

## Australians Explore Interfaith Approaches to Peacebuilding

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Melbourne, Australia -- A seminar on "The Role of Interfaith in International Relations and Peacebuilding" was held at Monash University.

The seminar, which was organized by UPF-Australia together with its sister organization Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP)-Australia, was subtitled "Let Us Create a Laboratory for Dialogue to Open Minds and Possibilities for Peace."

The October 18, 2014, meeting was the first in a series that will explore the role of religion, morality and interdisciplinary perspectives in addressing current moral, humanitarian and peace challenges.



Dr. Julian Droogan, the director of the International Security Studies program at Macquarie University in Sydney, spoke on "The Role of Religion in International Relations." Dr. Droogan argued that at a time of

remarkable global instability, such a dialogue is timely and important. His presentation asked: Is religion a net positive or a net negative force in global affairs and peace-building?



Adel Gaballa, a former senior teaching fellow at the Faculty of Economics and Politics at Monash University and an expert in Sufism, spoke on "The Role of Islam in Peacebuilding: Obstacles and Solutions to Peacebuilding in the Middle East." He argued very convincingly that a true form of Islam is a force for peace.

Fr. Dr Herman Roborgh addressed the topic "Going Deeper into Inter-religious Dialogue." Dr. Roborgh, who has been active in various inter-religious dialogue projects in Australia, argued that inter-religious dialogue will be more effective when we can move beyond an exchange of information about our different religious beliefs and practices. Going deeper into dialogue requires the humility to keep reviewing our self-understanding and to overcome our fear.



Dr. Yusuf Sheikh Omar spoke on "Islam, Dialogue and Peace (A Personal Perspective)." Dr. Omar did his doctoral research at La Trobe University in Melbourne, focusing on Somali youth and their experiences of integration, particularly within the United States and Australia. He spoke about the value of dialogue between different faiths and cultural traditions using social and cultural negotiations.

John Bellavance, the vice president of UPF-Australia, spoke about the proposal made by UPF Founders Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon for an interfaith council at the United Nations. He argued that the wisdom of faith-based traditions is a spiritual asset that should be utilized by the UN to foster peace between nations.

The outcomes of the dialogues were:

That the role of faith traditions in addressing peace challenges should be further explored. That a formal proposal be put together to create state and national Interfaith Peace Councils to bring a fresh perspective to peace-building to Australian government agencies and the broader Australian society. That such a council would include interdisciplinary perspectives, religious perspectives and NGO perspectives. The meeting also included the awarding of Ambassador for Peace certificates to two distinguished individuals: Dr. Imran Syed, the founder and CEO of the Sadaat Foundation; and Member of Parliament Hon. Hong Lim, who represents the town of Clayton.