

## **Contributions to a global Culture of Peace”.**

Commemorating the UN International Day of Peace UPF Burgenland, an Austrian region located on the eastern part of the country, organised on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 an peace conference in cooperation with the Coalition of Faith Based Organizations with the theme “Contributions to a global Culture of Peace”.

This conference took place in the premises of the Schlaining Peace Castle and it was moderated by **Mr. Johann Rechberger**, the president of UPF Burgenland.

In his opening remarks **Mr. Rechberger** noted that: “The year 2000 was declared the "International Year of a Culture of Peace" in a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. The General Assembly, recalling the aims and principles of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations, states that peace does not only mean the absence of conflict, but that it also requires a positive dynamic and participatory process, within which dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are to be resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation”.

The panellists of this event were Prof. Dr. Titus Leber, Creator of numerous large-scale interactive-cultural multimedia productions; Ms. Tatjana Christelbauer M.A., the founder of the “Agency for Cultural Diplomacy Austria”; Prof. Dr. Elmar Kuhn, President of the Coalition of Faith Based Organisations for Austria and Central Europe; Dr. Leo Gabriel, a social anthropologist, journalist and documentary film-maker; Ms. Anela Cindrak, an Accordion player and Music teacher from Montenegro and Mr. Peter Haider, the President of UPF in Austria.

**Prof. Dr. Titus Leber** started with stating that peace arises from finding common ground while transcending boundaries. During the last 25 years he was involved in multimedia presentation of cultural and religious contents. Some of his projects were documentaries of World Culture Heritage sites under the protectorate of UNESCO like the Borobudur in Indonesia. His latest project is “Africa interactive” which uses state of the art technology to gather and disseminate compact information of Africa’s vast cultural heritage and to make this information accessible via smart media to young

Africans, thus enabling them to appreciate Africa's contribution to the world's cultural patrimony. He also suggested to be concerned about the spiritual or mental pollution of our environment that takes place through the media and was even heavily criticized for it. The display of violence leads to excesses. He suggested at the European Cultural Parliament to put heavy taxation upon media producers who propagate violence for the sake of violence.

**Ms. Tatjana Christelbauer** said that UNESCO understands the culture of peace as the everyday way of thinking, behaving and living of individuals and society. It is based on respect for human rights, participation, dialogue and cooperation. The culture of peace fundamentally excludes violence as a means of conflict resolution. She spoke about Feminist approaches to the culture of peace and quoted Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938), an Austrian musician, composer, cultural philosopher and gender and peace researcher who said "Humanity can achieve lasting peace only when 'feminine qualities' are actively incorporated into the political and social order of society." After her speech she presented a dance meditation "I did not let go of my angel for a long time" ("Angels songs" by Rainer Maria Rilke) with expressive dance forms (Tatjana Christelbauer) and Tai Chi sword art (Mag.a Ursula Wagner). Her presentation ended with a "Feather meditation" as a sensual experience that invites attentive movement in leading and following, as well as the ability to send a gift and receive it again, to hold it (the gift) mindfully and to let it go again.

**Prof. Dr. Elmar Kuhn** emphasised in his address that it is high time to finally develop narratives of peace, which are based on truth and that religious institutions in particular could develop such narratives and implement them in education. To achieve this, religions and ultimately each of us would have to become more visible again in society. There will be no peace in the world without the contribution of Faith-based organizations, even if our secularized Europe tries to banish God from politics and society as much as possible.

**Ms. Anela Čindrak**, an artist whose parents live in Montenegro and who studied in Slovakia spoke about her journey in life. She started with "Salam" explaining that she has a Moslem background. Coming from Montenegro, which is on the way to become an EU country, she continued with "Mir". In 1992 the Bosnian war began and Yugoslavia was destroyed. She was born in a Serbian town which was completely destroyed in 1999.

Still she said “Peace” or “Mir”. Her family has Albanian background and she used the word “Pace”, which has Latin roots. As an Albanian she also used “Shalom”, as Albanians have saved during their history many Jewish lives. Now she has an address in Vienna so she says “Frieden”. In Vienna you hear in the 2<sup>nd</sup> district “Shalom”, in the 10<sup>th</sup> you hear “Salam”. You can hear “Friede” and also “Mir” or “Pace” and she asks herself: “Am I at home here?” She likes to live in Vienna, which is so colorful. Even she speaks “Peace”, “Peace”, “Peace” she feels anger and sadness as this world became a much more difficult place to live in during the last year – new wars, a new crises here and there. She announced that within 24 hours she will perform in three events dedicated to peace. After her speech she surprised the audience with two musical contributions on the accordion.

**Dr. Leo Gabriel** recalled the danger of the nuclear threat, which has become even greater as a result of the war in Ukraine, stating that: “Peace is the most important issue in the world today”. He spoke about the discussions in the World Social Forum, where he has been active for decades and among others mentioned that the peace movement must also learn and connect the issue of peace with the climate and environment topics as well as social justice. He concluded by saying that we need a convergence of movements, because together we are strong.

**Mr. Peter Haider** started by quoting Paramahansa Prajnanananda, an Indian yoga master, who said in a recent UPF Conference: "Peace is the absence of ruthlessness, hatred, jealousy, conflict, contradiction, and chaos, and the prevalence of cooperation, serenity, mutual understanding, and the manifestation of help and care for one another." He said that family is the only institution that God has created and it is sustaining humanity. It is the school of love where people can learn how to love each other and live together in peace. It is like a base camp for world peace. He also quoted UPF founder Dr. Sun Myung Moon "The problem is how to end the troubled conflict within ourselves. My first motto when I started this path was, 'Control yourself before you try to control the universe.' If you can't control yourself, you can't control the world." "Why must we continue this path that is causing so much suffering, wasting countless dollars on wars that in the end will never lead to reconciliation between enemies? The time has come for all countries in this world to use their resources to build a world of peace."

The conference concluded with a lunch in the gardens inside the castle, where everyone enjoyed the sunny weather of a very warm late summer day.

### **A message from Peacecastle Schlaining: For a nuclear weapons-free Europe - cranes for peace**

Every August, people around the world commemorate the atomic bomb of Hiroshima - the Schlaining Peace Castle houses what is probably the best-known legacy of a Hiroshima victim: a tiny crane.

The paper crane made by Sadako Sasaki, the girl from Hiroshima, is only a few millimetres small. When the atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, Sadako was just two and a half years old. She survived, but 10 years later she fell ill with the long-term effects, but she clung to an old Japanese belief, that anyone who folds 1,000 cranes would recover and be healthy again.

Five cranes for five continents.

But when the 1000 cranes were folded, the girl felt worse than ever. She tried harder and folded even smaller and more elaborate cranes...

By the time she died, there were around 1,700 origami cranes. After her death, her last five cranes were carried into the world by her surviving brother as a sign of peace. The Crane for Europe has been kept in the Peace Center in the city of Schlaining, since 2009.

The tiny Sadako crane is considered one of the peace centre's greatest "treasures". Visitors from all over the world come to see this symbol of peace. The crane can also be found in the castle's emblem.

Ms. Ruiko Friesacher, a loyal participant in the UPF peace conferences at Schlaining Castle, folded 2,400 cranes during the pandemics as a symbol of healing the world and world peace.

All conference participants were invited to take one of these cranes home with them.

Report written by Johann Rechberger and Peter Haider



