

## Think Tank 2022 Forum Europe and Middle East, February 1: IAPD Session

Yvo Bruffaerts  
February 1, 2022



Europe and the Middle East - The second webinar of the Think Tank 2022 Global Forum presented the views of faith representatives concerning Korean reunification.

The session, titled "Can Peace Be Achieved by Human Means Alone? - Ending 70 Years of Painful Division on the Korean Peninsula," was held on February 1 by the Europe-Middle East branch of UPF's Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD).

The eight webinars of the Think Tank 2022 Global Forum were held from February 1 to 3 as a precursor to the events of World Summit 2022, which would be held in Seoul, South Korea, and online from February 11 to 13.

The Think Tank 2022 webinars were held not only in Europe and the Middle East but also in Asia, Africa, and the Americas by UPF and its associations. Several of the online sessions were held jointly with UPF associations from other continents.



[Heiner Handschin, Coordinator of IAPD for Europe and the Middle East](#) In his opening remarks, Heiner W. Handschin, the coordinator of IAPD for Europe and the Middle East, said it was high time to bring the problem on the Korean Peninsula into global focus, to make leaders realize that this painful division and stalemate must end.

Mentioning that the Think Tank 2022 webinars were taking place at the same time as the United Nations' World Interfaith Harmony Week, Mr. Handschin said that IAPD celebrates interreligious harmony, while mobilizing ethical people, faith leaders, key religious figures, and people of conscience to address the situation on the Korean Peninsula, so that the Koreans may find a place of peaceful coexistence, harmony and good neighborliness.

Next a video was shown of the World Interfaith Harmony Week anthem for 2015, Sami Yusuf's song "The Gift of Love."



[Ms. Maria Gabriella Mieli, UPF Coordinator South Europe](#) The session moderator was Mrs. Gabriela Mieli, the coordinator of UPF for Southern Europe.



[Rev. Dr. William McComish, Dean Emeritus, St. Peter's Cathedral, Geneva; Co-Founder, Geneva Spiritual Appeal, Switzerland](#) Mrs. Mieli introduced the first speaker, Rev. Dr. William A. McComish, the dean emeritus of St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland.

Tragically, he said, secular forces have failed for 70 years to remedy the situation on the Korean Peninsula, which was created against the will of the Koreans, "unlike the division of my homeland, Ireland, that results from discord among its own population."

The major powers concerned have vested interests in a divided Korea, Reverend McComish said. So far, secular leaders haven't come up with any plausible solutions. Politicians tend to be interested in power and pride, rather than in people's needs, he said. Unsurprisingly, there is a widespread crisis of confidence in authority of all kinds, especially among young people in the Western world.

There is hope in divine guidance, however, since God is still interested in human life and undoubtedly will continue to act in history, Reverend McComish said. God's spiritual divine force should not be confused with modern religious institutions, which suffer a crisis of authority due to, among other factors, fanaticism and immorality. Without the power of God, humans cannot succeed, he said.



[Ms. Emina Frljak, Program Coordinator, Youth for Peace, Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) Emina Frljak, the program coordinator of Youth for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, said that to achieve unification on the Korean Peninsula, reconciliation must happen both in politics and in the hearts of the people. To be ready to genuinely live with each other, rather than merely coexist, is a long and difficult process. The best the international community can do is to listen to the people who are part of the process and to act as mediators, she said.

Research conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has shown that there can be a big difference in how Koreans emotionally experience the prospects of unification and how they reason cognitively, Ms. Frljak said. For that reason, the differences between North and South Koreans must not be overlooked.

She said that her experience of working on sensitive issues, such as reconciliation, forgiveness, and establishing connections among people, taught her that people find comfort in faith and spirituality. Because the latter is not necessarily linked to a specific religion, non-religious people also should be considered. Faith-based organizations, religious people, and people of faith must raise awareness among politicians and the people about the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

As youth are part of the present and the future, Ms. Frljak called for an intergenerational dialogue as part of the peace process. Citing a UN article, she said, "Youth are not a problem for older people to solve; they are actively a part of the solution." In the Korean context, the older generation still have memories of a unified peninsula, while the younger generation have grown up in a divided country.

[Click here for the full intervention of Ms. Emina Frljak](#)



[Nikolay Kizimov, Director, Spiritual and Moral Center Great Nation, Russia](#) Nikolay Kizimov from Russia, the director of the "Great Nation" spiritual and moral center, said that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many were searching for spiritual knowledge. While reading the sacred books, he discovered, among other things, that many norms of communist ideology were taken from the Bible; that sacred books are a fount of knowledge; that not only scientists who discover the laws of nature should be admired but also the Lord, who created them.

Mr. Kizimov gave some historical examples of what belief in God has meant for Russia. In World War II, when the fascist German troops had reached Moscow, Joseph Stalin addressed the population with the words "brothers and sisters" and ordered a plane with the icon of the Virgin of Kazan to fly over the city. And the Lord helped them. There was an icy cold spell in the autumn, for which the German troops were not equipped. Adolf Hitler reportedly said: "It was not Stalin who defeated me, but some kind of force."

World history has seen many leaders who considered themselves great and omnipotent, Mr. Kizimov said. Personality cults emerged which the population eventually opposed. On this subject Matthew 23:9 reads, "And do not call anyone on earth your father, for you have one Father, who is in heaven."

The sacred books of world religions define the norms of human behavior, Mr. Kizimov said. By implementing them, true happiness will be found.

[Click here for the full intervention of Mr. Nikolay Kizimov](#)



[Ms. Lejla Hasandedic-Dapo, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, URI Europe CC Liaison Officer, Turkey](#) Lejla Hasandedic-Dapo, a psychologist, psychotherapist, and Europe CC liaison officer for United Religions Initiative based in Turkey, who grew up in war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, gave a personal testimony about how she became a peacebuilder.

She was staying in Mostar, a city where Muslim Bosnians and Catholic Croats lived completely segregated from each other. She went to an experimental school where both Bosnian and Croat children studied under one roof, although initially they had curricula and teachers of their own. One day, the student council came up with the idea to cross the iconic old bridge of Mostar, which was rebuilt after it had been destroyed in the war. As it is located in the Bosnian section of Mostar, many Croats had never set foot on the bridge. This small initiative, which symbolized the bridging of a deep gap in the minds of the participants, turned out to be a life-changing experience.

Mrs. Hasandedic-Dapo met a participant whose father had been responsible for the death of her grandmother. Although she had to deal with a lot of strong emotions, she decided, after long talks with the boy, that she would forgive him and his family. This was the beginning of her peacebuilding journey, from a person hating others to someone who is forgiving.

She hopes that young people in North and South Korea, who are living separately from each other, soon may cross the border and bridges in their minds and live peacefully together. Finally, she called on the audience to step out of our comfort zones, meet "the other side," and become the change that we want to see in the world.

[Click here for the full intervention of Ms. Lejla Hasandedic-Dapo](#)



[Venerable Dr. Michel Thao Chan, President, Cercle de Réflexion des Nations, Paris, France](#) Venerable Dr. Michel Thao Chan from France, the president of Cercle de Réflexion des Nations, said that in these past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we often have called on God to give us hope, a sense of life and the great sacredness of life. He said he has asked God whether peace can be achieved by human beings alone. Only recently has God let him understand that there is no God Almighty for us to turn to, because the keys to inner peace, love, compassion and prosperity are to be found in our hearts. After all, God the Creator created humans in His own image, full of love, peace and compassion.

Dr. Chan mentioned the preamble to the constitution of UNESCO declared in 1945: "Since wars begin in the mind of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Moreover, he said, the opposite of war is not merely peace but creation from the heart. It is above, it transcends peace. In 2006 Dr. Chan therefore proposed in the UN: "Peace is in the heart of people, so it is in the heart of people that peace has to blossom."

A study entitled "The Korean Reunification, a Transformative Opportunity for Understanding the World Peace of People and Nations," conducted by Dr. Chan, mentioned the following points:

First: Problems of reunification cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness as where they were created.

Second: Actions and projects made justifiable in the name of reunification have to be gradually removed from information and education in the two Koreas. Solutions must be rooted in the convergence of the soul of the Korean people.

Dr. Chan said the governments of North and South Korea both have proclaimed that the restoration of Korea as a single state is their goal.

The end of 70 years of painful division on the Korean Peninsula and world peace, Dr. Chan said, depend on the concordance of: the Providence of Heaven (inner peace); a favorable environment (peace among all beings); and peace between peoples and nations (universal peace), which can be summarized in the mantra "Om Peace, Peace, Peace."

[Click here for the full intervention of Ven. Dr. Michel Thao Chan](#)



### **Question-and-answer session**

Responding to the question of how interfaith cooperation could affect the Korean peace process, Rev. Dr. William A. McComish said that Koreans are very religious. He suggested that a day be organized on which all Koreans, and all people outside Korea who are concerned about Korea, pray for the reunification of Korea, the well-being of its citizens, peace in the world and the glory of God.

Asked to elaborate on the role that youth, and interfaith youth, can play in bringing peace to the Korean Peninsula, Emina Frljak said that, on the one hand, there must be political will. On the other hand, at the level of the population, willing young people must claim their space in society and then live up to it, cooperate and contribute. She believes that the power of prayer plus action can bring change.

Answering the question of how distrust and enmity between the citizens of North and South Korea can be prevented, Nikolay Kizimov said that Kim Jong Il visited the Russian Far East city of Khabarovsk in August 2002. Inspired by a visit to the cathedral, he ordered an Orthodox church to be built in Pyongyang. We should really promote a religious culture in North Korea, Mr. Kizimov said. He mentioned a Russian saying: "Even though the truth is hard, it is better than a lie." Therefore, people should be educated so that God's spark can enlighten their lives, he said.

At the end of the session, Gabriella Mieli said the founders of UPF, Father and Mother Moon, spent their whole lives and mission for world peace and the reunification of their homeland, Korea. Reading their life stories makes us realize the importance of balance between the inner - the spiritual - and the outer - practical actions. It is important to discover our talents and qualities as a gift from our Creator in order to live for the sake of others, she said.

Mrs. Mieli said that one of the recent programs initiated by Mother Moon, called "Peace Starts with Me," is the starting point of a dialogue between myself and the Creator, between myself and my brothers and sisters, and finally of the reunification of anything divided in the universe. Let's make a start with the Korean Peninsula, she said.

Heiner Handschin said he was "deeply touched by all the great speakers" and that it had been "a wonderful session." He said, "We can understand what kind of resources we have. If we can bring that to work, I think there can be hope for a peaceful reunification among the Korean people and the world."



## Intervention of Ms. Emina Frljak in the Think Tank 2022 Forum

Written by Ms. Emina Frljak, Program Coordinator, Youth for Peace, Bosnia and Herzegovina

01 February 2022



### **Intervention of Ms. Emina Frljak, Program Coordinator, Youth for Peace, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the IAPD Session of the Think Tank 2022 Forum on 1 February, 2022.**

Good morning, afternoon and evening from Bosnia and Herzegovina, depending on the place from which you are watching us. It is my pleasure and honor to be here with you and speak among these distinguished speakers. I wish to thank to the organizers for inviting me again to speak about this extremely important, yet complex topic.

I will start my speech with a quote from the late Desmond Tutu (God rest his soul):

“Forgiveness and reconciliation are not just ethereal, spiritual, other-worldly activities. They have to do with the real world. They are realpolitik, because in a very real sense, without forgiveness, there is no future”.

So, reconciliation is both a spiritual and a very practical process.

These two sides need to go hand in hand. Only then we can

speak about real progress and real living together on the Korean peninsula, but also elsewhere. To achieve unification, there must be reconciliation on both levels: the political one, but also the level of the people. People are the ones comprising one country, people are the heart and soul of one state and, in my experience, we tend to forget that very often. People on both sides of the Peninsula have suffered and still suffer. They bear a great burden of the past that is laden with violence. Families were ripped apart; lives were completely changed and there is so much pain there that needs to be processed.

I want to emphasize that a careful and sensitive approach to this process is needed, with genuine interest in the people and their needs, with genuine interest in their fears, pain, and experience about the situation on the Korean peninsula, because people know the best situation in which they live.

Speaking from personal experience and as someone who comes from an extremely divided society, due to our past, burdened with the violence and war that we experienced in the 90's, I have to highlight that reconciliation is never an easy or quick process. It takes time, years or even decades until people are ready to genuinely live with each other, not simply coexist, and until they are able to reconcile their differences. And reconciliation should never be imposed on people; the best we as an outside, international community can do, is to be mediators and carefully listen to the people who are part of the reconciliation process.

One study done by the Carnegie Endowment for Global Peace finds that the two complex and sometimes contradictory fundamental dimensions of the unification discourse in the Korean peninsula are striking - unification is both an emotional issue of the heart and a rational issue of the mind. How Koreans perceive the prospects for unification emotionally and psychologically can be very different from how they cognitively reason about how the unification process would actually work. This is important to understand and take into account when we speak about the unification process.

We also have to understand the diverse realities in the two parts of the Korean peninsula. Just to demonstrate this to you, I will quote the findings from the Global Peace Index 2021. On the Global Peace Index, South Korea is ranked 57, while North Korea is ranked 151. This means that South Korea enjoys a high level of peace and North Korea a very low one. This Peace Index is measured by the Institute for Economics and Peace, which uses various indicators to



measure this index. I highly recommend you read about their approach, as it is very well imagined and put into practice and provides us with accurate data on the state of peace in the world with specific country focus. This shows that the realities of these two parts of the peninsula are very different, and we have to take this into account when thinking and speaking about the unification process on the Korean peninsula. Of course, there is and there will be a challenge to reconcile these two different environments.

Many things are done on the political level to unite the peninsula, but here I am not going to talk about these things, since I am not a political expert nor analyst, but I will try to convey a message from a young person of faith who comes from a divided society and as someone who works on peace and reconciliation processes with young people in BiH and the Balkans peninsula. But I want to emphasize that these are just my experiences and that not all of them may be transferable or relevant for the Korean peninsula.

One thing I learned in my work is that when you work with sensitive topics such as reconciliation, forgiveness, pain and establishing connections among people is that people find comfort in faith and spirituality. According to Professor Don Baker, Korea has one of the most diverse religious landscapes on this planet. And when we speak about this diversity, we need to also take into account those people who are not religious, since spirituality does not need to be linked to a specific religion.

We need to appeal to these faith and spiritual values, not just of the Korean people, but also people around the world. Faith based organizations, religious leaders, and people of faith have a large influence on the happenings in the world. So, this influence needs to be used for advocacy, lobbying, and raising awareness about the Korean peninsula. This influence needs to appeal to governments, groups, and individuals. Our world today is one big global village as some like to say. Our world is highly heterogenous; we don't live in completely closed communities anymore, and definitely peace in one place influences peace in another place. On the other hand, with a heavy heart, I have to say that we also live in world full of wars and conflicts and with the COVID 19 pandemic, which highlighted all our inequalities, it is the time to ask ourselves what kind of place and world we want to live in and what kind of world we wish for our neighbors. I think that in today's world we are all neighbors to each other and that now more than ever "Love thy neighbor" should be practiced.

Another very important note that I would like you to take from my speech is the inclusion of youth in peace and reconciliation processes. Here I refer to the meaningful inclusion of young people, which means having us at the table, giving us space and a voice, listening to us, listening to our narrative, taking seriously our perspectives, including us in serious discussions about the present and the future, since we are part of both. We are not some distant blurry future, we are the present, we are here and we are now and that is where and when we need to be included. As one UN article on the meaningful inclusion of youth states "youth are not a problem for older people to solve, they are actively a part of the solution". Here I am appealing to intergenerational dialogue and, in the Korean context, we need to understand that the views of those who are older and who still have memories of a unified island and those who grew up in a divided environment may differ, and this needs to be considered in the process.

To wrap up this speech of mine, I will offer another quote with which I want to reiterate my words from the beginning. This quote comes from Malcolm Fraser who says that "reconciliation requires changes of heart and spirit, as well as social and economic change. It requires symbolic as well as practical action".

Thank you very much!

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## Intervention of Mr. Nikolay Kizimov in the Think Tank 2022 Forum

Written by Mr. Nikolay Kizimov, Head of the Spiritual and Moral Center Great Country, Russia



01 February 2022



### **Intervention of Mr. Nikolay Kizimov, Head of the Spiritual and Moral Center Great Country, Russia, in the IAPD Session of the Think Tank 2022 Forum on 1 February, 2022.**

#### **The Importance of Faith in God and Spiritual Laws in the Unity of the Korean People.**

Dear brothers and sisters of the Korean people!

By the will of fate, there was a division of your united state. There are forces of good and evil in the world that affect people. Everything good is from the Lord God, and everything bad is from Satan. The principle of the evil forces is divide and conquer. This is what happened to you.

If possible, I will share my thoughts on the division of your once unified state into two countries. There is no vacuum in the soul and consciousness of people. If we do not fill them with good, they are filled with bad.

For more than 20 years, I have been engaged in peacekeeping activities. I am addressing the people of South and North Korea

as a believer and in the past an officer-political worker, a communist.

When I was studying at the military-political college, we studied scientific atheism, and we were told that there is no God. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people rushed to the search for spiritual knowledge. Reading the sacred books, I made many discoveries for myself. The main ones are:

- Many norms of communist ideology were taken from the Bible
- Sacred books are a storehouse of knowledge
- World religions have existed for thousands of years, but the ideology of communism lasted only 70 years

We admire scientists who discover the laws of nature. For example, Newton. Moreover, we should admire the Lord the Creator, who created them; and on which our entire planet lives.

Schoolchildren in elementary grades study the subject of natural history. Reading the Bible, I was very surprised that the phenomena of nature and their relationship with faith in God are described in detail there.

#### **Old Testament, Book of Job 8:11-13**

**“Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water?**

**While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant.**

**Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish.”**

There is one wise saying: “Ignorance of state laws does not exempt us from responsibility. And ignorance of spiritual laws does not exempt us from the consequences.”

Using historical examples, I will give some insight into the meaning of faith in God for Russia. Many aggressive wars were waged against our country, and the enemies reached Moscow. And only thanks to God's help, our ancestors saved the country, when it seemed that everything was already predetermined.

A striking example is the entire Great Patriotic War – World War II for Russia -of 1941-1945. The troops of fascist

Germany reached our capital, and awards for the capture of Moscow were already made.

In this difficult time, Joseph Stalin addressed the citizens of the USSR in a Christian way, saying: "Brothers and sisters!" An order was given to fly around Moscow on a plane with the Kazan icon of the Virgin. Church services were also allowed. And the Lord helped us!

In the fall, a sharp cold snap came and severe frosts hit. Our enemies had summer fuel for aviation and armored vehicles, and autumn uniforms for soldiers. And the plan for the lightning-fast capture of the USSR failed. In the 50s in England, the memoirs of Schellenberg, the head of Wehrmacht intelligence, were published. There he cites Hitler's words before the end of the war: "It was not Stalin who defeated me, but some kind of force."

The text of the Russian national anthem contains the words:

**You are the only one in the world! You are the only one -  
the native land so kept by God!**

I'd like to ask the participants of the conference to pay attention to the semantic content of the word - religion. It means to enter into union with God!

World history knows many examples when the leaders of a number of states considered themselves great and omnipotent. A cult of personality was created, which was then condemned by the citizens.

On this subject, the Gospel of **Matthew 23:9** says: **"...And do not call anyone on earth your father, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.."**

The sacred books of the world religions define the norms of human behavior; by implementing them, we will find true happiness. And by violating them, people begin to be guided in their lives only by their instincts and become like animals.

I bring to your attention a poem in Russian:

**Only faith in the Lord will save our souls,  
It will save people from dirt and death.  
Only with faith in God we all will know,  
What should we be to be called human beings!**

To supporters of atheism, I propose paying attention to the science of psychology. This subject was studied in the USSR in all higher educational institutions. It means "the science of the soul". Is it then worth it to unfoundedly deny the existence of the Lord God?

In the present time, even the Charter of the Communist Party of Russia does not forbid a party member to be a believer.

An important event for the Korean people took place on August 22, 2002, when Kim Jong Il visited the Church of St. Innocent of Irkutsk in Khabarovsk city, Russia, and became interested in Orthodoxy. Subsequently, thanks to his support, a temple of the Life-Giving Trinity was erected in Pyongyang.

Every nation has a rich cultural heritage. When I got acquainted with the Korean literature of the 17th-19th centuries, I learned a lot of new and interesting things for myself. An important feature of your works is that, passing through dangerous life situations, the characters are saved and fate rewards them with happiness.

The hero of the novel "Worthy Hong Gildong jeon" dreamed of a society where relations between people would be harmonious. I propose to carefully analyze another Korean story "The Story of the Pheasant".

In it, one can see much that is similar to the current situation on the Korean peninsula. The red bean seed was the cause of the death of the pheasant and the suffering of his family. He was dying because he came into contact with the world of people alien to him and adopted their customs.

Many countries have already abandoned the communist ideology and recognized its content as utopian. The female pheasant begged the pheasant 5 times in the name of Heaven and God not to peck at this bean seed, but he did not listen to her and trouble happened. The pheasant uttered the words: "Stubbornness is our enemy, the spirit of stubbornness has brought it to the grave." She also said about what she read in the Mirror of the Universe: "Bitter medicine pinches the tongue, but its properties are healing; truthful speech hurts the ear, but it is useful for life."

Dear brothers and sisters of the Korean peninsula! I have shared my knowledge and thoughts with you. If something I said was wrong, please forgive me. With God's help, our summit will contribute to ending the confrontation between the North and the South.

I dedicate my little poem to you:

**North and South are separate  
And unfortunately, there is enmity.**



*People suffer from this*

*It's a problem for the entire planet.*

*What a man can't do*

*The Lord will arrange without difficulty.*

*And again the people will become one,*

*Long live one country!*

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Written by Ms. Lejla Hasandedic-Dapo, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, URI Europe CC Liaison Officer, Turkey

01 February 2022



### **Intervention of Ms. Lejla Hasandedic-Dapo, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, URI Europe CC Liaison Officer, Turkey, in the IAPD Session of the Think Tank 2022 Forum on 1 February, 2022.**

Greetings of Peace everyone,

It is my great pleasure and honour to be on this webinar with other distinguish speakers and to be with all of you today. Also, I want to express my gratitude to the organizers for inviting me.

When I first received an invitation to be part of this webinar and when I read the topic "Can Peace be achieved by Human Means Alone – Ending 70 Years of Painful Division on the Korean Peninsula?", I was hesitating to accept the invitation, because I come from a completely different part of the world and my knowledge about the Korean Peninsula is limited to the information that I hear or read on the news. So, I thought that I won't be able to provide any meaningful contribution to this discussion.

But then I read the first part of the title again "Can Peace be achieved by Human Means Alone?" and I immediately remembered how I became a peacebuilder.

So instead of trying to deliver a speech based on peacebuilding, dialogue theories or interfaith work, I want to share my personal story. It is the story of a child that grew up during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in a divided city and in a divided country. A child that believed and dreamt about peace while trembling of fear in the basement trying to survive another day thinking about those enemies from the "others side" of the streets and walls that were dividing us.

Sarajevo in 1992 was a city under siege. It was not a place you wanted to be, and definitely not a place you wanted your children to be. Yet that was where I was at the beginning of the war and, together with my grandmother, I left on the last bus to get out of the city before the siege hardened. My parents were waiting for me in Mostar, the city famous for its beautiful 16th century bridge. There had been very little communication between the two cities in the preceding months and for a time my parents thought that I had died in Sarajevo. When I came to Mostar, the war had not yet started there and we were supposed to be safe. But a few weeks later, the conflict that was gripping the entire territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina reached us.

So, I grew up during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), living in the divided city of Mostar (the city was divided between the Bosnians, who are mainly Muslims, and Croats who are Catholics). I was living in different dark shelters, hiding from shelling and gunfire, constantly worrying about whether my relatives and loved ones were still alive. Living in constant fear, I developed a lot of stereotypes and prejudices about those from the "other side" and I hated people from other national and religious backgrounds.

When I started going to elementary school, the school system in Bosnia and Herzegovina was completely segregated along ethnic lines. I didn't have the chance to meet my peers from other national or religious backgrounds. But I went to an experimental secondary school where Bosnian and Croat children studied under the same roof and this concept of school was and still is called "two schools under one roof". We followed separate curricula and had different teachers, but we were in the same building. The two ethnic groups, Croat and Bosnian students, remained separated

most of the time, because the school authorities were concerned about the potential conflict. This started changing when students from both ethnic groups set up a student council that I was a part of.

One of the most important and symbolic activities of the student council was crossing the Old Bridge of Mostar. The Old Bridge was built in the 16th century and is one of the most famous places in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was destroyed during the war but rebuilt following it. The bridge is in the Bosnian section of the city and, therefore, many Mostar residents of other ethnic backgrounds had never set foot on the bridge.

It took us almost a year to convince our peers that it would really be safe to cross the bridge together. It was a very important day for us. Although to the tourists we probably just looked like a bunch of young people crossing the bridge and having a nice time together, for us it was a life-changing experience, because all of us came together and crossed the bridge together. It was not just crossing the iconic stone monument, but for us it was crossing the deep chasms between us. It was crossing the bridge between the borders in our heads! For us, crossing the bridge together was a start in building a new and better future for all of us.

On that day, I met a boy whose father was a soldier during the war. I learned that he was responsible for the death of my grandmother during the war. That was heart-breaking for me. I was overwhelmed by negative emotions and hatred. I didn't know how to react and what to do. I was overwhelmed by all the emotions, but also deep in my heart, I knew that this was a huge step for him and that this was great opportunity to practice peacebuilding by setting your own example. We talked for a long time, and, after our conversation, I decided to forgive him and his family. I discovered the powerfulness of forgiveness and, on that day, we both agreed to continue building a better community for future generations. And this was the beginning of my peacebuilding journey and inner transformation from a person who hated others to someone who is forgiving and building a better future for generations to come.

From that day forward, all of the young people from varied ethnic backgrounds who cross the Mostar Bridge in solidarity become bridge builders who are making a difference. Every time they cross the bridge together, they become the bridge.

When I think about the Korean Peninsula, I think about all those people, especially the children and young generations who are living in divided communities without the chance to meet those from the other side, to cross the border and bridges in their minds and to discover the beauty of human connections and peacefully living together.

But at the same time, I remember my own example and the powerfulness of the human connection, personal stories, opening your mind and hearts, of discovering that we are all human beings with similar fears and needs and that, if we all come together despite the complicated political and social situation, we can change the world. Because all these small steps in the end make a big change.

Being empathic, putting yourself in the shoes of others and keeping in mind that every religion promotes forgiveness for the sake of peace is a good first step toward overcoming the division. And to answer the question from the title of this webinar "Can Peace be achieved by Human Means Alone?". For me the answer is yes, maybe that is the only and most powerful way to achieve peace, not only on the Korean Peninsula, but also in the whole world.

Therefore, I want to invite you all to do your part today, to go outside of your comfort zone, to meet somebody from the "other side" and to become the change that you want to see in the world.

Thank you and God bless you all.

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## Intervention of Ven. Dr. Michel Thao Chan in the Think Tank 2022 Forum

Written by Ven. Dr. Michel Thao Chan President, Cercle de Réflexion des Nations, Paris, France

01 February 2022



### Intervention of Ven. Dr. Michel Thao Chan President, Cercle de Réflexion des Nations, Paris, France, in the IAPD Session of the Think Tank 2022 Forum on 1 February, 2022.

**« Can Peace be achieved by Human Means Alone – Ending 70 Years of Painful Division on the Korean Peninsula ? »**

#### INTRODUCTION

The past two years will long be remembered for the devastating impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the world's 7.8 billion people. While injustice, conflict and extremism of all kinds still ravage the face of the earth, there has never been such broad solidarity across historical barriers to solve the current problems that threaten humanity. In political, economic and health meetings over the past two years, we have often called on God (consciously and unconsciously), to give a Great Hope, a Sense of Life, the Sacredness of Life.

So... **What is God's will? What is Humanity's willingness?**

#### Story: God saw Me (I saw God)

In a big meeting I attended not so long ago, the economic and religious decision-makers called God so much; that God himself (seems) to appear in front of us all

**God asks:** Why do you call me so much, so intense and so long especially during the last 2 years?

All the general assembly answers **unanimously:** because we love You deeply and you are the God who helps us to **find Peace and Prosperity on Earth**

**God answers:** Really! Sincerely!!! But you have not yet met my friend 'God the Almighty Power of Name and Fame' who has the Power, the Money the Influence Power on this Earth; He is just right behind your backs, all of you.

95% of the General Assembly turned their eyes back and saw no one

**They all shouted:** God you have deceived us, there is no one.

**God replies:** No there is no one, but if you sincerely love me, you do not turn back to the God Almighty of Power of Name and Fame because the keys to Inner Peace, Love, Compassion and Prosperity are in your heart.

I am part of the 5% of Men, who have Faith who have not looked back; I have silently looked at my heart and I saw the

**God the Creator, God creates man in his own image**

#### **The opposite of War isn't Peace, it is Creation (from the Heart)**

War is in the Mind of People, so that in the Mind of people that Peace has to be constructed

Peace is in the Heart of People, so that in the Heart of People that Peace has to Blossom

Therefore:

The reunification of Korea is a transformative opportunity for understanding more deeply the world Peace of People



## Introduction of the study

1- We cannot solve the problems of the Reunification at the same level of consciousness that we created them (the division of the 2 Koreas)

***It must be rooted in "The Convergence of the soul of the people of Korea"***

2- The divergence of actions and projects made justifiable in the name of the reunification of Korea by indefensible interventions and planning must be erased, gradually removed from the information and education of the 2 Koreas.

***It must be rooted in "The Convergence of the soul of the people of Korea"***

## Conclusion of the study

. Despite being politically separate entities after the Korean War, the governments of North and South Korea both proclaimed the restoration of Korea **as a single state as a goal.**

As my research on the **Hope of Unification: Desirability, Harmony Charters, Financial Power** the willingness of people and nations are still in the same direction of reunification;

- ***A Unified Korea will sooner or later be among the three powerful strong states in the world.***
- ***The coming success of Korean reunification is a transformative model for all nations to understand the efficient world Peace of People and Nations.***

## Conclusion

*The efficient world Peace of People and Nations depends on the Concordance of 3 aggregates Circumstances (the laws of Causality).*

## The Providence of Heaven, a favourable Environment, Peace between peoples and nations

(Thiên thời địa lợi nhân hòa 天时地利人和 (tiān shí dì lì rén hé))

## OM Peace, Peace, Peace

(Inner Peace, Peace among all beings, Peace between Nations and People)

## Ending 70 Years of Painful Division on the Korean Peninsula

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