

## Interview with Dr. Thomas Walsh, President of the Universal Peace Federation

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March 9, 2017



**[Weekly Kyunghyang]**  
**“Dialogue and Cooperation in the Private Sector is Necessary to Stand Up to Conflict and Populism”**  
**Interview with Dr. Thomas Walsh, President of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF)**

“Each year, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) holds a series of events in the month of February. Unification Church members begin each New Year in conjunction with the joint birthday celebration of Rev. Sun Myung Moon (born in 1920) and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon (born in 1943). This year, the inauguration ceremony of the Korean chapter of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) and the IAPP World Assembly; the Second Sunhak Peace Prize Award Ceremony; the 2017 Universal Peace Federation (UPF) World Summit, etc., were held in Seoul, South Korea. We met with Dr. Thomas Walsh, President of UPF on February 1 at the Lotte World Hotel in Jamsil, Seoul, Korea.”

*Question: I have a few questions concerning the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) events. First of all, out of the IAPP events held on each continent last year, the Inaugural Assembly was held in Korea. Could you briefly describe the outcome of these events?*

“The IAPP was created with the guidance of UPF. The UPF is an organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. For the past 10 years, UPF has hosted events with religious leaders, scholars, youth and parliamentarians. In January of last year, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon expressed the need for an active peace movement of parliamentarians and thus, gathered 120 people at the National Assembly Hall in Korea. During the year after that, we traveled to Asia, Oceania, Central America and North America to establish a network and brand. Our activities focus on facilitating dialogue and discussion on critical issues such as climate change, extremism and the refugee crisis.”

*Question: How many parliamentarians are participating from around the world?*

“About 1,200 parliamentarians have participated in the continental inaugurations. There were about 404 current and former parliamentarians at the event in Korea. 374 of them are current parliamentarians.”

*Question: As you said earlier, dialogue between people of different ethnicities, races and religious beliefs is extremely important. But it is not enough to simply engage in dialogue with one another. Are there any actions or conclusions that result from these discussions?*

“Of course, I can’t say that we resolved the issues of climate change, extremism and the refugee crisis that I mentioned earlier. But I can say that these discussions have brought us on the path toward resolving these issues. We believed that it was very productive to just go beyond our differences in political positions and reinforce the importance of dialogue.”

*Question: Could you give an example?*

“Hilik Bar, Deputy Speaker of the Israeli Parliament, was one of our main speakers at this past event in Seoul. He led a discussion on ‘Solutions for Coexistence between the Two Nations’ in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This discussion was held not only in Seoul, but also on each continent. A second example is the discussion on the Syrian refugee crisis that was held in December of last year prior to this most recent assembly in Seoul. We held discussions based on the theme of peace in the Middle East, and are moving towards a method of implementation that will contribute to world peace.”

*Question: I understand that your organization, UPF, aims to go beyond religion and facilitate ‘interreligious dialogue.’ Do you feel inclined to let the parliamentarians of various religious beliefs know that Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon’s joint birthday celebration is occurring in the same area?*

“Those events are held not only to commemorate their birthdays, but also to celebrate their life and legacy of world peace. It has become a tradition for us to hold these events every year. I believe that beyond holding a birthday party with drinking and dancing, a much more meaningful way to celebrate a birthday is to create a space for dialogue and discussion in the name of world peace. It is an option for the participants to participate in the birthday celebration. I, myself, enjoy attending Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and other religious events. I believe that learning about other religions is important for peace. We can compare this to learning about another nation’s culture. It’s not about trying to convert someone of a different religion. I think that it is more important to eliminate the threats between religions. From a theological perspective, it is also important to learn about new religions.”....