

UPF Bonn, Germany: The Basic Concept of Gross National Happiness

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Bonn, Germany

Bonn, Germany -- UPF celebrated the International Day of Happiness with a presentation given by an Ambassador for Peace.

At the March 8, 2020, event, occupational therapist Patricia Hafner spoke on the topic "The Basic Concept of Gross National Happiness -- Can Happiness Be Learned?"

International Day of Happiness, which is still relatively unknown, was established by the United Nations in 2012 and is celebrated annually on March 20.

Ms. Hafner told about the 17-year-old Jigme Singye Wangchuk, who became king of the Himalayan nation of Bhutan in 1972. He first spent two years traveling across the country in order to better know and understand the living situations, desires and needs of his citizens and subjects. In this way he wished to research the conditions under which the country's political conflicts could be ended and his regency used for the good of the citizens. His official coronation took place in 1974.

Bhutan does not measure the prosperity of its citizens simply by the gross national product -- economic progress, Ms. Hafner said. It is the only country in the world that takes into consideration the happiness of its citizens.

Individual well-being, Ms. Hafner said, includes "personal, private happiness," which is decided by attitude and immediate living conditions, and "general happiness," i.e., the general framework of society in which one can develop. In this respect there are three decisive factors: harmony with nature, harmony with one's fellow humans (healthy communities), and harmony between spirit and body (people must be clear about their values).

She described her personal experiences with Dr. Ha Vinh Tho, who for many years as director (often known as "the Minister of Happiness") of the Center for Gross National Happiness in Bhutan was responsible for the implementation and further development of these ideas. Today he attempts to bring his knowledge to the Western world and offers his support to interested institutions and private companies.

The speaker presented excerpts from a radio interview with Ha Vinh Tho, broadcast by the German radio station WDR 5 on February 18, 2020, titled "Happiness Can Be Learned." The full broadcast (in German) can be [found here](#).

This successful event was brought to a close with a few practical exercises related to personal happiness and the external and internal circumstances that contribute to this.

There followed a lively exchange among the audience members, many of whom expressed the desire to repeat the exercises after a few months in order to assess how much personal situations or attitudes had changed.