

WFWPI's International Association of First Ladies for Peace Inaugural Assembly

Carolyn Handschin
February 5, 2020



Building a World of Lasting Peace: A First Ladies' Initiative at World Summit 2020 in Seoul, South Korea - Executive Summary

The International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP) held a successful inaugural world assembly affirming the unique and essential role that women leaders are called to play in bringing about a world of lasting peace. The high-level assembly, "Building a World of Lasting Peace : A First Ladies' Initiative" was part of the World Summit 2020, and special centenary celebration of the life and work of Dr. Sun Myung Moon. It was held at the KINTEX Centre outside Seoul on February 5, 2020. The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWPI), hosted the assembly with First Lady Debbie Remengesau, who had convened the Asia Pacific First Ladies Summit in December in Palau, and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF).



In its founding Resolution, the IAFLP declared it brings together "women leaders from all national, racial and religious backgrounds and all sectors of society, together with those who have lived the responsibility of First Ladies in their nations, uniting in solidarity to respond to today's challenges. The loving and sacrificial leadership of women working together to empower our youth for goodness, to build cohesive communities and, with men, establish models of ethical and balanced leadership to guide them has never been more critical."

Unanimously passed at the conclusion of the assembly, the IAFLP Resolution stands up for the central role that women and mothers have played throughout human history and as "decisive contributors to reconciliation, peacebuilding, reconstruction and development in the wider society and world." IAFLP proudly takes its place beside the International Summit Council for World Peace (ISCP) and the Summit's host, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and its core associations, which are dedicated to creating a world that is interdependent, mutually prosperous and based on universally shared values.



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« Building a World of Lasting Peace : A First Ladies' Initiative »

World Summit 2020
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Executive Summary

By Carolyn Handschin

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Ms. Merly Berlaan, WFWP President in the Philippines invited the current First Ladies to the be seated on the stage. **Ms. Carolyn Handschin**, director of the WFWPI United Nations Office and Emcee, welcomed a room full to capacity with prominent women leaders from every continent, and explained the significance of the assembly.

Opening Remarks were given by **Ms. Julia Moon**, president of WFWPI and director of the Universal Ballet. Addressing the prestigious gathering, she spoke with warmth of the visionary

leadership of **Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon** and her husband's lifelong commitment to peace, as well as the vast network of organizations to which they have dedicated their lives. She thanked Madam Madame Debbie Remengesau, First Lady of Palau for pioneering the First Ladies Association, saying, "Your passion, love, warmth and embracing leadership is an inspiration. IAFLP is an innovative initiative started by Mother Moon to harness the maternal qualities of women to work for peace beyond our families." She added, "Imagine what change could come about if we could bring together our wealth of knowledge, talent, experience and resolve to remedy some of the social, environmental and other problems of our time".

In the first panel, "Special Addresses I: Toward a Culture of Peace and Co-Prosperity: The Role of First Ladies", **Madame Debbie Remengesau**, first lady of Palau, referred to the December gathering in Palau at which the Asia Pacific First Ladies Summit was launched. "We are gathered again today to inaugurate this special session to jumpstart what would become a powerful partnership between first ladies, visionary women and prominent women leaders who share the same desires and ideals to build a future filled with peace, prosperity and stability. ... We must look into ourselves, draw upon that value, and work together as women traditionally would, to create solutions to challenges that threaten our families, our homes and our nations." She closed her remarks with an ancient Palauan chant, "Ko meral mesulang."

Madame Ingrid Aingimea, First Lady of Nauru, population 10,000, addressed the audience. She spoke about building people power and the importance of accountability. "The critical issues of our time and the thematic areas we must first of all ensure are the values which we hold dear so that goodwill, integrity and kindness and respect are extended at all times." Continuing, she explained, "A government cannot be seen as democratic if it is not accountable to its people, and that democracy must value people over profits." When we look beyond power, wealth, status and influence and apply the universal values of peace and goodwill, it becomes a common cause of empowerment and prosperity for our nations."

On behalf of First Lady Mme. Ginger Kabua of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, **Mme. Lieom A. Loeak** Former First Lady, thanked Mother Moon on this very special occasion. We are currently facing a 6-month health emergency due to dengue fever and we are always confronted with the serious effects of climate change. As now the world is affected by a global pandemic, the COVID-19 virus and coming together to stop it, we must do the same for all issues. "We must use opportunities such as we see at this Summit to learn from one another and be proactive in our responses to each-others struggles. "

Former First lady of Nicaragua, **Mme. Maria Fernanda Flores Lanzas'** speech was titled, "The Role of Women in Nicaraguan Politics". With conviction, she described the inaccessibility to decision-making of women in Latin America until the mid 1900s, expressing that to date, there have only been 3 women heads of state. Global legal frameworks for women's empowerment, like CEDAW have helped, but progress has been more on an individual scale. Nicaragua's civil rebellion of 2012 had a women's face. "Gender equality policies must translate into women's voices being able to contribute to problem solving". Let us work together to claim respect and not rest until we live in a world of freedom, justice and opportunities for all women. Thank you to Mother Moon, a spiritual guide and great woman leader!

The next speaker was **Mme Patience Jonathan**, former first lady of Nigeria, a country of over 206 million. She explained that “Peace is the ground upon which sustainable development is built. It is the atmosphere in which prosperity and other virtues like love and justice and equality can blossom. This is why everybody has to volunteer to promote peace, no matter our role and status in our societies.” She called for gender equality and justice in all spheres of society. “I call on women around the world to stand firm and continue with their task of peacebuilding in their respective nations, no matter the challenges and difficulties they face,” she said.

The final speech of the first panel was delivered by **Dr. Emilia Patricia Alfaro de Franco**, former First Lady and a Member of Parliament of Paraguay. With passion, she spoke of the struggle to be recognized and of the historic deep yearning for democracy of the women of Paraguay. Though always being at the side of her husband during his office, she was able to recognize and create opportunities for the vulnerable and disenfranchised -and pursue actions for the promotion and protection of human rights in many areas. At that time, two women ministers were appointed. “Our countries and peoples need us”, she expressed to the First Ladies in attendance. “I urge that we do not leave vacant the role of the First Lady, but work to foment the credibility of the family, social commitment and faith in our beliefs.”

A second panel of the session entitled, “Special Addresses II: “Identifying Successful Initiatives and the Future of IAFLP,”” was introduced by Mrs. Handschin as an opportunity to think together about plans, networking and concrete initiatives that could coalesce First Ladies, institutions, civil society and the private sector in the pursuit of cultures of peace.

The first speaker was **Madame Fionnuala Kenny**, wife of the former prime minister of Ireland, described Ireland as a nation which for many years was devastated by poverty and immigration. “There are 6.2 million Irish people on the island of Ireland now, but we have 75 million people around the world who claim Irish heritage”. Attributing Ireland’s progress and economic growth to its entry into the European Union in 1973, Ireland now works to support new, especially less developed nations. She praised the new first ladies’ association. “For women leaders, particularly for first ladies, who may have little experience in public life, there is great value and importance in a network that can show you the power you can have, or that you can use, to make the world a better place for our children.”

H.E. Anneli Jäätteenmäki, former prime minister of Finland, addressed the lack of progress in women’s participation in decision-making. “Equality in participation and decision-making in society at all levels, from grass-roots to governmental positions, is important,” she said. Despite the many advancements and achievements, the former prime minister said “most of the world’s illiterates are women, and poverty among women is increasing.” She called on civil society and governments to improve these “disturbing signs.”

Dr. Svjetlana Jovic of the Civil Affairs office, UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), who has had more than 20 years’ experience in UN peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, emphasized the involvement of women in the peace process. Dr. Jovic called upon the participants “to promote core values and to serve as role models to younger generations.

... Young people need someone to look up to and someone who will advocate for their interests: parents, mothers, grandparents, guardians. The more women are seen in positions of power and decision-making, the more positive, holistic and based on empathy these decisions will be."

Dr. Celine Guerin, neuroscientist and trauma therapist, Switzerland reminded the audience that the critical element in healing, and living in peace is "love". All my research and clinical therapy as a neuroscientist is rooted there. The trauma of violence, anger, death, fear, competition is embedded in our cells over generations and will affect our emotions and relationships. Through science, we are able to reverse the epigenetic modifications so that we heal trauma and bring ourselves to be able to receive and give love unencumbered.

Mrs. Laura Clark, Co-founder of the Palau Legacy Project spoke of the effect of the First Lady's project has had on her daily behavior and her own life work. Through the Palau Pledge, a mandatory stamp in the passport of all visitors, addressed to the children of Palau, thousands become more aware of the effect that they personally have, good or bad, on the natural environment. Reiterating the words of Mrs. Remengesau, she closed by saying that we need to take responsible action in our own countries.

Other attendees included **Madame Aman Agbomson Klutse**, wife of the former prime minister of Togo; **Madame Callista Mutharika**, former first lady, Malawi; **Madame Graciela Rompani**, Álvarez Caldeyro Barcia Foundation, Uruguay; **Madame Koila Nailatikau**, former first lady, Fiji; **Madame Bernadette Tong**, former first lady, Kiribati; **Madame Sitti Abdallah Mwinyi**, former first lady, Tanzania; **Madame Flutura Ahmeti**, wife of the former prime minister, Albania; **Madame Medine Hanku**, wife of former president, Albania and: Among the other speakers and attendees were **Madame Patricia Marroquín de Argueta**, former first lady, Guatemala.

Closing Remarks for the Session were given by **Dr. Samia Burton**, assistant clinical professor of medicine, George Washington University in the United States, who described the establishment of the IAFLP as "the 'crème de la crème,' the best of the best, as they say in French. The very best of all the associations for peace that were founded by Mother Moon." She thanked Mother Moon for her "vision, commitment, courage and hard work" and praised her family, Dr. Sun Jin Moon and her husband, Dr. In Sup Park, and Dr. Julia Moon of the Universal Ballet.

A short interlude The Little Angels Children's Folk Ballet of Korea provided delightful cultural entertainment while a light meal was served at each table.

The Inaugural Session of the IAFLP, moderated by **Mrs. Angelika Selle**, president, WFWP USA, who said, "We can all feel this new association is well off the ground and ready to move to the next level and into action." **Dr. Thomas Walsh**, the chair of UPF International, was invited to give congratulatory remarks. He thanked WFWPI and Mrs. Remengesau for the quality of the assembly and explained UPF's hopes for a strong collaboration in the future. The role of women "is no longer a question...In this room, there are parliamentarians, heads of states,

not just First Ladies, but many other leading figures, religious leaders". We need what women bring to the table and we need to be able to integrate that fully into our work.

Hon. Faustina Rehurer-Marugg, minister of state, Palau, gave opening remarks on behalf of president Tommy Remengesau. We live in peace, and stability with nature which provides our sustenance. If the plant is endangered, so is the human. "Let's use this opportunity .to build strong partnerships and solidarity as we continue to champion our good causes for the good of the whole world."

Senior Vice-president, WFWP International, **Dr. Sun Jin Moon** took to the stage to inspire the IAFLP delegation with her vision and call to action. She outlined many of the critical issues facing humanity, but most fundamentally, "At the deepest level, there is a crisis of the human heart and conscience. There is a crisis rooted in a failure to understand our true identity." "It is only when we come to recognize the depth of God's reality, and the divine dignity of each person, that we each can become a light, a compass that shows the way out of the chaos that surrounds us, our families and communities."

To formally inaugurate the new association, **Mrs. Blessie Dhakal**, president, WFWP Nepal, read the Resolution for the Establishment of the IAFLP. She quoted, "The loving and sacrificial leadership of women working together to empower our youth for goodness, to build cohesive communities and, with men, establish models of ethical and balanced leadership to guide them has never been more critical." After a presentation of gifts, congratulatory addresses were offered by distinguished participants.

H.E. Anneli Jäätteenmäki, former Prime Minister, Finland said that she would like to thank the founding members/ mothers of the Women's Federation and all that has been happening here during the Summit, because of Father and Mother Moon and their family. It is very important that we have signed this resolution, wiring our names in history. While women have always shaped the histories of their nations, they are seldom remembered. In Finland our new Prime Minister is a woman, and the majority of our government are women. I am sure that they will shape the future for a better Finland.

H.E. Dalia Itzik, former President, Israel addressed the group, saying. "It is astonishing to me to see how one woman (Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon) dedicates everything, together with her family, after all her life seeking for peace and fostering noble values". My husband is here with me. "I truly pray that when my daughter reaches my age and looks back, she will be as satisfied as I am today."

H.E. Sujata Koirala, former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Nepal, praised the IAFLP, which "will be led by women in order to foster maternal instincts such as unconditional love, the willingness to sacrifice, forgiveness and sibling harmony. Mother Moon calls this the 'Logic of Love.'" The family is the bedrock of society, she said. "When families are strong, stable and nurture children and grandchildren properly, then the society and the nation benefit."

Mme. Bernadette Meme Tong, former First Lady of the Republic of Kiribati, came to the stage with a written speech but explained that she preferred to speak from the heart. "Coming from

the smallest island in the middle of the South Pacific, I see that we are all striving for peace in so many ways. I cannot say more than has already been said, I am just so happy to be a part of this organization”.

Closing remarks were offered by **Madame Koila Nailatikau**, former first lady of Fiji. “Women’s representation matters, but it is essential for men, (and I hope all the men in the room are listening), to realise their privilege and make a seat at the table for women, just as Reverend Dr. Sun Myung Moon did when he acknowledged Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon as True Mother, as his equal in their path and work towards universal peace. Reverend Moon knew that when you teach a man, you teach a man, but when you teach a woman, you teach a generation. May we take these lessons to our nations, our homes, our families and instil the seeds of love, respect, inclusivity, and equality to begin a better world for our next generation. And for our strong powerful women: may we know them, may we be them, and may we raise them!”

The session concluded with all 18 former and current first ladies in attendance, alongside WFWP International President Julia Moon, Dr. Sun Jin Moon and Professor Yeon Ah Moon, chair of UPF-Korea, signing the resolution of commitment to work together for peace and to address the international cultural and social issues of the day. Support for the new IAFLP partnership was further confirmed in the resounding closing applause of all women leaders present.

Very special appreciation to the WFWPI headquarters staff and the advance team, including those not yet mentioned; Mrs. Paris Moon, Ms. Mion Migouchi for their tireless work behind the scenes.