

## UPF Latin America Hosts First Webinar: Latin America in the Era of the Covid-19

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**Latin America** -- UPF International's first Latin America's webinar was titled "Latin America in the Era of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities." The June 3rd conference had over 600 participants from 37 countries.

Dr. Thomas Walsh (Chairman, UPF International) gave the opening remarks, and Dr. Simon Feraboli (Regional Secretary General for South America) introduced the panelists.

During this time of the coronavirus, governments have their hands full addressing the immediate challenges of the crisis. The political and economic impact is equally enormous and widely felt. We invited panelists to discuss the political, social and economic context of the issues facing Latin America and offer their recommendations for constructive steps toward dialogue, peace and development that might be taken, either by governments or non-state actors such as civil society, the private sector, and faith-based organizations.

### Panelists

**Dr. Charles Yang** (UPF Regional Chair for Latin America and the Caribbean) spoke briefly about the current situation, saying that we have to think of it in terms of the *pre-Covid-19* period and the *post Covid-19* period. The shutdown we are in now will not be permanent, and the new period will be very different to the past. He emphasized the work of the UPF in this time not only with the Webinar series but also the work of our founder, Dr. Moon, and her desire that we establish "One Family under God." The launching of the Heavenly Parents Holy Community is for her the first step in fulfilling that vision.

**H.E. Luis Federico Franco Gómez** is a Paraguayan politician who was president of Paraguay from June 2012 to August 2013; he is a surgeon by profession. He reminded us that we are facing a new, unprecedented (in our lifetime) situation. We are desperately looking for a solution, and there is a global focus on the search for a vaccine. He urged all people to follow the lock-down rules: Stay at home, social

distancing, and so forth. He described the areas of human endeavor as being like the four legs of a table -- 1. Health, 2. Social, 3. Economy, and 4. Politics -- which ideally should be balanced. He believes that in his country of Paraguay this will only come through reform of the state: It is corrupt and needs to be smaller and more efficient to be effective.

**H.E. Jocelerme Privert** is a Haitian accountant and politician. He was the acting president of Haiti from February 14, 2016, to February 7, 2017. He is also the president of the Senate in Economy and Finance. He reminded us that we are all affected. Even though his region responded quickly to the situation, it still faces big problems. Especially the poorer people are affected most. He noted that the political situation in many countries was a barrier to effective control of the virus. Emphasizing the need for international cooperation and the need for justice, he noted that wWe need to work together. Unity, solidarity, and equality is the way forward. We should also create regional groups and establish research laboratories across the world to find the solution.

**Hon. Antero Flores Aráoz Esparza** is a Peruvian lawyer and politician. In 2004 he was elected president of the Congress of the Republic of Peru. From 2007 he also served as Peru's minister of defense. Dr. Antero noted that we were not prepared for this situation; even the most developed nations have been struggling to control it. The world is very unequal; countries without resources need more support internationally. Even the United Nations was not prepared: It was created to avoid wars and not to respond to pandemics. The number of people in extreme poverty is increasing and will continue to rise as people lose their jobs and states are unable to help. In Peru there are a lot of informal workers who cannot even leave their homes at the moment and are in dire situations. Even though the government has tried to help with funds, the system it created has failed many people. Only by working together globally can we solve the problem. Better education, teaching values, and understanding the deeper meaning of life is how to create a better world.

**Dr. Carlos Heriberto Rivas**, pastor, is the founder and leader of the TAI International Revival Tabernacle of El Salvador, a church that gathers around 10,000 people; He is the president director of the Christian Television Corporation. Our lives have already been changed by this situation, in the darkness, the silence and the emptiness that we have felt and seen in others. Countries have responded very differently. Brazil ignored it, others have used it to dominate their people. Dictators have increased their powers, and many countries in our region are suffering even though they followed protocols. If we work together, empathize and unite together, things will be different. Egoism is a problem; there should be global solidarity. El Salvador was battered by storms as well during this time: it has been very difficult. But we can see opportunity, too, if we can work together more, being hopeful and not fearful. We have overcome diseases in the past; we can do it again with God's help. Also we have to recognize our failures, especially with the environment. But let's go forward with faith, hope and love.

**Rev. Dong Mo Shin** (President of UPF-South America) expressed his appreciation to all the panelists, reminding us that the virus does not respect race or religion. He hopes that through this and similar meetings, UPF is making a significant contribution to overcoming the problems that we all face.

The meeting concluded with a short Q and A session. First, Dr. Thomas Walsh responded to a question from Nicaragua about overcoming the situation. He emphasized the importance of the core values of UPF: interdependence, mutual prosperity, and universal values and the need for us all to apply these principles every day. Dr. Carlos Rivas and Dr. Antero Flores Araoz reflected on the question of our destiny after the virus. Dr. Carlos responded, "We must learn from this situation and create a new future with love and solidarity." Dr. Antero said, "The future will not be given to us. We have to create it, becoming new people ready for a new world."