

2017 Mayors for Peace Youth Exchange for Peace: Support Program for
"HIROSHIMA and PEACE"

Aytug Bozagaoglu (Gentilly, France)

Dear members of the Mayors for Peace Secretariat,

Dear members of the AFCD RP,

Dear representatives of the City of Gentilly,

Ten days at Hiroshima, it was the most intensive period of my entire student life. It was instructional (I), emotional (II), will let in me a legacy that I will try to share once back in my country (III) and was inspirational and will allow me to prepare great projects (IV)

I. Ten days of instruction

At the Hiroshima City University, we first learned to meet and know each other with a lesson of intercultural communication. In fact, it was very important because there was a real melting pot of origins and nationalities in this program. There were Americans, Russians, an English, a German, a Canadian, an Ukrainian, a Brazilian, a Chinese, a Taiwanese, a Lebanese, a Pakistani as well as a good number of Japanese. Communication was therefore very important, so the entire program was conducted exclusively in English. We had to find a way to understand and bypass our cultural differences.

Subsequently, we entered the somewhat more technical points of the question. We understood the scientific functioning and the history of the atomic bomb. We learned to discern the fact that the purpose of the use of nuclear weapons was not to stop the war on the Japanese front but rather to prepare the ground for the cold war.

We also have studied the legal aspect of the bomb, which is particularly interesting for me as a law student. I understood that the justification of nuclear weapons by deterrence is null and void. Indeed, we can not ensure our security by threatening other countries. The law does not have the mission to adapt to the requirements of realpolitik of the great nations, but law has for mission to put the human life in the center of everything.

II. Ten days of emotion

This program was extremely emotional. We met, twice, with Hibakusha and suddenly we forgot every technical aspects of the lessons. Torn families, destroyed and damaged bodies, orphaned children, the shame of living as a survivor while their loved ones were slaughtered by one bomb: this was the emotional side and the great reality of Hiroshima.

But what touched me most was the lack of anger of the Hibakusha. They only consider Americans as humans, a human can make a mistake and anger doesn't solve any problem. That's why they mainly worked on reconstruction and transmission of the memory of the City.

The hope of a better world and to work in order to avoid a new catastrophe is the main struggle of Hiroshima. The Mayor of Hiroshima, gave us the honor to welcome us and explain the mission of every countries to take responsibility in order to avoid new tragedies. On the day of the 72-year bombing commemoration, on 6th August, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shared the same expectations and delivered a solemn message of peace to the nuclear powers.

III. Ten days of legacy

I came back in France full of new knowledge and I will try to transmit it to those didn't have that luck. I am very glad and honored for having been a part of this program. The organization was absolutely fantastic and I'm thanking the whole team of Mayors for Peace.

Concerning my project, I want to put this struggle against nuclear weapons in my career choice. In fact, I would like to be, at the end, an international lawyer specialized in humanitarian law. And Hiroshima will always remember me that we need to constantly fight because civilians expect so much of us.

Secondly, I want to share my experience with youth in France. I started to talk about it with my fellows at University. We saw that we are very unaware about nuclear weapons and that we need to explain to others the risk of letting a hole in international law concerning this weaponry.

IV. Inspirational for future projects

As soon as I started my internship in Ankara, Turkey, right after the program, in the Ankara program office of the Council of Europe I started to share and exchange with Turkish authorities. In fact, Turkey can be more active in this struggle and this is why I started to communicate with the Foreign Affairs to discuss this matter. I had some very interesting feedback that allows me to think that I can act in this region to increase peace with this top-down philosophy. I want to mobilize high-levels, to be able to have a power that will allow us to grant an access to the mass media and make people sensitive about that cause.

More than that, I hope that I will be able to act in France, particularly in my university. We started to talk about those issues with our professors. And in fact, this geopolitical period is complicated and this is why we need to prevent that this weaponry is not the solution.

Finally, with the City of Gentilly, we are currently working on bottom-up solutions working with different social groups as younglings and seniors in order to have a bottom-up solution. We will present the Japanese culture and explain what happened in Hiroshima so that no one will forget.

I would like to thank you again for this experience,

Sincerely,

Aytug Bozagaoglu