

## International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace launched in Israel

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Jerusalem, Israel—The national inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) was held at Israel's parliament, the Knesset, on June 21, 2017. Seven current Knesset members and one former Israeli government minister, as well as an international delegation, comprising parliamentarians from five nations, led by UPF International president, Dr. Thomas Walsh, and UPF-Middle East chair, Mr. Umberto Angelucci, participated in the program.

The one day event was composed of four parts: Part I: A VIP reception for the international delegation at the Knesset. Part II: The inauguration of the IAPP-Israel at the Knesset's Negev Hall. Part III: A roundtable discussion on the role of parliamentarians in the Middle East. Part IV: A roundtable discussion on the topic of rekindling the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.



### Part I: VIP Reception

The international delegation was welcomed by local parliamentarians from various parties, including from the coalition and the opposition, at a reception that took place in the VIP room.

The hosting Knesset members were Hon. Hilik Bar, deputy speaker of the Knesset; Hon. Zouheir Bahloul; Hon. Esawi Freij; Hon. Akram Hasoon; Hon. Abdullah Abu Maaruf; Hon. Anat Berko; and Hon. Ran Cohen, former minister of industry and trade of Israel.

The international parliamentarians delegation included Hon. Ek Nath Dhakal, former minister of peace and reconstruction of Nepal; Hon. Aylin Nazliaka, deputy of Ankara, Turkey; Hon. Roberto Rampi, Parliament of Italy; Hon. Gerardo Giovagnoli, the parliament of San Marino (the Grand and General Council); Hon. Yurii Miroshnychenko, the parliament of Ukraine; Mr. Murat Sengul, the Turkish Democracy Foundation; Dr. Tageldin Hamad, chairman of the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO); and Mr. Mykhailo Ilin, chair of UPF-Ukraine.

Mr. Hod Ben Zvi, president of UPF-Israel, opened the event with a short introduction, which was followed by a brief explanation about the IAPP by Dr. Walsh. Afterwards, each one of the local parliamentarians gave welcoming remarks and the international guests introduced themselves. In the warm atmosphere, a spirited discussion developed in which a local coalition member and the local opposition members expressed disagreements.



## **Part II: Inauguration of IAPP-Israel**

The main event, the inauguration of the IAPP-Israel, was held in Negev Hill at the Knesset. More than 80 people, including scholars, religious leaders, and leaders of local civil society and student organizations, attended the launching.

Mr. Ben Zvi welcomed the audience in and gave the floor to Dr. Walsh, who gave an overview of the IAPP and highlighted IAPP events that have taken place since the project's international launching in 2016. The local and international parliamentarians greeted the audience and spoke about the important role of parliamentarians in promoting peace in their nations and, more specifically, their role in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Hon. Bar thanked the IAPP for enabling him to present his peace initiative in several parliaments around the world. Hon. Bahaloul spoke about the importance of fighting against racism as a step toward achieving peace. Hon. Frej spoke about the importance of peace on the level of the individual, family and people-to-people for achieving peace among nations and religions. Hon. Hasoon spoke on behalf of the Druze community and said that the Druze are an example of a minority who have integrated exceptionally well into a society—the Israeli society—while keeping their unique tradition and religion.

Additional remarks were given by Knesset member Hon. Yael Faran, who spoke about the importance of the IAPP and the role elected parliamentarians should play in realizing peace.

Among the international guests, Hon. Rampi spoke about the importance of culture as a means to building peace. Hon. Miroshnychenko said that rather than talking about peace agreements we should focus on the hearts that are yearning for peace and the common emotions the word, “peace,” evokes. Mr. Sengul read a lovely Turkish poem, which moved the audience. Hon. Giovagnoli spoke about a Soccer for Peace project that brought together Israeli and Arab children that took place in the republic of San Marino. Hon. Dhakal spoke about the work UPF has done in Asia for peace.

Mr. Koriel Ben Zvi, coordinator of the Israel chapter of the Youth and Students for Peace (YSP), an affiliated initiative, the youngest speaker, caught the attention of the audience as well as the VIP's. He spoke about the responsibility of young leadership: to encourage and support parliamentarians in their efforts to bring peace. He emphasized one's personal responsibility and the need to achieve peace within ourselves and within our families first for peace to be achieved on higher levels. Mr. Ben Zvi concluded his speech by quoting from a speech UPF International chair, Dr. Sun Jin Moon, gave at the inauguration of the YSP Asia-Pacific.

The closing remarks were given by Mr. Umberto Angelucci, who expressed his passion for promoting peace in the Middle East and affirmed that he believes peace can indeed be achieved.

After the closing remarks, the international delegation was invited to the plenum hall of the Knesset, where Hon. Bar introduced them to the plenum and greeted them on behalf of the Knesset.



### **Young Leadership Special Session**

At the same time, in Negev Hall, a half hour session on the role of young leadership took place. Mrs. Miri Kamar, director of the Jerusalem Interfaith Forum, chaired the session. The speakers were Mr. Koriel Ben Zvi and Mrs. Liel Weiler-Hill, a coordinator of the YSP in Israel. They called on young leaders to join them for future activities of the YSP, and afterwards a discussion developed. About 15 young leaders from universities, the green movement, and the women's movement and education groups brought up sharp arguments. In conclusion, everyone agreed that the best way to contribute is to be in the field and organize projects involving Jewish and Arab youth.

### **Part III: Roundtable Discussion: The Role of Parliamentarians in the Middle East**

The third session, a roundtable discussion among parliamentarians, scholars and experts on the role of parliamentarians in the Middle East, took place at the Olive Tree Hotel in East Jerusalem.

The first session, which was chaired by Mrs. Angelucci, director of UPF-Middle East, focused on "Beyond National Interests – The Role of Parliamentarians in the Middle East." Hon. Talab El Sana, a former Knesset member who currently is an advisor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, talked about the necessity to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and end both peoples suffering. He lamented the lack of trust on both sides and stressed the need to know the other. Mr. Haim Koren, former ambassador of Israel to Egypt, highlighted the significance of track two solutions, which can arise from discussions in closed rooms, even in the Middle East's complex reality. Hon. Rampi spoke about the importance of culture in establishing societies of peace, and Hon. Aylin Nazliaka said that the situation in the Middle East will change dramatically when the power of love becomes greater than the love for power.

### **Part IV: Roundtable Discussion: Rekindling the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process**

The title of the second session, which was chaired by Dr. Tageldin Hamad, chairman of the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO), was "Rekindling the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process." A special guest from the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Ashraf Ajrami, a member of the Committee of Interaction with the Israeli Society and former minister of prisoners affairs of the Palestinian Authority, joined the discussion. He talked about the mutual desire of both Israelis and Palestinians to resolve their dispute in a peaceful manner. Mr. Daniel Sherman, an expert on Israeli-Palestinian affairs talked about the need for clarity and objectivity about historical facts when discussing differing national narratives. Hon. Giovagnoli alerted us about nationalism and populism using fear to gain power as opposed to pursuing the righteous desire of seeking unity beyond the nation. Dr. Drora Ben Dov talked about the need for courageous leadership, which tells us what we need rather than follows what we want. An important message was given by Prof. Glaubach, president of the Jerusalem Peace and Security Forum. He praised UPF's efforts to promote peace in areas of conflict around the world and emphasized the need for moral political leadership to implement peace.

The day's events, at the Knesset and at the hotel, created opportunities for the participants share new ideas and inspiration, and forge new friendships.