

Peace Road event at the Tri-border meeting point of Slovakia, Austria and Hungary

June 3, 2023



"The Austrian, Slovak and Hungarian chapters of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) jointly organised a full-day *Peace Road* program on the tri-border point of these three countries.

The program opened with the singing of the European Union's anthem, with participants singing together in their own languages. Elisabeth Cook, Austrian President of the Family Federation introduced the speakers. Peter Haider, President of the Austrian Universal Peace Federation, was the first speaker. He reminded us that in 1989 the Iron Curtain still divided the peoples and that we should gratefully thank those who gave their lives for freedom. "Peace has to be cultivated and not taken for granted!", was his most important message.

After him, Ing. Gerhard Zapfl, mayor of Nickelsdorf, a village located at the Austrian border to Hungary, took the floor. As Mayor of this village at the border he was responsible to manage 300 000 refugees crossing the border in 2015 and to maintain the social peace in the small community of his village. His experience is that integration is possible with good management and the goodwill of the people.

Mrs. Gabriela Ferenčáková, mayor of Čunovo, the village at the Slovak-Hungarian border, gave a short speech, highlighting the importance of cooperation, common values and common solutions to problems.

Mag. Barbara Grabner, representing UPF Slovakia, presented the "European Green Belt" initiative which became known under the Motto: **Borders separate. Nature unites**. The *Green Belt* was established after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989: Along the Iron Curtain the longest chain of protected areas worldwide was established. Today it is 12,500 km long and passes through 24 countries, from Scandinavia to the Baltic, Central Europa and Balkans. Also, a 10 000km biking track has been established along the Green Belt.

"United in Heart" was the topic of the Women's Federation for World Peace Presidents of Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. "Coming together as Youth for Peace" was the contribution of the Youth and Students for Peace Presidents of Austria and Hungary. They introduced the main areas of activities of their organisation.

The official program ended with a speech by Péter Mészáros, representing the Universal Peace Federation of Hungary. He remembered that when he was a child he experienced the severe border controls at the Slovak as well as at the Austrian border each time his family intended to travel abroad. His desire to cross the borders freely has been fulfilled, at least for this part of Europe. We should never take peace for granted, but work for it!

At the end of the official program on the triple border, the approximately one hundred and sixty participants, led by more than thirty Peace Road cyclists (and one long distance runner), retreated on a route of about eight kilometres to a nearby campsite in Hungary. In addition to the three neighbouring countries, participants had arrived also from the Czech Republic and Italy, several countries of the Middle East and Africa, as well as the Philippines.

After lunch together, they spent the afternoon at the campsite "Aranykarász", having lively discussions, playing ball games and exploring the *Szigetköz*, a well known nature reserve at the side arms of the Danube, by canoe or cruise boat.

The Peace Road is a global goodwill project of the Universal Peace Federation. The project dates back to 1981, when the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, our founder, proposed in a conference on the Unity of Sciences an international highway that will physically connect all people of the world.

The Peace Road initiative promotes two projects in particular: an undersea tunnel between Korea and Japan, and the Bering Strait Project to connect Alaska and Siberia. The founders' vision and desire was the peaceful reunification of Korea, which is surrounded by the competing superpowers of the world: USA, China, Russia and Japan. Only when the world is connected peacefully Korea can be reunited.

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