

## The Lebanese chapter of the IAPP launched at the Parliament of Lebanon

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Beirut, Lebanon—The Lebanese chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) was launched on December 14, 2017 at the Parliament of Lebanon.

Together with support from Hon. Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Parliament, UPF was able to organize the launch in the national legislature.

At the recommendation of Hon. Berri, UPF collaborated with the Arab Parliamentary Union (AIPU) and its secretary general, Mr. Fayez Al Shawabkeh. Mr. Al Shawabkeh, who has been working to promote peace and prosperity in the region, believes that if humanity is put in front rather than politics and personal agendas, we can all work together for a greater good and go beyond any conflict.

Thanks to Mr. Al Shawabkeh and his team, as well as the chief secretaries of the Parliament of Lebanon, especially Mr. Rashid Samaha, head of the Inter-Parliamentary Relations Division of the Lebanese National Assembly, UPF was able to prepare well for the national launch of the IAPP.



The distinguished guests included members of parliament as well as religious and NGO leaders from the Middle East and Europe, many of whom had been invited by the chair and secretary general of UPF-

Middle East, Mr. Umberto Angelucci and Mr. David Fraser-Harris, respectively, and the co-chair of the IAPP-Middle East, Dr. Mohammad Habash.

From Lebanon, several MPs, religious leaders, academics and NGO leaders participated. Most are senior leaders who are well known.

Representing UPF International were Dr. Thomas Walsh, president, and Dr. Taj Hamad, secretary general, and representing UPF Europe was its chair, Dr. Michael Balcomb.

A day before the launch, on December 13, UPF held a dinner event to welcome the international delegation, which was attended by Hon. Ali Bazzi, a Lebanese MP.

The next day, December 14, Hon. Bazzi gave the welcoming remarks at the launch, on behalf of the Parliament. He said: "[I am] honored to represent the parliament. Your objective is peace. It is important in this region. Your meeting is a representation of your closeness to this country, a country of diversity." He also extended greetings from Speaker Berri and spoke of the start of parliamentary diplomacy. "There are many challenges; we can overcome them together."

Among the other speakers were:

Hon. Habib Khodor, a Lebanese MP, who said, "The war has cost us billions, a high price." He mentioned the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the Seven-Day War with Israel.

Dr. Walsh gave a presentation on national IAPP inaugurations that have taken place around the world.

Dr. Allal Amraoui, a Moroccan MP, spoke about instilling a culture of tolerance and the need for education so as to prevent a lapse into extremism. He also spoke about the media's role and about coexistence.

Hon. Ahmed Mohammed Al Jarwan, an MP from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), said, "I praise the symbol you have chosen" (referring to the Lebanese Parliament).

Hon. Abed Al-Mahsiri, a Jordanian MP, spoke of his work with Palestinian refugees and shared that while he was asking himself if there are any peace activists in this world, he found UPF, and was invited by UPF to attend a conference in the United States. "I am proud to spread UPF's values," he sincerely declared.

Hon. Anas Al-Shami, a Syrian MP, said: "We want peace. Conflicts are generated by Satan. Six years of war in Syria; declare to everyone what is going on—wars under the label of the Arab Spring. We are gathered [together] as one common humanity, one family under God. We have to be the [heirs] of God on earth, [and] prepare ourselves to [end] conflict."

