

## Fiji's inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace

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Suva, Fiji -- The national inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) was held on the 2017 UN International Day of Families.

The Fijian chapters of UPF and Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization, held the event in the Suva City Council Function Hall, in partnership with the faith-based organization Shree Saraswati Ramayan Mandali.

The May 20 program was divided into two parts: a values education symposium and a celebration of UN International Day of Families together with the inauguration of IAPP.



Mr. Manoa Senikarawa, the CEO of the National Substance Abuse Advisory Council representing Minister of Education Dr. Mahendra Reddy, was the chief guest for the first part of the program. In his opening remarks he focused on character education, the behavior of students at school, and the need to reach out to the schools and students.

Dr. Reddy has emphasized four pillars of parental engagement, Mr. Senikarawa said. He said that primary schoolteachers work tirelessly to instill discipline in children, so teachers are now encouraged to reach out to parents. He expressed his gratitude for the IAPP seminar, saying that these sessions will empower us to reach out to parents.

The keynote speaker of the program was Mr. Enrique Ledesma, a UPF lecturer on family and peace education. He spoke about the importance of values/character education in the school system and explained why we need to cultivate the human heart. Educating for character must take priority, he said. Despite our long human history and high intellectual accomplishments, millions have died in world wars. From this evidence, he said, we can see that it is crucial to educate good, responsible and loving citizens rather than merely technically capable people.

Mr. Ledesma touched upon the family crisis in Fiji. Data show that Fiji has one of the highest levels of domestic violence in the world, also very high youth issues, such as high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, criminal activities, drugs, pregnancies, and school problems.

The presentation had three parts: the Priority of Educating for Character; Universal Values; and Achieving a Balanced Education. Just as human beings have a mind and body, education should have two dimensions: education for the character and education for career, Mr. Ledesma said. UPF proposes this should be based on universal values, thereby correcting the focus on a values-neutral perspective. The key is education of character based on cultivation of heart and true love, secondly education of norms, and thirdly education for mastery, he said.



There were three commentators in the first session. The first was Mr. Timoci Vosailagi, the principal of William Cross College, who commended the speakers, saying that this information will lead to changes in the way teachers handle students. He emphasized the education of character, which seeks to have teachers become good role models. When children see good character in their teachers on a daily basis, they also will develop a good character, he said.

Mr. Rajendra Vishnu Kumar, the principal education officer at the Ministry of Education, was the second commentator. He thanked the presenters for the special values education for teachers. The role of teachers is not only delivering the core curriculum but also training the hearts and minds of the younger generations, he said. Because there are many distractions for young people today, teachers need to be good role models, he said. Teachers are judged at all times, so we need to remind ourselves of moral values. Our school should offer good character education.

The third commentator was Mr. Wasu Deo, the secretary general of UPF-Fiji and the principal of Saraswati College. He reported on programs that UPF is conducting on the national level and the positive impact that the values education tour is having in the schools of Fiji.

Hon. Mohammed Dean, a member of parliament, closed the session by thanking UPF International for its good work. He summarized the important points that had been made by the various presenters. He concluded with UPF's simple message of humanity and love and said that the definitions of love and humanity in all religions are a unique tool used by UPF.

Mr. Wasu Deo, the secretary general of UPF Fiji, was the master of ceremonies for the second part of the program themed: "The UN International Family Day Celebration and International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace." The program started with special prayers by representatives of the major religions, which is the common practice of UPF and affiliated organizations in Fiji.

Opening remarks were given by Mr. Ratu Filimoni Ralogivau, the president of UPF-Fiji. He spoke about the UPF founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon's contributions to peacemaking. Dr. Moon focused on bringing people together and his work involved the unification of all humanity, he said.

Mr. Enrique Ledesma, a UPF lecturer on family and peace education, gave a presentation titled "The Family Is the School of Love," which covered the natural order of the family, the four spheres of love in the family and society, and the importance of celebrating the UN International Day of Families.

Hon. Netani Rika, the chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense and the deputy whip of the Fiji First Party in the Fijian Parliament, came to the podium with a mission to propose the establishment of IAPP in Fiji and to propose that Hon. Ilesia Delana become the president of IAPP in Fiji. He started his speech by reciting a poetry of Father Moon called "Crown of Glory." He then related his experience of participating in the birthday celebrations for the UPF founders and the IAPP global inauguration in South Korea earlier this year. He saluted Father Moon for the suffering life he led for the sake of all humanity.

Later, Hon. Rika moved a proposal of IAPP in Fiji and the motion was seconded by Hon. Dr. Brij Lal, a member of parliament. Hon. Iliasa Delana, the president of IAPP Fiji, received the Appointment Certificate from Dr. Chang Sik Yang, the secretary general of UPF International, and signed the IAPP declaration before giving his acceptance speech.

In his speech Hon. Delana focused on the main responsibility of parliamentarians as the servants of the country and its people. He argued that everyone needs to live for the sake of the country. Hon. Delana was a gold medalist in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London, United Kingdom. Currently he is an assistant minister for youth and sport of the Fijian government. He is seen as a hero and role model for the youth of Fiji.

The session concluded with Mr. Sat Narayan, the president of Shree Saraswati Ramayan Mandali, a partner organization of FFWPU and affiliated organizations in Fiji, happily announcing the Happy Family Award Ceremony, the highlight of the program. The award is a major tool to educate people on the importance of married life and family. Four couples were recognized as happily married couples. Dr. Chang Sik Yang, the secretary general of UPF International, and Hon. Rupeni Nadalo, the deputy speaker of the Fijian Parliament, jointly gave the award to the following couples:

Mr. Rocky Fatiaki, married for 40 years  
Mr. Mohammed Sanamulla Khan, married for 59 years  
Mr. Tevita and Mrs. Loraini Ba, married for 46 years  
Mr. and Mrs. John Mahadeo, married 60 years.

Parliamentarians from major political parties attended the program to congratulate the establishment of IAPP with its newly appointed president, Hon. Iliasa Delana, as well as the new project of UPF-Fiji and to congratulate the four couples who received the award. Among them were Hon. Professor Biman Prasad, the president of the National Federation Party and a prominent parliamentarian. He stated that “Family is a school in which we learn moral values, and families teach us to endure other turbulences.”

Hon. Veena Bhatnagar, the assistant minister for women, children and poverty alleviation, spoke on family unity, the definition of family, and the International Day of Families, whose theme in 2017 is “Families, Education and Well-Being.” Family involvement is important, parental involvement is important, and children need to respect the elderly, she said. Everything must be done to ensure that families live together. She said that 139 children are under social welfare care and 124 elders are in old-age homes. We need to care for the elderly and the disabled, she said. Families are like branches that belong to the same root.

Rev. Jong Deug Yoo, the regional chair of UPF for Oceania, thanked all the participants. He gave special appreciation to Hon. Delana for accepting the leadership of IAPP-Fiji and also to the four couples who had been given the Happy Family Awards.

He then introduced Dr. Chang Sik Yang, the secretary general of UPF International, mentioning that Dr. Yang traveled to Fiji to give the keynote speech representing the UPF founders. During his speech Dr. Yang spoke on the vision, mission and activities of UPF and IAPP, centering on the educational and Peace Philosophy of the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon. He said that Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon is carrying on the work initiated by her late husband, in particular her initiative to develop IAPP chapters in more than 120 nations.

The chief guest, Hon. Rupeni Nadalo, the deputy speaker of Parliament, spoke on the theme “Strong Marriages and Loving Families Make up a Good Society.” He said that all religions recognize marriage and that IAPP has been launched as a worldwide association with a forum that will have the capacity to solve the world’s problems. He went on to express that IAPP promotes one human family under God and gave thanks and appreciation to all the participants for making the IAPP inauguration a grand success.

Prior to the program UPF Regional Chair Rev. Jong Deug Yoo and UPF International Secretary General Dr. Chang Sik Yang met Former Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka and Speaker of the House Dr. Jiko Luveni. Dr. Luveni apologized for not being able to participate in the inauguration due to health reasons and sent her good wishes for the successful launching of IAPP in Fiji, promising to support the activities of IAPP in her role as speaker of the House.

The major personalities present at the conference included: the deputy speaker of the House, representing the speaker as the chief guest; Former Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka; 11 current parliamentarians; five former parliamentarians; diplomats; high-level government officers; high school principals and teachers; Ambassadors for Peace; leaders of civil society; and members of UPF, FFWPU and Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), another affiliated organization.