

Manchester, England
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When I first discovered that I had been chosen to represent the City of Manchester and the UK at an international conference in Japan back in May 2017 I had no idea what to expect. I was awash with feelings of excitement, apprehension and intrigue. Being only the second representative of Manchester to attend the conference I knew I must seize the opportunity to both share my own perspectives and understandings of peace and gain an insight into the perceptions of others.

The International Youth Conference for Peace in the Future (IYCPF) 2017 consisted of 44 participants representing a total of nine nations spanning across three continents. Bringing this diverse mix of people together from a range of ages and backgrounds alleviated the restrictions we face when travelling abroad for example. The intensity of the programme and its interactive nature meant we (as participants) could engage more freely with each other and gain a real appreciation of our differences and similarities, both personal and cultural.

We engaged in numerous activities and expeditions as a whole and in our smaller groups of seven. My group consisted of three representatives from Japan, two from China and two from Russia. We ate breakfast and dinner together everyday, providing an opportunity to get to know one another and gain insight into what life is like in each country of origin. I engaged in many extremely interesting conversations with my group members and the other participants, which I honestly feel is one of the most valuable experiences I can take from the IYCPF. The opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue with others from around the world, sharing your opinions and beliefs and reaching a mutual understanding is vital to addressing global issues such as peace.

As well as gaining an increased understanding of one another, we also achieved a greater appreciation of the importance of working towards peace in a nuclear free world by learning from the mistakes of the past. My own knowledge of the tragic events of 1945 was significantly improved during the programme. We attended the August 6th anniversary peace ceremony on, heard first-hand accounts from a Hibakusha and walked around the Peace Memorial Park Museum, which helped me to contextualise the importance of the nuclear free movement. In addition, it was extremely valuable for me to learn about the attitudes of the people of Japan to the events of 1945.

In today's times of uncertainty and danger, it is more important than ever to consider our own roles in the pursuit of a more peaceful world. During the IYCPF we sought to reach a common understanding of what peace is and ways to achieve it. With this in mind it is of paramount importance for me to take the lessons that I have learnt from my experiences in Hiroshima and share them with my friends, colleagues and the wider public. On the 20th September I gave a presentation detailing my IYCPF experience to my former colleagues at Manchester City Council. On the same day I am also talked to second year students at Manchester Metropolitan University. There is also the potential in October to talk to a number of schoolchildren from Manchester about my experiences and the valuable lessons that I have learnt. I am extremely grateful to the Hiroshima Board of Education for facilitating a trip that shall stay in my mind forever and it is my duty as a representative of the IYCPF to share my understanding of what is necessary to help us progress towards a more peaceful world.

Now, more prominently than ever, it is essential to remember the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To treat situations of conflict with the respect and

intellect they need to ensure a peaceful solution is reached for the safety and prosperity of societies all around the globe.