

UPF delegation received by the President of the Republic of Burundi

Paterne Zinsou
June 25, 2018



Bujumbura, Burundi -- A UPF delegation composed of the international chairman, Dr. Thomas Walsh, and the UPF secretary-general for West Africa, myself (Dr. Paterne Zinsou) was received by the president of the Republic of Burundi and a few moments later by the president of the National Assembly. Although we were expecting an audience at the National Assembly on the early morning of June 25, it was instead the president who first received the UPF delegation. We were accompanied by the second vice-president of the Senate, Hon. Anicet Niyongabo, who was appointed by the president of the Senate to chair IAPP-Burundi. The reception was very warm.

With a warm smile, His Excellency President Pierre Nkurunziza welcomed the UPF delegation. It was a reunion. When Dr. Walsh reminded him of his participation in the UPF inaugural meeting in New York in the United States in 2005, he admitted to being one of us. He expressed his keen interest in the goals advocated by UPF. He thanked Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and UPF for a packet and Memorandum of Understanding brought by Dr. Walsh outlining projects to help and support the leaders of African countries to achieve the goals of interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

The president added that he would arrange for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines collaborative programs as a follow-up to January's Africa Summit that include supporting IAPP, IADP, Peace Road, character education programs, and other initiatives. He expressed his concern to build a nation of peace and unity and spoke about the importance of interreligious meetings for unity and social cohesion in Burundi. The president was very happy and very open during our talks. We had a good time with him. He wished success to our activities in general and for the launch of IAPP Burundi in particular. He told us to visit Burundi regularly. He finally reiterated his attachment to the vision of the UPF with which he hopes to cooperate. The meeting ended with a group picture, first with Dr Walsh and then with all members of the delegation.

Then we headed to the National Assembly Building in Bujumbura, where the president of the National Assembly, the two vice-presidents and other members of the Bureau of the National Assembly of Burundi were waiting. Dr. Walsh and myself were invited to speak. We made in-depth presentations on the vision of UPF's founders and the proposed joint projects of Burundi and UPF, including the inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace, which would take place later that day.

President of the Assembly Pascal Nyabenda followed with great interest the many explanations and agreed in principle with regard to his membership and his involvement. He said he was available to work with UPF and ready to support the development of IAPP-Burundi. He reiterated his support by attending the inaugural IAPP assembly scheduled for the afternoon. It was his opinion that all parliamentarians would join the IAPP when they understand the objectives and vision of this important branch of the UPF. He invited in about 10 journalists who were waiting for interviews with Dr. Walsh and himself.

A special closing banquet was organized in the evening for the UPF delegation. This gala dinner with a professional band of musicians was initiated jointly by the National Assembly and Senate of Burundi and was marked by the presence of the presidents and vice-presidents of these two bodies.