

## PEACE STARTS WITH ME

**The International Leaderships Conference in Vienna, Austria, 28-29 April 2018**

*report by Dr. Annine van der Meer,*

*Ambassador for Peace, Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP Int.)*

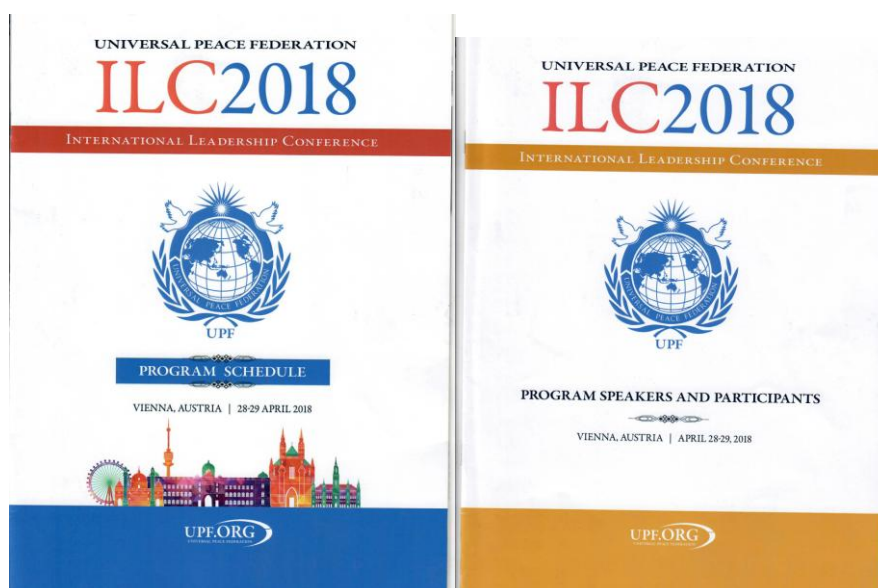


**On Saturday and Sunday, April 28 and 29, 200 Religious Leaders and Parliamentarians came together in Vienna in order to discuss the subject: **Toward Interdependence and Mutual Prosperity: the Role of Religious Leaders and Parliamentarians.****

**I had the honor** to be invited for this conference as Ambassador for Peace. This is a global network of 50,000 persons that forms the world's largest and most diverse network of peace leaders, representing the religious, racial and ethnic diversity of the human family. The network promotes the motto "peace starts with me" and practice "living for the sake of others".

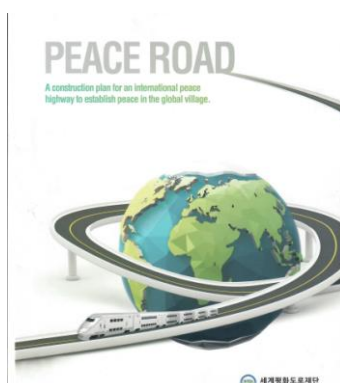
**The conference** was a spectacular and breathtaking event that learned me so terribly much. I filled my conference map with 35 pages of personal notes. But this is not the place to go deeply into the immense lot of new and important information the panels transmitted to the audience. (See program downwards).

**The conference map** provided the program, photo's and short bio's of most of the 200 participants coming from all over the world. Many came from Africa, Asia, from Russia, the Middle East, the Balkan and East- Central, Southern and Western Europe. Religious leaders, male and female, represented religions from all over the world.



**World Peace Road.** One of the projects got special attention in this conference map. The *World Peace Road Foundation* is organizing a construction plan for an international peace highway (without passport control and toll charges) in order to establish peace in the global village. This highway connects countries from the East and the West and the North and the South; tunnels and bridges will connect the continents.

*Balkans Peace Road.* In 2018 the work started for the *Balkans Peace Road*, connecting Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo about 1300 kilometers by bicycle by delivering messages of peace and cooperation.



**Concluding.** To be short: impressive were the short talks of the many members of the panels, specially the Islamic ones: dr. Mohammed Al Habash from Syria and Abu Dabhi university and dr. Ismail Yasin, from Syria and Austria. Dr. Elmar Kuhn from Austria stated: *“Time is over for hostility, bad thinking, time is over for pure academic discussions about the similarities and differences; all has been said; what is the next step?”*

**Sunday morning.** Impressive was the plenary talk of the Korean ambassador in Austria with inside information about the peace negotiations between North and South Korea. Friday, April 27, the very day before the conference started, saw the coming together of the two leaders of North- and South Korea and the planting of one tree with earth from both areas.

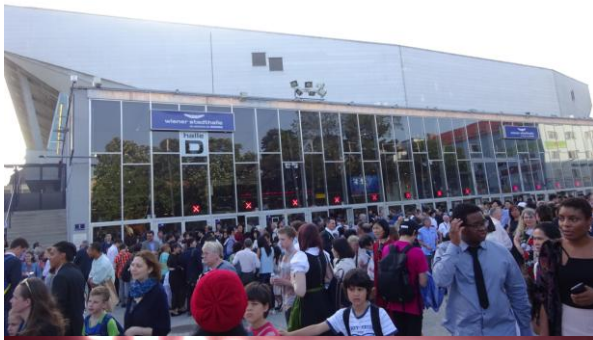
**Interreligious prayers** were given by Father Mariano Perron, a catholic priest and Rector Khalil Merroun, rector of the mosque in Evry, France.

**A peace ceremony.** Then 15 young women and men entered the stage with lit candles with whom they lit the candles of the religious leaders in front of them. The young ones also carried water bowls with water from the five different continents. They handed it over to the religious leaders who poured those waters out into one central bowl. Light and water are symbols that unite us.



**Peace starts with me.** After a quick but delicious lunch busses drove the 200 participants to the Wiener Stadthalle in the centre of Vienna. Here a cultural family festival was organized for ca. 10.000 mostly young people. For me this was the culmination of the program. Why? In my view the organization succeeded in bringing the message of peace to a young audience that enjoyed a light- and laser show, dance, music, several famous pop- and gospel artists and a gospel choir consisting of 300 young and adult people.





panel WFWP Sunday morning, 9,00h.



**The speech of Dr. Hak ja Han Moon.** Introduced by Dr. Werner Fasslabend, a former Minister of Defense in Austria, the 75 year old widow of Reverend Sun Myung Moon, both founders of the Universal Peace Federation, speeched in Korean language for more than half an hour without looking at any paper. She explained the audience that she was born in 1943 in North Korea and only could get away to the South in 1950. In 1960 she met her future husband with whom she got 14 children and 40 grandchildren. Her impressive speech was simultaneously translated in the German and English language; the written texts were projected on the immense screen with the beautiful and changing images and colors always showing the motto: “Peace starts with me”. She called humanity to form one global human family under the guidance of God. She was full of sorrow for the situation of the world today. She showed compassion and empathy with all the people who suffered. Two times she shed a tear. She spoke in a silent and dignified way and during her speech the 10.000 youngsters stayed silent. Mission succeeded. Her silent and strong speech made a huge impression on me.

**My Mission.** Before the closing banquet started I handed over a large envelope to the Dutch delegation of UPF and WFP, mr. Wim Koetsier and mrs. Rita Salaris. In The Hague in Holland a 2.20m golden (!) plant, the fifth in line forming together a unified field, is waiting already for **21 years** to be planted in the demarcation zone between North and South Korea. It was such a synchronicity that on Friday the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 - the evening before this conference started - the two leaders of North and South Korea met each other and planted a pine tree in the demarcation zone. They put earth on it from both sides of the border and watered the plant. May this golden plant be planted at that spot as a symbol of unity and unification of the two Korea's. See downwards for pictures of this huge golden plant. See [www.huubenadelheid-kortekaas.nl](http://www.huubenadelheid-kortekaas.nl) for the unified field project.



Unifying Fields





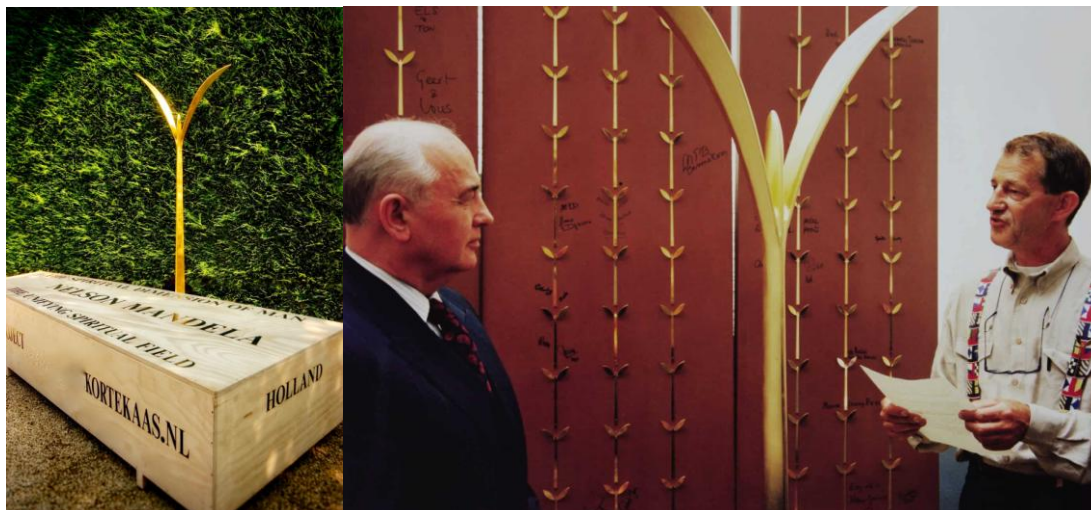
After the closing banquet the conference ended.

**Monday, April 30.** The day after, Monday April 30, we all went to the concentration camp Mauthausen at two hours distance of Vienna, where from 1938 to 1945 during WWII 80.000 human beings passed away and were killed during imprisonment. There we all participated in a peace ceremony.

Dr. Annine E. G. van der Meer, WFWP, The Netherlands, Wednesday May 2 2018

PS See downwards for golden plant project

PS See downwards for conference program downwards.



*Golden plant project of Adelheid en Huub Kortekaas*



*Conference-rooms at the Schönbrunn Parkhotel*

*See downwards for conference program (4 pages).*



# International Leadership Conference

“TOWARD INTERDEPENDENCE AND MUTUAL PROSPERITY:  
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS”

## Program Schedule

### SATURDAY, APRIL 28

Morning Arrivals in Vienna and Registration

#### 16:00 Session I: The Vision and Initiatives of the Universal Peace Federation

*This session will feature an introduction to the UPF Founders' vision and the peacebuilding principles informing the two projects recently launched by the Universal Peace Federation: the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) and the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD).*

**Moderator: Mr. Jacques Marion**, Secretary General, UPF Europe

**Welcoming Remarks: Dr. Katsumi Otsuka**, President, UPF Europe & Middle East

**Ms. Carolyn Handschin**, UN Office Director, WFPW International

**Founders' Vision and UPF Initiatives: Dr. Thomas Walsh**, Chair, UPF International

#### 16:30 Session II: Religious Leaders and Parliamentarians as Peacemakers

*Lasting solutions to the critical challenges of our time call for both the skills and experience of politicians and the global vision provided by religious leaders. How can parliamentarians and leaders of faith-based organizations, transcending national, religious and political affiliations, cooperate to develop comprehensive strategies for peace and development? Panelists will offer their perspectives on the complementary roles of political and religious leaders and propose policies and action steps to address specific challenges affecting Europe and the Middle East.*

**Moderator: Mr. Peter Haider**, President, UPF Austria

**Dr. Elmar Kuhn**, Dean, Class of World Religions, Europ. Academy of Sciences and Arts

**H.E. Fatmir Sejdiu**, President of Kosovo (2006 – 2010)

**Hon. Angela Guerra**, Member of Parliament, Portugal

**Hon. Andrey Svintsov**, Member of the State Duma, Russia

**Hon. Dr. Mohamad Habash**, Islamic Scholar, former Member of Parliament, Syria

18:00 Break



**18:30 Session III: The Role and Relevance of Religion in Building Inclusive, Peaceful and Prosperous Societies**

*Throughout the world, religion continues to play a very significant role in guiding the development of individuals as well as the wider society. While in some countries—in Europe, for example—there are spheres of life that are largely secularized, religion nevertheless has ongoing relevance and importance. The vast majority of the world's population identify themselves with a religious worldview that informs their ideas and guides their practices. In this session, panelists will assess the conditions under which religions can exert a positive influence on modern, democratic societies and offer policy recommendations to this effect.*

**Moderator: Mr. David Fraser Harris**, Secretary General, UPF Middle East

**Dr. Viggo Mortensen**, Prof. em. in Systematic Theology, University of Aarhus, Denmark

**Mr. Shlomi Perlmuter**, Senior Lecturer, Elul College, Israel

**Dr. Raffaella Di Marzio**, Director, Center for Studies on Freedom of Religion, Belief and Conscience (LIREC), Italy

**Hon. Dr. Andriy Yurash**, Head, State Department of Religion, Ukraine

**Dr. Ismail Yasin**, Lecturer in Islamic Studies, University of Vienna, Austria

20:00 Dinner

**SUNDAY, APRIL 29**

7:00 **Interfaith Prayer and Meditation** (optional, in both hotels)

*Observance*

7:00 Breakfast

**9:00 Session IV: Beyond Coexistence: Dealing with the Challenges of Interdependence - (Four Concurrent Sessions)**

**A. Values Education and Healthy Families – Fostering an Environment for Prosperity, Citizenship and Interreligious Harmony**

*Building a peaceful world of co-prosperity and shared values has long been the goal of religion, politics and educational institutions. In a stable, loving family, individuals may naturally develop capacities for love, respect, communication, cooperation, service, conflict resolution, forgiveness and other social skills that are relevant to life in the wider society. How can this universal principle be applied and extended to encourage harmonious social relations and partnerships for peace in our communities and in the family of nations?*

**Moderator: Ms. Carolyn Handschin**, UN Office Director, WFP International

**Prof. Yeon-ah Moon**, President, WFP International

**Hon. Dr. Vasilika Hysi**, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Albania

**Hon. Nina Nováková**, Member of Parliament (2013-2017), Czech Republic

**Rev. Ivo Sasek**, President, Organische Christus Generation (OCG), Switzerland

**Ms. Tahirih Danesh**, Senior Programme Consultant, The Ward and Brown Foundation, United Kingdom



## B. Middle East Peace Initiatives: Assessing the Role of Religion

*Peacebuilding necessarily involves cooperation between all sectors of society. While the world looks in anguish at the horrors of multiple conflicts in the home of the Abrahamic faiths, the evidence on the ground suggests that such conflicts are stoked by an array of other factors, not least a dearth of civic values and near-absence of the rule of law. In what way has—and in what way can—religion play a positive role in bringing peace to the peoples of the Middle East?*

**Moderator: Ms. Natascha Schellen**, Communications Advisor, WFPW Europe

**Mr. Oraib Al Rantawi**, General Director, Al Quds Center for Political Studies, Jordan

**Hon. Tahani Abu Daqqa**, Former Minister of Sports, Palestine

**Dr. Jihad Naaman**, Professor, Lebanese University, Lebanon

**Rev. Anders Gadegaard**, Dean of the Cathedral, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Denmark

## C. Toward a New Dialogue between Europe and Eurasia

*After the end of the socialist system in Europe, following the dissolution of the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, new sovereign states with new borders appeared on the map of Europe. In the context of the current geopolitical realities, participating nations of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) need to come to the negotiating table to revise the Helsinki Accords to reach a mutually acceptable understanding of the previous frameworks and discuss their possible modification. Panelists in this session will offer their perspectives on the role that may be played by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – and by the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) – in this undertaking.*

**Moderator: Dr. Vladimir Petrovsky**, Chief Academic Researcher,  
Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

**Dr. Walter Schwimmer**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (1999-2004), Austria

**Dr. Alexander Dubowy**, Senior Researcher, Austrian Defense Academy, Austria

**Ms. Dalila Khorava**, President, Georgia for Refugees, Georgia

**Hon. Viktor Ielensky**, Member of Parliament, Ukraine

**Dr. Leo Gabriel**, Journalist and Anthropologist, Austria

## D. Peace Initiatives in the Balkans

*As a historical crossroads of empires and cultures, the Balkan Peninsula is the center of political, cultural and religious influences that make it a significant field for interreligious and intercultural peacebuilding in Europe in the 21st century. In this session, panelists will offer their perspectives on peacebuilding initiatives undertaken in the Balkans and recommend action steps toward a peaceful and democratic future in the region. This session also will feature a presentation of the Balkan Peace Road project promoted by UPF.*

**Moderator: Professor Anis Bajrektarevic**, Head, IFIMES Permanent Mission to Austria  
and Vienna-based Intl Organisations

**Hajji Baba Edmond Brahimaj**, World Leader, Bektashi Order, Albania

**Mr. Mirnes Kovač**, Journalist, Preporod Islamic News Magazine, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Hon. Dr. Skender Recica**, Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, Kosovo

**Mr. Alksandar Pekovic**, Ljubljana Creative Forum, Serbia

**Ms. Manjola Vasmatics**, Secretary General, Tirana UPF Peace Council, Albania

10:30

Break



**11:00 Session V: Inauguration of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) in Europe and the Middle East**

*It is time for humanity to embrace universally shared values, going beyond differences of ideology, race, nationality, and religion, and pursue a path of mutual cooperation and mutual prosperity. In this way it is possible to build a world of lasting and sustainable peace that can be bequeathed to future generations. To fulfill this task, religious leaders have a primary responsibility to cooperate beyond denominations and work in harmony with leaders in all fields of society. In this session, religious leaders and leaders of faith-based organizations will propose the formation of a world-level interfaith association through which to work together for peace and development.*

**Moderator: Dr. Thomas Walsh**, Chairman, UPF International

**Keynote speech: Dr. Felix Unger**, President, European Academy of Sciences and Arts  
**Archbishop Dr. Johannes Ndanga**, President, Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe  
**Ms. Asmaa Kftaro**, Women's Advisory Board, UN Envoy for Peacebuilding in Syria  
**Rev. Dr. William McComish**, Dean Emeritus, Geneva St. Peter's Cathedral, Switzerland  
**Rev. Dr. Marcus Braybrooke**, President, World Congress of Faiths, United Kingdom

**Musical interlude**

**Interreligious Prayer**

**Father Mariano Perron**, Delegate for Interconfessional Affairs (1974-2012),  
Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Madrid, Spain

**Rector Khalil Merroun**, Rector, Mosque of Evry, France

**Peace Ceremony**

**IAPD Declaration**

**Dr. Elmar Kuhn**, Dean, Class of World Religions, European Academy of Sciences and Arts

12:30 Lunch

13:45 <sup>1.30bV</sup> Buses depart to the Wiener Stadthalle

**15:00 "Peace Starts with Me" Festival - Wiener Stadthalle, Vienna**

17:30 Buses depart to hotel

**19:00 Closing Banquet** (at Parkhotel Schönbrunn)

**Moderator: Mr. David Fraser Harris**, Secretary General, UPF Middle East

**Congratulatory Remarks: H. E. Alfred Moisiu**, President of Albania (2002 – 2007)

**Closing Remarks: Dr. Michael Balcomb**, Chairman, FFWPU Europe & Middle East

**MONDAY, APRIL 30**

7:00 Breakfast  
Departures

