

LOCAL CAPACITY FOR PEAC – a citizens meeting post the twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Saitama

Local Capacity for Peace - learning to abolish war The twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues took place in Saitama City, Japan, from 27 to 29 August 2008. About thirty people gathered. It was a significant opportunity to learn about disarmament and peace. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, co-organized the Conference with the support of the Government of Japan and the city of Saitama. The annual Conference has been hosted in Japan since 1989. It is recognized as an important forum for dialogue and exchange of views. The day after the conference, the citizens committee held a meeting for peace. This meeting was planned by ESD Saitama. Since ESD (education for sustainable environment) integrates global issues in the local capacity, such as human rights issues in the local community as an agenda for a better world. The meeting was conducted by Mr. Asakawa, chair of the committee. He explained how the meeting was established. Then the voices from three students from Kishi junior high school were heard. The students have observed the UN conference and they aspired to learn more and work for peace to save starving children overseas. The program was divided into two parts. Part I; Present situation and perspectives for the future, Part II; The role of peace/disarmament education and citizens participation. In Part I, firstly, Mr. Takahara stated the history of disarmament. At present military expenditure is increasing. In addition, the present society is already on the edge of over killing although the cold war was over. War is illegal now and no nation cannot start war, besides there was terror of having potential enemy. However, the fact that citizens have stepped towards controlling arms such as issuing the international mine ban treaty is valuable. Secondly, Mr. Morino of Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that the international relationship is much harder than interpersonal ones. The nation behaves seeking for national interests. Though there are universal values for peace. the Japanese government has been working for abolishing nuclear arms. Thirdly Ms. Joyce of Peace Boat talked about the ideal of Peace Boat. She also introduced the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict which

claims NGOs involvement at the UN security council. In Part II, firstly Mr. Fujita proclaimed the importance of the right to learn, peace is achieved by the continuous efforts with action by the peoples through consciousness raising. Secondly, Mr. Takeuchi traced the history of Peace Education after World War II. There are fruitful outcomes of teaching about peace. However, he stated the need for more comprehensive approach and the legal literacy on the Constitution of Japan. Thirdly, Reiko Kaneko recalled her experience with her students, of the study tour to Cambodia. Meeting a child in the province reminded her of the reason why she started a teaching career. Nowadays most teachers have become busy but there is great importance in spending much time with the students. On the whole, the world is heading for disarmament, however the issue is not clearly seen. Hague Appeal for Peace advocates peace by citizens. The international security issues are often dealt by high ranking officers but citizens involvement is much more important. At the UN conference the local government initiatives; Hiroshima Nagasaki Agenda was focused as a plan to abolish nuclear arms till 2015. Such local government efforts are very concrete and make citizens capable to work together for peace.

LOCAL CAPACITY FOR PEACE - LEARNING TO ABOLISH WAR

The twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues will be held in Saitama, Japan, in August 2008. The citizens committee will organize a meeting to share experiences and ideals on learning to abolish war over the conference. The round table will be held with Takao Takahara, Yasunari Morino, Meri Joyce, Hideo Fujita, Hisaaki Takeuchi, Reiko Kaneko. The guests from university and local NGO; a teacher and students from junior high school who observed conference will also be gathered.

Day: August 30th, Saturday, 2008

Venue: Urawa Community Center, room 14th (west exit of Urawa station)

Fee: free

For further information, please contact:

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■Profile Takao Takahara

He teaches at Meiji Gakuin University and is a research fellow at Peace Research Institute of Meiji Gakuin University. He is an expert in international politics, particularly nuclear disarmament issues. He was a visiting fellow at

Cornell and Maryland University and is well known internationally. Mr. Takahara is a member of Pugwash Conference, and the board of Peace Depot and Peace Studies Association of Japan.

Meri Joyce

Ms. Joyce is originally from Australia. She studied International Relations/Asian Studies at Melbourne University and Kyoto University. She is an International Coordinator for Peace Boat, is responsible for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and also works on peace and conflict prevention education. She co-translated the Japanese version of Hans Blix's Weapons of Mass Destruction Committee's report.

Hideo Fujita

He pursues educating for peace in the society. He is a survivor of the Tokyo Air Raid. He repented the pre war education and spent some years with young farmers since 1953. Then he taught at Rissho University for more than 40 years since 1959. Mr. Fujita is the chair of the Society for Building a Culture of Peace and the vice-chair of Daigo Fukuryu Maru Peace Association. He is also active in peace movement in Yokosuka.

Hisaaki Takeuchi

He teaches at Tokyo Women's University. He advocates to establishing the field of Pedagogy for Peace which further develops theory and practices of previous Peace Education. Mr. Takeuchi is a member of committee for Peace Education Special Interest Group of Peace Studies Association of Japan. The executive board of the Study Group for Peace Education.

Reiko Kaneko

She teaches at Saitama municipal Kishi junior high school. She is inspired by the need to teach the actual situation in developing countries, since she had been to Nepal sixteen years ago. The nonformal group was organized to learn about world peace with the graduates of the high school she works for. Its annual exhibition is held in the community center to show their activities to the public