

## The inauguration IAPP in the Kingdom of Tonga at a Basilica in Nuku'alofa

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January 26, 2018



Nuku'alofa, Tonga -- Approximately 40 people attended the inauguration of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) in the Kingdom of Tonga.

The event took place at the Basilica of St. Anthony Padua on January 26, 2018, in the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa, which means "the abode of love."

Tonga is an independent Polynesian nation-state in the southern Pacific Ocean with a population of around 108,000. It consists of an archipelago of 169 islands, of which 36 are inhabited. It has a king and recently has been moving toward becoming a constitutional monarchy with partially representative elections.

The Tongan islands are believed to have been settled by humans for nearly 3,000 years since the Lapita times. In the 19th century, following the arrival of Western traders and missionaries, Tonga embraced Christianity, with almost 98 percent of residents professing a Christian faith.

Many Tongans have emigrated to Australia, New Zealand, or the United States to seek employment and a higher standard of living. The United States is the preferred destination for Tongan emigrants, and as of the year 2000, there were 36,840 Tongans living in the US. More than 8,000 Tongans live in Australia. The Tongan diaspora retains close ties to relatives at home, and a significant portion of Tonga's income derives from remittances to family members (often aged) who prefer to remain in Tonga.

The IAPP inauguration consisted of a morning program followed by lunch. The theme of the event was "Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: The Role of IAPP in Tonga." The attendees included Speaker of the House Lord Fakafanua; Member of Parliament Hon. M'oaie Finau; Assistant Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Curtis Tu'ihalangie; former Members of Parliament Isi Pulu and Sunia Manu Fili; some Christian pastors, and community and youth leaders.

The emcee was Tongan youth representative Ms. Soana Fili. The meeting opened with a prayer by Rev. Sione Tuutafaiva from the Free Church of Tonga, followed by a video introduction to UPF and an introduction to IAPP by Rev. Santosh Neupane, the director of UPF-Fiji.



*Basilica of St. Anthony Padua on January 26, 2018, in the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa*

A PowerPoint on "Family Values and World Peace and the Need to Educate for Character" was presented by Greg Stone, the regional secretary general of UPF-Oceania. Dr. Venus Agustin, president of the Martial Arts Federation for World Peace Asia Pacific, gave a presentation on "Supporting Tongan Youth: Teaching Moral Values through Unified Martial Arts."

The speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga, Lord Fakafanua, who had been attending the morning session, gave his strong encouragement especially for the "Zero to Hero" program targeting troubled youth that Dr. Agustin had outlined.

IAPP-Tonga was officially launched with the reading and signing of the Inaugural Resolution. Hon. M'uale Finau, MP, spoke about the critical issues facing Tonga.

Rev. Shang Seon Park, the regional chair of UPF-Oceania, gave the congratulatory remarks. He pointed out that a nation like Tonga, which has strong faith in God, must be very serious to respond to God's call because God needs our help to address the many issues facing the world at this time.

Closing remarks were given by Mr. Sunia Manu Fili, the president of UPF-Tonga, who related his experiences of UPF over the years and encouraged the participants to work together to support the ongoing critical work of IAPP and UPF in Tonga.

The closing prayer was given by Rev. Kelepi Misa, who leads a Christian ministry which helps elderly and youth in trouble in Tonga. The meeting finished with lunch and informal discussions.