

UPF Europe and the Middle East: Three European Nations' Peace Road Event

Juraj Lajda; Maria Pammer and Stefan Schmid
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Central Europe -- Austrians, Czechs and Germans returned to a hilltop border triangle for their third Peace Road event.

Nearly 100 participants met at the top of the hill where three monuments mark the tripoint.

This year, the participants included a special delegation of 17 young people from South Korea.



Following the success of the Peace Road event at the same location in 2021 and 2022, the event on July 22, 2023, attracted more young participants not only from Europe but also from South Korea.



The Austrian, Czech and German chapters of UPF organized the event together with the Austrian and German chapters of Youth and Students for Peace (YSP), an affiliated organization.

The meeting started with two songs familiar to the international participants, "You Are My Sunshine" and "Arirang," performed by the GWBB-Mountain Band comprising **Stefan Schmid, Josef Wandl, Ulrich Ganz** and **Oivind Haugen**.



Dr. Juraj Lajda, the UPF president in the Czech Republic, and **Béatrice Kiedler**, the YSP president in Austria, served as the emcees.

In a short welcoming speech Dr. Lajda said he was happy that representatives of the three neighboring nations could meet for the third time -- proof of the will for reconciliation and unity among nations that the Peace Road initiative demonstrates. He welcomed the special guests, young people from the Republic of Korea who joined this event.



Christian Claus, president of the German chapter of Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), another affiliated organization, said: "I can still remember the time of the Berlin Wall and my visits to East Germany. Nobody imagined that one day the border could be overcome. Even if our efforts look small, we can only start from ourselves to overcome borders (Peace starts with me) and trust that one day the borders in the world will fall, especially now the border between North and South Korea. Thirty-four years ago, no one in Germany could believe it either."

Maria Pammer, the leader of UPF in the state of Upper Austria, said: "In 2022, when we met here for the second time, suddenly there was war in Europe again. I don't think any of us expected that, after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Iron Curtain. But each of us can make a small contribution to peace if we tear down the walls in our hearts toward our fellow human beings."

Mrs. Pammer introduced the special guest, **Michael Leitner**, the mayor of Schwarzenberg am Böhmerwald, an Austrian municipality near the border with Germany and Czechia. He has supported the Peace Road all three years and was able to attend in person this year. After his speech Mayor Leitner was awarded an Ambassador for Peace certificate from Mrs. Pammer, representing UPF-Austria.

Julia Claus, representing YSP-Germany, greeted the guests and participants. She appreciated the participation of young people and especially the group of youths from South Korea.



After another song, **Bok Jin Lee**, the YSP president for the Ocean District in South Korea, greeted the participants. He said: "I am sincerely moved, seeing all of you gathered here at the border of Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria for the purpose of the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas and longing for a peaceful Europe and the world. Being here, I truly feel the realization of the vision of one human family under Heavenly Parent. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you who welcomed us and prepared such a meaningful event to support Korea."



At the end of all the deeply moving speeches, **Gabriel Lindemann**, the leader of FFWPU for the German town of Giessen, read a message from **Dr. Dieter Schmidt**, the UPF chairman for Central Europe: "All the participants gathered here today because they yearn for a world where peace knows no boundaries. In Europe, where the nations represented here were once enemies in the Second World War, peace is held in the highest regard. Today we stand as friends, as brothers and sisters, sending a powerful message to the world."

This Peace Road event at the border triangle deeply touched the hearts of the young Korean participants. The sincere commitment of Europeans to the reunification of the two Koreas even brought tears to their eyes.

The final song, "Tongil," concluded the meeting.

The Peace Road is a global goodwill project of the Universal Peace Federation. The project dates back to 1981, when UPF founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, speaking at the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences, proposed an international highway that would connect all the people of the world.

A short video about the tri-nation Peace Road event: vimeo.com/859029782