

APEC Voices of the Future 2017

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In the epoch of the 21st century, the Asia-Pacific is one of the most rapidly developing regions in the world. Economic development has brought prosperity, improved human wellbeing and innovation. However, pertinent questions relate to how this new dynamism can enliven a sustainable trajectory and foster a shared future for all, not just those in society's most privileged echelons.

My experience at APEC Voices of the Future 2017 was incredibly formative, significantly enhancing my awareness of the complex sustainable development challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region. Given my strong academic interests in geography and sustainable development, I was very fortunate to be selected as an Australian youth delegate.



The location of the conference in Da Nang, a key commercial and industrial metropolis in Vietnam, facilitated thought-provoking cultural learning experiences, such as lantern making and visits to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hoi An. Attending the youth forum and APEC CEO Summit, alongside fruitful networking opportunities, provided an ideal opportunity to learn about diplomacy and the realm of cross-cultural dialogue.

The youth forum comprised the first two days of the conference. Despite a tropical cyclone (Typhoon Damrey) causing some last-minute activity changes, the enthusiastic spirits of the APEC youth delegates were not dampened. The drafting of a youth declaration, participating in cultural activities and meeting youth delegates from each APEC member economy, was an insightful learning experience. The level of hospitality from the local youth conferences organisers was outstanding.

The final three days of the conference involved attending the APEC CEO Summit. I attended panel discussions on 'Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Growth', the 'Future of Globalisation' and 'Building Connection and Community in a Technology-enabled World'. Highlights included hearing Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull speak on a panel with Facebook CEO Sheryl Sandberg, about the 'game changer' role that artificial intelligence when considering jobs of the future.



A pivotal focus of the thought-provoking panel discussions was how governments can effectively use technology and innovation to address development challenges, such as the use of public private partnerships. When predicting the impact of artificial intelligence and robotics on the global economy, it is necessary to achieve a balance between being cautious and optimistic. Another highlight of the CEO Summit was hearing keynote speeches from world leaders such as the President of the People's Republic of China, the President of the United States and the President of the Philippines.

Our conference experience also involved meeting with a number of Australian diplomats and government ministers. Prior to the conference, we cordially met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop. During the conference, we met Australia's APEC Representative, diplomatic staff from the Australian Embassy in Vietnam and the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Steven Ciobo.

I would like to thank the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Australia for this remarkable and inspiring opportunity. I would highly encourage interested students to apply for the program in the future.

