



Perspectives for Sustainable Peace in the Horn of Africa

Vienna, Austria, March 20, 2019

By Peter Haider

On March 20th 2019, at the Vienna International Center (United Nations building) in Vienna, the Universal Peace Federation co-sponsored a conference on the theme: “Perspectives for Sustainable Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa”, which was organized by the permanent mission of Eritrea to the United Nations in Vienna. 200 guests attended the event. The conference was organized on the foundation of the dramatic change that took place in the Horn of Africa, when the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea, on July 9th 2018, signed a declaration ending the state of war between the two countries. The summit between Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, had marked the first time that the neighboring heads of state had met in nearly two decades. This was a starting point of meetings which created new relationships among Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

In his [welcome remarks](#) [Dr. Martin Nesirky](#), Director of UNIS Vienna, remembered the audience that in 2019 the United Nations is celebrating its 40th year in Vienna.



He quoted UN Secretary General António Guterres, who said that our world is undergoing a stresstest. But there are also signs of hope as the declaration signed by Eritrea and Ethiopia after 20 years of conflict and stalemate. This is an example of courage that has a positive effect throughout the region.

The first session was moderated by Mr. Peter Haider, President of UPF Austria. In his [introductory remarks](#) he said: “The Horn of Africa enjoys an excellent strategic location south-west of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. It refers to four countries — Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti — but, in its wider political and economic context, the term also includes Sudan and South Sudan. The strategic importance of this East African region comes from it being the source of the Nile and a gate to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Its location on one side of some of the world’s major trade sea lanes and land routes gives it vital

importance. Its importance increases because of its proximity to the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula. The area has always been a magnet for international powers because of the sea traffic going by, major ports in the area, tremendous nearby riches, weapons trading, crossing points for people and merchandise and the dangers of piracy. The Horn of Africa, with its geostrategic location, is a source, as well as an area of transit and of destination of mixed migratory flows, and a center of migratory routes towards Europe, the Gulf countries and the Middle East, and Southern Africa.”



The session featured speeches from high level diplomats from Austria and nations from the Horn of Africa. **Dr. Werner Fasslabend**, the president of AIES and a former Austrian Defence Minister, described the significance of the political breakthrough in the Horn of Africa and the perspectives it opened for that region and surrounding regions.



Representing the nations from the Horn of Africa, the Ambassador of Sudan in Austria, **H.E. Mirghani Abbaker Altayeb Bakhet**, the Ambassador of Djibouti in Germany and H.E. Aden Mohamed Dileita, the Charge d' Affaires and Minister Councillor of the Permanent Mission of Somalia to UNIDO, shared their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges for the development of their region.



Dr Andreas Melan, the Head of the Africa Department at the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs – a former Austrian Ambassador to Ethiopia – reviewed the situation of relations between Austria and the Horn of Africa with an European Union perspective.



H.E. Abdulkadir Bakri Hamdan, the Representative of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the UN, the main organizer of the event, concluded by recalling the struggle of his country to gain independence and recognition from the international community, and emphasized how the recent peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia marked a new era for Eritrean people and for the peoples of the Horn of Africa.



The second session was moderated by **Mr. Tageldin Hamad**, Vice President of UPF International and Director the UPF Office for UN Relations. Shedding light on their field of activity in the region, several experts took the stand: Mr. Shaukat Abdulrazag, director for Africa at the Technical Cooperation Department of the IAEA; Mr. Abdalla Sharief, the President of the UN Correspondents Association in

Vienna; Captain Simon Gebre Yohannes Neguse, from the Eritrean Nuclear Security program; Mr. Hassan Eltigani Malic, from Awethu, Forum to promote African Unity in Diversity.

The Austrian entrepreneur Reinhard Trinkl spoke about the project of the Environmental Concepts Exchange Association for the Horn of Africa. And Jacques Marion, Secretary General of UPF Europe, concluded the session with a report on UPF activities in Africa and mentioned about the third Sunhak Peace Prize given recently by the UPF Founder to two African laureates: Dr Akinwum Adesina, the president of the African Development Bank and Ms. Waris Dirie, the Somali top model and for UN Ambassador who had started the campaign to denounce Female Genital Mutilation.

To conclude the event Mrs. Camilla Habsburg read a letter of appreciation, which will be sent to the Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed: “The participants of the conference “Perspectives for Sustainable Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa,” which took place on March 20, 2019, in the Vienna International Centre (United Nations), want to express their gratitude for the courage and vision that the political leaders of the Horn of Africa nations are showing in order to make a new start toward peace and mutual prosperity. This serves as an example for the whole African continent and for the world.”



Horn of Africa Peace Initiative - Universal Peace Federation – Awethu Forum to promote African Unity in Diversity - Women's Federation for World Peace - United Nations Correspondents Association Vienna - Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy