

International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace, an international holiday recognized by virtually all of United Nation's members, is celebrated yearly on the 21st of September since 1981. Naturally, UNOY together with partner organizations from the Netherlands, have prepared different events to celebrate such an important day.

It is important to mention that The Hague, known as the city of Peace and Justice, has been chosen by these organizations as the main location for these events. This year's International Day of Peace, however, coincided with an important Dutch holiday called "Prinsjesdag". This day is very important in the Netherlands, as the Dutch Parliament must present its plan for the coming year and the Queen delivers an opening speech in The Hague. This means the city is full of people from all over the country, all anxious to see the Queen and the rest of the Royal family passing by on their golden carriage. This, of course, was very helpful for the UNOY to raise awareness about the International Day of Peace, since the city was much busier than customary!

The events leading up to the International Day of Peace, however, began about a week before the day itself. Volunteers from UNOY have engaged in a street campaign, which means that different groups of people have visited schools in The Hague and surroundings collecting pictures with peace statements from students. These pictures were going to be uploaded on the Peaceportal.org website, supported by the ECCP (European Center for Conflict Prevention). Furthermore, another important feature of the website was the Blogs for Peace. These blogs had as their objective to raise awareness about conflicts in the Philippines, in Georgia, in Colombia, in Burundi and in Somalia. In order to humanize the people who daily endure these conflicts, youth representatives from each country were invited to host these blogs and answer any questions visitors may have.

Apart from promoting serious issues related to peace, volunteers were also at schools to promote other important events organized by UNOY's partner organizations: GPS Game, from Upact and a party at the Grote Kerk, from Culture Clash 4U. These events were both going to take place in The Hague, on the 18th of September, the weekend before the International Day of Peace. Through the GPS Game, participants had the chance to discover The Hague and the Millennium Development Goals through a fun and interactive way: by solving (secret) battle missions. The winning team got a prize offered by the Coffee Company. The party, on its turn, had varied acts, ranging from Thai dancers to famous Dutch bands; all of which were happy to announce to the crowd we were celebrating the International Day of Peace.

The next and final step of these series of events was the distribution of peace roses and tulip bulbs provided by the Valentine for Peace Project, which were to be distributed at two Coffee Company locations in the center of The Hague on the 21st of September itself. Next to the roses, once more UNOY's volunteers were present at both Coffee Companies inviting people to leave their peace statements and their picture on the PeacePortal website. The city, due to Prinsjesdag, was really busy that day, what helped UNOY's team of volunteers to execute an even more successful job at promoting peace and its very own day.