

International Student/Young Pugwash

Strengthening the young disarmament network

Workshop at Thinkers Lodge, Pugwash, Nova Scotia, 12-13 July 2015

Report

The International Student/Young Pugwash (ISYP) network convened a workshop involving nine aspiring young scholars to discuss ways in which ISYP specifically can be strengthened and how more generally the network of young disarmament and non-proliferation advocates can be enhanced. The setting of Thinkers Lodge, Nova Scotia, location of the first ever Pugwash Conference in 1957, played an inspiring location for generating one-and-a-half days of productive discussion and thinking. This meeting was scheduled as the first in a series, kicking off a multi-year project to reinvigorate and connect national points of contact across the globe. We acknowledge and thank the generous funding provided by the Eaton Foundation that made this meeting possible.

Generally, while recognizing that as a voluntary network, not an organization, there is a deficit of resources to enable activities, there was a sense that ISYP should be more active. There was good energy from participants moving forward to help connect activity at the national level with international coordination. It was pointed out that all possible opportunities should be taken to meet and organize events: for example, when two or more ISYP members are attending Isodarco or the NPT PrepCom meetings, the possibility exists to create a meeting, no matter if it is small. There was particular enthusiasm for enhancing activities at the national level – many of the participants were in the process of setting up national groups in their own countries and cities – and it was agreed that establishing these core centres of activity should be the main focus of the next one year before thinking of more ambitious regional or international projects. Participants felt that the strengths of the ISYP network, comprising of engaged, active young scholars and scientists, should be emphasised in contrast to ‘top-heavy’ and ‘directive’ organizations in the same playing field.

The half-day of 12 July was focused on introductions, shared experiences, and mutual learning – many of the group were new to each other, and some to ISYP and Pugwash. By design, the group was selected to blend some more experienced members of ISYP (and we were extremely grateful to benefit from the experiences shared by Sandra Ionno Butcher, Executive Director of Pugwash Conferences and a former Director of Student Pugwash USA for eight years) with younger, enthusiastic members starting out on their academic or policy careers. For the younger members, this day served as a valuable introduction to the organization’s unique role as a convener. In terms of building up networks and fostering understanding there is no substitute for person-to-person contact, as the history and tradition of the Pugwash Conferences demonstrates.

The day of 13 July was more directly focused on ideas and initiatives that would strengthen activities both at the national and international levels. In particular, attention was given to the upcoming ISYP conference to be held in Nagasaki on 30-31 October 2015; this meeting thus provided an excellent opportunity to plan for products and action in lead up to this and in subsequent months, as well as in the longer-term. These are summarized below according to three streams.

Projects and initiatives

All of these ventures should be aimed toward encouraging and showcasing a robust and effective network of student Pugwashites. We should be focused on continuity and sustainability of the network, as well as providing opportunities to engage new audiences through activities and outreach.

1. Products going in to the Nagasaki conference (there was recognition that because of time constraints, we must be modest in our ambitions)

a) Website – the ISYP website is in need of upgrading. We are in the process of transferring the domain from its current host in the Netherlands to the same one as Pugwash Conferences. This will enable us to move from a Wiki-based platform to (likely) Wordpress.

Action: Poul Christiansen and Kentaro Ide will complete this project during August 2015.

b) Discussion forum – In order to showcase the intellectual resources and wide geographic representation of the ISYP network, it was suggested that the new website host a forum section for short op-ed style pieces on the variety of topics of interest to ISYP. In the run-up to Nagasaki, this might engage applicants to the October conference; equally, it will engage existing members of the network. Following the conference, the management of the forum could be on a rotational basis by region, or equally one of the 9 Board members could manage it monthly.

Action: Proposal to be put to the ISYP Board in July 2015.

2. Products flowing from the Nagasaki conference

a) Outreach in Nagasaki – We should ensure that we can undertake a variety of activities while present in Nagasaki, and that this is also an opportunity to produce new content for the website. As such, possibilities include making video interviews with Hibakusha and filming interactions with high-school kids in Nagasaki. Plenty of photos for different features should also be included.

Action: Coordination is underway with the Japanese organizing committee by Poul Christiansen

b) ISYP Journal – The web-based ISYP journal has been moribund since 2006. Following conversations with its editor then, Arthur Petersen, there was encouragement that it could be re-started. There will need to be discussion of its format (it was previously peer-reviewed) and a clear statement of its goals, but there should be c.30 papers being entered into the Nagasaki Conference from which to choose. There was enthusiasm from several participants to aid in the editing and selection process.

Action: Proposal to be put to the ISYP Board in July 2015.

c) ISYP strategic goals – Questions were raised as to whether ISYP had a project plan. It was considered by all to be a useful aim to try and set annual goals for activities or a plan for the interim before the next major ISYP conference. Equally, participants asked as to whether it would be helpful to coordinate small groups of people assigned to look after specific tasks (e.g. website, journal, outreach, etc.)

Action: Proposal to be put to the ISYP Board in July 2015.

3. Longer term project goals

a) A workshop series at Thinkers Lodge – After discussions with members of the Thinkers Lodge Society and Pugwash Parks Commission there was much enthusiasm for ensuring that ISYP continue to hold meetings in Pugwash.

Action: Poul Christiansen to work with Sandra Ionno Butcher and others for a multi-year funding proposal to facilitate this.

b) Joint funding proposals – The participants felt it would be an excellent initiative for ISYP to pursue funding for activities that would link national groups, either regionally or globally. One example was a Middle East regional discussion to be held in a neutral country. Discussion and exploration of possible initiatives and ISYP entrepreneurs will take place over the coming 6 months.

Action: Ongoing exploration period but more detailed discussion will take place, likely at the July 2016 meeting at Thinkers Lodge.

c) Other smaller ideas/products not requiring much funding – these could be managed by willing volunteers or Board members, even on rotation as suggested above.

i) Joint academic papers – We should explore promoting articles jointly authored that can sustain the ISYP journal.

ii) Website-based discussion/conversations/exchanges – The isyp.org website could be a venue for short op-ed style pieces that engage on a topic or regional development.

Meeting participant list (including nationality):

1. **Jamie Boley**, *University of Western Ontario (Canada)*
2. **Sandra Ionno Butcher**, *Executive Director of Pugwash, London, UK (US)*
3. **Poul-Erik Christiansen**, *ISYP Board and University of Ottawa, Canada (Denmark/UK)*
4. **Brandon Friedman**, *ISYP and Tel Aviv University (Israel)*
5. **Kyle Gracey**, *Vice-President of Student Pugwash USA and Carnegie Mellon University (US)*
6. **Emma Hansen**, *University of Toronto (Canada)*
7. **Yonatan Maher**, *Interdisciplinary Center (IDC)- Herzliya (Israel)*
8. **Kevin Miletic**, *British Student/Young Pugwash and SOAS, London, UK (Switzerland)*
9. **Jonathan Miller**, *ISYP, Boston (US)*
10. **Alexandra Tsamados**, *British Pugwash Student Coordinator, London, UK (Greece/France)*