

## ***Religions for Peace Asian Religious Youth Peace Camp 2016***

### Summary Report

#### **Manila:**

From 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016 in Manila, Philippines, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Religious Youth Peace Camp was convened with the theme “*Responding to the Marginalized Communities’ Vulnerability to Climate Change: Strengthening Common Actions and Empowering Asia-Pacific Interfaith Youth Leaders.*” The conference brought together sixty multi-religious youth from five religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism; and twelve countries: Australia, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Pakistan, South Korea, and Sri Lanka. The camp was hosted by the ACRP Seoul Peace Education Center (SPEC) and jointly organized by *Religions for Peace Asia & the Pacific Interfaith Youth Network (APIYN)*<sup>1</sup>, *Religions for Peace Asia/ACRP*, and *Religions for Peace Philippines* in cooperation with the University of Santo Tomas.

Since the Asian Religious Youth Camp held in Seoul, South Korea in 2014, APIYN has mobilized the Asian youth to confront some of our most urgent challenges. Especially, since December 2015, APIYN focused to work on three issues, namely Violent Religious Extremism, Refugee Crisis, and Climate Change, which were highlighted in the Global Interfaith Youth Summit held in Paris, France in 2015 and echoed during the 2015 APIYN Camp in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where the Asian youth were called to put faith into action in order to respond to global concerns.

The host country for the 2016 camp was the Philippines, which faces the greatest threats due to the impact of environmental damage, caused by climate change and rising global temperatures. The impact of climate change is evident by a myriad of factors such as worsening weather patterns, extreme heat brought on by El Nino, and severe rainfalls caused by super typhoons.

In the opening ceremony, senior religious leaders of *Religions for Peace* inspired Asian religious youth leaders to combat climate change. Hadja Lourdes Mastura encouraged youth to be bold, to be brave, and to be beautiful in their work. Rev. Yoshitaka Hatakeyama paid tribute the resilience of the Filipino people, who have experienced many natural disasters over the past decade including earthquakes, landslides, flooding and typhoons, and encouraged multi-religious youth to respond to the challenges of climate change. In the keynote lecture, Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace International*, emphasized the importance of multi-religious youth cooperation for preservation of the environment. Dr. Lilian Sison, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace Philippines*, elaborated on the scientific analysis of climate change globally and emphasized the adverse impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and suggested cultivating a disciplined lifestyle and implementing awareness raising activities. Symbolically, religious youth leaders offered tree saplings to senior religious leaders as their pledge to commit to combating climate change.

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<sup>1</sup>The APIYN is the regional unit of the *Religions for Peace Global Interfaith Youth Network (GIYN)*.

## Religions for Peace

### Asia & the Pacific Interfaith Youth Network

Religious youth also participated in community service, as part of the *Religions for Peace* Global Youth Campaign “*Clean, Pray, Love.*” Youth delegates visited Masjid Al-Dahab Golden Mosque and undertook service activities in and around the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene. The delegation was warmly welcomed by the parish priest Msgr. Hernando Coronel, and *Religions for Peace* leaders addressed the congregation on the importance of multi-religious co-operation for peace. In contributing time and community service to the premises of the Basilica of the Black Nazarene, Asian religious youth leaders demonstrated mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and dedication to social action. We further pledge to continue to implement “*Clean, Pray, Love*” campaign, which gathers religious youth to clean together each other’s places of worship.

In four workshops throughout the conference, youth participants analyzed the challenges of climate change in each of their respective countries, brainstormed to come up with possible solutions, and worked to develop concrete action plans to achieve a wide set of objectives, including the following: building relationships amongst secular and religious climate change movements to share skills and knowledge amongst youth in Australia; organizing a youth camp to teach about the world’s religions and the importance of caring for the earth in China; using classical dance and other forms of culture as a mechanism to teach children about the importance of water sources in India; developing and implementing education programs focused on creating the understanding and importance of water to life in Japan; promoting understand and respect amongst different religions through establishing multi-religious dialogue in Mongolia; running workshops on interfaith dialogue incorporating discussions on human connection to the environment across different religions in Myanmar, developing programs for survivors of environmental disasters focusing on widows and children in Nepal; planting mangroves along the coastal areas and raising awareness of the impact of climate change on rising sea levels in Pakistan; campaigning to inform people about the impact that waste has on flooding and the importance of proper waste segregation, and up-cycling plastic bottles by turning them into furniture for community use in the Philippines; developing engagement programs for children to foster empathy and connection for nature through tree planning and naming programs in South Korea; running awareness raising awareness of the impact of landslides in vulnerable areas and running emergency response training in different religious places of worship in Sri Lanka.

In the closing ceremony, two of the initiatives from Mongolia and Philippines, were awarded APIYN Grants to assist in the delivery of their projects. Furthermore, APIYN officially endorsed a new campaign for the region in 2017, called “*Our Earth, Our Responsibility – RfP Multi-Religious Youth Action on Climate Change*” to be implemented in countries across Asia. We hereby promise to attempt to implement interfaith youth activities across the national, regional and intentional level.

We, the participants of the Asian Religious Youth Peace Camp 2016, would like to express our sincere gratitude to our hosts in Manila, whose generosity of hospitality and friendship in the Philippines was instrumental in the success of the camp. We affirm, as religious youth leaders across Asia and the Pacific, that we have been strengthened by the bond of friendship amidst the diversity of faiths, traditions and cultures.