



SHIP FOR THE WORLD YOUTH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

money of the program and ensuring its continuation. We wish that Japan will remain a pioneer in international educational programs and prove the visionaries of the past true. Needless to say, we are ready to support the program with all our strength as we have been doing since 2004 that our association became a legal entity under the Greek state.

For the SWYAA Greece Alumni Association

Konstantinos Tsigkaras

President



GREECE

H.E. Ms. Masako Mori
Minister for State for Youth Affairs
Cabinet Office
Government of Japan

Madrid, 2nd January 2013

Dear Ms. Mori,

The reason why I took the liberty to write this letter is to respectfully address you and raise your attention about the Ship for World Youth Program and its continuity, which I am very concerned about. I am currently the President of the Alumni Association of the Ship for World Youth (SWYAA) in Spain. As you may know, the program has been recently abolished due to budget cutbacks and this year the last batch, the 25th program, will take place.

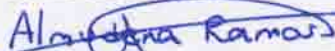
I can only speak from my point of view but I know that my opinion and concern are shared by many others in Spain and by a few thousands around the world. Only in Spain we are more than 60 ex participants (or *SWYers*, as we colloquially say). Spain has had the privilege to be invited to this program in 1992, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2008 and 2012. Since then, we have been trying not only to keep the SWY spirit alive but also to make an outstanding contribution to our society. We have promoted this program and its values, we have participated in several events in order to promote the Japanese culture and language and we have attended international meetings such as the SWY Global Assemblies in Egypt, Mexico and Bahrain. To give some concrete data, one of the Spanish participants founded her own Japanese language school in Catalonia, which keeps growing and growing since 2005. Another participant created an NGO for the preservation and study of nature in Asturias. And many of the ex participants are proficient in Japanese and have even made their way of living from it.

These are just a few examples of how the Ship experience has touched our souls and lives. This program is not a mere international trip; for all of us it meant a once-in-a-lifetime experience which made us grow personally, professionally and emotionally, but most important, which helped us change our perspective of how we see the world and understand that we are the changes we seek. Also, thanks to this program we could meet people and places that we never expected to visit or know. These human and cultural relationships, the courses onboard, the Japanese hospitality and every single moment lived during the program have contributed without any doubt to shape the kind of person that we are today.

We learnt to live in peace and harmony with people from different cultures, to respect different points of views, to exchange opinions and value other's vision, to appreciate what we have and to work hard to get a better world and a global society. Furthermore, we understand Japan, its culture and its people, and this is something we all cherish and value in our daily life. Therefore, we all keep actively working through the Alumni Associations in our countries to increase the network and to maintain the spirit that brought us together on the Ship in such a unique experience.

We know this is a Japanese Government funded program and therefore we know that its continuity depends on administrative decisions. With that in mind, we would like to take this opportunity not only to express our gratitude, but also to ask you to reconsider the future of this program and bring it back to life. We, as *swyers*, will keep working to get a better society and promoting youth participation. We would like that many other young people around the world can have the same unique experience we had. I personally believe that this program has achieved something priceless and its continuation is worth it.

Yours sincerely,



Almudena Ramos

President of SWYAA Spain

Ship for World Youth Program from a Swedish Perspective

Sweden is a country where international connections and relations are considered extremely important for the country's economy, politics, society and future. Being a small country with a language spoken by few we must maintain a strong bond with the rest of the world. As a consequence Swedish people travel a lot around the world and many speak several languages.

Understanding the rest of the world, learning other languages and getting the experience to live and learn abroad is therefore crucial for young people. It is considered an important part of their education, and those who don't have any international experience are left behind.

Sweden has been invited four times since the beginning of the program. The people that are selected are young people that are used to travel, used to meet people from different parts of the world and most probably have participated in some kind of exchange program before. Still, the Ship for World Youth Program is so unique that it marks a clear line in the lives of the Swedish ex-PYs. There is a before SWY and there is an after SWY. From a Swedish perspective, these are some features that make SWY a truly world unique international youth exchange program:

- **The time frame**

This youth program lasts long enough to actually create real strong and long-lasting friendships, make the cultural understanding process go much deeper and the individual personal journey becomes more life changing.

- **The equal premises**

Onboard the ship everyone is equal, everyone shares the same life. The ship is neutral ground. This creates an environment where differences in social and economic levels are minimized, and people can meet in a way that would be very difficult in their own environment.

- **The creation of an truly international community**

Living for so long together, sharing travels, ups and downs, culture shocks and breath taking experiences creates a community where people really have to learn how to respect each other and co-exist together.

- **Experiencing the world together**

The fact that everyone is travelling together make us meet the new places with a completely different perspective. We don't just visit some exotic place far away, we visit the home country of our dear friends.

- **Learning together**

Discussing and studying global topics together creates a great opportunity to share and compare experiences and perspectives.

Most Swedish ex participants have been very inspired by their experience on SWY and has launched careers that have strong international dimensions. Our members work as journalists, TV-reporters, hold positions in National and International Non Governmental Organizations, work within the Government,