

## UPF Austria's Ambassadors for Peace Reflect On the Events of the Past Year

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*Two new ambassadors for peace with Dr. Walther Lichem, a former Austrian ambassador to Chile, Canada and elsewhere, the writer and Mr. Abdalla Sharief, an engineer and past president of the Horn of Africa News Agency*

The Austrian chapter of UPF organized a meeting of ambassadors for peace in order to reflect on the events of the past year, and set a direction for 2018. Almost a hundred guests came to the December 9 event. The focus was on reports about the Inter-religious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), which has been founded in Seoul, Korea, recently, and on events connected to the founding of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP). Peter Haider, reminisced about the UPF conference at the United Nations on the theme of Interfaith Harmony Week, which was at the same time the founding conference of IAPP in Austria. All political parties of the Austrian government sent speakers to that conference, with altogether around two hundred attending, including numerous leaders of society.

An engineer, Abdalla Sharief, reported about the activities of the "Horn of Africa Peace Initiative." In one of their events, they introduced the nation of South Sudan; another conference was held about Eritrea's capital Asmara, which had gained the status of a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site; rounding out with a third conference, held on the topic of refugees and migration.

Ulrich Haider reported about Peace Road Austria 2017, which UPF organized in the district of Upper Austria. Participating cyclists covered a distance of thirty kilometers. Their destination was the so-called "peace bridge," an actual bridge that young Palestinians and Israelis had built as a Service for Peace project, which a second-generation Austrian member and his family had organized. Several mayors from the area had participated in that project, which attracted media coverage from local newspapers.

Dr. Walther Lichem reviewed a UPF conference in Pristina, Kosovo; Mrs. Elisabeth Brandner followed with a report about the founding of Parliamentarians for Peace in Ljubljana, Slovenia, which she had participated in. Elisabeth, belonging to the Croatian minority in Austria herself, had been a missionary to Slovenia during the time of communist Yugoslavia, and has since maintained good relationships with people in Slovenia and Croatia.

Marlies Haider, representing Youth UPF, reported about an event at Vienna University, which they had organized in early summer this year, on the topic, "Populism, Integration and the Future of Europe." More than sixty people had attended, many of them university students. Among the four speakers was a Syrian professor who is running programs for better integration of young foreigners in Vienna. Many of his students also attended that event.

With a performance of the Bosnian women's choir "Mimosas," the program officially concluded. Guests subsequently indulged in tasting Bosnian specialties and Christmas cookies, which gave them the opportunity to get to know one another and to deepen existing relationships. We all felt that 2017 was a very fruitful year, filled with Heavenly Parent's blessings and protection.