

## UPF Stuttgart, Germany: UN International Day of Peace, End Racism. Build Peace

Hildegard Piepenburg  
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**Stuttgart, Germany** -- The third webinar in UPF-Germany's series of Peace Talks took the motto of this year's UN International Day of Peace, "End Racism. Build Peace."

Addressing the role played by religion in world peace, the webinar emphasized the importance of affirming religious and ideological diversity in contributing to peace.

This hourlong event, which was held on September 24, 2022, in cooperation with the House of Religion in Stuttgart, attracted an audience of more than 100 online.



UPF-Germany Chairman **Karl-Christian Hausmann** explained the meaning of a previously shown video about the "water ceremony," in which representatives of different religious communities empty jugs of water into a common container to demonstrate the necessity of interreligious cooperation -- as no one religion is in sole possession of the truth.

Mr. Hausmann quoted Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon in a speech delivered at the Assembly of the World's Religions in November 1985, in which the UPF founder called upon religious leaders to engage in lively communication with God rather than in arguments about theological details: "In God's parental heart and in His great love, there is no discrimination on the grounds of skin color and nationality, nor are there barriers between countries and cultures."

As examples of Dr. Moon's commitment to world peace through interreligious cooperation, Mr. Hausmann cited the book *World Scripture* (a comparative anthology of sacred texts) and the proposal to establish an interreligious council as an independent body of the United Nations.

It is urgent that we understand and appreciate the spiritual dimension of human existence, Mr. Hausmann

said, since 84 percent of the world's population claim to have a religious identity or affiliation. But it is of concern that 79 percent of these people live in countries with high, or very high, barriers to religious freedom. Therefore, it is imperative to call for an international "religious climate change" on the International Day of Peace. This is totally in line with UN Secretary-General António Guterres' statement: "[True peace] requires the establishment of societies in which all members have the feeling that they can flourish."



The next speaker, **Matthias von Sarnowski**, a freelance trainer and coach for religious and ideological diversity, has studied comparative religions, intercultural communication and cooperation as well as mediation, and is an ambassador in the Foundation for Global Ethics. He works as a coach, supervisor, mediator and moderator in adult education, prevention of radicalization and the so-called intercultural opening.

Mr. Sarnowski began by remarking, "A Day of World Peace, representing peace for all, from peaceful coexistence with neighbors and those closest to us, right up to world peace and the end of all wars, would truly be a reason to celebrate in society together, visibly, profoundly and permanently."

He said he regretted that the International Day of Peace is so little known. Most of the public holidays in Germany come from a Christian tradition, he said, but even many Christians no longer know their deeper meaning.

Over the past 150 years, the religious and ideological composition of German society has changed fundamentally, Mr. Sarnowski explained. In 1871, when the German Empire was established, 98.5 percent of the population were either Protestant-Lutheran or Roman Catholic, whereas today this figure is only 49.7 percent; the other half are of different religious or non-religious beliefs and denominations. Nevertheless, the traditional patterns of thought have been preserved in society, with most taking a two- or three-direction division such as Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Christians, atheists and Christians, or Christians, Jews and Muslims.

Mr. Sarnowski pointed out the phenomenon by which each community sees only itself and a few others and shows solidarity with one but not the other. Such "hypocritical dialogue" has led to common ground and peace, but also to conflict due to the exclusion of others. Conscious selection can only produce new factions for sociopolitical power struggles and no true peace. As the Swiss theologian Hans Küng said, there will be "no peace among the nations without peace among the religions."

An obvious example of selection is exclusive interreligious dialogue between the two major churches and official Muslim and Jewish groups, from which all others are excluded. Excluded are: those who are supposed to serve as an enemy image, those who do not fit into an appropriate worldview, and those who are simply ignored because they are small and have no lobby. Mr. Sarnowski called for an end to "the exclusive interreligious dialogue" between "always the same, exclusively chosen communities" and said we should encourage true peace by affirming the entire religious-ideological diversity, as some houses and councils of religion in larger cities already are doing.

In conclusion, Mr. Sarnowski expressed the desire for an inclusive dialogue in society as a whole, in which injustices and conflicts that are grounded in religion and ideology can be considered, discussed and resolved; a new curriculum in schools in which this diversity is recognized; and common holidays that

would create and maintain social peace and cohesion.

The final speaker was **Hubert Arnoldi**, representing UPF in Stuttgart. He introduced the House of Religion in Stuttgart, of which he is the co-founder and chairman. The House of Religion "should be a base for all people, regardless of ethnicity, religion or philosophy, where a solution for social problems can be developed in a common dialogue," he explained.

The House of Religion was officially established in 2011, having developed from the Interreligious Roundtable. The members promote respectful and peaceful exchange according to the motto "In my father's house there are many mansions" or "Unity in diversity." The desire is to have an impact on society as a visible place where people of different cultures and religions can meet, live with each other and learn from each other. "Here we can freely and informally draw from all of God's sources. Every religion and ideology is welcome here," Mr. Arnoldi asserted, "because we need each other, no one is dispensable." Each person and religion is unique and a valuable part of the whole, he said.



The goals and activities of the House of Religions include:

- getting to know each other as fellow humans and as religious communities;
- helping each other to break down prejudices;
- setting up book tables on the street;
- helping each other to be acknowledged, respected and taken seriously in the neighborhood and by the media;
- visiting educational events together;
- visiting religious communities in their own premises in order to get to know and appreciate them, as well attending lectures, seminars and online conferences;
- organizing together events for the UN Days of the Family, Peace, Human Rights as well as World Interfaith Harmony Week, etc.
- studying together the book *World Scripture*, in order to uncover similarities and to develop mutual respect and unity.

The House of Religion has four pillars:

1. The document "Creating Trust," which was adopted at the Ecumenical Church Convention in Munich;
2. Interreligious guidelines (both can be found under [www.haus-der-religion-stuttgart](http://www.haus-der-religion-stuttgart));
3. The resolution on human responsibility;
4. *World Scripture*.

Following the speeches, the moderator, **Estella Haubold** from Youth and Students for Peace, an organization that is affiliated with UPF, led a discussion among the participants, confirming that conducting inclusive interreligious and intercultural dialogue as a means to achieve lasting peace is needed and timely.

The event was brought to a close with a preview of the next Peace Talk, which was scheduled to be held at the Frankfurt Book Fair on October 22 and transmitted live via zoom.

Link to the recording of this webinar: [youtu.be/t-CuFDT3ouA](https://youtu.be/t-CuFDT3ouA) (Translated from German by Catriona Valenta.)