

## WFWP Austria Meets Members Of The Philippine-Diaspora Organizations in Vienna

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On July 12, 2021, WFWP Austria had its first "Meet and Greet" with Philippine-Diaspora Organizations in Vienna. The "Meet and Greet" gave an opportunity for each organization to introduce its vision and activities to one another.

Dr. Maria Riehl, Director of WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Vienna, began the program by sharing her experience at the 1992 inauguration ceremony of WFWP in Seoul, South Korea. Dr. Riehl stated how friendship among women contributes to building a more unified world because it builds "Bridges of Peace." Dr. Riehl, who was born in Slovakia, also delved into her personal story about becoming a refugee in Austria, when the Warsaw-Pact troops entered her country overnight in 1968. She brought awareness to the value of sharing between generations, for the purpose of passing down wisdom and personal experiences.



Ms. Kristine Cruz and Ms. Dulce C. Chica, Representatives from the Philippine Embassy, expressed their heartfelt gratitude for being able to join us on this day. Ms. Cruz shared how the mission of the Philippine Embassy is closely aligned with the goals and vision of WFWP. The Philippine Embassy closely communicates with the activities of the various Philippine NGOs in Vienna.

Ms. Marizel Rojas, Chairwoman of European Network of Filipino Diaspora (ENFID), shared about ENFID's inspiring vision which is to "envision a community of Euro-Filipinos whose talents, contribution

and potential as social and economic remitters are recognized globally (global and local) and fully integrated in Europe, keeping their cultural values and traditions while enriching the diversity in Europe and being cognizant of the future generation." Their mission is to be the prime organization of Euro-Filipinos in Europe in promoting programs, projects and activities that will lead to character transformation and strengthen solidarity, sharing and principled volunteerism in the framework of respect for human rights, upholding democracy and the rule of law, the Global Goals and the Paris Agreement.



Ms. Majorie Guidangen Akistov, President of Filipina in Austria, explained that there are an estimated 30,000 Filipino-Austrians currently living in Austria. Among them, 13,499 Filipino-Austrians were born in the Philippines, with 5,823 of them having Philippine citizenship. The Philippine culture and languages spoken are extremely diverse because the Philippines consists of more than 7000 islands. Mrs. Akistov commented on how amazing it is that all those diverse cultures are able to come together in Vienna and Austria.

Next, an "Ambassador of Peace Award" was awarded to Ms. Cecilia Orola Cech by WFP Austria, for 47 years of service in the Austrian community, as a nurse and her boundless investment in the Philippino Community. The Award presented read "The Women's Federation for World Peace acknowledges as Ambassadors for Peace, those women leaders whose lives and decisions are rooted in the "logic of love" and guided by universally shared values as they strive for interreligious/intercultural cooperation, strong family life, academic excellence and partnership between men and women in creating a lasting culture of heart and peace as one Human Family." This special moment was followed by a "Peace Toast" that was shared with great enthusiasm, as a sign of new sisterhood among the attendees.

The event came to a close, with a musical performance by Becky Moshhammer, a talented singer whose mother is from the Philippines. The song "Blessing" and its lyrics moved the audience to tears. Soon after, a buffet meal was served and it gave an opportunity for further sharing and building relationships among the sisters.

