

Ryosaku Saiki, Japanese Participant: Dominican Republic Delegation

I was sent to the Dominican Republic as a Japanese youth participant from September 5 to 22, 2015 and just after coming back to Japan, I joined the International Youth Conference. Through these experiences, I learned about the importance of language as well as the fact that what is a common perspective in Japan may not always be common in the world. I participated in the Culture Course Discussion with a jet-lagged mind. Anyway, I exchanged opinions with the youths from various countries including Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Latvia, Mozambique and Papua New Guinea.

The participating youths who were born and raised in different countries and, thus, have different perspectives, engaged in the meeting with English as the medium of communication. From the discussions, I really felt that there is no value in exchanging opinions with others if those opinions are not fully

understood and appreciated no matter how significant or wise they may be. If some of the participants are not well-versed in English, the discussions do not go along smoothly. If others are unable to express their opinions, we can only see one side of the coin. This situation does not only deprive someone of an opportunity to express his/her views but also limits the success of the meeting given the very limited time. Also, I found that the definition of culture varies from country to country. This requires us to learn to respect other people's view, as I realized during the brief discussion on "Traditional Culture." I came to know that respecting other people's views, grasping the context of other people's views and being understood clearly are important, but very difficult. These were the challenges that I faced.

Hitomi Aso, Japanese Participant: Latvia Delegation

Culture Course discussion was very fruitful.

When it comes to culture, it can be presumed as less important than education or environment. However, I learned that traditional culture takes a great role to identify the country by giving its people a sense of belonging or inheritance of knowledge. Having discussion with people from different cultures made me surprised by the act of writing letters. We spent a very meaningful time to have discussions with respect to the difference of culture each other.

Visiting Urasenke gave me, a Japanese person, an opportunity to have a fresh look at traditional Japanese culture. It was inspiring to observe Sado,

Japanese tea ceremony from reactions of foreign participants, and this made me learn about Sado from a different angle which can be only seen through the eye of foreigners. I was not able to answer their questions and this made me strongly think that I need to learn more about Japan.

In the discussions, I came to realize that I need to make myself grow more so that I could compete with top notch youths from the world. I am going to make positive efforts into broadening my knowledge and learning about my country in addition to foreign language proficiency.



Putheary Chum, Cambodian Participant

Participating youths from seven countries assembled and were divided in three different courses. Culture is one of the courses that was formed to share the ideas and knowledge of cultures from each participant and to let them learn the value of traditional culture. Arriving at the Culture Course early in the morning, we were so excited to get to know each other. Next came the presentations of each country. With the varied cultural aspects, the presentations were so interesting and fun. Some cultures shared the similarities whereas some was so unique that they unified themselves from others. To me, I accept the differences of other cultures because I think that every culture is special that we should give the appreciation and respect.

Every nation or a particular group of people has their own traditional culture. We came up with many definitions of traditional culture. I think that traditional culture is crucial. It is the characteristic or the identity, and shows the civilization of a country or a group of people. Because traditional culture is so important, we have to preserve it. It needs the contributions from the government, NPO, media, company and school. Based on the idea of my group, government plays an important role especially with the legislation. The government has power and can give the subsidiaries to other sectors whose work is to enhance or promote the traditional culture.

Every each of us also has our own action plan to hold on the traditional culture to our next generation. I think that I will be a good role model, so that my children or grandchildren can grow and learn from me. Moreover, after this Culture Course, I will be ready and available to share the knowledge and experiences to my people because I want them to know about other cultures as well.

However, there's a possibility that the traditional

cultures are in danger if they are neglected. In my opinion, this is because not so many young people are interested in being the successors. They might believe that they don't make a good living by their job, and there's no financial support as well. Some young people absorb new cultures as their friends do, and they will sooner or later leave their traditional culture behind.

One of the most interesting sessions was a presentation of Chado by Ms. Ichiho Abe. It was a great chance to learn and know about Chado, and how it has been passed on for nearly 500 years. I felt even more excited when I experienced the Chado, tea ceremony in Urasenke. I was so impressed by how the Chado was beautifully and meaningfully held in a very peaceful environment. My heart melt when drinking Japanese traditional tea for the first time. It gave me a feeling I have never had before. I cannot help thinking about Chado now.

Chado is a very good sample of how a traditional culture has been held. The question is what kind of elements of traditional culture should we carry on? The answer is all the elements including historical background, origin, raw materials, and ideology or meaning and so on. These elements are what makes a culture beautiful and meaningful for people to pass it on from generation to next generation.

Finally, the most memorable and important presentation of each discussion course was presented. Before this, we did some rehearsal that helped us to be well prepared a lot. I would like to say "Great" to the team for having done a very good job on the presentation. It showed that we all had learnt and understood much about culture and knew about its own value that we will make a strong commitment and effort to hold it on.