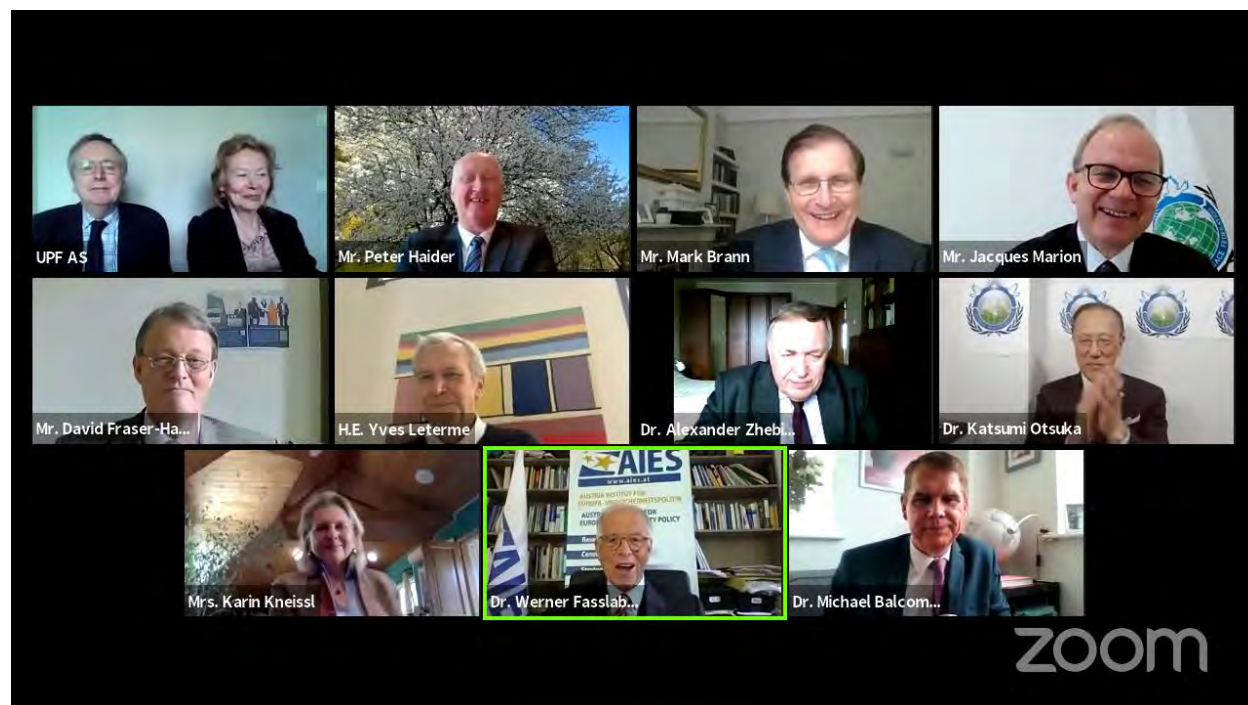


UPF Vienna, Austria - International Summit Council for Peace

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Vienna, Austria - Two former prime ministers joined the International Summit Council for Peace session of the Europe and the Middle East ILC2021.

The online meeting of ISCP, a UPF association, was the third session of the International Leadership Conference organized by UPF of Europe and the Middle East.

The ISCP session on April 29, 2021, was titled "The Implications for Europe of the Process toward Peaceful Reunification on the Korean Peninsula - How Can Europe Assist in That Process?"

Europeans remain largely unaware of the geostrategic importance of the Korean Peninsula and the impact that Korean reunification could have on global peace and security as well as economic growth. This webinar aimed to elevate the consciousness of peaceful reunification on the peninsula, examining how valuable Europe's role could be in facilitating this, and what Europe might gain from such an outcome. About 270 viewers took part in the online conference.

The four keynote speakers were:

H.E. Yves Leterme, the prime minister of Belgium (March 2008 to December 2008, and November 2009 to December 2011). He later served as deputy secretary general of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

H.E. Kjell Magne Bondevik, the prime minister of Norway (1997 to 2000, and 2001 to 2005); and minister of foreign affairs (1989 to 1990). He is also an ordained Lutheran minister. In 2006, he founded the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights, which operates closely with the Kim Dae-jung Library in Seoul.

Dr. Karin Kneissl, foreign minister of Austria (2017 to 2019), and a diplomat, journalist, political analyst, and author.

Dr. Alexander Zhebin, the director of the Center for Korean Studies at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and widely regarded as Russia's foremost expert on Korean affairs. Dr. Zhebin worked for 12 years in North Korea as a journalist and as a diplomat and is the author of numerous publications on Korean affairs.



[Mr. Mark Brann, Vice President UPF Europe and Middle East and Director of ISCP Europe and Middle East](#)

Mark Brann, vice chair of UPF for Europe and the Middle East and director of ISCP for Europe and the Middle East, gave the opening remarks. He briefly introduced UPF's founders, Father and Mother Moon, and repeated Mother Moon's prediction that the process of Korean reunification would start as early as 2022. To help this process, in 2020 Mother Moon initiated a global interdisciplinary working group of experts to explore and advise on how this could be achieved.



[Dr. Werner Fasslabend, President of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, Minister of Defence \(1990-2000\), Austria](#)

The moderator was Dr. Werner Fasslabend, the Austrian minister of defense (1987 to 1990, and 1990 to 2000) and current president of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy. He extended a warm greeting to the participants and emphasized that the Korean Peninsula is situated at the epicenter of world politics and draws the interest of the three great world powers. He then introduced the session's four distinguished panelists.



[H.E. Yves Leterme, Prime Minister of Belgium \(2009 - 2011\), Belgium](#)

H.E. Yves Leterme, the former prime minister of Belgium, began by clarifying European views on the topic. He provided four incentives for the European Union and the global community to be more involved in Korean reunification.

First: Pacification is the best way to prevent an outbreak of a second Korean War. Second: the rising tensions and the continuous failure on the part of the international community to prevent North Korea from becoming a fully fledged nuclear power. Third: A pacified Korean Peninsula would bring about a balance of power in a crucial region. Fourth: concern for the well-being of the population of the Korean Peninsula, especially in the North.

Prime Minister Leterme pointed out that by a more active engagement, the European Union and its member states should focus on three key elements: denuclearization and non-proliferation, social and economic development, and human rights. Until today, he said, the European Union has been sitting on the sidelines and not taking an active role.



[H.E. Kjell Magne Bondevik, Prime Minister of Norway \(1997-2000 and 2001-2005\), Norway](#)

H.E. Kjell Magne Bondevik, the former prime minister of Norway, offered some thoughts about the tragedy of Korea being divided into two independent states, despite being one people. He expressed his desire for the people in the North to have more freedom, to have their human rights protected, and to enjoy prosperity.

From his experience and observation, imposing our will on North Korea has not been successful to this day. Instead, he said, we should adopt a warmer and more positive approach, such as the "sunshine policy" that was initiated by Kim Dae-jung, the president of South Korea from 1998 to 2003. Such an approach, based on communication and dialogue, can warm relations rather than freezing them.

In addition, the prime minister proposed that Europe take an approach based on the model of the Helsinki Accords. Through this process, Europe during the Cold War arranged meetings of the conflicting forces in an agreed location, creating a dialogue and making agreements regarding economic cooperation, security cooperation, and human rights. Similarly, he said, North Korea would be able to arrive at some agreements which eventually would lead to a developed economy. From a long-term perspective, it could guide North Korea back into the greater international community.



[Dr. Karin Kneissl, Austrian diplomat, political analyst and author. Minister of Foreign Affairs \(2017-2019\), Austria](#)

Dr. Karin Kneissl, the former foreign minister of Austria, stressed the importance of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which took place in Vienna in 2015 between Iran and the five permanent U.N. Security Council members (China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, the United States) plus Germany and the European Union. The plan was designed to prevent nuclear proliferation by Iran and was widely referred to as the "Iran Nuclear Deal."

North Korea was quietly observing the situation with the international community with regard to Iran. Once the United States withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018, Dr. Kneissl said, the reaction in North Korea was most likely that the US cannot be trusted.

Dr. Kneissl said that now there is a chance for a fresh start with the Biden administration. The United States could reconnect with the JCPOA in two possible ways - enter the agreement with the same conditions that existed when they left it or renegotiate the terms of the agreement. In the latter case, they would focus not only on the nuclear restrictions but also the regional role of Iran in the Middle East. Dr. Kneissl's advice was that the development in the JCPOA should be used as a base that would help gauge the North Korean response.

When looking at Europe as a larger player, it has nations such as Switzerland, Norway, and Russia, countries with dense, far-reaching diplomatic networks, Dr. Kneissl said. They could play a role using their channels with North Korea and share information on those developments, as long as the roles are clear regarding who is doing what. Because Asian countries often feel they must choose between China and the United States, the European Union or other European countries can serve as an alternative.



[Dr. Alexander Zhebin, Director, Center for Korean Studies, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia](#)

Dr. Alexander Zhebin, a noted Korea expert from Russia, noted that the peaceful reunification of Korea is possible only through a long period of peaceful coexistence. During this period, economic cooperation and security guarantees can play a role in building trust between the North and South.

Due to historical and psychological circumstances, it would be easier for North Korea to deal with and communicate with mid-level powers from Europe. Therefore, Russia disagrees with those who are advocating postponement of the implementation of economic projects with North Korea until the nuclear issue is resolved. Such projects are important for opening new opportunities for business cooperation and economic integration, Dr. Zhebin said, and would serve to strengthen confidence and security in the region. Now it is very important to move from political statements to practical steps that will build trust.

Dr. Zhebin said that a multinational effort produced a paper published in 2019 by the International Institute of Madrid, defining the role of Europe in facilitating both the solution to the nuclear problem and the

reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The paper proposed that the EU should re-establish its high-level political dialogue with North Korea as soon as possible and convince the US and both Koreas that dialogue is necessary to achieve both solutions. The EU also should share its vast experience in confidence-building measures, soften the sanctions imposed on North Korea in the process of its denuclearization, and provide humanitarian, financial, and technical assistance.

After the presentations, the moderator presented two questions to be answered by the speakers. The first was "How can we overcome and bridge the rivalries created between the two Koreas' different systems?" The second was "What can be done to draw Korea away from the tensions between the big world powers?"

To the first question, Prime Minister Yves Leterme replied based on his experience of hosting a delegation of women from Pyongyang as a confidence-building measure. Every opportunity for people-to-people interaction should be given high importance, he said. As for the second question, he said that once the political situation allows it, common economic projects can help with the integration of Europe and the EU.

Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik replied that it is true that there is a systemic rivalry between the Koreas, but there is also a strong will among the people to reunify. He gave the example of West and East Germany, which were able to unite and form one country once again. The process is possible, but not a quick fix, he said; it will require time.

Dr. Karin Kneissl said that the systemic rivalries could be very hard to overcome. Around the 1990s there was some momentum in that direction; however, today it is a much more multipolar world. She too encouraged the idea of allowing as many human encounters as possible, and especially while older Koreans are still alive.

Dr. Alexander Zhebin suggested that both Koreas should be reminded to abide by the many agreements that already have been established between them. Regarding the tension on the Korean Peninsula to choose between the US and China, a situation which causes great stress, the role of Europe could be to send a message to the big powers, saying that they should not push Korea to choose, and allow it to be freer.



[Mr. David Fraser Harris,
Secretary General, UPF
Middle East](#)

David Fraser Harris, the secretary general of UPF for the Middle East, led a question-and-answer session with questions collected from the participants during the webinar.

The first question was "Could we think of a team of mutual facilitators - some from Western countries, such as the EU, Norway and Switzerland, and some from Asia, for example Mongolia and Vietnam?"

To this question Dr. Zhebin replied that initial progress in the Korean settlement can be done only by a bilateral track between the US and North Korea. That is because North Korea is very much threatened by military power. Only after such progress will middle powers from Europe and Asia have a chance to contribute and find opportunities for economic cooperation and humanitarian exchanges.

Next, Mr. Fraser Harris brought up the idea, suggested by Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik, about having an Asian Helsinki Process. He asked if the other speakers had any comment on this idea.

Dr. Kneissl answered that in the 1990s there was an effort to stretch the Helsinki Process to the Middle East as a larger diplomatic concept. Later it was even considered for use in Africa. However, when one closely checks the Helsinki Process, with all its success and achievements, it is not a concept that can be used in all conflict areas, she said. The Helsinki Process was a very particular case of confrontation between two military blocs on one continent. As much as she felt deep appreciation and admiration for the process that took place in 1975, she was doubtful if an Asian Helsinki Process could be the answer. She said: "We should never push analogies too far. I think the Korean Peninsula merits its own handling."

Dr. Zhebin added that the two cases are also different in the sense that in Northeast Asia there are territorial disputes, no mutually recognized borders and no mutually recognized governments. In Europe, the Helsinki Process was possible because everybody recognized each other.

After a few more questions and interactions, Mr. Fraser Harris ended the QandA and gave the floor back to the moderator, Dr. Fasslabend, for closing remarks.

Mr. Brann of UPF and ISCP thanked the panelists and stated that from UPF's perspective, the importance

of a peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula cannot be overestimated. For this reason, UPF and its affiliated organizations have put tremendous efforts into this cause during the past 40 years.

Mr. Brann emphasized the many different changes and developments that are occurring in Northeast Asia and said that it is of great importance that Europe fully recognizes the implications of these changes and shifts, and moves to embrace them and work with them. This means doing everything in Europe's power to help bring peace to this region. Europe has a lot to give Asia, through helping the reunification of the Korean Peninsula, but also much to gain, Mr. Brann said. Therefore, it must be prepared to accept the challenges that this could entail.

