

# Youth Voices

## ( Impressions of the youngsters trip to Hague peace conference 1999)

Eleven youngsters from tower hamlets borough of London went on a seven day trip to Hague Netherlands to take part in the peace conference . Here are their comments :

We heard about the peace conference from the youth service, Tower hamlets CND and East End life weekly . We thought it would be a great opportunity to learn about peace human rights, justice, the subjects which are not taught in the Schools. Also it would give us a chance to hear world leaders talk about peace .

Our first workshop was attending the youth orientation day . We learnt skills about community and youth work , problems of global inequality , rich and poor divide and conflict resolution .

The opening ceremony was a breath taking experience . There were speeches by Arch bishop Desmond Tutu and other Nobel laureates . Desmond Tutu emphasized that if the world could end slavery apartheid then we can also see the end of wars in the next century .

In his speech he narrated the following amusing joke . A women met him in San francisco and said " How nice to meet you Arch bishop Mandela .He replied that Madam my name is Arch bishop Tutu but now you have got two for the price of one . A number ex child -soldiers from Sierra Leone gave a superb music and dance performance which set the tone for the start of the conference .

We attended several other seminars . One was about the Military technology . We came to know about the future high tech weapons and weapons in space . Something we were never aware of . Another workshop was about child soldiers, small arms and landmines .

It was harrowing experience . A party of Japanese including the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were present at the conference. They told us about the devastating affect of atom bomb and the radiation on children. It was awful .Another one was about people who had suffered from the violation of the human rights. There were people from unrepresented minorities who told us stories about how badly they have been treated in the past .

Lots of workshops, sometimes fifty were going on at one time . We must say that it was a bit too much to take on and absorb . The pressure was building up. So we decided to take a day off and went to see the city of Amsterdam .

The closing ceremony included great speeches from Kofi Anan , secretary general of United nations, prime minister of NetherLands, Sheikh Hasina prime minister of Bangladesh . Kofi Anan told us about the sufferings and wars in Africa at present . He received a long standing ovation at the end of his speech . Kofi Anan promised to discussed the final agenda coming out from the conference in the United nations later this year. Shekh Hasina, a model peace maker, told us about the peace accord, she managed to make it possible with peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts . She also promised t deliver the Hague conference edition to all the other prime ministers . We had a photograph with the prime minister which was a great moment to remember for us.

There were around fifteen hindered people from all over the world under the age of twenty five . During the seven days we became friends not only within our group but also with the group from Brighton and people from the peace boat . We exchanged names and addresses with people from different nationalities and culture . A Jewish and a Palestinian girl each told there story of conflict and humiliation which they have to face every day in the Middle East crises .

We have now made our peace presentations after coming back . We are in touch with East End life weekly , BBC world service , local schools and youth organizations to spread the culture of peace . When the youth come to-gather and speak for a common cause, the future is bright .

Youngsters : Hanea Khan, , Roda Ahmed , Lipi Begum, Mabel Chan, Abdul Muhib, Tippu Uddin, Ryan Jeffs, Daniel Nutter, Karley Styles, Shakul Islam, Nozmul Hussain .

Organisers from THCND : Sue Davis and Vijay Mehta .

To view photos of the group which visited the Hague appeal for peace please visit photo gallery

