



2016 APEC Voices of the Future Report

By Philip Chan, Youth Leader and Educator of the Australian Delegation

Beautiful Diplomacy: Opening Minds and Trading Cultures

From the colourful flurry of Latino dancing, the tingling of tastebuds from local cuisines, to the generous warmth and passion of Peruvians, the beauty of Lima was on full display during the 2016 APEC Voices of the Future Youth Forum.

Alongside world leaders, CEOs and industry experts, we shared the world stage to discuss, collaborate and network on 'Quality Growth and Sustainable Development'. At the Youth Forum, we were welcomed by the Second Vice-President of Peru, Mercedes Araoz Fernandez, and worked successfully with the other youth delegates to create the Youth Declaration. I had the privilege to present the speech on behalf of Australia, a creative spoken-word poem that inspired the delegates and world leaders to "give a fair go" to young people in the Asia-Pacific region. The electric buzz of cross-cultural and economic diplomacy was palpable as we attended the APEC Business Advisory Council and APEC CEO Summit. Christine Lagarde, International Monetary Fund Managing Director, gave an inspiring speech on women's economic empowerment, while our Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, impressed the youth delegates with his passionate discussion on innovation and technology. One of the defining highlights was meeting our friendly and agile Prime Minister at a spectacular garden reception at the Australian Ambassador to Peru's residence, as well as sharing with the guests about the Duke of Edinburgh's Award's powerful impact of our lives.





As my first visit to South America, I fell in love with the Peruvian people and its culture. Vivid and passionate, the Peruvian spirit and Latino soul adds distinct colour and flavour to the country's colonial Spanish influence. At one of the country's best public schools, we met some incredibly bright students, who showcased their classrooms, technological skills including 3D-printed body parts and self-made drones, and spectacular dance performances. We also went sightseeing through the hipsters' haven of Barranco and the historic town centre of Lima, exploring colourful cathedrals, palaces and plazas. At night, we were dazzled with three hours of traditional music, food and dancing, filled with extravagant costumes and energetic performances. Throughout the week, I also discovered the famed wonders of Peruvian food, including ceviche (raw fish), chocolate-filled churros, stir-fry lomo saltado and other Chinese-Peruvian fusions, giant corn, pisco sour and chicha juice.





Leading the Australian youth delegation was a truly unforgettable experience. Above all, it was phenomenal to meet the youth delegates from across the region, learning and understanding each other's cultures, and sharing our dreams and passions. Like free trade, we became friends without any barriers and learnt that we have much more in common than our differences. These inspiring leaders are now my friends, offering incredible hope for our region's future. Beyond the high-level negotiations and discussions of APEC, we are nurturing open minds and open borders at the very grassroots. This is what true diplomacy looks like: young people from diverse countries coming together, collaborating with understanding and empathy, sharing a joke (and a selfie), dancing some salsa, and becoming lifelong friends and partners in improving our region — nothing could be more beautiful.

I am forever grateful to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for this opportunity.

