

UPF Vienna, Austria Sustainable Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa

Jacques Marion
March 20, 2019



Vienna, Austria -- Two hundred guests attended a conference at United Nations headquarters in Vienna titled "Perspectives for Sustainable Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa."

The event, which was organized by the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the United Nations in Vienna, was co-sponsored by UPF-Austria, along with the Horn of Africa Peace Initiative, Awethu Forum to Promote African Unity in Diversity, United Nations Correspondents Association Vienna, Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, and Women's Federation for World Peace, an organization that is affiliated with UPF.

The conference, which took place on March 20, 2019, at the Vienna International Centre, was organized on the foundation of the dramatic change that took place in the Horn of Africa on July 9, 2018, when the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a declaration ending the state of war between the two countries.



That summit between Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, marked the first time that the neighboring heads of state had met in nearly two decades. This was a starting point of meetings which created new relationships among Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

In his [welcoming remarks, Dr. Martin Nesirky](#), director of the United Nations Information Service (UNIS) Vienna, reminded the audience that in 2019 the United Nations will celebrate its 40th year in Vienna. He quoted UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who said that our world is undergoing a stress test. But there are also signs of hope, he said, especially the declaration signed by Eritrea and Ethiopia after 20 years of conflict and stalemate. This is an example of courage that has a positive effect throughout the region.

The first session was moderated by Mr. Peter Haider, president of UPF-Austria. In his [introductory remarks](#) he said: "The Horn of Africa enjoys an excellent strategic location southwest of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. It refers to four countries -- Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti -- but, in its wider political and economic context, the term also includes Sudan and South Sudan.



"The strategic importance of this East African region comes from it being the source of the Nile and a gate to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Its location on one side of some of the world's major trade sea lanes and land routes gives it vital importance. Its importance increases because of its proximity to the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula.

"The area has always been a magnet for international powers because of the sea traffic going by, major ports in the area, tremendous nearby riches, weapons trading, crossing points for people and merchandise and the dangers of piracy. The Horn of Africa, with its geostrategic location, is a source, as well as an area of transit and of destination, of mixed migratory flows, and a center of migratory routes toward Europe, the Gulf countries and the Middle East, and southern Africa."



The session featured speeches from high-level diplomats from both Austria and Horn of Africa nations. Dr. Werner Fasslabend, the president of the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES) and a former Austrian defense minister, described the significance of the political breakthrough in the

Horn of Africa and the prospects it has opened for that region and surrounding regions.

Representing the Horn of Africa nations, H.E. Mirghani Abbaker Altayeb Bakhiet, ambassador of Sudan to Austria; H.E. Aden Mohamed Dileita, ambassador of Djibouti to Germany; and H.E. Mahad Ahmed Haji, a chargé d'affaires and minister-counselor at the Permanent Mission of Somalia to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), offered their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges for the development of their region.



Dr Andreas Melan, the head of the Africa Department at the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs and a former Austrian ambassador to Ethiopia, reviewed the relations between Austria and the Horn of Africa from a European Union perspective.

[H.E. Abdulkadir Bakri Hamdan](#), the representative of the Permanent Mission of Eritrea to the UN in Vienna, the main organizer of the event, concluded by recalling the struggle of his country to gain independence and recognition from the international community, and emphasized how the recent peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia marked a new era for Eritrean people and for the peoples of the Horn of Africa.

The second session was moderated by Mr. Tageldin Hamad, vice president of UPF International and director of the UPF Office for UN Relations.

Shedding light on their fields of activity in the region, several experts took the stand: Mr. Shaukat Abdulrazag, director for Africa at the Technical Cooperation Department of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); Mr. Abdalla Sharief, the president of the UN Correspondents Association Vienna (UNCAV); Captain Simon Gebre Yohannes Neguse from the Eritrean Nuclear Security program; and Mr. Hassan Eltigani Malik from the Awethu Forum to Promote African Unity in Diversity.

The Austrian entrepreneur Reinhard Trinkl spoke about the project of the Environmental Concepts Exchange Association for the Horn of Africa.

Jacques Marion, secretary general of UPF-Europe, concluded the session with a report on UPF activities in Africa. He mentioned that the third Sunhak Peace Prize had been awarded recently by the UPF co-founder to two African laureates: Dr. Akinwum Adesina, the president of the African Development Bank, and Ms. Waris Dirie, the Somali top model and UN ambassador who started the campaign to denounce female genital mutilation.

To conclude the event, Mrs. Camilla Habsburg read a letter of appreciation, which will be sent to Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed: "The participants of the conference 'Perspectives for Sustainable Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa,' which took place on March 20, 2019, in the Vienna International Centre (United Nations), want to express their gratitude for the courage and vision that the political leaders of the Horn of Africa nations are showing in order to make a new start toward peace and mutual prosperity. This serves as an example for the whole African continent and for the world."