

Young people have their own requests of G8 leaders

By Junior Delegate Harry Brooks on behalf of the J8 Community

On the evening of the 7th of July, 2008, nine young people from the 39-strong Junior 8 (J8) delegation had the opportunity to meet the most powerful people in the world – the G8 leaders. The J8 Summit is the young people's event linked to the G8 Summit and organized by UNICEF.

The chosen nine traveled to Lake Toya (this year's G8 venue), were given lessons in protocol and presented the group's recommendations on climate change, global health, and poverty and development. After a hushed silence, Shiro (our representative from the Japanese team) handed the finished declaration to the awaiting grasp of the G8 leaders.

Looking back, it has been a journey from the blank screen to the impressive communiqué we now have. The gravity of what we were undertaking didn't really hit me until that first day of deliberation. We are 39 of the most interested and diverse young people in the world, all in Japan to write a document that could make a difference. As you can imagine, we are an opinionated group, but no matter what our personalities are like, we are all here for the same reason: to show that young people have a loud and clear voice that needs to be heard.

After flying in from all over the world, we worked to get to know each other and our cultures. We broke into groups based on topics we had spent the last few months researching. After days of deliberating, debating, challenging each other, and finding common ground, we attempted to summarize our collective beliefs in a document that we have titled after the city where we met: The Chitose Declaration.

Our recommendations focus around three themes, are useful, and most importantly are realistic. The need for a youth voice has become apparent during our discussions: how can an adult speak for a child? In order to comply with article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that young people must be involved with decisions that affect them, our governments must listen to our ideas. We advocate for our inclusion in policy-making, especially those policies which directly impact us. We also advocate for inter-governmental cooperation. Just as we united to become a J8 community, governments too must unite in a global community.

On the topic of climate change we base our solutions on realistic ideas, the most controversial being the Kyoto Protocol recommendation: we suggest a successor. We recommend the improvement of alternative energy sources in order to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, and incentives for companies to create energy efficient products.

On the topic of global health, emphasis was put on HIV and AIDS. The discussion revolved around education and while the conversation was sometimes riddled with clichés, we agree that education is the only vaccine we have and that it must be used in conjunction with contraceptive hand-outs. We also suggest an innovative method of drug patenting which offers benefits to all parties involved. G8 governments must provide grants to match the healthcare funds offered by the governments of developing nations. Our last recommendation is to appoint respected young people as ambassadors, so that the youth of the world have somebody who they can trust on these issues.

On the topic of poverty and development we focused on Africa. We avoid ideological ideas, such as: 'G8 countries should cancel all debts'. We present ideas that leaders will find reasonable and feel that G8 countries must reiterate promises on promoting the rights of children, especially

girls. We ask that all G8 countries ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also sponsor the prohibition of tied aid, which always leads to the long-term detriment of a country. We feel that infrastructure is a necessary base for economic growth; therefore G8 governments should promote incentives, such as subsidies, to companies demonstrating corporate social responsibility. To stabilise conflict-afflicted areas, the G8 countries should provide rehabilitation and protection, particularly for women and children.

The young people of today are often stereotyped as being apathetic toward political situations; we show that this is not true for most, and that it's time for this to change for those who are. The future is not a commercial commodity that can be measured as a political pawn and traded over international borders. The future is an investment for generations and generations to come and we implore that governments do all within their power to brighten their children's future.