

Ypres, Belgium  
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Taking part in the International Youth Conference for Peace in the Future 2017 was a great experience for me. You learn a lot about each other in so little a time. This meeting took place in the context of peace promotion and ten days for learning each other's culture, being together thinking about important things, getting to know personalities and so on.

It was very important for me to learn about the culture of the host city the first eight days. We attended the Peace Memorial Ceremony, took part in a tea ceremony, visited several shrines, stayed with a host family and we had the honour to taste Japanese food. By eating breakfast and dinner together and enjoying free time together, you get to know each other better and better which helps the group discussions later on.

During the Peace Memorial Ceremony I was a bit shocked, because they were remembering something very big. It was the remembrance of the biggest disaster for the city of Hiroshima ever. Something everyone in the whole world knows about. The day after, we visited the museum, to know more about the history of Hiroshima.

The 8<sup>th</sup> of August, we attended the tea ceremony. This was very special for me. You had to wear some special shoes, walk through the garden, enter the beautiful buildings and of course, taste the sweet and famous green tea. It was difficult to sit on my knees for so long, but eventually I did it.

The most difficult part for me was dealing with all the different languages of the people who participated in the Youth Conference for Peace. We could all speak a bit of English, but some better than others. Some dared to speak English and others didn't.

After a while, when you were used to the English language, it was a lot easier to talk with the other participants and learn more about them.

Certainly the last two days, we talked in groups a lot and we tried to answer important questions about peace. This process was very special to me. It was after all the main goal for the Youth Conference for Peace. I think the most important thing about it, was hearing other people's experiences of peace in their city and country. We tried to give inspiration to each other, making an atmosphere of enthusiasm, positive energy and ideas for peace.

I will try to bring these ideas to the other side of the world, Belgium, and find solutions. Our peace-leader already started an exchange in Ypres for people from other cities. Certainly after my experience in Japan, I will help him to organise this activity. The ideas we gathered in Hiroshima will be heard in Ypres. During that exchange in Belgium, I will also bring my story to the participants of that program. During the period after the journey to Asia I already told my story to a lot of people. I brought my presentation to the youth-council, my school, my youth movement and all of my friends and family.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, the peace prize of Ypres will be handed over to the White Helmets. A prize every four years, when the youth of Ypres can vote for their winner.