

UPF Austria, Vienna International Centre (United Nations), January 27th 2017 –

Commemorating the World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) organized a conference on the theme "Toward Peace and Reconciliation in Conflict Zones - The role of Religions". 200 guests attended the conference which was the 5th annual celebration of this special week since 2013 organized by UPF in the UN building in Vienna. Partnering organizations were the Women's Federation for World Peace, the United Nations Correspondents Association Vienna, The Best of the World Network and the International Institute for Middle-East and Balkan studies.



[World Interfaith Harmony Week: Toward Peace and Reconciliation in Conflict Zones - The role of Religions](https://www.facebook.com/348753624614/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10154490315119615)

UPF Austria, Vienna International Centre (United Nations), January 27th 2017 - Commemorating the World Interfaith Harmony Week 2017, the Universal Peace Federation organized a conference addressing the role of religions in conflict situations, which was attended by 200 guests. It was the 5th annual celebration of this special week since 2013.

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The World Interfaith Harmony Week was first proposed at the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2010 by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan. Just under a month later, on October 20, 2010, it was unanimously adopted by the UN and henceforth the first week of February will be observed as a World Interfaith Harmony Week. This age of globalization needs enlightened people in each faith, who can examine their sacred writings and traditions and identify the aspects that can benefit all humanity as well as those that preserve each religion's identity. UPF and its network of Ambassadors for Peace celebrate this week each year, in a way that encourages understanding, respect, and cooperation among people of all faiths for the well-being of our communities and peace in the world.

In his welcome address Mr. Peter Haider, President of UPF in Austria stated that peace can be fully accomplished only when the wisdom and efforts of religious leaders, who represent the internal concerns of the mind and conscience, work cooperatively and respectfully with government officials who have much practical wisdom and worldly experience. UPF advocates for the establishment of an Interfaith Council at the United Nations as well as on national and local levels to provide structures for this to take place. Then the World Interfaith Harmony Week anthem "The Gift of Love" was shown.

Mr. Jacques Marion, Secretary General UPF Europe served as the chair of the first session. Speakers included HE Hussam Abdullah H. G. Al Hussein, Ambassador of Jordan to Austria, Dr. Ihor Shaban, who serves as the chairman of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious affairs in the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Kiev, Mrs. Lama Al Atassi, a peace activist from Homs, Syria who came from Paris as well as Mrs. Nada El Jarid, Counselor in the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the UN in Vienna and Dr. Anis H. Bajrektarevic, a professor in international law and global political studies.

The 2nd Session was chaired by Mrs. Heather Wokusch, Liaison officer for ACUNS Vienna. Speakers included Mr. Mayank Sharma, Counselor in the Embassy of India in Vienna, Dr. Wendelin Ettmayer, who served as a member of the Austrian Parliament from 1977 until 1993 and from 1994 – 2008 as an ambassador to Finland, Canada and the Council of Europe. Mrs. Tatjana Sehic MA, who is the program director of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin, Dr. Gottfried Hutter, a theologian and psychotherapist from Munich in Germany and Dr. Leo Gabriel, a social anthropologist, journalist and the initiator of „peaceinsyria.org“ completed the list of speakers.

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