

## APEC Voices of the Future 2022

### *Aotearoa New Zealand Report*

By Melanie Roundill, Josh Ellwood, Kaylen Hojdelewicz, and Mareikura Ikin.

#### Introduction/Overview



*Open. Connect. Balance.*

Between the 12 - 19 November 2022, four youth delegates alongside two working-party members, and two educators travelled from Aotearoa to Bangkok Thailand to attend the APEC Voices of the Future programme. There, they joined eighteen economies to share ideas and visions of the changes they wished to see in the Asia-Pacific region. Aotearoa aimed to voice the need for more indigenous and women representation in business and policy, and form allyships with the other economies to achieve these goals.

We believe that youth occupy an essential place in aligning future generations for success. They have the power to make change in our current society, and the ability to shape what society will look like for future generations. Therefore, our involvement in the following programme played an important role in the ways in which Aotearoa and the Asia-Pacific region will be shaped in the coming future.

*“As youth, it is our role to foster these relationships, understand the cultures within our economies and others, work on rebuilding economic trade, and doing so with a focus on safeguarding the environment. The future targets set at APEC this week will impact youth the most. Our generation is required to save the world. We must work together.”*

## Meeting with NZ Embassy



When we arrive in Thailand, the New Zealand Embassy in Bangkok was in the process of finalising the plans for the CEO Leaders' Summit; however, the Aotearoa team were generous with their time and allowed us to meet with them on the 8th of November. Within this meeting, we had the privilege to learn about the astounding mahi that they achieved with such a small team and had the opportunity to share the amazing programme that APEC Voices of the Future had set up for us. We had the opportunity to discuss political and business questions and build whanaungatanga with New Zealander's working abroad within the Asia-Pacific region. We all walked away proud and amazed at the amount of hard work and difference that such a small Embassy can make in Thailand.

## Working with Youth in the Asia-Pacific Region



Throughout the APEC Voices of The Future programme, we had many opportunities to collaborate with youth from different economies in the Asia-Pacific region. These sessions



allowed us to share what we, as Aotearoa youth, wanted to be a key focus within the Asia-Pacific, and listen to other economies priorities. Throughout these session, we strongly pushed the need for indigenous and wāhine representation and support throughout economies, and the necessity for changes to reduce the rate of climate change. Many economies shared similar concerns and desires for positive change; however, the cultural differences between the economies have shaped what the solutions to these issues look like in each economy. Nevertheless, by coming together and creating a shared goal, we were able to have thoughtful discussions and brainstorms about how we could create meaningful impacts in our home economies and how to successfully support the surrounding economies in the Asia-Pacific region.

### Youth Declaration Session

On the 13th of November, each of the 12 economies present put forward one delegate to collaborate on the 2022 Youth Declaration. This was a fantastic display of diplomacy in action - words had to be delicate, collaborative, and not asking for too much. While this was bordering on frustrating at times, the process demonstrated the realities of multilateralism. Aotearoa New Zealand pushed for equitable support for women, indigenous peoples, and ethnic minorities, and was struck with other economies wanting to support all people equally. Nevertheless, the calibre of the other delegates at the table was impressive, with each bringing their personal lens and that of the economy to convey the issues facing youth. Disagreement and compromise is at the heart of diplomacy, and it was special to be part of it.





Our representative also experienced a round of bilingual media interviews with leading news agencies such as the Bangkok Post and Thailand Online.

The following day, on the 14th, our representative attended Parliament House and delivered the just-minted Youth Declaration. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha accepted the declaration with thanks, and took the time to greet each economy's representative. The press ensured that

plenty of photos were taken throughout these two days.

### CEO Summit/ABAC



The APEC CEO Summit was held at The Athenee Hotel in Bangkok from the 16th until the 18th of November 2022. We had the privilege to attend and represent Aotearoa youth. There were some fascinating speeches and conversations had on the APEC Summit stage. We were impressed by our very own Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's speech and the way she spoke about important issues, such as the empowerment of wāhine and the issue of climate change. Meeting Jacinda after her speech was definitely a memorable event for us and one that we will all treasure. We feel proud to be Kiwis and were honoured that Jacinda took time out of her extremely busy schedule to meet with us.



We were very grateful that the New Zealand APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) took the time to meet with us at the CEO Summit and we thoroughly enjoyed being able to connect and talk with such inspirational leaders. Thank you to Aotearoa ABAC Chair Rachel Taulelei, Stephen Jacobi, Malcolm Johns, and Anna Curzon for your time, you provided us the opportunity to have interesting and important conversations to build our knowledge on the role of ABAC in the Asia-Pacific region.

### **Cultural Evening**

We concluded the evening with a cultural night where each economy had the opportunity to share their traditions, cultural practices, cuisine, and humour. Aotearoa opened their performance in their two official languages, New Zealand Sign Language and Te Reo Māori, followed by two traditional waiatas and showcasing poi which was later given out to fellow delegates as gifts. After a week full of harikoa, whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga, it was time to farewell our fellow delegates. It is safe to say, lifelong friendships were formed.



### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to send a thank you to all of those who made this programme possible. It is not possible to list all of the amazing people, that were involved in the extensive mahi that made this possible; however, we would like to say a special thank you to Centres of Asia-Pacific Excellence, particularly Isabella Mory and Angela Davis, and Te Puni Kōkiri, specifically Lee Arna Nepia and Jessica Smith. These fantastic people helped fund and arrange our trip, support our hauora, and ensure that Indigenous issues and solutions were brought to the table. The 2022 Aotearoa Youth Delegation will forever be awed and thankful for the hard work that was put into an opportunity for us to make a difference.