

## UPF Italy's Conference at Italian Senate Addresses Religion and Peace

Carlo Zonato  
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**Rome, Italy** – In celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week and the International Day of Human Fraternity, at the initiative of **Senator Pier Ferdinando Casini**, UPF-Italy organized an interreligious conference on the theme “Interreligious Cooperation – A Foundation for Human Fraternity and a Culture of Peace” on February 4, 2025. The event was held in Rome, at the Italian Senate of the Republic, in the Zuccari Hall of Palazzo Giustiniani.



The conference highlighted the importance of dialogue among different religions as a foundation for building a cohesive and peaceful society. During the meeting, various speakers emphasized the crucial role of women in mediation processes, and the family as a social model.

Speakers from the Islamic and Jewish traditions stressed individual responsibility in promoting mutual respect and understanding. Christian representatives highlighted the importance of fraternity and solidarity, underscoring that religions should be instruments of peace rather than conflict. The Buddhist representative underlined the need to overcome division by recognizing our common humanity, urging everyone to choose to be peacemakers.

Moderated by **Ms. Raffaella Di Marzio**, director of the Center for Studies on Freedom of Religion, Belief and Conscience (LIREC), the meeting opened with greetings from Senator Casini. He spoke about the importance of promoting peace and interreligious dialogue in a global context marked with division

and conflict. He recalled the significance of this occasion, which commemorates the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib – a fundamental step towards building a fairer and more united society.



**Mr. Tageldin Ibrahim Hamad**, director of the UN Relations Office of UPF, read the 2024 message from the UN Secretary-General, stressing the urgency of combating discrimination and intolerance. He urged recognition of the humanity that unites us — rich in diversity, equal in dignity and rights, and united in solidarity — reminding us that together we can chart a path toward a more peaceful, inclusive, and just world for all.

**Mr. Carlo Zonato**, president of UPF-Italy, focused on the essential role of interreligious cooperation in building a culture of peace, drawing attention to the universal values shared by all religions. He cited UPF’s founders, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, pointing to their teachings on the necessity of respect and collaboration among different religious traditions.



**Imam Nader Akkad** of the Great Mosque of Rome underlined how interreligious dialogue serves as a crucial tool for overcoming division and fostering peace, referencing the Abu Dhabi Document, which condemns violence committed in the name of religion and upholds the dignity and rights of all human beings.

**Ms. Francesca Baldini**, journalist and coordinator of the Italian network Women of Faith in Dialogue of Religions for Peace, emphasized the fundamental role of women in peace and mediation processes, highlighting their contribution to interreligious dialogue. She believes that the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace and harmony, while sharing moral and spiritual values and experiences in a climate of truth and love.

**Mr. Giuseppe Calì**, president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU Southern Europe), stressed the importance of human fraternity and interreligious cooperation, arguing that

true fraternity cannot exist without the concept of the family. He described the family institution as the model for all social relationships, pointing out how the principles of love and respect are essential to building a more united society.



**Rabbi Ariel Di Porto**, from the Jewish Community of Rome, spoke about each individual's responsibility in building peace, stating that every action, no matter how small, contributes to the healing of the world. He urged people to counter the misuse of religion for divisive purposes by recognizing it as a powerful tool for reconciliation and healing.

The **Right Rev. Luis Miguel Perea Castrillón**, bishop of the Anglican Church of Europe, spoke about the importance of individual responsibility in promoting fraternity and peace, and the need to recognize what unites us: goodwill and the desire to progress together, seeing one another as true brothers and sisters. He explained that, of course, this is neither easy nor obvious, but it is possible.



**Ven. Thenzin Khentse**, a Buddhist monk from the Tibetan tradition, pointed out that despite the fears and difficulties of the contemporary world, humanity has always found the resilience necessary to pursue ideals of peace and justice throughout history. He reminded the audience that the art of loving is communicated through one's gaze, physical contact, and presence, even before words.

Also present was **Mr. Jacques Marion**, regional chairman of UPF-Europe and the Middle East, who noted that in his home country of France, every institutional building bears three essential words: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. These words are a symbol of the nation, but while the struggle for liberty and equality is strongly felt, fraternity often does not receive the same attention.

The event provided an important opportunity for exchange and dialogue among different faiths, reaffirming the need for a shared commitment to building a future of peace and harmony.