

## International Association of First Ladies for Peace: Peace In The Pacific Rim

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April 29, 2021



The International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP), in partnership with Women's Federation for World Peace, conducted session V of the ILC Americas on the topic, "Women's Perspectives on Peace in the Pacific Rim." 248 participants joined the live session, held on April 29, 2021 at 10 AM (EDT).

The session began with heartfelt welcoming remarks by the IAFLP Americas Chair and President of WFWP USA, Mrs. Angelika Selle. Mrs. Selle set the tone for the focus on the Korean Peninsula, and shared the founder's vision as to why women need to play a pivotal role in leading the way to peace at this time, together with men. In her opening remarks, WFWP International President Dr. Julia Moon described the world's recent history, headed by Atlantic Ocean nations maintaining power by masculine means of military strength and colonization. Dr. Moon then spoke on the current Pacific Rim era, with the Latin root of peace found in Pacific. She confirmed that if we are able to learn from our mistakes of the past, and lean into a feminine, nurturing approach to peacemaking, a world of peace is within reach.

Each of the panelists expressed their hearts of concern and resonance for the divided nation of Korea, as they compared the divides and challenges with those in their own countries.

Distinguished panelist Hon. Mrs. Mignon E. Bowen-Phillips, wife of the current Prime Minister of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, spoke of Guyana's recent history of conflict and mass violence pre-independence, and that her country could empathize with the challenges on the Korean peninsula. Acknowledging the limited communication between the two conflicting states, she conveyed the importance of governments and global stakeholders to work together in seeking solutions to humanitarian concerns.

Hon. Mdm. María Fernanda Flores de Alemán, First Lady of the Republic of Nicaragua from 1997 to 2002, shared about the extreme political divide in Nicaragua caused by injustice, and how this division has prevented economic and socio-political stability. To resolve such issues, she strongly emphasized the need for people to unite together for a worthy cause. She urged all leaders to set objectives not for material gain, but for the common good of the people.

Hon. Mdm. Emília Alfaro de Franco, First Lady of the Republic of Paraguay from 2012-2013, shared Paraguay's experience in bringing together their divided country. Broad consensus came about through the initiation of a great person, who envisioned a unified future as opposed to power at the expense of the people. At this time of COVID-19 resulting in major setbacks for women each from our nations, Hon. Franco empowered all to raise their voices and gain visibility, to effect change on the major concerns of our time.

In her closing remarks, Roswitha Dueck de Giuliano, WFWP International Vice President of Latin America, highlighted the takeaways from each of the presentations, and appealed that we stay connected.

Moderator Dr. Susan Taffer, Founder of World Connections Foundation, opened the floor for questions, which sparked a most engaging and spirited discussion. Several questions challenged the speakers as to next steps for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and for IAFLP, and on how to implement the ideas shared during the program. Panelists conveyed the importance of having the strong will to do what is needed to make the change and to invest in our communities through education and instilling values. Ideas including sending a delegation of women leaders to meet with the leadership in North Korea were discussed.

In terms of next steps for IAFLP, Mrs. Selle announced an upcoming First Ladies Conference being planned in Washington D.C. in October 2022. Dr. Taffer wrapped up the session warmly and on a high note, projecting real hope that peace is within reach.

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Background: The International Leadership Conference (ILC), consisting of virtual seminars held in multiple time zones around the world, was hosted by Universal Peace Federation (UPF) from April 28 to 30, 2021. The ILC featured each pillar association of UPF, to expand discourse over the theme, "Toward the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity and Universal Values." As a partner of UPF, Women's Federation for World Peace, International (WFWP) co-sponsored the International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP) sessions within the ILC.