**REPORT**

**Celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week UN 2021 “Building Bridges Across Boundaries”**

**Video:** [**Youtube**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iN8Z6O7-HTU)

On 12th February 2021, the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) Peru branch, held the celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week UN 2021, with the main theme “Building Bridges Across Boundaries”. The event was sponsored by Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Peru and more than 200 participants joined the live online broadcast.

The interfaith meeting brought together six religious leaders who shared their thoughts and experiences of how to build bridges of peace through mutual understanding and interfaith dialogue in order to contribute to well-being in society. A virtual symbolic interfaith ceremony "The Water of Life Ceremony" was held thereafter, in the name of reconciliation, interfaith cooperation and world peace. As part of the program, 28 new Ambassadors for Peace were appointed, among religious leaders, authorities, academics and civil society leaders, committed to actively promoting peace initiatives and social service work in favour of those most in need.

**Dr Trevor Jones** (President of UPF Peru) gave the opening remarks. “For more than 40 years, the founders of our organization have made global efforts to promote interreligious peace and harmony, such as the Peace Initiative for Middle East, bringing together religious leaders and authorities across the world”, he said. The United Nations inaugurated the World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2010 and UPF Peru has celebrated it since 2012. With the establishment of the associations worldwide and the inauguration of IAPD Peru in November 2018, we have successfully involved more religious leaders, in order to promote peace and to help those most in need.

**Mr Jaime Fernández** (General Secretary of UPF Perú) read the remarks from Dr Thomas Walsh, Chairman of UPF International, about the World Interfaith Harmony Week "Building Bridges Across Boundaries", inviting all faith actors to mark this week as an opportunity to bring people together for this noble purpose of building a culture of peace.

Subsequently, **Bishop Jesús Mejía Quiroz** (Bishop of the Catholic Anglican Church of Peru and President of IAPD Peru) shared his reflections about the event. He emphasized the efforts of UPF founders in holding many meetings with religious leaders across the world for many years to promote fraternity, mutual respect and urged to renew the commitment to promote a greater unity among believers and work for peace and religious harmony.

**Priest Walter Malca Rodas** (Redemptorist Missionary of the Catholic Church of Peru) spoke next about Jesus as a model who achieved to build bridges of peace and break boundaries through his work, regardless of the nationality and religious denomination of the people. He highlighted the role of religion as an instrument of peace and mutual understanding.

**Pastor Violeta Nolasco Negreiros** (Renewal Apostolic Church - Lima, Peru) spoke then about the role of the religious leader, as spiritual leader, making that the love and character of God be known by humanity, instilling peace and hope in people, especially in these current difficult times, helping people to recognize their worth and dignity.

**Hon. Orestes Sánchez Luis** (Congressman of the Republic of Peru and Pastor of World Christian Mission Church) spoke about the importance of establishing bridges of peace through the principle of loving God above all things and loving one's neighbor as oneself, is to do good to others. M.A. Sánchez urged authorities and key individuals from different areas of society to be ambassadors for peace, who may follow this principle to love one’s neighbor and promote peace, unity and development.

**Sheikh Mohammed Kobbi** (Iman of the Islamic Association of Peru) continued with his intervention. God invites, through his word, that all humanity may come to God, and that all humankind may live in peace, recognizing one another and, therefore, promoting respect for people and respect for the religious denomination that they profess.

Finally, **Mrs Dina Salas Montoya** (Missionary of Seventh-day Adventist Church) spoke about the importance of loving our neighbor and service. We, as humanity need to unite with God and we can turn into builders of bridges that promote peace among humankind and heal wounds in families and at all levels of society through reconciliation.

The religious leaders took part of the Virtual Interfaith Ceremony "The Water of Life Ceremony", which represents the contribution of each religion to the comprehension of the divine, the understanding between religious traditions and the common will to work in unity for peace. **Bishop Jesús Mejía Quiroz**, president of IAPD Peru, offered a representative prayer on behalf of all the religious leaders and the audience for reconciliation, interreligious cooperation and world peace.

Subsequently, **Mr Jaime Fernández** (General Secretary of UPF Peru) preceded with the Nomination Ceremony of 28 New Ambassadors for Peace. **Dr Trevor Jones**, President of UPF Peru, gave congratulatory remarks to the new ambassadors for peace and thanked the panellists and the audience. "We all have a fundamental role to play in order to create a peaceful world, a family under God, an ideal pursued by the founders of UPF," he finished.