

Large demonstration in Japan before G-8 summit

Several thousand demonstrators took part in a largely peaceful and colourful protest in northern Japan Saturday against the upcoming Group of Eight (G-8) summit.

Organisers said an estimated 5,000 people, including members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil groups from 50 countries, gathered in a park in the city of Sapporo to voice their view that the G8 has failed to deal with world poverty and war.

The protesters then staged a two-hour march through the streets of the city, some of them wearing traditional Japanese kimonos and manga costumes and shouting 'down G8!'.

Four demonstrators were arrested, local media reported.

'The G8 countries have failed in their responsibilities,' resulting in discrimination, war and environmental destruction, said one of the organisers, Akiyoshi Ishida.

'The G8 countries are the greatest weapon exporters in the world and when they meet they don't work for the creation of peace,' said a 59-year-old housewife and peace activist at the rally.

'When the leaders of the richest states meet does that serve to help the poor? History and common sense says no,' said an activist from the US.

Attac, an anti-globalisation group, declared the demonstration a success given that such protests are generally rare in Japan.

The G8 groups the world's seven biggest economies plus Russia.

This year's G8 opens Monday in the city of Toyako, on the northern island of Hokkaido.

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