

# High School Model United Nations: The Activities of High School Ambassadors

By Takeshi Koh



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## What Is the Model United Nations?

The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), together with the Japan Committee for Global Classrooms (JCGC), began this year promoting model United Nations conferences for high school students as a way of nurturing the next generation of international citizens and global leaders.

Model UN conferences are part of the Global Classrooms educational program administered by the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA). The Global Classrooms/Model UN program was initially proposed as an advanced educational approach to teaching various issues of the modern world in public junior high and high schools in America, but has now been adopted as an effective study program around the world. The Japan Committee for Global Classrooms (JCGC) was formed in 2007 within the Japan Model United Nations organization (which was established as a club activity in 1983 at Sophia University with Sadako Ogata, then a Sophia professor and later United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, serving as an advisor) and began its work with high school model UN conferences by sending the first-ever delegation from Japan to the Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference at the UN Headquarters in New York that same year.

## Model United Nations Procedures

The model UN is a program in which teams of two delegates act as ambassadors from a country other than their own, protecting that country's national interests and the lives and property of its people at a simulated UN conference. For example, if serving as ambassadors from a country that asserts its right to possess nuclear weapons, it would be

against the national interest to agree in conference to abolish nuclear weapons. Before taking part in a model UN conference, participants must do considerable research on the countries they will represent as well as about past UN resolutions, then deliberate and negotiate the assigned issues with ambassadors from other countries, seeking to guide the drafting and adoption of UN resolutions that are both based on the decisions reached and aligned with national interests.

Photo: ACCU



Opening Ceremony of the 6th All-Japan UN Conference

## High School Model United Nations: 2 Programs

Broadly speaking, there are two types of high school model UN program promoted by the ACCU. The first is a domestic program involving hosting the two-day All-Japan Model United Nations Conference at United Nations University in Tokyo. The second is an international program involving sending a Japanese delegation to the Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference held at the UN Headquarters. The Japanese delegation to this international conference is composed of teams that performed particularly well at the All-Japan Conference. Furthermore, high school students hoping to take part in the All-Japan conference must first pass through rigorous preliminary screening.

## Results of 2012 High School Model United Nations Program

The domestic program, the All-Japan Model United Nations Conference, got underway on June 1 with the announcement of the preliminary screening essay topic, as well as which committee would be simulated at the All-Japan Conference and which topic taken up. The committee to be simulated this year was the Disarmament and International Security Committee (known as the First Committee) of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly, and the topic was disarmament. Prospective participants submitted their assigned essays in English (prepared individually) and Japanese (prepared as teams) by the second Friday in September. Preliminary screening results and assigned countries were announced on Oct. 1, and the high school students who made it through spent the following month researching their countries' positions on disarmament and preparing for their roles as ambassadors. Some 137 teams - the most ever - representing 97 schools from 28 prefectures had applied to take part in this year's All-Japan Conference, and 52 - also the most ever - made it through the screening and moved on to the All-Japan Conference.

The 6th All-Japan Model United Nations Conference was held over two days on the

Photo: JCGC



Teams at the Model UN Conference demonstrate their skills.

Photo: UNAUSA



The opening of Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference

Photo: JCGC



Closing Ceremony of Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference

weekend of Nov. 10–11, 2012 in Elizabeth Rose Hall at United Nations University. Four resolutions were proposed on the first day. Following deliberations and negotiations, revised versions of each were subsequently submitted with three being adopted and one being rejected. Teams from the six schools (12 individuals) below that demonstrated exceptional negotiating, research, and leadership skills during the conference will represent Japan at the international conference to be held in New York during the third week of May next year. Note that Seishin Joshi Gakuin High School, although ineligible to be sent overseas, received the Best Position Paper.

- Best Delegation: Nada Senior High School
- Honorable Mention: Kaisei Senior High School
- Jissen Joshi Gakuen Senior High School
- Shibuya Kyoiku Gakuen Makuhari Senior High School
- Toin Gakuen
- Committee Special Award: Nishiyamato Gakuen Senior High School

Unlike the All-Japan Model United Nations Conference, the Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference at the UN Headquarters incorporates multiple simulated committees each deliberating topics of their own. At the 2012 Global Classrooms International Model UN Conference held last May, the five teams in the Japanese delegation each deliberated different resolutions on different committees but all acted as ambassadors from Zimbabwe as they went up against 2,500 high school students from 14 countries. Members of this year's delegation were selected at the 5th All-Japan Model United Nations Conference held in November 2011.

Because both country and committee were different than at the All-Japan Conference, the delegation started out by researching Zimbabwe. The advance materials forwarded by the organizers were all in English, however, also the language that would be used during the international conference itself. As there are very limited Japanese-language materials available about Zimbabwe, one team read through eight cardboard boxes full of English-language materials about the country as well as past UN resolutions and then consumed a full box of report paper in making their preparations. Thanks to such efforts this year's delegation produced Japan's best-ever performance (three schools earned Honorable Mentions and one earned the Best Position Paper Award), suggesting that the support offered for sending the delegation was a great success.

The secret to the good results achieved by Japanese teams was

their ability to overwhelm other ambassadors with the knowledge they had gained in thorough advance research. Past Japanese participants at the High School Model United Nations had experienced for themselves just how necessary such preparations were for Japanese high school students who were generally unaccustomed to debate and deliberation. They have shared their experiences in guiding their juniors, and thorough advance preparation has now become a tradition of the Japanese delegation.

### My Hopes for High School Students

In reporting on the lifestyle trends of high school and university students these days, it has been said that they are introverted and that fewer have big goals like going overseas to study or growing up to pursue Japanese national interests on the international stage. The number of Japanese studying in the US, for example, peaked at about 47,000 but had fallen below 30,000 by 2008 and is probably even lower today. Japan's neighbor South Korea, on the other hand, despite having a population roughly half that of Japan, sends more than three times as many students to study at American universities. Although studying abroad is certainly not all-important, I believe nurturing high school and university students with big dreams will be crucial for protecting Japan's national interests.

In this respect, high school model UN conferences offer high school students an opportunity to practice not only their use of English but also a number of other skills in which Japanese high school students have typically not excelled, including: 1) thinking about and devising solutions to international issues, 2) advocating their own positions while speaking in front of other people in English, 3) cooperating with ambassadors from other countries to prepare draft resolutions, and 4) employing communication skills to explain their country's position to ambassadors from countries that have opposing national interests and to better understand their positions. I believe studying such skills will be essential for the next generation in order to pull Japan more deeply into the international community.

At ACCU we hope to have even more high school students take part in conferences, particularly those from public high schools outside the Tokyo Metropolitan area. In this respect funding is also an important issue. The cost of implementing the program - holding the All-Japan Conference, travel subsidies for participants from outlying areas, sending delegations to the international conference, etc. - are covered through corporate support. As of the end of November we had received support from more than 30 corporations and other organizations and hope to continue benefitting from even broader corporate support as we pursue our all-Japan efforts to encourage ambitious high school students.

**JS**

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