

International Youth Conference for Peace in the Future 2022

From September to October 2022, seven young people from Hiroshima City represented their hometown during the International Youth Conference for Peace in the Future 2022 (IYCPF), hosted by Muntinlupa in the Philippines.

To prepare for the conference, participants learned the basics of the realities of the atomic bombing, as well as international understanding. In addition, participating in exchanges with young people of various backgrounds helped to foster their will for lasting world peace and gave them the opportunity to think about what messages they wanted to convey to young people from cities across the world.



Dates	Details
July 24-September 11 (6 meetings)	Pre-conference seminar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum • Atomic bomb survivor testimony • Lecture by the director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum • Presentation prep, etc.
August 6	Attending the Peace Memorial Ceremony
September 18-October 16 (5 meetings)	Online conference (hosted by the City of Muntinlupa)
November 1, 13	Post-conference seminar
November 20	IYCPF 2022 Report Presentation (International Festival)

●What is the IYCPF?

The IYCPF is a conference where young people from Hiroshima City and young people from the City of Hiroshima's sister/friendship cities deepen their ties of friendship and mutual understanding by thinking about and discussing world peace together. In addition, participants in the conference convey the Will of Hiroshima (the will for nuclear abolition and the realization of lasting world peace) to the next generation of future leaders across the globe. By raising awareness for world peace, we hope that participants will gain a global mindset to become international human resources.

●The History of IYCPF

The first IYCPF was held in Hiroshima City in 2005, the year which marked 60 years since the atomic bombing. It was modeled after youth exchanges which had been held between the City of Hannover (Germany) and Hiroshima. Subsequent IYCPFs were hosted in turn by the City of Hiroshima and its sister/friendship cities. This year's conference was the 18th conference held.

1) Pre-Conference Seminar

At the pre-conference seminar, participants deepened their knowledge about the realities of the atomic bombing and international understanding. They also worked on their presentations for the online meeting. Each participant played a proactive role in the seminar, encouraging one another that the IYCPF is what you make of it.

●Atomic Bomb Survivor Testimony (*Hibakusha*)

Participants were given the opportunity to think more about what each *hibakusha* had been through and about peace by listening to a *hibakusha* testimony.

Participant comment: Despite the fact that nearly 80 years ago an extremely long war was going on, citizens were also trying to live their lives as usual, just like we are now. For example, right now, there's a war going on in Ukraine, but we still go about our lives: eating, sleeping, showering, talking to friends. But when I think about how those everyday lives were stolen because of one single atomic bomb... It must have been more horrific than anything I could ever imagine. There are three things that make atomic bombs truly horrific: radiation, intense heat, and blast winds. But what I found even more terrifying than these three things was the fact that these weapons leave the physical and psychological wounds that will never, ever heal. Keloids, blindness, hearing loss, diseases brought on by radiation, the death of family members—the fact that these memories live on inside the survivors must be the worst of it all. I was asked to choose between 70 plus years of war or 70 plus years of peace, and I chose the latter. I think we would all choose the latter. The reason we have peace now is because our predecessors chose to take steps for peace. But, the age of wars is becoming a thing of the past. That's why it's so important that we, the builders of tomorrow, take our first steps and choose the path to peace.



● Inheriting the Legacy of Hiroshima: Lecture by the Peace Memorial Museum Director

After touring the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, participants heard a lecture by the museum director, learning more about the legacy of Hiroshima. The lecture renewed their resolve to carry on the memories of the bombing.



Participant comment: The IYCPF acts as a steppingstone in figuring out what exactly we, as the younger generation, should do in the future.

● Presentation Prep

In preparation for the online conference, discussions, facilitated mainly by a leader and sub-leader, were held, and groups considered the format of their presentations, as well as the roles of participants. Each participant worked proactively to fulfil the roles assigned in preparing for the conference.



Working on their presentation about the City of Hiroshima



Filming their video presentation



Reading a poem about the atomic bombing

2) Attending the Peace Memorial Ceremony

Participants attended the Peace Memorial Ceremony as representatives of the youth of Hiroshima City. As young people from Hiroshima, they furthered their resolve to convey the Will of Hiroshima to young people around the world.



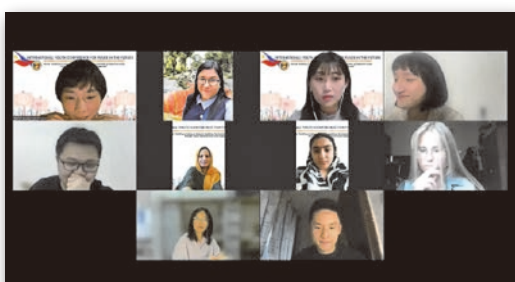
Participant comment: This was my first time attending the Peace Memorial Ceremony. My first impression is that there were so many people there that I almost got lost in the experience. As the ceremony began, listening to the Peace Declaration, the Children's Commitment to Peace, and speeches by invited guests reaffirmed the importance of using my own words to speak, taking initiative, and spreading my own message. Our work will continue until November, so during my time in the program, I want to focus on taking an active role in speaking my thoughts and taking action. This was a great opportunity for me to reaffirm those aspirations.

3) Online Conference with Young People Abroad

Participants participated in IYCPF 2022, hosted online by Muntinlupa (Philippines) every Sunday from September 18 to October 16, 2022. With 46 participants from seven cities in six countries participating, they attended lectures about promoting the culture of peace, environmental issues, and more, and then discussed these topics in groups. The conclusions were then shared with the world via social media.

Cultural exchanges were also held as participants gave presentations on their cities, cultures, and customs. Participants from Hiroshima City used a video that introduced the Cenotaph for A-Bomb Victims, a reading from a poem about the atomic bombing, and their impressions of the Peace Memorial Ceremony to introduce the realities of the atomic bombing, peace initiatives, culture, and the Children's Commitment to Peace.

● **Participating cities:** Volgograd, Hannover, Chengdu, Muntinlupa, Saint Petersburg, Tehran



Group discussions



Presentation by Hiroshima City



Social media post by one of the groups

4) Participant Comments

In anticipation of their future activism, participants from Hiroshima City who contributed to peace activism through their participation in the entirety of the IYCPF were awarded the Certificate of Appointment as a Hiroshima Ambassador for Peace in the Future and Certificate of Achievement in the International Youth Conference for Peace in the Future. At the end of the conference, participants gave speeches to one another about their experiences during the IYCPF.



Comment 1: What really struck me during my time at the IYCPF was interacting with my peers from abroad. At first, I couldn't catch what they were saying in English, and I felt anxious and a little regretful that I couldn't answer them when they talked to me. It was pretty scary. But, after a while, that fear subsided, and I started to look forward to taking with my group members because I realized that while they might live overseas, they're still human, like me. I know it seems obvious, but, as we were talking, I realized that they have feelings just like me, and that they're no different from me. We're all just people. When tragic things happen in the countries that the participants were from, it made me scared because the news

of people dying from conflicts or people's lives being destroyed felt more personal to me. Peace doesn't require lofty ideals. Having fun is better than fighting. People want to continue to be able to do the things they want to do tomorrow. Laughing is better than crying. Peace is all of these obvious things, but there are so many people who have had those things taken away. That's precisely why I want to be grateful for these things we take for granted and continue to convey the importance of peace.

Comment 2: Participating in the IYCPF, I was so happy to see so many people around the world who wanted to do something to bring about peace. There are so few people around me, for example at my school, who are interested in peace education, and even if I wanted to do something, I wouldn't know where to begin. Even if I did take action for peace, I wasn't sure whether it would be accepted, so I found myself hesitating to take action. I was even made fun of for saying that I was interested in getting information out about peace. But to see my peers making an effort to learn about the atomic bombing, something that not even Japanese people know all the details about, and to see them so motivated to take concrete action, it was so reassuring to know that they shared my goals.

I also learned just how much my English still needs to improve. During our group discussions, I was so caught up in trying to understand what they were saying that I was hardly able to contribute. But I also learned that even if there is a language barrier, you can still find ways to communicate what you want to say. Using proper grammar is, of course, important, but what's even more important is the will to communicate.

While we only met five times, it was a fruitful experience for me because I got a clearer idea of how to reach my goals and learned what I was lacking. I am so thankful for the opportunity to have such a valuable experience.



5) Hiroshima Appeal

Through the pre-Conference seminar and online meetings, participants had the opportunity to consider what peace is, and what they, as young people in Hiroshima, can do to realize a peaceful world. After the Conference, they each created their own Hiroshima Appeal essay on the topic of what young people can do to build the culture of peace.

● **Participant Essay 1:** We are facing so many issues: human rights, the environment, and even war. The situation is especially unstable recently, and the threat of nuclear weapons use is rising. In the face of these issues, it is not realistic to think that one young person can affect change for the better. As such, it is out of necessity that we must build the culture of peace, i.e., try to change the values of society on the whole. In doing so, if countries or ages continue to be stipulated as is convention, it will not be easy to get rid of prejudice and conflicts that arise between the leaders of countries or generations. To fix this, promoting exchanges online with those who couldn't be connected before will be crucial.

The IYCPF is a prime example of this. While there were scattered instances of communication issues during statements and discussions at the Conference, by recognizing participants as an "in group" (as in "human beings on my team"), we were able to suppress the effects of cognitive bias. However, this Conference is nothing more than a temporary project and its sustainability is an issue. In order to take this project to the next level and turn it into a community that takes continuous action, it is absolutely imperative that the younger generation take a self-motivated approach.

For all the reasons stated above, I believe that in order to build the culture of peace, we of the younger generation must build and operate a new kind of online community, focus on cooperation between communities, and shape social groups that transcend conventional frameworks.

No matter the issue, the farther we are from it, the easier it is for the essence of the issue to be distorted. In human rights issues, there is psychological distance between the majority and minority. In environmental issues, there is temporal distance between the future and the present. In war, there is spatial distance between your own country and other countries. While making moves that largely contribute to solving issues is important, it is vital that we of the younger generation move forward, one step at a time, at a realistic pace, to close the gap in distances.



● **Participant Essay 2:** I believe that what we, the younger generation, can do to build the culture of peace is to proactively hold exchanges. The reason for this is that while it may be difficult for us to inspire action on a global scale, I believe that because our generation is young, we can create flexible connections that transcend borders using various means available to us. I also believe that the younger generation holding exchanges that transcend borders means that when the time comes for that generation to lead their country, they will be able to realize peaceful exchange on a large scale without falling victim to biased concepts.



Furthermore, we of the younger generation are able to learn so much more, and I believe that we should be more proactive about it. The reason for this is that through learning, we can understand different cultures and think of ideas that solve issues, thus gaining the ability to build a more peaceful culture. In order to do this, I believe that learning is essential for my generation as we have the time and the environment to do so.

● **Participant Essay 3:** The younger generation lives in a world with so many issues, including war, the possible use of nuclear weapons, abnormal weather phenomena, and human rights issues. As the leaders of the next generation, there is a lot of expectation that we will be the ones to solve these issues.

The international issues for which solutions are regarded as important today are, fundamentally, those which take away the peace and psychological tranquility of people's everyday lives. So, what can the younger generation do in order to build the culture of peace? I think they can consider about what peace means to them and not just stand by watching international issues unfold, but use the abilities unique to our generation to make an effort. In order to accomplish this, it's important that we deeply recognize that international issues affect young people individually, and that individual action has an effect on those around you.

During the IYCPF 2022, I truly felt that international issues are not just somebody else's problem because we had participants who were directly affected by the current international situation. Through the Conference, I learned that just one person's influence, however insignificant, becomes amplified when lots of people take action and leads to something that can have an effect on those around us.

I have peers around the world who are interested in peace and will join me in taking action. For our generation, as the leaders of the next generation, searching for what peace means to us individually and thinking about what kind of peace we want to see in the world in the near future are the first steps to building the culture of peace. Additionally, I consider it possible to build the culture of peace by using our high-level internet and social media literacy to expand our community of like-minded individuals.



As a young person born and raised in Hiroshima, I will explore the topic of peace by continuing to learn about the history of Hiroshima and take action to further expand the community of those seeking peace.

● **Participant Essay 4:** Wars approach quietly and when least expected. It begins with small conflicts that gradually expand to those around us and then, it completely changes the lives of innocent civilians. In today's international situation, I believe that we all understand this fact, and have once again renounced wars and nuclear weapons. However, war is not the only thing standing in the way of peace. Humanity faces a whole host of issues, including poverty, human rights, the environment, labor, economics, politics, and international security, all of which cause violence, be it directly, structurally, or culturally. As such, it's easy to misunderstand that our world and our lives are made up of violence and the issues that cause it.

That's precisely why we must think of peace not as the opposite of war, but in a broader sense of the word. We must make peace a shared goal among humanity. It is also vital that we participate in programs that will help us to achieve that goal and take action for peace. Furthermore, it is also our responsibility to convey the past and the present to those around us so that we might all work toward peace, and we must provide them with the motivation, inspiration, and encouragement to work to achieve it.

It is so important that the younger generation learn about peace. We are the leaders of the future, which is why we must look back at the mistakes of the past and view the present from the correct standpoint so that we can make a better world for everyone. We exist in the present, where we can choose the path to create a proper future, and we must lead humanity to a future that does not repeat the mistakes of the past.

As a young person who was born and raised in Hiroshima, has continuously been a part of the IYCPF, and hopes for peace in today's world where issues on the global scale are constantly discussed, I will continue to convey to the world what happened in Hiroshima. I solemnly swear that I will make it my mission to learn about, discuss, and take broad action for peace with young people who share my goals, and that we will work to get each of our smaller communities involved.

