

Concept Note – World Peace Youth Congress

Project Title	World Peace Youth Congress
Location	Berlin
Project Duration	1st weekend, September or October 2018
Lead Applicant	IPB Youth Network via IPB Office Berlin
Budget:	206.100 Euro
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Project Summary	
<p>The world of the 21st century appears to be full of ideas and concrete steps leading to a more peaceful, just and sustainable future. Our vision is a world in peace and without war and violence. A peaceful world is the basis for societal progress as peace is not everything, but everything is nothing without peace. Disarmament and peacebuilding are first important steps towards peace. However, achieving peace is only possible with actions for peace starting from the individual level.</p> <p>Young people are agents of change and need to discuss and exchange on these matters much more. We want to organize to amplify our voices and to engage much more in peace processes and struggles for societal progress. This in conclusion means that we should exchange with stakeholders on eye-to-eye level.</p> <p>The world youth congress is a youth-led congress, contributing to the vision of a world in peace and without war and to the vision of a more peaceful, just and sustainable future. The idea of the youth congress derives from the preparatory process of the youth gathering of the IPB World Congress “Disarm! For a Climate of Peace – Creating an Action Agenda” (www.ipb2016.berlin). Some of the discussions of this congress will be continued at the world youth congress.</p> <p>The congress will focus on steps of transformation towards a more peaceful, just and sustainable future. This will be achieved by informal learning, developing senses for personal responsibility, by achieving ways for concrete actions. The youth Congress will engage youth from various different backgrounds and with varying perspectives and approaches to peace, justice and sustainability as well as diverse experts and lays from different fields related to the congress’ issues.</p>	
Context	
<p>In the 21st century, we experience multiple wars, destruction and injustice. Challenges and problems become more visible in small and large scale ranging from several possibilities of ending human life itself</p>	

to diverse destruction of environment and other basis of living. Militarism and injustice drive these tendencies on multiple levels. Tendencies of society – i.e. lack of democracy, distribution of wealth, gender inequalities or the belief in infinite profit maximization - are at the base of many challenges and problems.

Peacebuilding can take many different forms. For some, it can be disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons, for others it will be intercultural dialogue, for some again simply local actions towards inclusion and tolerance. Simply, peacebuilding is all the actions, be there local, national or regional, that contribute in building peace. This is what we aim to reflect through this youth-led Congress, and this is why we want to tackle such diverse and various themes: we believe each of them plays a crucial role in building a more just and sustainable world, free from violence.

Democracy is a given for peace and it is at stake. National societies have worrisome tendencies of autocratism and other undemocratic systems. The representative democracy seems to be in crisis. International democracy is a mirror of these national tendencies. The United Nations with its security council do only partly reflect the 21st century. Other supra-state institutions lack transparency and legitimization, many international regimes are closed jobs. Bottom up processes and participation in decision making need to be included on all these levels and beyond. The United Nations is the most important international institution there is. It needs to be reformed, strengthened, and empowered.

Peace and disarmament mean democracy and participation – we need to show why and how. Not least this implies developing a gender perspective both on the military system, and on the models of peace-making, peacebuilding and development being promoted to replace it.

Obstacle to peace, justice and sustainability in the world are nuclear weapons. They are undemocratic, illegal and inhumane means of human self-destruction and must be verifiably abolished. The UN Ban Treaty negotiations are a right step into this direction but merely a step. Much more pressure on all levels is necessary to accomplish a nuclear weapons free world.

A global dimension of conflict is climate change and conflicts deriving from it. Climate change exposes more and more areas in the world and thus more and more people of this world to life threatening living conditions. As this process slowly proceeds, conflicts increase. Tipping points may turn conflicts into wars over water, land, or other basis of life. We are aware that these conflicts and wars will increase in the next decades. In a world with limited resources and unjust economic systems climate change amplifies existing conflicts and creates new ones. Conflicts on access to water, use of land, and fishing, and other economic issues will increasingly become conflicts with military components. Unjust global trading regulations will fuel these conflicts and will work in favour of those with economic power. Climate and environment play a key role in shaping peace in the future in all parts of the world. Dealing with environmental justice in all societies will be a core challenge.

Armament and the spirit of confrontation are on the rise yet again. Weapons production and development, militarization of the terminology of security, building enemy pictures in- and outside of societies are results of this trend. NATO members' commitment to increase military spending to 2% of their GDP, the enhancement of nuclear weapons by all nuclear weapons states, increasing military exports and unprecedented efforts to coordinate military research and development are some indicators for the armament spiral we are facing today. At the same time of increasing military budgets, the already underfunded budgets for social welfare, environment, and civil projects are being cut. For example, the UN Sustainable Development Goals should have much more funds for a successful implementation. The argument for the spiral of armament has always been the same: we have to protect each other from an enemy. Instead of defining enemies and creating confrontation we need a spirit of cooperation and convergence.

The military-industrial complex is a driver for weapons production and export and therefore for conflict

and militarism. We need to converse it and prioritize civil purposes. This does not only include the material base but also the moral and work ethics. Inventing, developing, building or selling weapons and military equipment is highly immoral and irresponsible. Nobody should have to work in this field. We need a discourse about the responsibility of one's actions again and we need to develop moral codes and ethical guidelines which highlight civil and peaceful constitution of work and life.

Science and education play an important role for progress of society – in both a positive and a negative way. Scientists and educators have a responsibility towards the society and should engage with their environment. Military research is an important contributor to war, destruction and injustice. Peace research and education have an opposite effect and must be strengthened and enlarged.

Young people represent a tremendous asset and a potential catalyst for sustainable development and for building peace. However, from country to country, the narrative around young people is primarily negative. They are either seen as either regressive voters or abstentionists, troublemakers, a security threat to be managed, or as victims to be protected from violence by national authorities.

Peace is connected to broad and diverse social security issues, to which young people must have a voice if we aim for sustainable solutions. Living, studying, working is only possible in times of peace and in a just and sustainable world.

Internationally, there is increasing recognition for the role of young people in building peace and preventing violence. However, this recognition is largely confined to global institutions such as the United Nations, which adopted UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security in December 2015. This project will bring the conversation on youth, peace and security to different regions in the world. It serves as a channel for youth engagement and for conveying youth perspectives for integration into national, regional and continental policies, strategies and programmes. Our project aims to bolster the formation and capacities of such networks working on peace.

Objectives

The overall objectives of the world youth congress is to build bridges and foster discussions among youth with different perspectives on and approaches to peace, justice and sustainability and non-youth stakeholders active in the peace movement and in the various fields. Voices of youth against war and for peace should be increasingly and strongly heard. Among others specific objectives are:

1. Speaking out and act against wars, militarism, injustices, and destruction of bases of living in their own and new environments.
2. Equipping participants with broader and deeper arguments and competences for speaking out and acting for peace, justice and sustainability in their own and new environments.
3. Bringing youth into regional, national, and international decision making processes and bring a youth voice to the table; Strengthening bonds and contacts between participants, particularly opening new channels of action and communication in an intergenerational dialogue between people working for peace.
4. Starting an inter- and transdisciplinary approach towards steps against war and for peace, justice and sustainability.

Principles

1. Real inclusion of diverse young people to peace events and discussions

The World Congress will be a youth-led Congress. Primarily organised by the *IPB Youth Network*, the project managers are composed by a vast majority of young people. Support will come from the IPB Office Berlin.

Among the invited speakers, the organisations which will be organising workshops and other side events, more than half (at least 60%) will be young people. Aim is to have activists from different movements and with different perspectives on and approaches to peace ranging from peacebuilders to anti-war activists and from other social movements and fields.

All organisations working on themes developed at the Congress and willing to be involved will be able to, but specific attention and roles will be given to youth-led organisations and to youth members of interested organizations of the peace and other movements, i.e. IPB organizations will be asked to support the engagement of young members in the congress.

When the Congress will be open to all participants, the organisational team will make sure that all the youth is represented, by finding ways to include youth from the global South.

Through these processes, young people will be strongly included in the process both upstream and downstream, and we will avoid tokenism.

2. Dynamic and participative method

We aim to use a different method than in most conferences. We will break the dichotomy of active/passive: speaker/spectator. Most of the conference will be organised around workshops and small group discussions on specific topics. Specific forms of exchange will be developed, based on informal learning and personal responsibility, strongly relying on non-formal education methods.

Public actions will also be organised. Together we want to act for a world without war and violence. They will stimulate participants to take actions themselves and enhance the World Youth Congress visibility.

Cultural actions will also be organized and there will be room for self-organization of cultural events.

It should be examined if a camp could be the form of accommodating the participants. Beyond accommodation, this would be adding a new dimension to the overall congress.

3. Provide a platform for discussion exchange

The Congress will allow connecting the local experiences of young people in different parts of the world working on issues of war and peace around the world, to share stories and good practices, and to amplify their voice at an international level. Integral for the conference will be the exchange on the different perspectives on and approaches to peace and the other concepts of the congress. There are many different understandings, experiences, and views and an open dialogue will nurture the understanding of each other.

The open dialogue will be an opportunity for youth and non-youth to have a meaningful discussion on questions of peace, disarmament and peacebuilding and the other topics of the congress. Opportunities to open dialog, foster debate, and mainly build bridges between these different perspectives will have plenty

of space. The open dialogue between youth and non-youth actors working with issues related to peace will be real and meaningful.

4. Experience peace in a broad and inter-disciplinary approach

Working on peace is as wide a field as understandings, definitions, and experiences on peace.

Depending on age, personal experiences, location, and other markers, views on peace already vary. It even more varies depending on which movement or kind of dimension of peace a person ascribes themselves. We want to bring together this diversity and have a meaningful exchange between persons ascribing themselves to different movements, topics of work and experiences and have them exchange on peace issues. This way we aim at fostering understanding, cooperation and respect between people from different parts of movements for peace, i.e. a anti-war activist and a peace researcher, a nuclear abolitionist and a global justice advocate, a communal peacebuilder and an activist on military spending.

5. Turning engagement into actions

We realize that own convincement, education, and believes are important for creating a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. We also realize that we have to organize actions in order to achieve our visions. Therefore, the congress will try to transform debate and dialogue to concrete actions and activities.

Framework

The congress will be structured to overcome the dichotomy passive vs. active. It will be a participative event based on the principles above. The program of the congress will also follow an intercultural, interdisciplinary, interreligious, and intergenerational approach, bringing the diversity of peace and social movements together.

The program of the congress will include self-organized and centrally organized parts with a focus on self-organized parts by partners and interested groups or persons.

The congress program will to a large extend depend on the input given to and the constitution of the organizer and partners. The framework and program of the congress will be worked on in an open preparatory group. Nevertheless there will be centrally organized events at the congress: opening and closing as well as different thematic plenaries, symbolic actions, and cultural events.

Expected Results

Participants will have had the opportunity to network and meet other stakeholders working directly or indirectly on peace.

We aim to enhance cooperation between activists, civil society organisations, and various stakeholders working on peace, disarmament and peacebuilding. An enhanced network will bring new partnerships, build new alliances and allow organisations working on peace to gain more weight both at local, regional, national and international levels.

We aim to increase the recognition of the role of young people in building peace and preventing violence. Young people are seen as victims of conflicts, when they are actually the main stakeholders that need to be included. They are not the actors of tomorrow but also the ones of today.

This starts to be recognised at the international level with SCR 2250 on Youth Peace and Security, but

needs to be translated to local realities. The World Youth Congress will contribute in doing so.

Target audience

In line with our objective of bringing together youth and non-youth stakeholders working directly or indirectly on peace, justice and sustainability, the project will engage with a range of actors including:

1. **Young people interested in or working for peace, justice and sustainability as well as youth-led organisations**
2. **Non-youth working for peace, justice and sustainability as well as organisations**
3. **Decision makers and other important stakeholders**

Proposed Recipient Organization(s)

Project coordinator: IPB Youth Network

Implementing partners: IPB Youth Network, IPB, partners organisations of IPB

IPB Youth Network

The IPB Youth Network is the youth branch of IPB.

The **International Peace Bureau** is a global peace network, founded in 1891/92. IPB's network of member organisations, together with individual members, forms a global community, bringing together knowledge and campaigning experience in a common cause. We link experts and advocates working on similar issues in order to build strong civil society movements.

The IPB is dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. Its current main programme centres on **Disarmament for Sustainable Development** and within this, IPB's focus is mainly on the **reallocation of military expenditure**. IPB believes that by reducing funding for the military sector, significant amounts of money could be released for social projects, domestically or abroad, which could lead to the fulfilment of real human needs and the protection of the environment.

The IPB Youth Network sees itself as an open network. It aims to provide a platform for discussion, exchange and common action for young people working on peace and demilitarization. The first large common action is the world conference youth, demilitarisation, and transformation in 2018. This is being discussed and prepared right now in frequent phone calls with participants from Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Background

Around the IPB World Congress “Disarm! For a Climate of Peace – Creating an Action Agenda” (www.ipb2016.berlin) an international youth gathering was organized. The meeting was prepared for 8 months in open and inclusive discussions and calls for participation. Up to 40 young people with diverse perspectives on peace and peace work participated in the process. Besides developing a program for the youth gathering, main work was the development of a draft declaration of the youth gathering which was presented to its participants on the first day of the event. The draft declaration consisted of two main structural decisions: the creation of an IPB Youth Network and the agreement to organise a world conference on youth, demilitarisation, and transformation in 2018. These proposals were agreed upon by the participants in the last panel of the youth gathering (see attachment for final declaration of the youth gathering). Since October 2016 frequent open conference calls have been conducted (see www.ipb-youthnetwork.org).