



Perspectives for sustainable Peace in Europe The UN Vision, the Role of Parliamentarians and Civil Society

United Nation Building, Vienna, Austria, 15. September 2017

By Peter Haider

On September 15, 2017, on the occasion of the International Day of Peace, UPF organized a conference at the Vienna international Centre (United Nation Building) on the theme: “Perspectives for sustainable Peace in Europe - The UN Vision, the Role of Parliamentarians and Civil Society”. The meeting was also the occasion to launch the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) in Austria.

Co-sponsoring organizations included the United Nations Correspondents Association Vienna, The Best of the World Network, the Women’s Federation for World Peace, and the International Institute for Middle-East and Balkans studies. In a full capacity hall of 200, the meeting was attended by representatives from the whole political spectrum of the Austrian Parliament, by members of the diplomatic corps, and by NGO representatives. Three parliamentarians had come from Italy, the Ukraine and the Czech Republic.

At the opening, Mr Peter Haider, President of UPF Austria, explained about the two

purposes of the meeting: the celebration of the UN International Day of Peace, with its theme on “[Together for Peace](#)” based on the UN SDG 16 and the message of [UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres](#); and the launching of IAPP, a UPF initiative providing a forum for parliamentarian from all nations and political parties to search for solutions to local, national and global problems in a spirit of dialogue and

cooperation. A regional launch of IAPP was held on every continent in 2016, including a conference at the British Parliament in September 2016 for Europe, Eurasia and the Middle-East. After the Global Assembly of Parliamentarians held in Seoul, Korea in February 2017, national chapters are currently being launched throughout the world.



The first session, on the theme: “Migration, Refugee Crisis, European Identity – Perspectives for the 21st Century”, was moderated by Mrs. Heather Wokusch, from ACUNS Vienna. Mr. Ismail Balla, Director of the Vienna UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, began with a report on the UN’ efforts to control the arm trade. Austrian parliamentarian Nikolaus Berlakovich, a former minister of agriculture, then spoke about the issue of peace in the Western Balkans. Padre Alejandro Solalinde, a Catholic priest and human rights activist from Mexico, shared about the need to embrace refugees with humanity and respect for our human diversity. Dr Katsumi Otsuka, President of UPF Europe and Eurasia, gave an insight into the UPF Founders’ philosophy of peace and described some practical projects they launched for peace and reconciliation, such as the Korea-Japan Undersea Tunnel. The final speaker was Mrs. Nina Novakova, a member of the Czech Parliament, who described the challenge Europe is going through regarding her values and identity.

The second session, on the theme: “The Role of Parliamentarians for Sustainable Peace in Europe”, began with a video from Secretary General Guterres’ Day of Peace message. The panel featured four members of the Austrian Parliament representing different political parties: Mrs. Karin Doppelbauer, from the Liberal Party; Mrs. Petra Bayr, from the Social Democratic Party; Mrs. Barbara Neuroth, from the Green Party; and Dr Andreas Karlsbock, from the Freedom Party. Each of them shared their and their party’s perspective on the need for intra-national and international communication, beyond party lines, and described their contribution to sustainable peace through projects in various areas such as climate change, ocean protection, aid and trade, or co-development. Mr. Roberto Rampi, from the Italian Parliament, spoke about the problem of refugees and the need to adapt to the changing nature of our identity in a multicultural society. In conclusion, Mr. Jacques Marion, Vice President of UPF Europe and moderator of the session, read the main points of the resolution to launch IAPP in Austria, and called for all



parliamentarians to join in a commemorative photo and sign the resolution that was put on a standing board on the stage.

Dr Dieter Schmidt, Vice President of UPF Germany, moderated the final session on the theme “Europe-Eurasia and the Balkans: Building Trust and Securing Cooperation”. Mrs. Christine Muttonen, member of the Austrian Parliament and president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, spoke about her Assembly’s efforts to deal with conflicts in Europe, such as Nagorno-Karabakh, and pointed to art and culture as important tools for conflict resolution. Amb. Alena Kupchyna, Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to Austria, spoke about her country’s European identity and about its commitment to play a mediating role in conflicts in the region, through a “New Helsinki Process”. Amb. Dr Peter Schatzer, a member of the Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean, shared his perspective on various crises in Europe, from refugees to cooperation in the Balkans. Mr. Viktor Ielenskyi, a parliamentarian from Ukraine, gave a detailed account of his country’s aggression by Russia and about Ukrainians’ efforts for resistance. The final speaker, Mrs. Marijana Grandits, from the University of Vienna’s Human Rights Research Centre, shared her experience in

promoting human rights in the Balkans, and insisted that sustainable peace could only appear on the foundation of restorative justice.

The prestigious décor of the UN, the expertise of the speakers, the challenging but relevant theme of sustainable peace contributed to the success of the conference, and to an auspicious launch of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace on the UN International Day of Peace.

[more photos](#)

The "[International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace](#)" has been launched by the Universal Peace Federation as a worldwide association of parliamentarians which provides a forum to bring their experience and wisdom to bear in the search for solutions to our world’s problems. Parliamentarians from around the world have offered their remarks on the importance of their work and the value of increased cooperation and collaboration in the search for innovative solutions to some of the critical issues that we face on the local, national, regional and global levels, from climate change to the rise of extremist ideologies to humanitarian disasters and conflict.

