

**Youth Representatives**  
58<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
**United Nations General Assembly**

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**YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES TO UNGA**  
**INFORMATION KIT**

1981

***'Governments should consider the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly'***

(Resolution on Communication Between the United Nations and Youth and Youth Organisations, A/36/17)

1995

***'Invites Member States, once again, to include, whenever possible, youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly'***

(World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, A/50/81)

2001

***'Reiterates the call made in the World Programme of Action to Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly'***

(Resolution on Policies and Programmes Involving Youth, A/56/117)

**Has your delegation included a youth representative  
on its delegation to UNGA?**

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**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE?**

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This year, eight Member States have included youth representatives in their delegations to UNGA. Some of these delegations have had youth representatives for over 30 years.

**2003 Youth Representatives**

Adam Smith – Australia  
Camilla Blomquist – Denmark  
Lars Dyrhagen- Denmark  
Salla Rundgren – Finland  
Anna Chojnacka – The Netherlands  
Finn Myrstad – Norway  
Gry Larsen- Norway  
Valerie S. Lalji- Surinam  
Jonas Klang - Sweden  
Karolina Frischkopf- Switzerland

While the role of a youth representative varies within delegations, most youth representatives draft and deliver a statement to the Third Committee on an issue relating to, or of importance to, youth. Youth representatives provide youth input to their delegations in their consideration of agenda items, such as human rights education, the rights of the child and social development. This aspect of the youth representative role is particularly important when the biennial resolution on *policies and programmes involving youth* is discussed.

In addition, the youth representatives work together to promote and further youth participation at the UN. In the past, youth representatives have had input into preparations for the Special Session on Children and several meetings within the UN System such as WSIS. Each year the youth representatives organise a high profile Youth Symposium, with an expert panel to discuss youth issues and youth participation.

Youth representatives participate in the general work of their Missions through attending a range of meetings, receptions, informal negotiations and providing assistance in monitoring general debates and drafting reports. The length of time the youth representatives are based in New York ranges from eight weeks to three weeks.

On their return from New York, many youth representatives conduct tours of schools and universities and share their experiences with other young people. This serves to educate young people about the UN and international politics, as well as encourage youth to get involved with decision-making processes in their own communities.

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**WHY THE NEED FOR YOUTH REPRESENTATION?**

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*Why is Youth Participation Important?*

It is imperative that young people have a stake in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Young people face many challenges and problems particular to them and while young people aspire to full participation in the life of society, their voices tend to be marginalised. Young people will live with the consequences of the decisions taken by the international community. Young people also have unique insights that can contribute to the development of more effective solutions to the problems youth, and society as a whole, face.

Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. By enabling more effective participation of young people we can benefit from their energy, idealism, unique perspectives and innovative and creative ideas.

Young people are the experts on the issues that affect them and as such are integral to achieving effective and enduring solutions. By empowering young people to participate more fully in society and decision making processes, young people become engaged as partners in shaping the world they will inherit and pass on to future generations.

*UN Calls for the Inclusion of Youth Representatives*

The *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, adopted by the 50th General Assembly, is a blueprint for action in a number of key priority areas, including the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and decision making. The Programme calls upon Member States to:

*...include Youth Representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, thus enhancing and strengthening the channels of communication through the discussion of youth-related issues, with a view to find solutions to the problems confronting youth in the contemporary world.*

The General Assembly of the United Nations has subsequently adopted numerous resolutions recommending that young people should be more directly involved in the decision-making processes of Member States and calling for the inclusion of youth representatives in Member States' delegations, as well as other international fora.

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### *Benefits for National Governments*

The creation of a youth representative position has the benefit of empowering an often-marginalised sector of society as well as leading to more appropriate and effective solutions to problems facing young people. The existence of such positions is a tangible and very visible demonstration by governments of their commitment to young people. Promoting youth representation and participation in the United Nations General Assembly can inspire young people to take a greater interest in international issues and become more involved in decision-making processes.

True representation however can only be achieved when youth organisations and other bodies that represent different youth interests, such as National Youth Councils, conduct the selection procedure. Youth organisations also play an important role in the feedback, and feed-forward of all the activities of the Youth Delegates.

Youth Representatives have demonstrated themselves as of great value to their governments and Foreign Ministries who have benefited from fresh perspectives and valuable expertise.

### *Youth at the United Nations*

The Focal Point within the United Nations that is facilitating a great deal of processes that aim to increase youth participation is *Youth at the United Nations*. The unit aims to enhance awareness of the Global situation of youth and of the rights and aspirations of young people. It works towards greater participation of youth in decision-making and development.

Youth at the United Nations is part of the Generational Issues and Integration section of the Social and Integration Branch, of the Division for Social Policy and Development, of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations.

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**INDIVIDUAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAMMES**

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The Member States that send youth representatives in their national delegations to the United Nations General Assembly have slightly different programmes. The different options that have been adopted so far are listed below. Factors referred to include length of stay, how the youth representatives are chosen, their level of funding and their role in their home countries.

**AUSTRALIA**

**Length of Programme:** Each year since 1999.

**Number and age of representatives:** One delegate, between 15 and 24.

**What costs are met:** The Australian Government pays for costs of accommodation in New York, the remainder (flights, living expenses, consultation and reporting back expenses) comes from sponsorship which the Youth Representative must obtain themselves.

**Length of stay:** Eight weeks in 1999, 2000, 2001 and six weeks in 2002 and 2003.

**Selection Procedure:** Australia wide selection process open to all under 25. The United Nations Youth Association, in conjunction with another youth organisations and the past two Youth Representatives select the Youth Representative through a national application and interview process.

**Role while in New York:** Provision of youth opinion within the Australian Delegation. The youth representative is based in the Third Committee, and delivers a statement to the Third Committee, including the biennial youth resolution. The Youth Representative lobbies for greater youth participation within the UN system.

**Role in Australia:** The Youth Representative consults with youth organisations in Australia. On return from New York, the Youth Representative shares their experiences at universities, schools and other gatherings of young people.

**For more information:** Contact the 2003 Youth Representative at adam\_m\_smith@bigpond.com or the National President of the UN Youth Association at president@unya.asn.au.

**DENMARK**

**Number and age of reps:** Two delegates, between 18 and 30 years old

**Length of Programme:** Since 1970

**What costs are met:** Identical to Parliamentary Advisers – Business class airfare, hotel suite and daily allowance.

**Length of stay:** Two youth representatives attend for a total of six weeks, three weeks each.

**Selection Procedure:** Candidates send individual applications through their own organisations, who then send nominations to the Danish Youth Council (DUF), an umbrella organisation for 74 national youth organisations. DUF is responsible for final selection.

**Role while in New York:** Delivers youth statement to Third Committee, represents the mandate given by the Danish Youth Council (subject to confirmation by the Danish Foreign Ministry), works to put youth on the agenda of the UN and its institutions and advises the Danish Delegation on youth matters.

**Role at home:** The Youth Representative facilitates the preparation of the DUF strategy towards the UN in consultation with the member organisation of DUF, meets with a number of

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UN agencies, promotes the role through the media, reports back to DUF on return and is an active member of the DUF's UN working group.

**For more information:** The Danish Youth Council, Scherfigsvej 5,  
2100 København Ø, Denmark. Phone: +45 3929 8888; www.duf.dk; duf@duf.dk.

**FINLAND**

**Length of Programme:** Since 1997 (selection of the candidate by the National Youth Council (Allianssi)).

**What costs are met:** Flight, hotel suite and daily allowance.

**Length of stay:** Two weeks.

**Selection Procedure:** The National Youth Council coordinates a candidate from one of their member organizations, ministry of Foreign affairs confirms the selection. Youth delegate should be under 26 years, have broad experience of youth related issues and have international experience.

**Role while in New York:** Mainly in relation to the youth resolution: discusses resolution with youth delegates and government officials and influences Finnish position on youth. Youth delegate works in close co-operation with the permanent mission.

**Role at home:** Informs Allianssi's member organizations about UN issues, goes to schools, meets with various stakeholders, writes articles, influences Allianssi's UN strategies.

**For more information:** www.alli.fi, info@alli.fi  
Youth delegate 2003, Salla Rundgren: f76768@uwasa.fi

**NETHERLANDS**

**Length of Programme:** 33 years.

**What costs are met:** Flight, hotel suite and comfortable allowance.

**Length of stay:** Four weeks.

**Selection Procedure:** The Youth Representative is selected by the National Youth Council that comprises over 30 Dutch youth organisations. This umbrella organisation is responsible for selection and preparation. The selection process is open to all under 27.

**Role while in New York:** Active in the Third Committee, proposes and drafts the biennial youth resolution. Delivers the Dutch youth statement to the Third Committee. Advises the delegation on other matters – contributing a youth perspective to the delegation's approach. Active in representing and lobbying for the Netherlands.

**Role at home:** Consulting with youth organisations and youth political parties, reporting back to over 30 youth organisations and youth political parties, establishing a tour of schools speaking about the Millennium Development Goals, holding a UN information day open to all youth, reporting back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, actively participating in the National Youth Council's international political committee and participating in the Dutch delegation to the Commission on Social Development.

**For more information:** www.jeugdraad.nl; email info@jeugdraad.nl. This years youth delegate, Anna Chojnacka: chojnacka\_anna@hotmail.com

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**NORWAY**

**Length of Programme:** About 30 years.

**What costs are met:** Lump sum government payment to cover flights, modest accommodation and incidentals.

**Length of stay:** Two youth representatives (one male, one female) attend for a total of six weeks, three weeks each.

**Selection Procedure:** The National Youth Council selects both youth representatives. There is a tradition that one of the representatives comes from a youth political party (a different party from year to year) and the other representative comes from a Norwegian youth organisation.

**Role while in New York:** Delivers a statement to the Third Committee and active within the Third Committee. Although a full member of the delegation, the Youth Representative retains some quasi-independence in terms of being able to represent the views of their National Youth Council. This is a reflection that to some extent the National Youth Council defines the Norwegian delegation's position on youth as the foreign department largely adopts the youth statement written by the Council as the official Norwegian position.

**Role at home:** Consulting member organisations of the Norwegian Youth Council, reporting back to member organisations, and taking part in the work of the Norwegian Youth Council's Committee on International Politics.

**For more information:** [www.ungnett.org](http://www.ungnett.org), [christine.weima.lager@lnu.org](mailto:christine.weima.lager@lnu.org) (international officer)

**SURINAM**

**Length of stay:** 3 weeks

**Selection Procedure:** The selection was done through the Ministry of Foreign affairs.

**Role while in New York:** Full participation in the Third Committee, presents a statement on youth to the Third Committee.

**Role at home:** Advocate for youth on a regional and National Level. Organise seminars and workshops on youth related issues.

**For more information:** Contact the Surinam Youth rep at: [sharva\\_lalji@hotmail.com](mailto:sharva_lalji@hotmail.com).

**SWEDEN**

**Length of Programme:** This is the sixth time since 1985.

**What costs are met:** Airfare, hotel suite, allowance.

**Length of stay:** This year one delegate stays for five weeks (in the past two youth representatives have stayed for two weeks each).

**Selection Procedure:** The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations chooses the youth delegate.

**Role while in New York:** Delivers statement in the Third Committee, including on the youth resolution and is active within the Third Committee.

**Role at home:** Consultations with member organisations of the Swedish Youth Council (which provides the basis for the Youth Representative's statement), reporting back to Swedish Youth Council and member organisations on how youth issues are addressed at the UN and increasing young people's attention to and knowledge of the UN.

**For more information:** [jonas@lsu.se](mailto:jonas@lsu.se)

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**SWITZERLAND**

**Length of Programme:** This year is the first.

**What costs are met:** Airfare and hotel suite.

**Length of stay:** 10 days; the period of the negotiation with regard to the Youth resolution.

**Selection Procedure:** The National Youth Council selects the youth delegate.

**Role while in New York:** Since it is the first year, the exact tasks are still to be established. The youthrep is actively involved in the process of describing the job description. The main task this year was participating in the negotiations with regard to the Youth resolution.

**Role at home:** Represent the interest of youth organization in Switzerland and advises the Swiss delegation on issues concerning youth. Reports back to the Youth organization in Switzerland, on the development of youth issues at the UN.

**For more information:** International Policy Office in Swiss Youth Council: smichaud@csaj.ch.  
Swiss Youthrep 2003: kfrischkopf@saju.ch

**OTHER MEMBER STATES**

A number of other Member States have in the past included Youth Representatives in their Delegations, however we do not have detailed information on their programmes.

These Member States include:

- Ethiopia
- Bangladesh
- India
- Greece
- Jamaica
- Turkey