

UPF Vienna, Austria celebrates 100 years of the Korean Independence Movement

Peter Haider
March 7, 2019
UPF-Austria



Vienna, Austria -- The 100th anniversary of the Korean Independence Movement was celebrated with a program at the UPF offices.

Seventy guests attended the gathering, which was held on March 7, 2019.

Martin Putz, who has been studying Korean language and history at the University of Vienna during the past two years, gave a lecture on the historical background of the Korean Independence Movement in 1919. He mentioned the young Korean woman Yu Kwan-sun, one of the organizers of the Independence Movement, who died in prison and became a national heroine.

"During the colonial period [1910-1945], the Japanese pillaged [Korea's] resources," Mr. Putz said, "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 ... and conscripted Koreans into their work force or as uniformed soldiers in the Pacific War. ..."

"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," Mr. Putz said.

The second speaker was a Viennese woman, Susanne Wang, whose grandfather Seo Young Hae had been a Korean independence fighter. He participated in the uprising in 1919 and then fled to Shanghai, China, where he became the youngest member of Syngman Rhee's provisional government. In the 1990s he was declared a national hero of Korea.

She said she would visit Korea in April, in connection with a book about her grandfather being published. In January, a Korean TV channel sent a team to Austria to film a documentary about her and her sister.

UPF-Austria President Peter Haider recalled a visit he had made to Seoul's Pagoda Park, where the Korean Independence Movement started. He then gave a report about [the World Summit 2019](#), which was held in Seoul from February 8 to 11. A total of 1,200 participants from 110 nations, including 40 current and former heads of state and government, attended the summit.



Mr. Haider reported that at the summit 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). This organization, he said, will 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).

During the World Summit, the third [SunHak Peace Prize](#) was awarded to Waris Dirie, a human rights activist who is working to stop the practice of female genital mutilation, and Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, the president of the African Development Bank, for his work in promoting Africa's growth and good governance through agricultural innovation.

Mr. Haider reported that he participated in the World Summit session on "[Peace in the Korean Peninsula](#)," organized by the Segye Ilbo and The Washington Timesnewspapers. South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon and former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper participated in that session, along with parliamentarians, other officials and military and political experts, as well as quite a few Korean cabinet ministers.

Mr. Haider also described the remarkable speech that UPF co-founder Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon gave at the 30th anniversary of the Segye Ilbo newspaper's founding.

Heather Wokusch, a founder of SDG 5 Thrive!, who likewise participated in the World Summit in Korea, offered her impressions. She said she was very impressed by the interfaith quality of all the programs.

"It was also interesting for me to experience Mrs. Moon directly," Mrs. Wokusch said, and she called the founders' birthday celebration "a work of art from beginning to the end. It was beautiful and overwhelming."

After the presentations, the participants enjoyed traditional Korean food that had been prepared by Korean supporters of UPF-Austria.