

## ESD

### Citizens meeting post the 20th UN Conference on Disarmament in Saitama

#### • Outline

LOCAL CAPACITY FOR PEACE - a citizens meeting post the twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Saitama was held on August 30th in Saitama Japan. There were thirty participants from students of junior high school to officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was a significant opportunity to learn about disarmament and peace.

#### • Local situation

The twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues took place in Saitama City, Japan from 27 to 29 August 2008. The Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the 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.

#### • Purpose/goals

It was planned to share experiences and ideals on learning to abolish war, particularly disarmament issues since the twentieth United Nations Conference on Disarmament was hosted by their local government. In connection to the disarmament issue, the other purpose of the meeting was to promote ESD.

#### • Executive Body

The citizens committee was formed in cooperation with ESD Saitama. The meeting was held under the auspices of the local board of education.

• Budget Self sufficient.

#### • Records

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 the beginning 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.

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 is 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 Conflicts which claims NGOs involvement in 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.

For further information, please contact:

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