

UPF Vienna, Austria Co-Sponsors Interfaith *Peace Starts with Me* Conference

Peter Haider and Marinela Stefanc
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Vienna, Austria -- "Peace Starts with Me" was the title of an interreligious peace conference organized by UPF-Austria in cooperation with the Kriya Yoga Foundation.

The event, attended by 140 participants, was held at the Vienna Peace Embassy on September 1, 2023, in honor of the 11th anniversary of the ascension of UPF founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon.

Elisabeth Cook, president of the Austrian chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization that is affiliated with UPF, was the moderator.

In his opening remarks **Peter Haider**, the president of UPF-Austria, emphasized that UPF promotes interfaith dialogue as a way to build understanding and respect between religions. To create a harmonious and peaceful society and world, it is important to find common ground and to respect differences, he said.



Mr. Haider quoted Reverend Moon: "It will not be easy to tear down the religious walls that have stood for thousands of years. But these walls must come down, if we are to aim for a world of peace."

The panelists of the event were:

[Paramahansa Prajnanananda](#), supreme soul, master and guru of the ancient science of Kriya Yoga.

"Peace is the absence of relentlessness, hatred, jealousy, conflict, contradiction and chaos, and the prevalence of cooperation, serenity, mutual understanding and the manifestation of helping and caring for one another," he said.

Professor Ismail Yasin, a scholar of Islamic studies and Arabic calligraphy from Damascus, Syria, who

teaches in several academic institutions in Vienna and runs an integration center for migrants and refugees from the Middle East.



Starting with the prayer "Peace be upon you!" he introduced the perspective of peace according to Islam, stating that the word "Islam" itself means "peace." Thus one has to submit one's character, body, mind and soul to the Will of God, Professor Yasin said. There is no peace in Islam without believing in God. Peace does not come from emptiness, but it comes from believing that there is a God in this universe, he said.



Venerable Ruchun, the head nun of the Fo Guang Shan Temple in Vienna, a Buddhist temple originating in Taiwan.

"We can achieve peace only by breaking down and eliminating the attachment to ourselves," she said. "Once we are detached from the idea of 'me and my,' we will no longer easily enter into conflict with others. Then it will be easy to accept different opinions and ideas, and in this way we can have peace in our minds and achieve peace in the family, society and the world."

Dr. Joshua Sinclair, an American medical doctor who later became a writer, filmmaker, actor and film director as well as a professor of comparative religions.

Dr. Sinclair stated that one person may not be enough to bring peace. He quoted a few historical figures and told some personal anecdotes, including meeting with Mother Teresa in Calcutta while giving medical treatment to the poor.

After comments from the audience, the event concluded with the awarding of an Ambassador for Peace certificate to Paramahansa Prajnanananda, who in return delivered presents to the conference speakers and organizers.