

Interreligious Leadership Conference focused on The Responsibility of Religion

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Seoul, Korea -- The third day of the Interreligious Leadership Conference 2017 focused on "The Responsibility of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in Building Peaceful and Prosperous Societies."

UPF and its affiliated organization American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) are holding the IRLC jointly from November 10 to 14, 2017, at the Lotte Hotel World.

The following is a summary of events on November 12, 2017.

Session III: Interreligious Peacebuilding: The Responsibility of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in Building Peaceful and Prosperous Societies

In this session, the speakers addressed the role that religious leaders can play and are playing in building a world of lasting peace and in solving the critical problems facing humanity.

Mr. Jacques Marion, the vice president of UPF for Europe and the Middle East, served as the moderator. The invocation was given by **Imam Moussa Drame** of the Fatima Zahra Mosque of Grand Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire.

Dr. Elmar Kuhn, the dean of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Austria, spoke on the topic "Fields of Hope and How to Overcome the Dead Ends of Dialogue." Despite many high-level conferences of interfaith leaders, peace remains an elusive goal, he said. He highlighted two recent programs held in Lugano, Switzerland, and Rome, Italy, which emphasized the gap between religious values and civil society policy. "There is a gap that separates policy from value-driven action for the common good," Dr. Kuhn said.

He defined four fields of action that go beyond dialogue. First, religion brings spirituality and personal benefit by linking every person to the almighty God. Second, religion can contribute values to society. Third, it is the responsibility of religion to educate and inculcate religious values in the hearts of our children. Fourth, religion can deal with Europe's problem of migration. The integration of migrants and refugees is not only a political task; religious leaders also must participate. Dr. Kuhn concluded by thanking UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for organizing the Peace Rally that had taken place the day before and for the invitation to the IRLC. He urged the audience, "Go into our society and share the message that we are children of God."

Ambassador Jakob Finci, the president of the Jewish community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, spoke about the situation in his country. For the last 500 years the area was considered a religious paradise, but unfortunately in the 1990s, with the collapse of socialism and the breakup of Yugoslavia, "our world fell apart." The war in Bosnia was not a religious one, he said, but was misused by the political leaders. Since the signing in 1995 of the Dayton Accords, which ended the conflict, the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina has encouraged greater tolerance and integration of the faiths. He described the council as a meeting point for religious leaders and said, "Diversity is something that exists, and we accept that it exists."

Monsignor Jacques Gaillot, the titular bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Partenia, France, spoke about his experience at the previous day's Peace Rally. The monsignor was one of the religious leaders who opened the program with prayer. At one point the ten religious leaders were holding hands on the stage. "We were 10 men, all representing different faiths, different countries, different prayers, and yet we were united. Like a flower on a garland, each is a separate flower but together more beautiful," he said.

He made three observations. First, no one has the truth -- no group, no religion, no church. We are "seekers after God," as St. Augustin said. Second, we should not accept injustice. As the Jewish prophet Isaiah said, "Then your light will appear like the dawn." The monsignor said, "You will be a blessing if you fight injustices." Third, always pursue the way of nonviolence and "be bridges to the vulnerable, the excluded and the unwanted."



Rev. Yoshio Kawakami, a professor emeritus at Tezukayama Gakuin University in Japan, said that religions often think theirs is the best religion. This attitude leads eventually to a sense of exclusiveness and the rejection of ideas outside their own faith frame. "We must gain the ability to be understanding and to reach out to other religions," he said. Rev. Kawakami encouraged the participants to go outside their own faith and learn about other traditions.

Second, he said he wants to encourage outreach to young people. "We face many problems -- broken homes, divorce, child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and in Japan many young people don't want to get married," he said. The home is the foundation of society, he stated. "Our society cannot stand on broken homes. Homes should be strong." He defined the best home as "in the arms and in the bosom of God; this is the way to make peace."

Dr. Hamdi Murad, a professor at the International Islamic University in Jordan, said religious leaders have a responsibility to achieve lasting world peace because "they are the link connecting God's ... messages with people. ... They are the carriers of this Holy Secretariat and great message They are the honest and sincere translators to what God wants for people." Dr. Murad testified to the power of the human spirit to rise above this materialistic society by living a life of humility, honesty and practicing good deeds.

Archimandrite Vladimir Milovic of the diocese Budimlje-Niksic, Serbian Orthodox Church, Montenegro, said, "The critical question is how we can make sure that the fundamental values that should guide the political processes in the world -- respect for human dignity, peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation, solidarity, and sustainability -- can be maintained in times of change. No compromises can be made concerning these basic values. Even if policy choices may differ, our unity should be rooted in these values."

He referenced the interfaith document *Initiative on Shared Wisdom (ISW)–Thought and Action for a Sustainable Future*, which insists that "a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities that would stand beside the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" is an unconditional necessity for a just, peaceful and sustainable world. The archimandrite comes from Montenegro, a country with "a tradition of a multi-confessional society, where three major religious traditions (Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam) have been intertwined and have coexisted for centuries." Learning about differences and how to understand them "deepens the understanding of one's religious beliefs and mutual respect," he said.

Dr. Ancil Peters, the president of Mentoring the Nations Network International, Trinidad and Tobago, said, "I want to speak heart to heart." The gathering of persons representing diverse religions in one place

is not possible in his country, he said. Dr. Peters said he wants to bring this movement back to Trinidad and Tobago. "If it can be done here, then it can be done anywhere. I believe that Korea will be free. I believe that God answers all prayers."

Dr. Peters said our challenge is not peace; the greatest challenge is the temptation to remain silent. "As religious representatives, our responsibility is to share this initiative not only with the leaders but with the people." This sense of responsibility must be shared across the board from one generation to the next. The second concern is how to guarantee that what we do today will last until tomorrow. This peace initiative must become institutionalized, he said, and lastly, whatever prosperity or benefit comes from this initiative must be shared equally by the people.



Rev. Dr. Tina T. Saxon, president, Saxon Fellowship Center, the United States, gave her thoughts on the conference from the perspective of a woman. Reverend Saxon testified to her upbringing in the Baptist Church and her love for Jesus. The word "dominion" is often misused, she said. "It doesn't mean dominion over women," which is frequently how society treats women. Rev. Saxon called on the men in the audience and said: "Men, how long have you been fighting each other? Men, how long have you been writing about peace? Men, do you think you are closer to peace?" Addressing the women in the conference, she said, "Sisters, you have to rise up and bring peace to this earth." She called on the men in power to include more women in the "thinking and the doing."

Session IV: The "Special Presentations" session was moderated by **Mrs. Tomiko Duggan**, the director of the Office of Public Affairs of UPF-USA. The speakers provided an overview of four important programs – the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), the Northeast Asia Peace Initiative, Peace Road and the Sunhak Peace Prize.

Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, co-chair for Asia of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace and the former minister of peace and reconstruction of Nepal, briefed the conference participants about the IAPP. "We live in an interconnected world, and the problems of one nation impact neighboring countries and regions," he said.

IAPP stands on the foundation of the global foundation of UPF. There are two international co-chairs: Hon. Dan Burton, who served as a U.S. congressman for 30 years, and Hon. Jose de Venecia Jr., a five-time speaker of the House of Representatives of the Philippines. The IAPP was launched at the National Assembly in Seoul in 2016. In the past year, regional inaugurations have been held in all continents and national chapters have been launched in over 40 parliaments around the world.

IAPP is well positioned to be an effective organization for four reasons, according to Hon. Dhakal. One, IAPP is politically neutral. It embraces lawmakers from all parties. Two, IAPP emphasizes dialogue as an essential first step to resolving conflicts and building trust. Three, it respects all religious faith traditions. Fourth, it highlights the importance of the family as the cornerstone of peace, prosperity and patriotism.

Mr. Thomas McDevitt, the president of UPF International, spoke about the Northeast Asia Peace Initiative, a program that was created several years ago, and which was referred to at the Peace Rally on Nov. 11. At the closing of the Peace Rally, a resolution was read and enthusiastically approved by the

80,000 attendees.

There were four points, Mr. McDevitt said: One, in preparation for the era of a unified Korea, we pledge to create a cultural movement that upholds interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values, grounded in "unification thought." Two, as part of the global peace project for the realization of peace on the Korean Peninsula, we pledge to actively promote activities for the construction of a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) Peace Park and the establishment of the fifth United Nations office in Korea. Three, with conviction that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will open a new chapter of peaceful civilization in the Pacific Rim region, we pledge to promote non-governmental exchange movements for peace. Fourth, despite escalating conflicts among nations and between religions throughout history, which continue to threaten the peace of all humankind, we pledge to do our utmost, moving forward for the establishment of the IAPP and the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development, and for the firm establishment of the ideal of "One Family under God" throughout the world. Mr. McDevitt proposed that the UPF and IAPP work together to focus on fulfilling and executing the Peace Rally resolution for peace in Northeast Asia.



Dr. Kwang Seuk Song, the president of UPF-Korea, spoke about the Peace Road, which is a proposal to construct a superhighway from China through Korea to Japan, as well as a superhighway that eventually would link the world together. The idea initially was proposed by UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon at the tenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences in 1981. In the past year more than 120 nations have participated in the Peace Road project, primarily by foot, car or bicycle. In addition to the Peace Road, the project also campaigns for the establishment of a fifth UN office on the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. In Seog Nam, the secretary general of the Sunhak Peace Prize, Korea, outlined the history and mission of the Sunhak Peace Prize, which was founded by UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon "with the intention to create a global culture of peace, with no wars or conflicts, where all people love each other as one family, irrespective of race, culture, religion and nationality." The prize is based on three pillars: respect for human rights, resolution of conflict, and preserving the ecological system.

The first awards ceremony was held in 2015, when the prize was presented to former Kiribati President Anote Tong, for his work in making the world more aware of climate change, and to Indian fisheries scientist Modadugu Gupta, for his pioneering research in aquaculture. The second prize was awarded in 2016 to Italian surgeon Dr. Gino Strada, for his work in disseminating emergency aid in conflict areas, and Dr. Sakena Yacoobi of Afghanistan, for her work with refugee education. The next awards ceremony is scheduled to be held in February 2019.

Session V: Interreligious Peacebuilding: The Responsibility of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in Building Peaceful and Prosperous Societies

Mr. Masayoshi Kajikuri, the president of UPF-Japan, served as the moderator.

Pastor Dr. Charles Schultz, the founding vice president of the Confederation for Religious Freedom, Conscience and Worship (CONFELIREC) and a former representative of the Chamber of the Congress in Colombia, spoke about his experiences at the negotiating table between the government of Colombia and the Marxist rebel group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). A peace agreement was signed in 2016 to end more than 50 years of conflict. Pastor Schultz, as a senator and a religious leader, said he believes the spiritual values embraced by both sides enabled the political and ideological gap to be

bridged. He said he believes the principles that were successfully applied to Colombia may be applied to other regions of the world, specifically for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Dr. Syafiq Mughni, a professor of Islamic civilization at National Islamic University, Indonesia, made several points. First, in the course of human history religions have been "misused or hijacked to achieve their secular, political, economic goals." There are always a few people who promote violent extremism in any of the major religions. Extremism is the challenge, he said. Faith alone is not enough; there must be action. "It is not enough to believe, but what we have to do with this belief. Action is important." Second, the need to promote democracy. Third, the importance of strengthening multiculturalism. Fourth, to promote religious moderation. Fifth, to fight for economic justice. Sixth, to defend human rights. Seventh, to work for humanitarian relief. Following these principles will lead us to a world of peace, he said.



Dr. Ohr Yitzhak Margalit, the head of the Department of Jewish Thought at Levinsky College of Education, Israel, referred to two challenges. First, though we may be united, we find that we are different. Second, while we've had many opportunities to bring about peace, still there is much to do. Twenty years ago, he thought peace was close at hand, yet despite positive signs of progress, peace is still far from being achieved in the Middle East, he said.

Dr. Margalit relayed several *rabbinic adages* that cannot be understood without interreligious dialogue. One is our differences. It is through our differences that we can better understand our own faith. Two, though the work may never be finished, it must continue. When he meets his Palestinian friends who come from different backgrounds, they learn how different they are from each other. "It is a miracle that when two people meet who are different in many ways, for just a second those differences disappear," he said. "The bridge is crossed. The abyss is closed." Three, according to the religious faiths, this world is made up of many different faces of God. According to the *Hasidic* tradition, God made men and women with two hands, yet he gave us ten fingers, meaning that the hand may be defined as a single entity or five, depending on your point of view.

Dr. Chintamani M. Yogi, the founding principal of the Hindu VidyaPeeth School in Nepal, said his 85-year-old mother sent her greetings – *namaste* – to all the conference participants. Dr. Yogi described his nation, Nepal, in glowing terms and invited everyone to visit. He said that although we all have different faiths, we should work together. "What's most important is to become a good human being," he said. Dr. Yogi urged the participants, "Work for faith or work through faith."

Dr. Prophet Radebe Mbiza of the Revelation Church of God in South Africa, testified to his church which was founded in 2009 and now has 58 branches in South Africa and nearby nations. Prophet Radebe offered five keys to resolving religious conflict. One, embrace spirituality as universal above any religion or doctrine; two, exercise love and humility; three, focus on the end goal of connecting to God; four, practice acceptance and tolerance; and five, engage constantly between religious leaders on issues of spirituality.

Ven. Professor Dr. Medagampitiye Wijithadhamma, head of the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, spoke on the role of Buddhism in bringing about a peaceful world. Dharma, which refers to the teachings of Buddha, is the way to realize universal harmony. Dr. Wijithadhamma gave an overview of Buddha's core teachings, known as the Four Noble Truths. "Promotion of education, dialogue, social and economic development will lead to sustainable development of peace in the world," he said. It is important to "apply the wisdom of the Buddha and learn about other faiths through direct dialogue with an attitude of openness and tolerance," he said. Buddha's vision to build a society free of strife is just as applicable and valid in modern society as it was 2,600 years ago, he said.

Rev. Dr. William A. McComish, dean emeritus, Geneva St. Peter's Cathedral, Switzerland, reported on the Geneva Spiritual Appeal, of which he is an author. The appeal declares: "Religion should never be used to justify violence, exclusion, discrimination, or exploitation." It was developed in 1999 by a group of international religious and political leaders, including Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim spiritual leaders and the president of the Red Cross, U.N. High Commissioners for Human Rights and for Refugees, and the general director of the World Health Organization. The appeal calls for the following three principles: first, a refusal to invoke a religious or spiritual power to justify violence of any kind; second, a refusal to invoke a religious or spiritual source to justify discrimination and exclusion; and third, a refusal to exploit or dominate others by means of strength, intellectual capacity or spiritual persuasion, wealth or social status.



Session VI: Special Presentations

Rev. Gregory Stone, the secretary general for UPF for the Oceania region, served as the moderator for this session in which the unique contributions of several organizations that are affiliated with UPF were described.

Rev. Hyun-young Lee, the president of the Korean Religions Association, gave a presentation on the KRA. At the organization's inauguration on February 24, 2017, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon said, "I ask each member of KRA to practice faithfully your own essential role and unite for the sake of freedom, peace, and happiness centering on God, who is idealized by religions." Through interreligious dialogue the KRA strives to bring peace and harmony on the Korean Peninsula. Rev. Lee reported on various conferences and fact-finding tours to the United States, Japan and throughout Korea to encourage interfaith dialogue and greater awareness and education among the world's religious traditions. Rev. Lee praised the conference. "Your prayers and spiritual energy emanating from this group of almost 400 religious leaders and faith-based organizations will surely lead to the unification of the peninsula," he said.

Dr. Robert S. Kittel, the international president of Youth and Students for Peace, introduced the YSP program. Dr. Kittel highlighted the four loves that are learned in the family: 1) parents' love for their children, called parental love; 2) children's love for their parents, called filial piety; 3) siblings' love, in which brothers and sisters love each other; and 4) conjugal love between husband and wife. He then stressed the role that youth and students play in creating a culture of sustainable peace, saying, "Of these four loves, it is the role of youth and students to take responsibility for two of them. First, they are responsible for filial piety or children's love. Secondly, they are responsible for the pure love between brothers and sisters. The other two loves -- the parental love and the conjugal love -- are reserved for couples, that is, for spouses (husband and wife) and for parents (father and mother)." The YSP has conducted numerous programs throughout Asia that have attracted thousands of young people and positive attention and support of the governments of Nepal, Taiwan, Philippines, and Sri Lanka. Dr. Kittel proposed that the YSP model be applied to all nations to help solve youth problems and the breakdown of families.

Rev. Angelika Selle, president of the U.S. chapter of Women's Federation for World Peace, introduced the WFWP, which in 1992 was co-founded by Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon for the sake of announcing the era of women. In 1997, WFWP International attained General Consultative

Status at the United Nations, which is the highest status that an NGO can receive in association with ECOSOC. WFPW has chapters in over 120 nations internationally and 35 chapters in the United States. This year WFPW celebrates its 25th anniversary. Shortly before Rev. Moon passed away in 2012, he and Dr. Moon founded the Global Women's Peace Network, a project of WFPW International. The international president is Professor Yeon Ah Moon. WFPW is moving from the international to national and to the local level. Its prime mission is to deal with two areas: marriage and family, and leadership of the heart.



Mrs. Ursula McLackland, the secretary general of UPF for Asia, spoke about the Interfaith Blessing Movement as an answer to the breakdown of the family. The root of family breakdown began with the very first human family. The first son murdered his own brother. Instead of setting a standard of true love, the first family established a tradition of false love. Mrs. McLackland said, "We must deal with the root cause of the problem." The Interfaith Blessing Movement focuses on parents and how they can become ideal parents so that their children can aspire to emulate them. This family model should be expanded to the community, national and world levels, Mrs. McLackland said. "We should live and show our children how to become people of true love. The key to the future is for the children to develop a heart of love and to live for the sake of others," she said.

