Thomas Brake, a British Liberal Democrat politician and Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington in South West London, hosted this session.



Faith-based efforts

Baron Nazir Ahmed, a member of the House of Lords and the first person to become a member of the House of Lords after swearing on the Holy Quran, greeted the audience. The session focused on the role that religious leaders and faith-based organizations could play in cooperation with political leaders in bringing effective solutions to violent religious extremism. The panel comprised several prominent speakers: Lord Robin Eames, the

former primate of All Ireland (a religious post), who is well known for his role in the peace process in Ireland; Fatmir Sejdiu, former president of Kosovo (2006–2010), who was involved for many years at the highest level in the process of his country's independence; Sen. Latifa Gahouchi, member of the Belgian Parliament and head of the Commission on Education of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation; Dr. Afzal Ashraf, a consultant fellow at the United Kingdom's Royal United Services and an expert on terrorism and radicalization.

IAPP established

Virendra Sharma, a member of the House of Commons and the patron of UPF-UK, who greeted the participants, hosted the second session at Parliament, where the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace was launched for Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East. Moderating the session, Dr. Thomas Walsh explained the purpose of this world-level association of parliamentarians, describing it as a forum through which to work together for peace and human development by going beyond differences of ideology, race, nationality and religion. He then gave the floor to Lord Rajinder Loomba, founder of the well-known U.K. charity Loomba Foundation, which supports widows around the world, who greeted the participants and supported the UPF initiative.



True Mother's message

The FFWPU international president, Sun Jin Moon, daughter of UPF Co-Founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, delivered True Mother's address. "I will do my best to convey the warmth of love and the hopes for peace that she has in her heart," President Moon said, "and I invite you to all pay close attention to her message."

In the address, True Mother recalled that when she spoke at the United Nations in Vienna in 2015, she called for a spiritual awakening and urged each member-state to serve the whole, looking beyond national self-interest. She also asked the audience in London to consider establishing a fifth UN Office on the Korean Peninsula in order to work for peace in the Asia Pacific Region.

"I want to emphasize the importance of the role of parliamentarians," Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon said in her address. "You represent the people. You are entrusted by the people with a great responsibility. If parliamentarians of the world join together in harmony and cooperation for the sake of peace, we

can transform the current reality of our world, creating a world of joy, harmony and lasting peace."

Representative members of parliament from Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East then took the floor and gave brief statements of support for the new association, starting with: Nina Novakova, member of the Czech Parliament; Gen. Karlis Kreslins, member of the Latvian Parliament; Eleonora Bechis, member of the Italian Parliament; Silvio Parnis, member of the Maltese Parliament; and ending with Hilik Bar, deputy speaker of Israel's Knesset, who closed the session with a rousing speech calling for peace in the Middle East. (Unable to attend, Sen. Ahmed Palankoev of the Committee on International Affairs at the Russian Senate, had sent a message of support to the conference.)

All the panelists then signed the displayed proposal for the foundation of the International Association of

Parliamentarians for Peace, joined by the former presidents of Albania and Kosovo, the former Austrian defense minister and his wife, and the three UPF regional chairs. All the participants separately signed the proposal, and then added their signature on the board.



Afloat on the River Thames

The evening concluded with a wonderful dinner-cruise on the River Thames, during which the participants could admire famous London sights while enjoying music, songs and dance.

On the closing day of the conference, Friday, September 9, participants had the opportunity to choose between four breakout sessions in the morning.



Those at the session on Family, Peace and Sustainable Development discussed the role of the family in building peace, its impact on social stability and prosperity and the challenge to define family policies for sustainable development. Members of Parliament and prominent supporters of family values in Europe comprised the panel: Rajinder Loomba from the House of Lords; Mr. Harry Benson, the research director of the UK-based Marriage Foundation and a regular voice on the issue of the family in UK local and national media; Inga Bite, a member of the Latvian Parliament; Ulviyya Aghayeva, a member of the Azerbaijan Parliament; and Mr. Antoine Renard, the French president of the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations.

Media in modern times

A concurrent session on Media and Peace-building: The Impact of Social Media discussed the influence of social media in current societies, their role in relation to conflicts and to what extent laws should regulate them. Moderated by Mr. Humphrey Hawksley, a BBC world affairs correspondent from

the United Kingdom, it brought together media professionals from Europe and the Middle East. Among these were Professor Simon Holberton, a lecturer in journalism at Deakin University in Australia; Professor Predrag Vujovic, the founder and president of the Public Relations Business School in Serbia and a leading communications expert in the ex-Yugoslavia region; Mr. Kiriakos Pierides, a journalist and founding member of the Association for Social Reform (OPEK) in Cyprus; Zuheir Bahloul, a member of the Knesset and a well-known television and radio sports broadcaster in Israel.



The role of women

In the second morning period, the session on "Women's Leadership in the Prevention of Radicalization" brought together woman parliament members from Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East who discussed the role of female empowerment and leadership in countering extremism and resisting radicalization. The panel was composed of: Alenka Jeraj, the vice-president of the Slovenian Democratic Party and president of its Women's Committee; Dilara Jabrayilova, a member of the Azerbaijan Parliament; Ksenia Svetlova, a journalist and member of the Knesset in Israel; Flora Brovina, a poet, pediatrician, women's rights activist and member of the Kosovo Parliament.

Since the "male representative" on the panel, Roberto Rampi, a member of the Italian Parliament, had to depart unexpectedly, Dr. Walsh joined the panel and offered his views on the interactive and complementary role of men and women in overcoming conflict.

Conflict resolution

The concurrent session's theme was Resolving and Preventing Conflict: Reconciling Secular and Religious Perspectives. The panelists discussed the interplay of religious and secular perspectives in conflict resolution and prevention, in view of searching for lasting, democratic solutions to contemporary conflicts.

The panel comprised: Dr. Emmanuel Dupuy, the president of the Paris- based Institute for European Prospective Studies, who served as advisor to the French secretary of defense; Dr. Roman Joch, the president of the Civic Institute from the Czech Republic, a former advisor to the Czech prime minister on human rights and foreign policy; Asdin El Habbassi, a member of the Austrian Parliament and a deputy of the Austrian People's Party youth organization. Dr. Edwin Shuker, vice-president of the European Jewish Congress, who concluded the session with heartfelt words on Jewish spirituality's role in implementing peace.

Some reflections

A final luncheon ended the three-day conference, preceded by a ceremony in which thirty-two participants who had requested it received an ambassador for peace certificate from Dr. Walsh. One participant from each region offered a heartfelt testimony on their experiences throughout the conference, and a professional soul singer sent us all off with two farewell songs.

In their evaluations, participants described good impressions of the conference, appreciation for the high quality of the speakers and the relevance of the themes discussed. They were particularly impressed by the sessions at the Parliament, by the support from prominent members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons, and by the variety of political and religious views represented in the audience. Several members of parliament expressed their desire to join the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace and to participate in UPF activities. Reports of the conference made the news on TV channels and some major newspapers in countries around the world.