

"100th Anniversary of the Korean Independence Movement" and Reports from the World Summit 2019 in Seoul, Korea - Elisabeth Cook - March 7, 2019

70 guests attended on March 7th 2019 an evening organized by UPF-Austria in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Korean Independence Movement. Martin Putz, who had been studying Korean language and history at the University of Vienna during the last 2 years, gave a lecture on the historical background of the Korean independence movement in 1919, including the story of the young lady Yu Kwan-sun, who was one of the victims of the independence movement and who became a national heroine.

„During the colonial period (1910-1945), the Japanese pillaged Joseon’s resources, banned the use of the Korean language - even going so far in 1939 as to require Koreans to change their personal names to Japanese style surnames and given names under the Name Order, and conscripted Koreans into their work force or as uniformed soldiers in the Pacific War. Koreans engaged in persistent struggles to regain their independence. They organized clandestine organizations to fight the Japanese within the country. They also established forward bases for the independence movement in China, Russia, and the United States and led unprecedentedly peaceful demonstration. In March 1919, Korean leaders announced the Declaration of Independence. Students and ordinary people joined them by staging street demonstrations across the country. These protests continued for 12 months, involving about 2 million people, and were violently suppressed by the Japanese, with many thousands killed and wounded. The movement spread to the Koreans resisting in Manchuria, the Maritime Provinces of Siberia, the United States, Europe, and even to Japan. Following the March 1919 Independence Movement, organizations representing Koreans were established in Seoul, the Maritime Provinces of Siberia, and Shanghai. The Provisional Government of Korea established in Shanghai was **the country’s first democratic** republican government; it was equipped with a modern Constitution and a political system that separated the three basic branches (executive, legislative and judicial) of government.“

The second speaker was a Viennese lady, Mrs. Susanne Wang. She had received the invitation to this evening by e-mail forwarded by a friend. And she had a special reason to come as she is a granddaughter of Seo Young Hae, a Korean independence fighter called. He participated in the uprising in 1919 and then fled to Shanghai. There he **became the youngest member of Syngman Rhee’s provisional government**



Later, in 1937 he was sent to Paris where he worked as an ambassador, representing the independent Korea. There **he came to know Mrs. Susanne Wong’s grandmother, an** Austrian artist, and married her. Already in 1939 he had to move back to Shanghai. He had to stay in China, was teaching in a Korean school and later moved to North Korea. It is not clear when and how he died. In the 1990s he was declared a national hero of

Korea, and several newspaper articles appeared about his life and sacrifice for Korea. Mrs. Susanne discovered the story of her grandfather only a few years ago by contacting a Korean library. Her grandfather had 8 brothers and sisters. Mrs. Susanne found out that she has many relatives in Korea and she visited them already. She will be invited to Korea in April this year as a book about her grandfather was published recently. In January of this year a Korean TV 35 members team came to Austria in order to produce a documentary film about her and her sister.



After some personal reflections from a visit to the city centre of Seoul and to Pagoda park, where the independence movement started, UPF-Austria president Peter Haider gave a report about the [The World Summit 2019](#) on **"Peace, Security and Human Development,"** which was held from February 8 to 11 in Seoul, South Korea with 1200 participants including 40 current and former heads of state and government from 110 nations. A resolution was approved to establish a new association of current and former heads of state, government and world leaders known provisionally as the International Summit Council for Peace (ISCP) to work in concert with the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) and the International Association of Traditional Rulers for Peace (IATP). **The second topic of Peter Haider's report was the 3rd [SunHak Peace Prize](#)** which was awarded to Waris Dirie, human rights activist fighting for eradication of female genital mutilation, and Dr. Akinwumi Adesina for his work in promoting Africa's growth and good governance through agricultural innovation. Waris Dirie had become legally an Austria citizen in 2005 for her achievements in fighting FGM and propagating human rights in Africa. He participated in the session on **"[Peace in the Korean Peninsula,](#)"** organized by Segye Ilbo and the Washington Times featuring H.E. Lee Nak-yon, prime minister of Korea, Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, prime minister of Canada (2006-2015), parliamentarians, and other officials and military and political experts. He also had a chance to experience the impressive attendance of quite a few Korea cabinet ministers and a remarkable speech by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon at the 30 years anniversary of the Segye Ilbo newspaper founding.

Then Mrs. Heather Wokusch, who also participated in the Summit in Korea, shared her impressions. Here is a short summary of her report: **"I loved the fact that the programs were interfaith all the way through. It was also interesting for me to experience Mrs. Moon directly. When she gave prizes for peace on one occasion, all the recipients were men. I was deeply moved, because I thought: what must it feel for her to live and lead the movement in this society as a woman, without her husband at her side? I thought she must be very strong and courageous. The SunHak Peace Prize: It was wonderful to see that **these two persons had been chosen for the award. The founders' birthday** celebration in the Peace World Centre was a work of art from beginning to the end. It **was beautiful and overwhelming.**"**

After the presentations we could share Korean food, which had been prepared by the Korean ladies of our community.

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