

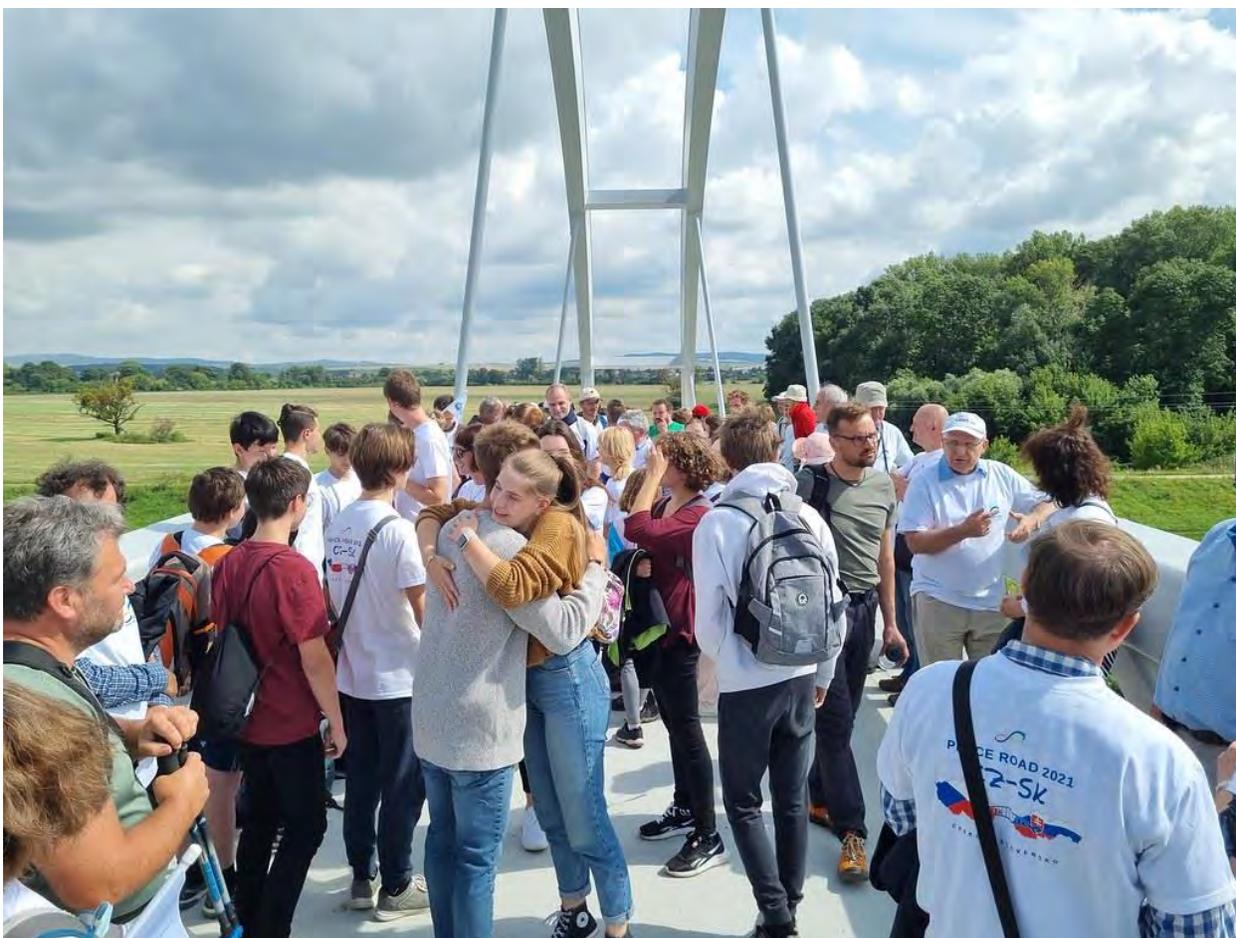
UPF Czech and Slovak chapters walk Bridge Of Friendship on Peace Road 2021

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic -- UPF supporters from Slovakia and the Czech Republic participated in a Peace Road event in which they walked to a "bridge of friendship" connecting the nations.

The Czech and Slovak chapters of UPF cooperated in organizing the Peace Road event on August 29, 2021.



The whole region has a rich history, because it was here where the first Christian missionaries came in the ninth century to the Great Moravian Empire.

Czech and Slovaks have deep spiritual roots in this area, which is rich in excavations and historical materials from the past. The Czech participants had the chance to visit the historical museum before the Peace Road event started.

The participants from the Czech Republic walked 1.5 kilometers and the Slovaks around 5 kilometers to the meeting point -- the "bridge of friendship" across the Morava River that was finished in 2019. Over 100 participants -- children, youth, adults and seniors -- took part in this unique event.

In his welcoming speech **Dr. Juraj Lajda**, UPF president for the Czech Republic, emphasized the significance of the meeting place as a symbol of the common Christian history of both nations. Although Czechoslovakia was divided in 1993, there are still strong bonds and good relations between the two

nations, he said. Finally, Dr. Lajda mentioned the devastating tornado that hit this area recently.

Miloš Klas, the president of UPF-Slovakia, said that if we look around us, there are no borders anywhere. It is people who make the borders. If people meet as a family, there are no borders. Family ties create an environment without borders.

As an example, he mentioned Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa (1717-1780), whose many children married all over Europe – in other words, her family and allies were located in all of Europe. Mr. Klas suggested that instead of "divide and conquer," people should live by the motto of "unite and love."



Dr. Lajda and Mr. Klas exchanged national flags, and the participants sang the Czech and Slovak national anthems.

The next speaker was the mayor of the Czech village of Mikulčice, **Josef Dvořáček**. In his short speech he expressed his gratitude and appreciation that the Peace Road was being held in this area.



Mr. Dvořáček said he knows the region very well. He recalled opening the newly completed "bridge of friendship" together with the mayor of the Slovak village of Kopčany. This project to connect the two nations over the river started already 20 years ago, he said. The people of both sides expressed their desire to be connected by a bridge in order to freely walk or bicycle over the river dividing the two nations.

Mr. Dvořáček referred to the horrors of the tornado that hit his village recently, causing all the inhabitants' houses to be either damaged or totally destroyed. He could not stop his emotions when speaking about the suffering and despair of the people in the village. He mentioned that any help would be welcome.

The mayor of the Slovak border village Kopčany sent a congratulatory message to the participants.



The next speaker was **Su-hyon Kim**, a South Korean native representing the Czech chapter of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an organization that is affiliated with UPF. In her moving speech, which she delivered in the Czech language, she spoke of the division of her homeland into North and South Korea.

Mrs. Kim praised the initiative of UPF to organize this event in support of Korean reunification. With deep emotion she described the pain of many Korean families who still are divided by the 38th parallel. In the end she expressed her hope that her homeland soon will be reunified.

The final speaker was **Rev. Dr. Mikuláš Vymětal** from Prague, an evangelical pastor and the pastor for minorities. He said he appreciated any kind of bridge-building among people, communities and nations. In this historic place with deep Christian roots, he prayed together with all participants the Lord's prayer in both Czech and Slovak.

In the end the mayor of the Czech village of Dolní Bojanovice, **Eva Rajchmanová**, praised this initiative which connects people as a basis for peace. Then she challenged her colleague, the mayor of Mikulčice village, to sing a Moravian folk song for the participants, and many participants joined.

With the final singing of *Tongil*, the Korean song of unity, the official part of the Peace Road was concluded. However, some participants, led by Erika Lajdová from the Czech Republic and Marcela Magušinová from Slovakia, sang one Czech and one Slovak folk song.

The Peace Road was very successful, with a good number of participants from both sides, good speakers and a cordial atmosphere. Many of the participants hoped that we would meet again.