

## UPF Stadtschlaining, Austria Peace Conference - Building Bridges - Overcoming Division

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**Stadtschlaining, Austria** -- A 750-year-old castle was the site of a peace conference organized by UPF under the theme "Building Bridges -- Overcoming Division."

More than 50 supporters and prominent personalities attended the conference held on August 29, 2021, at Schlaining Castle in the easternmost Austrian state of Burgenland, which borders Hungary.

Schlaining Castle is known as the site of the peace institute Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), which was founded almost 40 years ago on the edge of the Iron Curtain to develop solutions at a critical time of the Cold War.

The Castle Hall and the entire castle have been completely renovated in the last two years. The UPF conference was the first peace event at the castle after a two-year break.



**Johann Rechberger**, the chair of UPF in Burgenland, moderated the event and introduced the speakers. After giving the history of the Peace Castle, he spoke about the meaning of the UPF Peace Road Initiative, explaining that UPF founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon had presented the vision of an International Peace Highway on November 10, 1981, to 800 scientists from 100 nations attending a science conference in Seoul. The highway would connect Japan and South Korea by an undersea tunnel and would go from there through North Korea and the Asian region. Reverend Moon expanded this proposal in 2005, while speaking in New York at the founding of UPF, with the suggestion to connect Eurasia and North America through a tunnel under the Bering Strait.

In 2012 Reverend Moon's wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, launched the Peace Road Initiative to particularly promote these two projects in order to overcome the division on the Korean Peninsula.

**Ursula Gamauf-Eberhardt**, the program director of the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, spoke about the history and tasks of the peace institute located in the castle, as well as her personal experiences and tasks and the international significance of the peace institute.

**Dr. Leo Gabriel**, a well-known journalist, professor of political science and peace activist, spoke about his experiences at a peace conference at Schlaining Castle with conflicting parties from Syria. He also explicitly praised the interreligious aspect of UPF, stating that peace can be achieved only if people are understood in their hearts and beliefs and if their beliefs are also respected and valued.



**Johannes Reiss**, the director of the Jewish Museum in the city of Eisenstadt, reported on the tragic development of Burgenland's Jewish community. One hundred years ago, there were more than 8,000 Jews in the state. In some communities, Jews were more than 60 percent of the total population. Today there are only a few Jews left in all of Burgenland. The Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt is the only one in Burgenland that has synagogue status. Mr. Reiss also gave many details about the culture and history of Judaism in Burgenland.

**Peter Haider**, the president of UPF-Austria, described the UPF founders' vision of a Chamber of Religious Leaders at the United Nations, as well as UPF's international activities. He emphasized the importance of a reunified Korea, a topic that has been the focus of many online conferences held by UPF during the past year.



**Dr. Fazel Rahman**, chair of the Afghan cultural association in Austria, spoke about recent developments and the current situation in Afghanistan.

Among the guests, we were happy to welcome from the Hungarian city of Győr the president of the local chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, an organization that is affiliated with UPF. After all, Burgenland had been a part of Hungary before it was allocated to Austria after World War I, and for many centuries Schlaining Castle had belonged to Hungary's aristocratic Batthyány family.

Finally I would like to mention that some of the UPF supporters in Burgenland came to the conference by bicycle, covering 160 kilometers (almost 100 miles) in two days!

A short video about the conference: <https://vimeo.com/603751499>