

UPF delegation at the first World Tolerance Summit Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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Dubai, United Arab Emirates -- A UPF delegation of six attended the first World Tolerance Summit, which took place from November 16 to 18, 2015 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). UPF was an official supporting partner of the two-day conference whose theme was "Prospering from Pluralism: Embracing Diversity through Innovation and Collaboration."

The delegation included the International Association for Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP)-Middle East and North Africa (MENA) co-chair, Dr. Mohamad Habash; Mr. Peter Haider and Mr. Pascal Haider of UPF-Austria; UPF-MENA chair, Mr. Umberto Angelucci; UPF-Middle East secretary general, Mr. David Fraser Harris; and Dr. Michael Balcomb, regional chair of UPF-Europe and the Middle East. During the gala dinner on the first evening, Dr. Balcomb received an award presented to UPF for its partnership support on the Summit. The following day, Mr. Angelucci and Dr. Hamad Al Shaikh Ahmad Al Shaibani, managing director of the International Institute of Tolerance, signed a memorandum of understanding.

This Summit was held on the centenary of the birth of HRH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE who gathered different tribes in the 1960's to form one united nation. This unifying spirit infused the conference and reflects the development of the UAE itself into a nation that today is home to over 200 nationalities. The many tributes to the life, heart and vision of Sheikh Zayed that were given testified to a man who sought to embody an Islam that embraces and welcomes all people alike.

There was broad participation from many fields and of many nationalities. Many of the participants clearly shared a vision of harmony between faiths and cultures and some, born from intercultural marriages, were demonstrating it in their lives. The spirit of forgiveness was highlighted in the example of a youth organization leader who somehow found it in his heart to give a job to the kidnapper of his still missing brother. He said, "I looked into his face and saw he was really an innocent young man." The

sessions were intense and well-attended, although, at times, there were too few opportunities for the audience to participate.

On the second evening, our hosts treated us to a special centenary concert commemorating the life of Sheikh Zayed that was beautifully presented in an open air space across the water from the nation's new Etihad (unity) museum.

The concluding declaration, the Dubai Declaration 2018, echoed the participants' comments as to what tolerance is and what it is not. There was much resonance among and a broad welcome by the participants, with the participants from other Arab nations expressing their sense of pride that an Arab nation could light such a beacon of values for humanity.

