

## UPF Vienna, Austria's the Significance of Faith-Based Organizations

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Vienna, Austria -- UPF International and UPF-Austria organized a side-meeting to the 28th Session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

UPF was a participant in the conference, which was held from May 20 to 24, 2019, at the Vienna International Centre in Austria, home to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The annual conference draws delegations from around the world, representing UN offices as well as member states. In addition, a variety of experts, activists and NGO delegations participate. In addition to the official intergovernmental discussions, there are numerous side-events organized by NGOs.

The UPF side-meeting, held on May 20, 2019, was titled "Ethics and Good Governance as Applied to Criminal Justice: The Significance of Faith-Based Organizations."

Dr. Thomas Walsh, chair of UPF International, and Mr. Peter Haider, president of UPF-Austria, organized the session, which included the following speakers and commentators: Dr. Michael Platzer of the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; Dr. Jay Albanese, criminologist from Virginia Commonwealth University in the United States; Rev. Darcy Roake, a Unitarian Universalist minister from the United States; Dr. Afsar Rathor, former project manager in different UN organizations; and Jasmina Bosto from the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

The side meeting gave attention to such subtopics as the importance of education, especially in areas of ethics and civics; the importance of good governance and equitable and prudent public policies related to the criminal justice system; and the value of innovative approaches, such as restorative justice methodologies.

The development of partnerships between faith-based organizations and United Nations agencies, as well as with national and local governments, was considered. The session deliberated on the relevance to criminal justice and crime prevention of faith-based agents and institutions, as well as the core religious values, principles and best practices common to many religious traditions.

The following day, after a conference co-organized by UNODC and KAICIID on "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Leaders in Crime Prevention," UPF joined KAICIID in hosting a special concert for peace. The concert, featuring a number of performers, was coordinated by UNODC official Dr. Slawomir Redo and his wife.

UPF is in partnership with many of these NGOs and FBOs and has plans to cultivate those relationships. In particular, plans are under way for a set of meetings in San Francisco this November, during the time of the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology. This meeting will include a public program at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. This program will be followed by a next step during the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Kyoto, Japan, in April 2020.

Faith-based organizations, as well as believers from all religions, are important stakeholders who can and should be encouraged and welcomed to associate with various government agencies in the effort to prevent crime and improve the criminal justice system.