

Religious Youth Service in Moscow

Maria Nazarova - February 2, 2018

(as part of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week)

From January 31 to February 2, Moscow hosted a RYS volunteer project related to the **UN World Interfaith Harmony Week**. Youth and students of 13 countries, volunteers of Universal Peace Federation and participants in the contest "Mr. and Miss University," for several days actively attended lectures, participated in discussion programs, and interactive modeling. They met with experts in the field of the Sustainable Development Goals, and UN volunteers.



Also, as part of the youth volunteer program # RYS, they took part in the service project, in the Martha-and-Mary Convent. Volunteers from different countries collected food kits for poor citizens.

The project participants visited the Moscow Cathedral Mosque and plunged into the amazing and profound peace of Islam. It is the interreligious dialogue and interaction of representatives of different countries and religions that is the main feature of the RYS project.



At the end of the 4-day intensive program, an interethnic cultural program was held in which participants from 13 countries demonstrated national costumes, sang folk songs, gave presentations and performed national anthems. The great success of the project is that the participants from different countries made friends and came to a unanimous decision to develop such projects for the sake of sustainable development, interethnic and interreligious harmony.



Feedback from the participants:

"Each of us has had the warmest and brightest memories from visiting the Marfa-Mariinsky Convent and the Moscow Cathedral Mosque." For me, this trip was symbolic. Firstly, I visited the Orthodox abode of charity founded by Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fedorovna Romanova. My family members were carrying a service under the emperor of the Romanov dynasty, and therefore seeing archival photographs, documents, and household items – it was like going back in time. Secondly, some members of my family profess Islam, and therefore I can pray both in churches and mosques. It was very interesting to watch the reaction of the young participants of the project, how their eyes were burning and with what interest they were getting acquainted with traditions of religions and cultures of different peoples, and the beautiful architecture items. "We

also took part in one of the volunteer projects in the Marfo-Mariinsky Monastery, and shared our stock of goodness with those who needed it so much. I am immensely grateful to each organizer and participant for the trip."

"Today was a wonderful busy day filled with good deeds and positive emotions. All the guys from different countries were very friendly, and it made me very happy. All participants were completely different, but the amazing snowy weather fascinated everyone without exception. Confessional, intercultural and international dialogue allowed us to penetrate into another culture and experience a new atmosphere. It is difficult to single out one thing, but I was struck by the special tranquility of the Moscow Cathedral mosque, its majestic beauty and peace, its gentle-turquoise color, which carried me to the mental and sensual trance, especially against the backdrop of a boiling life in the Martha-and-Mary Convent of Mercy. It was nice working together for a good cause. The common cause brought together completely different people."