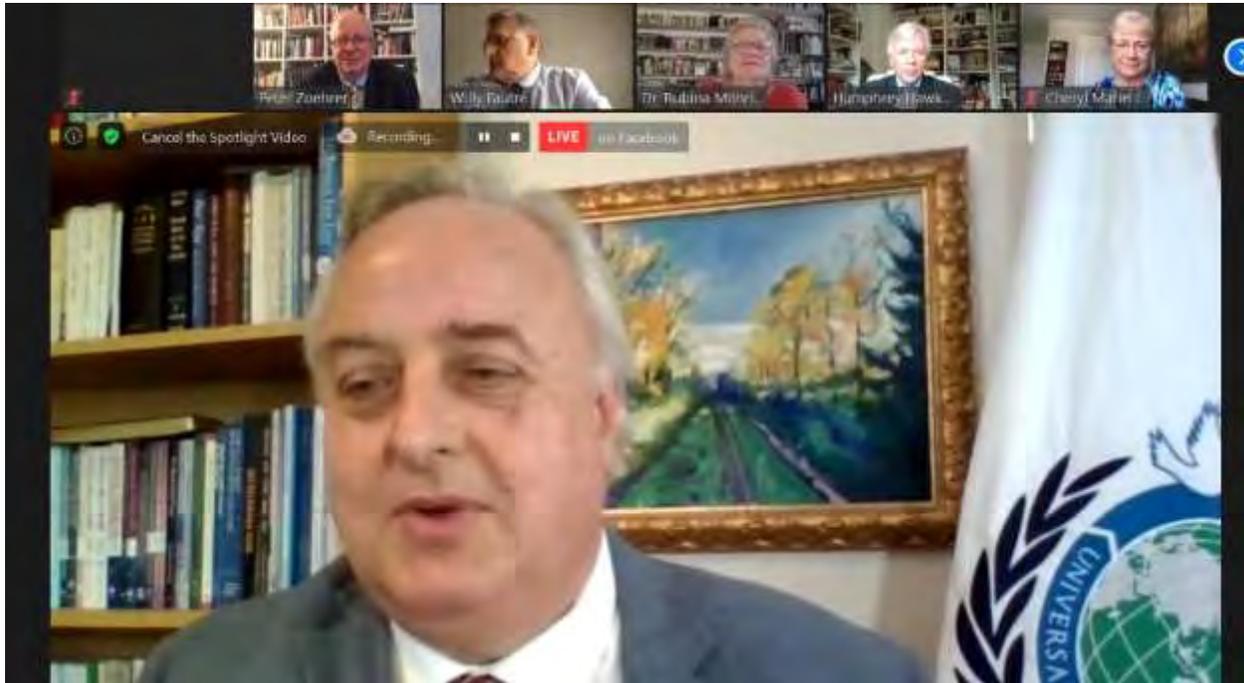**UPF London, UK: Successes and failures of COVID-19 Crisis news coverage**

Robin Marsh
June 9, 2020

London, United Kingdom -- Successes and failures of COVID-19 news coverage were the topic of an online discussion.

The International Media Association for Peace (IMAP), a project of UPF, organized the event, titled "Assessing the Role of News Media in the Global COVID-19 Crisis," on June 9, 2020.

Mr. Peter Zoehrer, the coordinator of IMAP for Europe and the Middle East, led the discussion.

The speakers were Mrs. Cheryl Wetzstein, a senior advisor to IMAP and a former national reporter and special section manager, The Washington Times, United States; Mr. Humphrey Hawksley, a former BBC foreign correspondent and author, United Kingdom; Mr. Willy Fautré, the director and editor in chief of Human Rights Without Frontiers, Belgium; and Dr. Rubina Möhring, the president of Reporters Without Borders, Austria.

Every nation faces continued lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Amid the massive health challenges, economic systems have stalled or teeter on the edge of collapse. During this civilization-level crisis, the media have played a vital role as a source of reliable information for billions of citizens. Information conveyed by mainstream and social media has been of paramount importance, not only for medical professionals but also for governments, businesses, essential institutions and NGOs that provide infrastructures to save lives of affected people.

At the same time, the media have come under severe criticism for allegedly exaggerating the size, impact, morbidity and mortality of the pandemic, thus inducing irrational fears and panic among many people. Furthermore, numerous journalists and media outlets have been accused of not sufficiently questioning

government interests and even propagating conspiracy theories. On a global scale, we are witnessing a fierce information war and battle of narratives concerning the origin of this new strain of coronavirus, the supposed cover-up in Wuhan by the Chinese communist regime, and the belated reaction of the World Health Organization.

The International Media Association for Peace is providing an audience platform for media thought leaders to reflect on the challenges faced, lessons learned, and recommendations for change to navigate the pandemic-affected world.