



Only Eight Youth Delegates are back A call for more Youth participation

After the last UN General Assembly has seen the largest number of Youth Delegates (YD) ever only eight are now able to attend the Commission for Social Development (CSocD). "It is really a pity – considering that more than half of the world population is under 25 years old we're definitely underrepresented here" explains Martina Gasser, the Swiss YD. The UN defines Youth as people between 15 and 24 years and participation was stressed again in the last Secretary General's Report on Social Integration (2009). "Bearing these facts in mind we have to make sure that youth is effectively involved in decision-making processes – not only when the topics are directly related to youth" highlights Emily Buening, the German YD. She already attended the GA in October 2009.

Looking at the schedules of the YD during the first week shows how important their presence at the UN is. Meetings with (Youth) NGOs and the missions are daily business. Furthermore, they meet with different UN agencies and initiatives in order to discuss their priorities and the values of youth participation at the global level. Besides the plenary and informal negotiations they are talking to delegates and high representatives from Member States and civil society in order to bring forward the youth perspective in a wide variety of topics. During the Side Event on Youth and Volunteering, organised by UN Volunteers (UNV), they emphasized the positive impact of youth participation and engagement in youth-led organisations and called for a better recognition of non-formal education.

Another step in promoting the idea and value of Youth Delegates is the Side Event this Monday in the German Mission. Nicola Shepherd, the UN Focal Point on Youth explains: 'we will mainly focus on what is necessary in order to set up a Youth Delegate programme – last October we had a working breakfast addressing a similar question which was co-hosted by Australia and Thailand, which was a huge success'.

Georges-Louis Bouchez, one of the Belgian Youth Delegates, is optimistic: 'I'm sure that the Side Event will strengthen youth participation at the UN level and we will see as many Youth Delegates attending the GA as we saw in 2009'. We all wish, he is right... [FM]



More pink at other commissions

Apart from the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development there are more possibilities to include Youth Delegates. The UN GA urges all Member States not only to include Youth Delegates in their delegations to the General Assembly, but also to the Economic and Social Council, its functional commissions and other UN conferences.

Several Member States include Youth Delegates in their delegations to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development. Does your country already have a Youth Delegate that will attend these commissions?

Youth participation is of major importance, not only in issues, which are generally considered youth issues, such as youth participation. As one of the biggest social groups young people are especially affected in all social matters and those concerning the future development of our world. Therefore, the opinion of youth should be considered in all those question and youth delegates included in all delegations at UN conferences. [EB]

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The 2nd International Year of Youth: Quo vadis?

The proclamation of the International Year of Youth on 18 December 2009, approx. eight months before its commencement, generated mixed feelings at the UN. On the one hand, there was great joy as to increased potential of re-asserting and celebrating the importance of youth on a global stage. On the other hand, there was wide skepticism as to the realistic capacity of properly organizing an International Year of Youth within such a short timeframe.

To be noted, the International Year of Youth 12 August 2010 – 11 August 2011 is the second one of this kind. In 1977 Romania spearheaded the initiative to proclaim an International Youth Year. The main objective of the year was to stimulate public awareness of the needs and aspirations of young people and ensure their active participation in economic and social development and the construction of peace.

25 years afterwards the UN proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Youth: "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding" in an effort to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world's youth in overcoming the challenges facing humankind, from enhancing peace to boosting economic development. Several international events are scheduled throughout the year, including the Fifth World Youth Congress from 31 July to 13 August in Istanbul, and the World Conference for Youth in Mexico City from 24 to 27 August.

However, at some points, coherence and vision are missing with respect to this 2nd International Year of Youth. There might be a number of youth-related events at the horizon, which are in fact always present in a form or another. BUT the question is: where are they heading to? What are they aiming at? What are the short-, medium- and long-term objectives of this Year per se? What is its scope? Quo vadis?

Given the recent proclamation, the inquiry is – by no means – meant as a critique. Instead, it is an invitation to all Member States, international organizations, civil society and further stakeholders to start thinking about it and to come together with strategic plans of actions for making the most out of the coming International Year of Youth. Dialogue and Mutual Understanding are direly needed! [BS]

World Youth Report 2011 - on migration?

Every two years the United Nations publishes a report that examines the challenges and opportunities existing for youth worldwide. The World Youth Report is of great importance for all young people around the world. It is a crucial working instrument for the YD, the National Youth Councils, for Youth NGO's, other stakeholders of the civil society and for the UN entities themselves. It is now the time to decide on the topic of the World Youth Report 2011. During the last GA the YD held a Working Breakfast in the Swiss Mission to the UN on "Youth and Migration". During this meeting the idea was born to devote the topic of the next report to "migration".

This choice of topic is supported by the YD for various reasons. A report on youth and migration could improve the relations between countries of origin and countries of destination. It could help to create mutual understanding for different situations. Furthermore, it would be a possibility for the international community to draw special attention to a phenomena too often ignored and not talked about due to political reasons. But most of all, it could delineate ways to ameliorate the situation of all youth concerned with migration and its implications.

Another aspect that strengthens the choice of migration as the topic for the World Youth Report 2011 is the insufficient documentation available on this matter. Stakeholders that are working on the topic of youth and migration urgently need more data to get a clearer picture of the dimension. [MG]

We'd love to hear from you! Please contact the editors Christoffer Grønstad (European Youth Forum) and Falko Mohrs (Germany) on youngnews09@googlemail.com.

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