

The Inauguration IAPP in The Kingdom of Tonga held in Nuku ‘alofa

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The Inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) in The Kingdom of Tonga took place at the Basilica of St Anthony Padua on Friday 26th January 2018 in the Tongan capital of Nuku ‘alofa which means “the abode of love.”

Tonga is an independent Polynesian nation state in the southern Pacific Ocean with a population of around 108,000 people. It consists of an archipelago of 169 islands of which 36 are inhabited. It has a king and has recently been moving towards becoming a constitutional monarchy with partial representative elections.

The Tongan islands are believed to have been settled by humans for nearly 3,000 years since the Lapita times. In the 19th century, since the arrival of western traders and missionaries, Tonga embraced Christianity, with almost 98% of residents who profess a Christian faith.



Many Tongans have emigrated to Australia, New Zealand, or the United States to seek employment and a higher standard of living. The United States is the preferred destination for Tongan emigrants, and as of the year 2000, there were 36,840 Tongans living in the US. More than 8,000 Tongans live in Australia.

The Tongan diaspora retains close ties to relatives at home, and a significant portion of Tonga's income derives from remittances to family members (often aged) who prefer to remain in Tonga.

The IAPP Inauguration consisted of a morning program followed by lunch. The theme of the launch was "Addressing the Critical Challenges of our Time: The Role of IAPP in Tonga." Around 40 people attended including the Speaker of the House, Lord Fakafanua, Member of Parliament Hon M'aole Finau, the Assistant Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Curtis Tu'ihalangie, Former Members of Parliament such as Mr. Isi Pulu and Mr. Sunia Manu Fili, some Christian pastors and other community and youth leaders.



The emcee for the event was Tongan youth representative Ms. Soana Fili. The meeting opened with prayer by Rev. Sione Tuutafaiva from the Free Church of Tonga, followed by a video introduction to UPF and an Introduction to the IAPP by Rev. Santosh Neupane, Director of UPF Fiji.

A PowerPoint on "Family Values and World Peace and the Need to Educate for Character" was presented by Greg Stone, Secretary-General of UPF Oceania. Dr. Venus Agustin, President of the Martial Arts Federation for World Peace Asia Pacific, gave a presentation on "Supporting Tongan Youth: Teaching Moral Values through Unified Martial Arts."

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga, Lord Fakafanua, who had been attending the morning session, spoke, giving his strong encouragement especially for the "Zero to Hero" program targeting troubled youth outlined by Dr. Agustin.

The IAPP Tonga was officially launched with the reading and signing of the Inaugural Resolution. Hon M'aole Finau MP spoke about the critical issues facing Tonga, and Rev. Shang Seon Park, Chairman of UPF Oceania gave the congratulatory remarks. He pointed out that a nation like Tonga, which has strong faith in God, must be very serious to respond to God's call because God needs our help to address the many issues facing the world at this time.

Closing remarks were given by Mr. Sunia Manu Fili, President of UPF Tonga, who related his experiences of UPF over the years and encouraged everyone to work together to support the ongoing critical work of IAPP and UPF in Tonga.

The closing prayer was given by Rev. Kelepi Misa who leads a Christian ministry which helps elderly and youth in trouble in Tonga. The meeting finished with lunch and informal sharing together.