

## UPF London, UK: UPF Young Achievers question of members of Parliament

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London, United Kingdom -- Young achievers met and asked questions of members of Parliament in an online event held during UK Parliament Week.

For the November 5, 2020, meeting, there were over 60 connections on Zoom and 700 views on Facebook.

UPF of the United Kingdom held the event to promote political dialogue and understanding, with a particular focus on young people and the issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sunhak Peace Prize laureate Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, an Afghan educationalist, commented on Twitter, "Engaging young people with parliamentarians leads us to look at the world through their lenses and open our conscience to today's problems with a broader view of a solution."

Rt. Hon. Baroness Janet Royall tweeted, "A pleasure to participate in the Q-and-A this evening, energized by amazing young people."

The parliamentarians included Afzal Khan MP CBE, Rt Hon. Baroness Janet Royall, Baroness Sandip Verma, Paul Scully MP, and Shaun Bailey MP.

UPF patron Carole Stone CBE and UPF Chair of Trustees Keith Best also spoke.

The panelists briefly introduced themselves first, talking about their career, passions and interests in the context of young people.

It was great to hear from a mixture of younger and older panelists and why they all desire to get young people involved in politics and ensure they are part of conversations today.

Young people then asked questions to the panelists. The questions were directed toward specific members

of the panel who were best positioned to answer. Questions focused mainly on the issues that the COVID-19 pandemic is causing for young people, both in the short term and the long term. Some of the questions asked were:

How are we supporting young people in starting small businesses, given that we are expecting an economic crisis?

When will the COVID-19 crisis end?

How can we balance the anti-COVID restrictions with the mental health of the youth?

Are university students being consulted? Are universities resuming solely based on a financial decision?

If a COVID vaccine becomes available, should vaccination be compulsory?

Should politics be taught to everyone in schools as part of the national curriculum?

The panelists gave thoughtful, honest answers and showed real compassion and interest in the issues that young people in particular are facing today. Although many of the panelists said that they could not give definitive answers to some of the questions (there isn't a right or wrong answer to many of the questions), the young people asking the questions expressed appreciation for the answers provided.



There was also a strong theme emerging that the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be solved internationally. There is a huge focus on nationalism today (e.g., vaccines being purchased by countries alone). However, the view was expressed that we need global cooperation to resolve such issues. Another theme expressed was that we all need to take individual responsibility to overcome this pandemic.

Concluding remarks were given by Dr. Michael Balcomb, chair for Europe and Middle East of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization that is affiliated with UPF. Dr. Balcomb encouraged all young people to get involved and reach out directly to their local member of Parliament in the belief that young people can effect positive change in their area.