

UPF International Peace Summit 2023: Session VI-A: Europe and the Middle East

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Seoul, South Korea -- "Prospects for Peace in Southeast Europe," which took place on May 4, 2023, was one of the regional peacebuilding sessions of Peace Summit 2023, organized by UPF International.

Jacques Marion, the regional UPF co-chair for Europe and the Middle East, moderated Session VI-A, which featured a very distinguished group of speakers.

"Our region is strongly affected by the war in Ukraine and by growing tensions between East and West," he said. "Southeast Europe, particularly the Western Balkan nations, stands at a frontline in this struggle. The impact of this conflict is deeply felt in that region, where memories of war at the turn of the century are still vivid in many people's minds."



H.E. Albin Kurti, who since March 2021 has been the prime minister of Kosovo, said: "We [in Kosovo] are trying our best to have, on the one hand, peace and security but, on the other hand, freedom and democracy. We believe we do not have to sacrifice freedom for the sake of security, or vice versa. ...

"We are optimistic about the future, we want to cooperate for peace, and we believe that democracy is not just an instrument to get elected into power but also a value to which we should adhere every day," he said.

H.E. Alfred Moisiu, the president of Albania (2002-2007) and the current chairman for the Balkans of UPF's Summit Council for Peace, warned, "We stand in front of a very difficult and dangerous situation, in which even a sporadic event may lead to a mad collision of the world which could be World War III."

President Moisiu said: "It is the duty of all peace-loving people and those who understand the magnitude of these possible dangers not to remain indifferent to what is approaching the world."



H.E. Filip Vujanović, president of Montenegro (2003-2018) and the founder of the Podgorica Club, a group of former heads of state and government from the Balkan nations, said he "would like to point out only three things."

First: During the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, Montenegro accepted many refugees and displaced people. This is one of the reasons that Montenegro enjoys a good relationship with all the neighboring countries.

Second: After the conflicts, Montenegro democratically restored its state independence, became a member of NATO and a leader in the European integration process.

Third: Montenegro is strongly dedicated to affirming values of peace, stability and prosperity.

H.E. Mladen Ivanić, president of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014-2015, 2016-2017), speculated that in the current Ukraine-Russia conflict, the two sides may not sit down to build an agreement until 5 million people have been killed.

"Hundreds, if not thousands, of fathers, brothers, sons will be killed there." He proposed that the two sides should not wait but should sit down now and work for an agreement.

Hon. Dr. Werner Fasslabend, the Austrian minister of defense (1990 to 2000) and president of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, explained that just before he was sworn in as defense minister in December 1990, he gave a short list to his future chief of cabinet about preparations of the defense ministry. "And at the top of the list was preparations in Austria for a crisis in Yugoslavia."

He did that, he said, not because of receiving any intelligence about the Balkans, but rather "just due to my personal experience, as so often I had spent my vacation in Yugoslavia. I went through Slovenia and Croatia and Bosnia and Serbia. I talked to people. And when I came back, I had this strong feeling that something was going on, that a crisis would come."

H.E. Zlatko Lagumdžija, prime minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2001 to 2002) and the newly appointed ambassador of his country to the United Nations, reminded the audience of UN Secretary-General António Guterres' recent statement that we must think about the artificial intelligence threat more and more, especially since one of the Google founders who had been dealing with artificial intelligence "decided to quit and to tell the world that we are entering a no-man's-land or twilight zone."

H.E. Boris Tadić, president of Serbia (2004 to 2012), said: "We are living in an interconnected world. ... We can compare the world with the human body. What is happening in one cell in the human body has an impact on the others. Everything that is happening in Ukraine is creating an impact in the South China Sea. We cannot isolate one aggression, one war, from other potential aggressions. In that respect, Europe is not secure anymore."