

UPF Vienna, Austria: Austrians, Germans Hold UN Family Day Conference

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May 14, 2020



Vienna, Austria -- Experts from Germany and Austria participated in an online conference to emphasize the importance of the family.

The May 14, 2020, event, which commemorated the UN International Day of Families, was a joint project of the Austrian and German chapters of UPF and the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization.

Mr. Peter Haider, the president of UPF-Austria, explained in his opening statement the background of this day: In 1993, International Day of Families was established by the UN General Assembly through document RES/47/237 and celebrated for the first time on May 15, 1994. Since 1996 there has been a different motto every year, determined by the UN secretary-general and the United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development. The motto always relates to current issues and events and represents different facets of family life.



Mr. Haider explained that the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic (www.un.org/en/coronavirus) brings into sharp focus the importance of investing in social policies protecting the most vulnerable individuals and families. It is the families who bear the brunt of the crisis, he said -- sheltering their members from harm,

caring for out-of-school children and, at the same time, continuing their work responsibilities. Families have become the hub of intergenerational interactions that support us in this crisis. Under economic duress, poverty deepens. In times of uncertainty, stress increases -- often resulting in increased violence against women and children. That is why support for vulnerable families -- those who have lost their income, those in inadequate housing, those with young children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities -- is imperative now, more than ever, he said. See also: www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-families



Mag. Wolfgang Engelmaier from the Catholic social association Kolping International explained the work that is being done within the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family (www.viennafamilycommittee.org/), which he chairs. This NGO committee was founded in 1985. By now its membership consists of 60 NGOs which operate internationally and 40 NGOs on the national level. A big portion of the committee's work is done online by providing information about the family. A quarterly journal is published, and once a year an international forum takes place with guest speakers. Another focal point is the information the committee provides for parents about the Internet's dangers to children.

Dr. Dieter Schmidt, president of FFWPU-Germany, explained that just as the coronavirus can penetrate the walls of cells and infect them, destructive ideas and behavior in our society endanger the family unit. As a medical doctor, he said he can verify that a healthy family is the best precondition for physical health. The family is the most decisive factor in shaping the lives of children. The importance of the family is still not recognized enough in today's society, he said. We can say with certainty that the family is the only institution that has been founded by God, our creator. His will is fulfilled when families can live in peace. The most important aspect in creating peace is love, which manifests itself in loving relationships within the family and within society, he said.

If family relationships don't reflect God's love, the family can be the birthplace of neuroses. Therefore it is essential to build successful families. Harmonious families are also the building blocks for a well-functioning society and a peaceful world. The United Nations goal of world peace can be achieved only by strengthening families, Dr. Schmidt said. Binational families play a special role in contributing to world peace, as they connect two nations through loving family ties. The recent coronavirus crisis is another example of how families can manage difficult societal situations, he said.

Hedwig Freifrau von Beverfoerde, founder of the Family Protection Initiative and an organizer of the Demo für Alle rallies in Germany, said: "The coronavirus crisis brings to light what many politicians in particular have forgotten: Without the family our social system would collapse like a house of cards. The family is the most important factor in the system." Mrs. Beverfoerde is the chair of the Family First initiative. In June, her organization wanted to have a big pro-family demonstration. In her speech she explained five points that her organization was going to present to the government. These points are:

They want to bring about a change of policies concerning the family: Parents should be able to decide whether to put their small children in a daycare institution or care for them in their own homes. Politicians should provide this possibility by equal financial support.

Concerning children's rights: Parents are responsible for the care of their children. Therefore parents' rights need to be strengthened. "Children's rights" means, in effect, that the state makes the decisions.

Parents should have a say in the sexual education of the children, which now happens at school. Home

schooling should become legal in Germany.

Parents' educational and caretaking work should be honored by the state. Consumption taxes discriminate against families financially.

She is against redefining the family. The family should mean "father-mother-children." Her initiative does not accept "marriage for all."

The legislation should adjust its decisions to the well-being of the family. The ideological indoctrination of children at school should be stopped.



People can sign an online petition: www.familie-geht-vor.com

Mag. Harald Janisch, a sports scientist, a life-and-social consultant, the initiator of sos-corona.org and the chair of the Section for Personal Counseling of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce, explained in his statement: The Austrian government created the job of "life-and-social consultant" because it realized that positive psychology and sports science can support mental and physical health. It became a health-care institution with special permission to provide psychological help as well. This institution has existed in Austria for 30 years, and 15,000 persons are working in this field. Apart from life-and-social consulting, so-called "care workers" support people, often substituting for missing family members or looking after elderly people living at home. About 100,000 care workers are active in Austria, many of whom come from Eastern European countries.

From his work experience Mr. Janisch said he can see that the best solution is always the strengthening of the original family of father, mother and children. But whatever state a family is in, his organization strives to provide support in order to improve the situation. It works according to plan "A": The original family is strengthened. Plan "B": A new partner replaces the original partner. Plan "C": trying to stabilize whatever is possible. He said that studies show if the quality of the family diminishes, it becomes the source of many social problems.

Mr. Janisch referred to Dr. Anneliese Fuchs' book Can the Family Still Be Saved? He said his answer is "yes," but one has to deal with family problems and make efforts to solve them. He recently started the initiative www.sos-corona.org, a platform of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, in order to assist people in these days of pandemic.

After the presentations there was time for discussion. Mr. Christian Hausmann, president of UPF-Germany, stated that we must have the will to change reality. In order to do that, we need a clear vision of a well-functioning family.

Although the coronavirus crisis didn't allow us to have a conference in the usual way, the organizers, speakers and participants appreciated this online conference, especially as it proved to be a fruitful cooperation between the Austrian and German chapters of UPF.