

RECORD NUMBER OF YOUTH REPS TO ATTEND 60th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This year the United Nations in New York will have an invasion on its hands. Not any kind of international threat, however, but a huge benefit. Previously unseen numbers of Youth Representatives will descend on the General Assembly throughout its activity, vigorously promoting the issues important to young people today.

Some nations have a strong and proud history of youth representation at the UN. The Netherlands, Denmark and Norway are a few which advocated the idea. Of course the dream is to have all 191 member states send a young person in their delegation, but we first must acknowledge the huge improvement this year on the 11 which attended in 2004.

Amongst the countries sending youth reps for the first time are the UK, Germany, Mexico and Ghana. A main factor behind the increase this year is the review process of the UN World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) taking place the first week of October. On the 5th there will be an open round-table session on the theme of *Making Commitments Matter* - the implementation of WPAY. Following this on the 6th will be a General Assembly Plenary, at which one national youth rep will summarise the discussions of the round-table. The 2005 Youth Resolution will hopefully be adopted during this high-level meeting and some youth reps will be lucky enough to make statements.

By Frederick Bernas, UK

LATEST COUNTRY LIST

Australia
Denmark (2)
Finland
Germany (2)
Ghana
Mexico (2)
Netherlands
Norway (2)
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom (3)
Zambia (2)

At the time of printing, many other nations have confirmed they will be sending youth reps but haven't announced names yet. Keep checking www.un.org/youth for updates.

PREPARATORY GATHERING IS A BIG SUCCESS

By Frederick Bernas, UK

On August 27-28 a selection of this year's youth reps attended an informal preparatory gathering in Uppsala, Sweden. It was a very important weekend because we had the chance to meet each other, share ideas and make plans for the UNGA60.

The event was organised by LSU, the Swedish students' union, which provided an intensive schedule for all involved. As well as discussing what we'd like to do in New York, hearing of successful advocacy schemes and learning about UN procedure and protocol, the youth reps had another brilliant opportunity to see and comment on the 'zero draft' of this year's Youth Resolution. Catarina Carvalho from the Portuguese Mission held a session in which she presented the resolution and invited our feedback.

There could have been no better preparation for the trials and tribulations of the UNGA. It is now the crucial task of those of us who attended this meeting to pass our new knowledge on, ensuring the youth reps form a cohesive, efficient and effective unit.

Many thanks to LSU for this event.



ATTENDING NATIONS

Denmark □ Martin Justesen, Sidse Kamille
Finland □ Antton Rönholm
Germany □ Hanna Labonté, Anne Spiegel
Ghana □ Thomas Nyarko Ampem
Netherlands □ Erik Thijs Wedershoven
Norway □ Victoria Uwonkunda, Torbjørn Røe Isaksen
Sweden □ Hanna Hallin
Switzerland □ Yuan Yao, Nicole Affolter
United Kingdom □ Frederick Bernas



- if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas please email youthrepsnewsletter@gmail.com -

"No-one is born a good citizen, no nation is born a democracy. Rather both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline." - Kofi Annan

YOUTH REPS ATTEND DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE IN HELSINKI

By Hanna Labonté, Germany

In mid-September governments and NGOs met in Helsinki to discuss the world's future. Sure enough, youth had to play a role in this and 25 young people from all over the world (including five UN youth reps) met in advance of the so-called Helsinki Conference to speak about the youth point of view.

The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) was a huge topic. We took three of its 15 priority areas and discussed them in detail: employment, participation and HIV/AIDS. We tried to look at them from our perspective and with the WPAY as a background.

We identified diverse problems and came up with different ideas as solutions. High on the list was the WPAY's lack of implementation and the lack of indicators it gives to check what has been done on national or international level.

The Programme is not very specific, we realised. Still, although we understood that there should be a lot more done by the United Nations Corps and the nations themselves, we decided that another vital step towards full implementation would be to make the WPAY more recognised. Even in the youth context it's not very well-known.

Implementation of the WPAY has to take place on a regional level. Even though youth all over the world have similar difficulties, the face of the problem is very different from place to place and needs specific handling.

Young people wish to become more active in the process. Therefore it's very important to give us the chance to change something by providing the tools and breaking down frustrating bureaucracy barriers which stop youth from implementing innovative ideas.

Apart from discussing the WPAY with young people who are already active, we (the five youth reps) had a panel discussion in which local media students posed a series of challenging questions. We also visited a Helsinki school and talked to students about the programme and their views on it. Their ideas about what should be priority areas were close to the WPAY's real main topics and this was very interesting.

All in all we had a very successful time in Helsinki and came back with loads of new ideas.



Jeffrey Avina of the UNDP leads a seminar at the Helsinki Youth Conference.

YOUTH REPS IN HELSINKI

Martin Justesen, Denmark
Antton Rönholm, Finland
Hanna Labonté, Germany
Hanna Hallin, Sweden
Frederick Bernas, UK



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A MESSAGE FROM SERBIA/MONTENEGRO

Money makes the world go round?

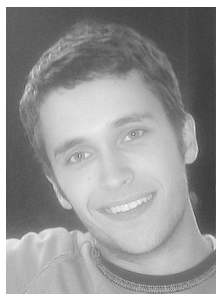
An example of how everyday politics diminishes youth participation and shapes the life of young people without any kind of policy.

By Nikola Pucarevic, State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (nikola.pucarevic@gmail.com)

In its meeting on August 30 2005 the Youth Coalition of Serbia, consisting of seven national youth organizations, decided to support my candidature as a Youth Delegate for the 60th Summit of the UN; it agreed to fully cover all expenses so the State Union wouldn't have to find additional resources (as we are a developing country). The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro is a union of two states, governed by the President of the State Union and a Council of Ministers.

Although the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been informed of this proposal, along with a Cabinet representative of the President of the State Union, on its session held on September 8, the Council of Ministers (whose members therefore had information on the proposal) didn't make the decision for sending a youth representative as part of our delegation. This happened in spite of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia sending a recommendation letter stating that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could support a youth representative suggested by youth organizations.

The problem might more easily be seen on the outcome of the decision. The only two people present at the UN Summit were the State Union's Foreign



“Sorry I am not there with you, helping to shape the world for better youth participation in decision-making processes on all levels.”

Affairs Minister (a politician promoting Serbian interests at the UN) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Montenegro (promoting Montenegro's independence and dissolution of the State Union). Neither the President of the State Union nor the Heads of State are representing our country at the Summit. Bearing this fact in mind, neither the youth representative of Montenegro, who got support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro (but not the funds), nor the representative of Serbia, whose funds were provided, were able to come and participate in the WPAY+10 events.

The bottom line is that, because the politicians couldn't find a common language among themselves, youth has been neglected completely.

This shows that, although sometimes funds could be found for youth participation, it is the lack of policy promoting it which is to blame - especially since Serbia and Montenegro does not have a governmental institution dealing with youth or a national/local youth policy.

It is up to the young people to keep fighting for their rights and to empower their peers in the struggle for a better future, so I am more than willing to present how youth participation and policy is fought for in Serbia in forthcoming issues of a *yoUNg view*.

AN APPEAL *to all countries not including a youth representative in the UN delegation...*

Who will be forming the next generation of national governments, world leaders and responsible citizens? The answer is obvious: the youth of today. Do we need to say any more? Surely this should be convincing enough for all UN member states to include a youth representative in their national delegations to the General Assembly.

However, anyone who believes that young people are the future is sadly mistaken. We are the present as well. Huge international initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals cannot possibly be implemented without the active involvement of youth. We make up a sizeable proportion of the global population and deserve to be treated as equal partners in the struggle for a better world. Please take heed of Nikola Pucarevic's story. Please realise that on the current political agenda there is nothing more important than the participation and empowerment of young people.

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a YOUNG View

issue one - week of September 19

newsletter of the UN youth reps

youthrepsnewsletter@gmail.com

who are we

Short answer: a small group of young people charged with the vital task of representing global youth at the world's most prestigious diplomatic event. Here you can find out more about us...

SWEDEN

History of youth reps: This year is the seventh time at the GA since 1985. Youth reps are also sent to different UN commission meetings.

Selection process: The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations chooses the youth rep from nominations received from its member organisations.



Name: Hanna Hallin
Age: 23
Occupation: Student
Organisational Background: Red Cross Youth
Email: hanna.hallin@lsu.se

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I have been involved in youth organizations and projects all my life; from forming a youth association organising an exchange project with Spanish youth to being a scout leader, doing voluntary work with youth abroad and empowering Swedish youth through the Red Cross movement.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

I believe in the idea of "by youth for youth". Young people across the globe are taking an active part to work for a better world, but we have to be included as equal partners at all levels of society. The empowerment of youth is essential in order to achieve sustainable development.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

I will promote the importance of supporting youth-led development in order to achieve the MDGs. Involving us will not only increase young people's sense of ownership in their society, it will also encourage young people to take control of their lives.



DENMARK

History of youth reps: Have been sending youth delegates to the GA for the last 26 years.

Selection process: Every member organization of the Danish Youth Council can nominate a candidate. After this the board of the Danish Youth Council elects the two youth delegates. We are members of the official Danish delegation to the UN consisting of NGOs and parliamentarians.



Name: Martin Justesen
Age: 19
Occupation: Student
Organisational Background: Danish Student Movement
Email: martinjustesen@gmail.com
Website: www.duf.dk

What experience do you have of youth issues?

For many years I have been involved in fighting for better rights and conditions for Danish pupils and students. This work involves meetings, interviews, press events, campaigns, gatherings, demonstrations and a lot of other policy-making.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

Every three second a child dies from extreme poverty. You all know the facts; the world sucks as it is and, as long as the leaders of the world aren't doing anything about it, we will have to! Young people are advocates for change, for making the world a better place - I think we all are obligated to contribute.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

To cut the crap and focus on things that matter. Stop the talking - do the action. I think we should focus on action, implementation and demanding things to be done. If the UN is to survive it has to do more than talk.

AUSTRALIA

History of youth reps: Seventh year there has been an Australian youth representative to the UNGA.

Selection process: Applications open to all young Australians aged 15-25. The Australian United Nations Youth Association reviewed written applications, interviewed candidates and recommended the successful one to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



Name: Ben Whitehouse or Benny
Age: 23
Occupation: Child Protection Social Worker
Email: youthrep2005@unya.asn.au
Website: www.ben.formip.com / www.unya.asn.au

What experience do you have of youth issues?

For many years I've worked with youth from different backgrounds, including indigenous people, refugees, special needs and homeless. I have worked in places such as Youth Drop-in Centres, after-hours street Medical Centres for the homeless, Soup Kitchens and Education Support Schools.

I have also worked in international 'front-line' programmes in places like India and New Orleans. I am a young man who has suffered major depression, which has fired my passion for demystifying the myths surrounding depression.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

I thought that it was a wonderful opportunity to assist in sharing the strengths and challenges of young Australians with the highest forum in the world. Similarly, sharing these voices with those in the United Nations will assist in making the organisation feel relevant to young Australians.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

As the 2005 Aussie youth rep, I have travelled the length and breadth of Australia talking about the United Nations, as well as exploring issues that are important to young Australians.

Now I must represent and advocate for these people. Similarly, I must inspire and urge other nations to include youth representatives as part of their official delegation.

Turn over the page for more youth rep profiles...

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who are we

NORWAY

History of youth reps: Norway has been a part of this for some time (started in 1971). Each year two reps are chosen, usually a girl and a boy (equality, people, equality).

Selection process: Youth organisations are asked to submit their candidates to the National Youth Council; from there two are chosen. One represents a youth political party and the other a student/youth organisation.



Name: Victoria Uwongkunda
Age: 24
Occupation: Studying Media Sciences
Organisational Background: National Youth Council
Email: uwongkund@stud.ntnu.no
Website: www.ungnett.org

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I started not so long ago with student politics and from there I thought: why not give this a try and see what happens? So far, so good - I have now gotten some blood on my teeth and want to do more.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

I really didn't think I would be elected in the first place because I thought the competition would be far harder to beat. Once elected, I made up my mind that I will take the chance and try to make a change. I want to take part in this work and to experience how the UN works from within.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

As far as preparing goes, I believe we are on the way to something that resembles a speech/statement and I am really pleased. Torbjørn and I decided on which topic we wanted to focus and as soon as the foreign affairs ministry gave us the green light we got to work. We also wish, like many other youth reps, to urge more states to send youth delegates to take part in the GA and the UNGA.

SWITZERLAND

History of youth reps: This is the third year for Switzerland.

Selection process: The Swiss National Youth Council (SAJV) selects a team of five youth representatives based on a demanding criteria list. The five youth representatives then decide amongst themselves who is going to represent the Swiss Youth and the national team of youth representatives at the General Assembly of the United Nations.



Name: Yuan Yao
Age: 20
Occupation: Student / Teacher / Dancer
Organisational Background: Swiss National Youth Council (SAJV)
Email: yuan.yao@student.unisg.ch
Website: www.youthrep.ch

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I have been involved in many organisations (e.g. UNESCO) in order to work on youth issues. I write a monthly column on youth matters and teaching young people fulfils me in a way nothing else does. In June 2005, I was elected to the board of a National Children & Youth Foundation.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

I wanted to expand my horizons and work with four exceptional young people on youth issues to prove that we can make a difference. This is an amazing privilege and you meet so many inspiring people. Furthermore, it is going to be a great learning experience!

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

I want to represent the Swiss Youth and our National Youth Council (SAJV) as well as I can. I also want to lobby for the implementation of the WPAY and the inclusion of more youth delegates - especially from "Southern countries". We can make it happen!

more youth rep profiles on the next page...

UNITED KINGDOM

History of youth reps: The three attending this year will be the UK's first ever youth delegates.

Selection process: Application form on the internet requesting personal information and details about youth experience. Following this, 15 of an initial 600 applicants were chosen for interviews at the Foreign Office which decided the final three.



Name: Frederick Bernas
Age: 18
Occupation: Youth Activist / Journalist / Gap Year Student
Organisational Background: UK Youth Parliament / English Secondary Students' Association
Email: uk.youthdelegates@unysa-uk.org / frederick.bernas@btopenworld.com
Website: www.unysa-uk.org

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I was elected to the UK Youth Parliament in February 2004 and have been involved in many different projects since then. These include working with London's successful 2012 Olympic bid, the Greater London Authority (devolved governing body for the city) and several government departments. I'm also involved in other youth organisations such as the recently-established English Secondary Students' Association.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

I thought it was a fantastic chance to use my experience in youth issues to benefit young people in the UK on the international stage. It's also going to be great to discover how such a powerful and influential organisation as the UN works on the inside.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

For the three youth reps to successfully represent young people in the UK to the best of our combined abilities. Lobbying more nations to include youth reps next year is also important. In my role co-ordinating and editing the youth reps' newsletter I hope to publicise the great work we're doing at the UN. The whole event is going to be amazing and an unforgettable experience!

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FINLAND

History of youth reps: Since 1997 one delegate each year has been chosen by the board of the National Youth Council.

Selection process: Youth organisations appoint young people as their candidates, who then send applications to the National Youth Council Allianssi.



Name: Antton Rönholm
Age: 25
Occupation: Student, Political Assistant
Organisational Background: Social Democratic Youth in Finland
Email: antton.ronholm@abo.fi

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I have been active in youth politics both in the Youth League of Finnish organisation for Nordic cooperation and Young European Federalists.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

To be a youth representative is in a great chance to use my experience in youth work to benefit the member organisations of my Youth Council and get experience on how the UN system works.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

I wish to work actively in my national delegation and influence the Finnish policies concerning youth matters. At the same time I am very interested in learning about best practices from all over the world both in youth politics and developing the work of youth representatives.

who are we

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Name: Kristofer McGhee
Age: 21
Occupation: Business and Management and Social Policy Student, University of Glasgow
Organisational Background: Scottish Youth Parliament / UK Youth Parliament / UNYSA university branch
Email: uk.youthdelegates@unysa-uk.org
Website: www.unysa-uk.org

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I have been involved at local level in my community and in school from a very young age so am familiar with the issues important to young people at grass roots level. Nationally, I have been involved in the Scottish Youth Parliament Executive for the past four years: this year as Vice Chair and focussing on policy promotion.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

To ensure the views of young people in the UK are represented internationally and that our government recognises the importance of involving young people in all decisions.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

To have fun! This will be achieved through a successful side event, the promotion of our issue (citizenship within education!) and by having a voice. On returning, I want to make sure that the UK sends youth delegates to New York in future years!

GERMANY

History of youth reps: Nothing, Germany does not include youth representatives. We are here nonetheless.

Selection process: Application with essays about issues concerning the UN and youth, then interview on phone, afterwards another in Berlin.



Name: Hanna Labonté
Age: 21
Occupation: Student
Organisational Background: AFS, intercultural programmes
Email: HannaLabonte@aol.com
Website: www.jugenddelegierte.de

What experience do you have of youth issues?

I've been active in different projects concerning youth. My latest experience is involvement with AFS, intercultural programmes and big travel activities during the last year to meet young people living in Germany. We talked about their wishes and hopes, their fears and their engagement.

Why did you want to be youth rep?

I find the United Nations very important - it's quite amazing how people from 191 nations can come together and try to build a better world. Young people can play a very important role in this process because they are so willing to move and really could make a change, not only talk about it. That is what I want to do.

What are your priorities for the UNGA?

I would very much like to prove that we, as young people, are already helping to build this world. We are valuable for the task. I would very much like to show that we are also not only thinking within national borders but have an idea of how complicated it is for this globalised world to think of solutions for all people.

SIDE EVENTS

During the week of October 3 there will be a series of side events taking place on youth issues, as part of the WPAY review process and leading up to the round-table session on October 5. For a full list of side events please visit www.un.org/youth or see the daily journals that week.

MESSAGE FOR ALL YOUTH REPS

If any of you have ideas, suggestions, comments or contributions for this newsletter, please email youthrepsnewsletter@gmail.com. Throughout the UNGA it would be great to feature articles on the different side events and what you're all up to. Thanks!

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