

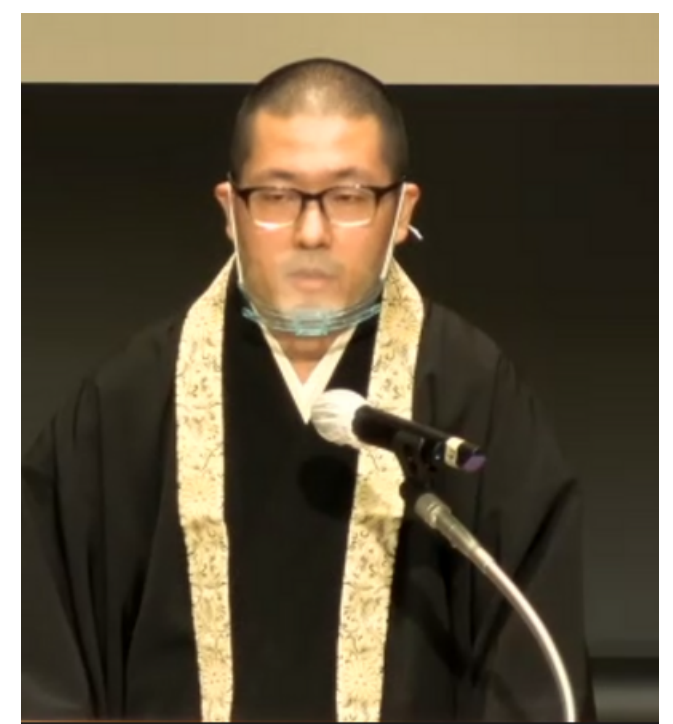
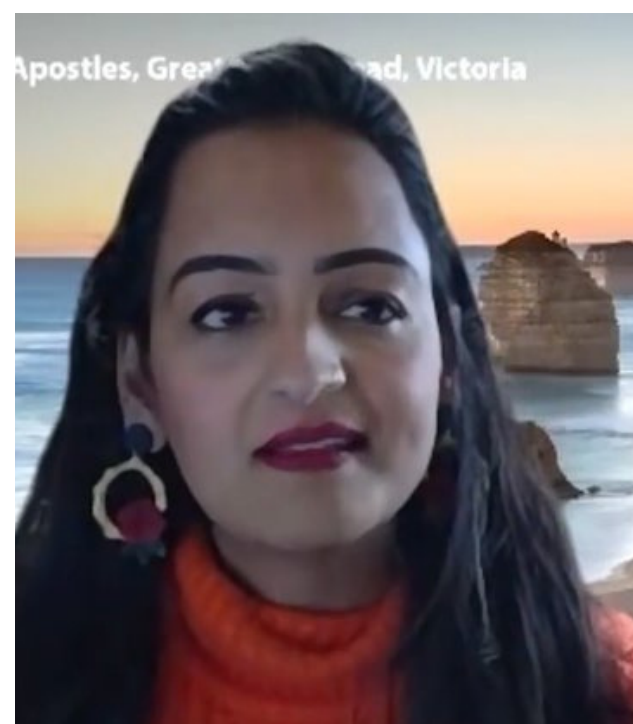


YOUTH PRE-ASSEMBLY

“Young people are said to be the future. You are the ‘now’. You are an equal stakeholder in the world today”

Ms. Nivy Balachandran, APIYN Co-Moderator

Tokyo, Japan - Hundreds of youth leaders and members from 21 member nations of *Religions for Peace Asia* gathered virtually for the Pre-assembly youth meeting of the ACRP 9th General Assembly held on 17 October 2021 in Tokyo, to strengthen the Asia and Pacific Interfaith Youth Network (APIYN) through interfaith common action of empowering the youth in addressing the challenges in Asia.



With the theme “Arigato into Action”, the program kicked off with remarks from Ms. Nivy Balachandran, APIYN Co-Moderator, emphasizing the essential role of contacts and networks of different religions in youth’s individual transformation. “Young people are said to be the future. You are the ‘now’. You are an equal stakeholder in the world today” said Ms. Nivy. **Ven. Gikyo Sugitani**, Director of Youth Committee, *RfP Japan*, gave a profound welcome remark highlighting the assembly’s theme “Arigato into Action” which means turning “Thank You” into action for those who are suffering in various countries.

Keynote Speaker, **Mr. Seietsu Sato**, Former Deputy Chief of the Minamisanriku Fire Department, Great East Japan Disaster Storyteller, shared his experience as a firefighter during the 2011 Great East Japan Disaster in Japan and how losing his wife to a disaster taught him the importance of “self-protection”. “My experience taught me that leaders truly emerge during a disaster. But for me, before you can save others, you must save your own”, he said. He also shared the concept of *tendenko* or self-protection. “Be a leader, but save your own life first. Then if you’re lucky, you may save others”. Sato concluded his message by emphasizing compassion. “As much as it is important to think of yourself, I learned that taking another’s hand and guiding them makes the world better”, he concluded.

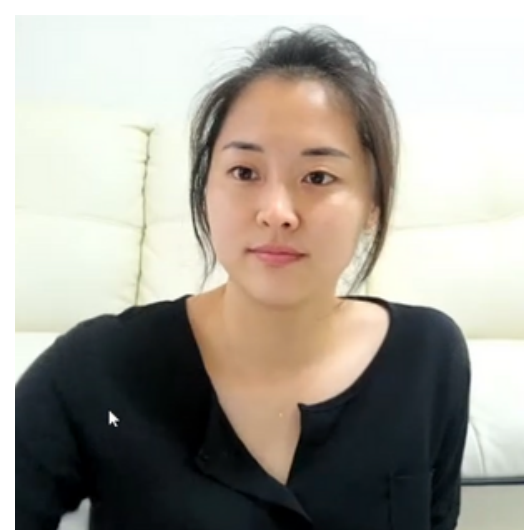
At the second session moderated by **Ven. Eigen Onishi**, Deputy Director of Youth Committee, *RfP Japan*, the various youth leaders continued to reflect on the many challenges facing young people, and how their future can be secured in Asia through multi-religious cooperation. **Mr. Shameer Rishad** of *RfP India* spoke about the on-going religious violence in India. The discrimination against women is a threat to the future of youth according to **Ms. Gasun Han** of *RfP South Korea*. This only shows, in the words of Ven. Eigen Onishi that “we are all related no matter where we live, and no matter which country we came from.” Unity and cooperation among the youth is the only way to secure their good future.



The participants were then assigned to breakout rooms to exchange opinions and learnings from the previous sessions. The third session featured 3 participants who offered their Arigato messages. **Mr. Injae Yoo** from South Korea, **Dr. Sehreen Khan** from Pakistan, and **Mr. John Medina** from the Philippines. Aside from sharing experiences from the last Asia Interfaith Youth Camp last 2019, the speakers highlighted the lessons they acquired from the said event. These young people expressed the need of more activities that will bring young people together to know one another, develop friendship



The call for a more active involvement of the youth at the national, regional, and international level is the emphasis of the various reports from the breakout sessions. Youth engagement is imperative specially in countries where freedom of speech, freedom of movement, and freedom of religion and belief are threatened. The youth leaders have recalled how the various youth camps and the various programs they have implemented in the past 5 years have empowered to work as one, improved their leadership capacities, and make meaningful impact to society. In closing, **Dr. Renz Argao**, the newly elected Moderator of APIYAN, has said it very well when he explained the role of the APIYN in Asia: “ACRP gives a voice to the young people. Likewise, ACRP gives people opportunities for leadership. APIYN will be the platform of young people. It is the voice of the youth by the youth and for the future of Asia. The youth is and must be part of the solution.” **Rev. Dr. Nobuhiro Nemoto**, the ACRP Secretary General, has expressed his profound gratitude to the great leadership of the APIYN, and in behalf of all the senior religious leaders present, called them as the future of ACRP, and finally vowed to support their efforts and autonomy in pursuing the a harmonious and peaceful Asia.

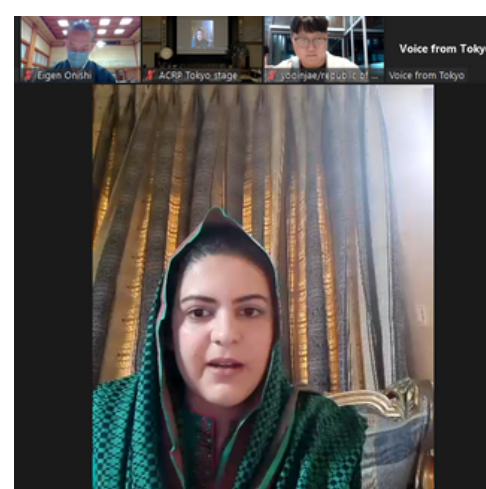
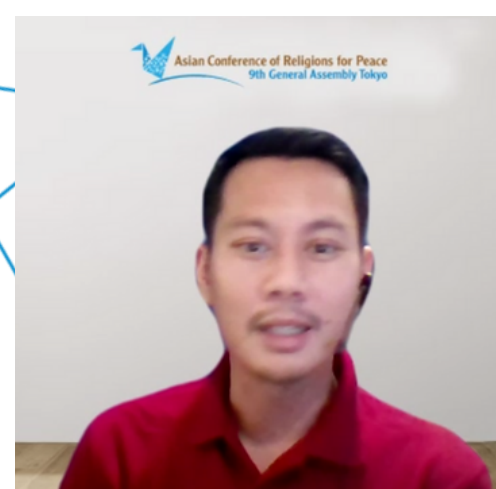
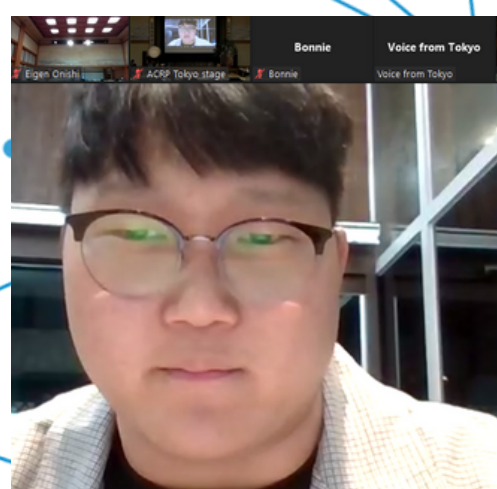


“It’s hard to be a pessimist in the midst of that conflict. But, I’m a realist. We need to first accept that there is a problem before we can address it.”

- Mr. Shameer Rishad, *RfP India*

“We are all related no matter where we live, and no matter which country we came from.”

-Ven. Eigen Onishi, *RfP Japan*



“We’re the first generation who cannot live better off than our parents. So the younger generation does not have hope for their future.”

Ms. Gasun Han, *Rfp Korea*