

International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace in London, UK

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World Peace 'Field of Communication'



On the 8th (time of location), the launching of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East is being held at the UK Parliament in London

Heathrow Airport, a gateway to London, is well-known for its unremitting immigration procedures. Terribly strict investigations were conducted not only on Koreans who just got off the same plane as I, but also on foreigners with colored skin or wearing traditional Islam clothes. I could surely feel this nation's growing concern against terrorism and foreigners through the chilly atmosphere throughout the immigration process.

In 2005, in London, the first terrorist suicide attack in Western Europe had occurred. Recently, there have been large-scale terrorist attacks in two neighboring countries, France and Belgium. The strict investigation at the immigration station reminded me that although England has decided on Brexit (withdraw from the European Union), it can never break out of the fears against terrorism that had spread across Europe.

Fortunately, the atmosphere in London was quite different from that of the immigration station at the airport. People seemed to enjoy their daily life in the clear autumn weather, and the picturesque townscape was beautiful. Notably, people of various skin colors walking on the streets with their languages or intonations reminded me that London was indeed a "world city." More than 300 languages are used in London, and this suggests the variety of nationalities, ethnicities and religions in this city.

On the 7th (hereafter local time) to the 9th, the International Leadership Conference (ILC) was held by the Universal Peace Federation in London, where various peoples and cultures coexist.

People from different races and religions got together at the ILC opening banquet. It was as though one of the five core values presented by UPF, "peacebuilding through intercultural, interfaith, international cooperation," was being realized in this limited space. Incumbent/former key politicians, including incumbent members of the House of Lords, academics, religious figures and UPF leaders from countries of Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East and North Africa, participated in the opening banquet.

At the opening banquet, UPF Europe Regional Chairman Jack Corley stated, "We must think and discuss about how to realize peace in substantial ways. Since wars began in the minds of men, peace also begins in the minds of men."



Participants are exchanging greetings at the ILC opening banquet.

Leaders from various nations discuss peace

The ILC, held over three days and two nights, became a place for interracial, interreligious and international discussion on various topics concerning peace. They covered various crucial issues such as the refugee crisis, addressing peace and security challenges through trade and economic integration, overcoming extremism and the impact of social media on peacebuilding, etc.

Also worth noting is the lineup of speakers and panel members. Incumbent parliamentarians from England, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, Belgium, Czech, Austria, Latvia, Kosovo, Israel, Malta, San Marino, Azerbaijan, etc., participated and shared their perspectives. When we include former politicians, academics, experts and religious figures, leaders from more than 40 nations participated. Although the race, religion, position and situation of each participant varied, they all engaged in heated discussions concerning "peace."



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Former President of H.E. Albania Alfred Moisiu stated, "It is important for political leaders to meet, think and discuss about peace." He then said, "When a problem arises, it will be a great help in solving the problem if politicians had relationships where they could discuss it in person."

Former President of Kosovo H.E. Fatmir Sejdiu claimed, "We must not try to solve these problems at once, but look ahead into the remote future and solve them together, one by one. If we do not recognize each other, another conflict will arise."

Lord Robin Eames of the British House of Lords stated, "Conflicts occur when we claim each other's differences and it produces pain and fear. This was because we could not understand each other." He continued, "I believe peace starts when we free ourselves from ignorance. We must make an effort to know each other by gathering together to realize peace."

Italian Parliament Member Mrs. Eleonora Bechis claimed, "In order for each of us to bring peace by finding sustainable and universal content, an international assembly to realize peace is necessary."

Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, Israel Hon. Hilik Bar also claimed, "Parliamentarians carry an important role in deciding the nation's direction. It is important for parliamentarians of different countries to come together and discuss peace."



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International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace, a "place for world communication?"

The launching of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace promoted by the UPF was held during the ILC conducted with various national leaders. During the ILC, the launching of the IAPP in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East was held at the UK Parliament, the home of democracy.

The UPF held a resolution event to establish the IAPP in Korea in February. They launched the Asian and Oceanian branch in July and the West and Central African branch in August. The launching of the branch in Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East will be followed by launching events in Central America, South America and East Africa. At the end of the year, an international inauguration ceremony of the IAPP will be held officially in the US.

The UPF is proposing a plan to solve peace issues through the "International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace," a global-scale association of parliamentarians. They are addressing parliamentarians to seek out a practical strategy and cooperation plan to solve peace-threatening issues.



ILC participants are holding heated discussions on peace at the UK Parliament.

The IAPP may in a way sound like a dreamy idea. In a reality where conflict and violence constantly occur, and where the positions of each party are entangled complicatedly, the word "peace" is itself close to a mere ideal. Furthermore, it is not easy to bring radical groups or countries, such as IS or North Korea, into the association in the first place. Even if they all managed to gather to communicate, it is never easy to solve conflicts of interest at any crucial moment.

However, it is also true that the IAPP is heading towards the direction they pursue. There have been continuous significant changes in human history, as well as many conflicts and sacrifices. These changes happened as we put into practice the very things we thought would be mere ideals.

Furthermore, the IAPP gained a positive evaluation for providing another new "place for communication." In order to pursue peace, we must have as much communication as possible. When a conflict arises, the IAPP can play a role of a "hotline" to solve it. The national leaders who participated in the ILC and the launching event of IAPP also evaluated the potential of IAPP from such perspective.

The changes IAPP activities may bring to the world undoubtedly draws our attention.....