

The United Nations is seeking young, future leaders to join new global training programme for a world free of nuclear weapons

Call for applications now open

NEW YORK, 18 May 2023 (Office for Disarmament Affairs) – The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the government of Japan are calling on young people to apply for an innovative learning programme that will empower them to make their contribution to a world free of nuclear weapons.

Applications are now open for a new global training programme called the “Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons”. The training programme, which is run by UNODA and made possible by the generous financial contribution of Japan, offers up to a hundred scholarships for young people aged 18 and over. The new training programme is aimed at equipping the leaders of the future with the knowledge, skills, and network to join global efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons – the most dangerous weapons on earth.

Although nuclear weapons have only been used twice in warfare—in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945—about 12,500 reportedly remain in our world today and there have been over 2,000 nuclear tests conducted to date. One nuclear weapon can destroy a whole city, potentially killing millions, and jeopardizing the natural environment and lives of future generations through its long-term catastrophic effects.

The programme is seeking youth who are motivated to use their talents to promote change for a more peaceful and secure world – without nuclear weapons. The intention is to bring together an eclectic and geographically diverse group of advocates for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In addition to young people interested or active in international affairs, such as government or civil society organisations, those with a background in education, academia, journalism, industry, and other areas, are encouraged to apply. The programme is open to youth from across the globe, from nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States alike.

Over the course of two years, the selected participants will receive training in general principles of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control through online courses, with a selected cohort going on a week-long in-person study tour to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The future leaders will also exchange ideas with disarmament experts from think tanks, civil society organizations, media, and the diplomatic field, and develop the practical know-how to engage and contribute on issues related to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control. Importantly, participants will learn about the lessons that the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, called *hibakusha*, have long

been sharing with the world about the unimaginable suffering that nuclear weapons caused. As the *hibakusha* continue to age, it is vital that their powerful stories and appeals to eliminate nuclear weapons are carried forward by the future generation.

The programme will start in 2023 and culminate in 2030 – a year marked by various milestones, including the 85th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and the 60th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of the Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Upon completion of the programme, the alumni will play a key role in training and mentoring the next cohort of interested young nuclear disarmament advocates. Following the 2023 – 2025 inaugural training programme under the Youth Leader Fund, three more rounds of similar trainings will be conducted, generating a positive ripple effect, and consolidating a worldwide network of talented future leaders with the shared goal of saving humanity from nuclear weapons. Through education, skills training, mentoring and other support, the hope is that participants will continue their disarmament and peace and security work in their field of interest and expertise after the programme.

In recent years, the United Nations Secretary-General has made a major push to empower youth, recognizing their role as the ultimate force for change and noting that they have proven their power in support of the cause of disarmament. Last Summer, at the tenth Review Conference of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Prime Minister Kishida announced his country's commitment to contribute ten million US dollars towards the United Nations to establish this new disarmament education and mobilization initiative, which seeks to "bring the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the world, and the world to Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Applications will be accepted until Monday, 31 July 2023. For more information, visit www.disarmamenteducation.org/ylf.

Contact: youthleaderfund@un.org.