

UPF-Japan observance of UN World Interfaith Harmony Week in Shinjuku, Tokyo

Shunsuke Uotani
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Tokyo, Japan -- UPF-Japan and its Council of Religious Ambassadors for Peace co-organized an interreligious forum, the 103rd one the chapter has convened, in Shinjuku, Tokyo on February 21, 2019 in observance of UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The forum, which is convened every year to commemorate the UN week, included a "Prayer for Peace by Religious Leaders," and was attended by about 50 Ambassadors for Peace and representatives of five faiths: Shinto, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim and Christian. Since its establishment in October 2010 by the UN General Assembly, World Interfaith Harmony Week has been observed annually during the first week of February.

The "Prayer for Peace by Religious Leaders" was the first half of program. Ven. Taishu Nara, a Shinto priest and vice president of the Council, performed a Shinto ritual. This was followed by prayers offered by representatives of the Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian faiths, and the recitation of a prayer of the late founder of UPF, Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Two representatives of the Jewish and Shinto faiths were appointed as Ambassadors for Peace at the end of the first half of the program.

During the second half, Mr. Shunsuke Uotani, secretary general of UPF-Japan, spoke about the World Summit 2019, which took place in Seoul, Korea from February 7 to 10.

Mr. Uotani emphasized that it was significant that not only prominent leaders of various fields could share their insights and perspectives on global challenges, but that also political and religious leaders could deepen their exchange with each other during the Summit. Political leaders tried to consider a realistic approach to realizing world peace and promoting development. On the other hand, religious leaders discussed the role of religion in guiding people to create peace, Mr. Uotani shared.

After speaking about the Global Assembly of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), which was held during the Summit, Mr. Uotani said he expects several projects supporting peacebuilding will be initiated by religious leaders through the IAPD-Japan.

Afterwards, each participant who attended the Summit shared their thoughts and experiences. One participant expressed enthusiasm for the IAPD to become a network of different religious leaders.

Mr. Shinobu Ishimaru, executive advisor of the Council of Religious Ambassadors for Peace-Japan, said: "During the Summit, I had a discussion with founding members of the Council of Religious Ambassadors for Peace in Japan on how to develop IAPD activities. At the same time, we could deeply understand the vision for peace of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and share the necessity of why religious leaders must learn it."

The program concluded with a reading of some passages from Rev. Moon's speech, "God's Model Ideal Family and Nation and the Peace Kingdom," through which the participants could learn about the vision of the interreligious movement to establish world peace.