

## UPF Malaysia ‘Peace Talks’ Celebrates World Interfaith Harmony Week, Launches IAPD

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**—UPF-Malaysia celebrated UN World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) and the International Day of Human Fraternity as well as launched the national chapter of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) during its first “Peace Talks” webinar held on February 3, 2021. The virtual program was attended by 250 participants from 15 nations.

In the first session, leaders of UPF-Asia Pacific launched the IAPD-Malaysia. Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN resident coordinator for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, delivered a special message on WIHW and commended UPF’s efforts in promoting interfaith harmony and supporting the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This was followed by a Panel Sharing Session featuring three distinguished speakers representing interfaith, women and youth perspectives who shared their views on and practical solutions on the topic “*Covid-19: Pathways Forward- Working Together for National Prosperity and Happiness.*” The session was moderated by **Dr Amir Farid Isahak**, Chairman of Interfaith Spiritual Fellowship, who has over 20 years of extensive experience in interfaith work at national and international levels. Dr Amir led a very insightful and fruitful discussion

The first speaker was **Dato’ Azman Amin bin Hassan**, former Director General of the Department of National Unity & National Integration under the Prime Minister's Department in 2014, and the former Chairman of National Committee for the Promotion of Understanding and Harmony among Adherents of Religions. Dato’ Azman spoke on the role of religious institutions as advocates for setting actions and change at a national perspective and gave practical solutions and examples on how religions can serve the community for nation building.

The next speaker was **Dr Radiah binti Salim**, President and Founder of Club H.E.A.L. Singapore, who presented on the topic from the women’s perspective. Dr Radiah began her presentation by highlighting the role of women as natural caregivers with the famous quote “*the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world*”. She then shared about her personal experiences as a caregiver, leading to the founding of Club H.E.A.L, which consisted mainly of women actively playing the role of building bridges and reducing stigma in mental health challenges, thus promoting peace in the community and society.

The third speaker, **Mr Chin How Zet**, Youth Chairman of Penang Hakka Association, a very passionate and dynamic youth activist presented on the role of youth in nation building. He drew the attention of the audience by presenting real-life community service case studies carried out by his team of young volunteers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mr Chin emphasized on the spirit of volunteerism, multicultural partnership and the use of social media as a catalyst to promote peace and sustainable development.

Overall, the webinar was a great success, gathering participants from more than 10 NGOs and 5 universities to celebrate ‘unity in diversity’ for a peaceful and harmony multicultural Malaysia. In a post-event survey, 70% of the participants rated the event as “Excellent”.

Watch the full webinar at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlClj5zn3T0>

### **Reflections from online participants:**

“It is powerful that everyone considers cultural and religious diversity not as a destructive factor, but as a unifying one. I now realize that living in harmony with each other could be the most important goal to attain in order to achieve peace.”

- *Staff, United Nations Association of Singapore*

“People should work together to change the community and inspire one another in order to create a loving and peaceful environment and help others in need to pass [through] this pandemic.”

- *University Student*

“It was a really warming and helpful webinar; I found it especially useful for teenagers and adults who are going through [difficulties] during this pandemic. It would be nice if [the participants] could have [talked] with the speakers. Overall, the webinar was wonderful! I would recommend it to my family and friends to gain better knowledge.”

- *Member, Malaysia Peacelanders*

“Well done. Keep going and keep improving, and understand other people's ideas and implement them if possible. The team has eloquently shown [this program is] for connecting the world for peace and prosperity and that is something which needs much appreciation.”

- *University Student*