

A Brief Guide to  
Youth Delegates to the United Nations General Assembly

---

Prepared specifically for:  
Members States of the United Nations

---

Prepared by:



The United Nations Programme on Youth  
Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD)  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

July 2005

## Introduction

---

The purpose of this guide is to provide Government representatives with information regarding national youth delegates to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

It has been prepared by the United Nations Programme on Youth, a part of the Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Programme acts as a focal point within the United Nations system on matters relating to young people, particularly in relation to the priority areas identified in the World Programme of Action for Youth<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, the Programme aims to:

- Enhance awareness of the global situation of youth and to increase recognition of their rights and aspirations;
- Promote national youth policies, programmes, and coordinating mechanisms as integral parts of social and economic development, in cooperation with both governmental and non-governmental organizations; and
- Strengthen the participation of youth in decision-making processes at all levels in order to increase their contribution to national development and international cooperation.

## Justification

---

Member States of the United Nations have long recognized that the imagination, energy and ideals of young people are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. In 1995, on the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, the United Nations formally strengthened its commitment to young people by directing the international community's response to the challenges to youth into the next millennium. It did so by adopting an international strategy called the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

One of the priorities of the Programme of Action is to support the participation of youth in decision-making. In particular, it invites Governments to strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums by considering the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly. (A/RES/50/81, para 107, 1995)

This invitation has been renewed several times in subsequent resolutions (A/RES/52/83, 54/120, 56/117, 58/133). In the most recent youth resolution pertaining to the tenth anniversary of the Programme of Action for Youth, Governments are “urged to consider being represented by youth

---

<sup>1</sup> The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond was adopted by the General Assembly in 1995. It is a guide for youth policy in relation to the following ten priority concerns: education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women and the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making. In 2003, the General Assembly also noted five additional issues of importance, namely globalization, information and communications technology, HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention and intergenerational relations. The Programme is available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/global.htm>

representatives to address the plenary on this occasion” (A/RES/59/148, op. para 4, 2004). The tenth anniversary of the Programme of Action is an excellent opportunity for Member States to initiate an annual youth delegate process for their country.

The underlying principle to youth participation in the work of the General Assembly is that it leads to better international policy and programmatic responses to the problems facing young people today. Not only do youth delegates enrich the debate and policy dialogue, they strengthen existing channels of communication and cooperation between Governments and young people. Upon return, youth delegates also act as a resource to promote continued progress in youth policies and to encourage other young people to participate more fully in their nation’s development.

A precedent for the inclusion of youth representatives in national delegations to the General Assembly exists among some Member States, with the number gradually increasing year by year. For a list of countries that have youth delegates and for more information on their process, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthdelegates05.htm>

## **The Role of a Youth Delegate**

---

The role of a youth delegate to the General Assembly differs from country to country and is generally determined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) in cooperation with its Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

### ***Before the General Assembly Meetings***

Before attending meetings of the General Assembly, youth delegates are normally expected to become familiar with the work of United Nations on youth issues. It is useful to review recent youth resolutions and relevant reports of the Secretary General. This information is accessible via the UN Programme on Youth website at [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth) or by request (please see our contact information below).

Ideally youth representatives are also aware of existing policies and programmes for young people in their country and may attend a briefing with the Ministry of Youth Affairs (or equivalent). In some cases, youth representatives initiate events, discussions, consultations, tours or other forms of outreach through youth organizations and schools in order to inform their peers of their role as a national youth delegate. Some Governments support this work, either financially or by integrating these activities into existing programmes.

### ***During the General Assembly Meetings***

The amount of time youth delegates spend at United Nations Headquarters in New York varies among countries from two to eight weeks. The main focus of the delegate’s work is usually to follow the processes of the Third Committee, the part of the General Assembly that deliberates on Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Issues. In past instances, youth delegates have delivered statements on issues of concern to young people on behalf of their Government in the Third Committee.

Matters that pertain specifically to youth fall under the agenda item called “Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and

the family”. The agenda of the General Assembly, including that of its Third Committee, is usually available in late summer, prior to its commencement, at: <http://www.un.org/aboutun/mainbodies.htm>

**For the year 2005, the agenda item related to youth will be discussed in the Third Committee during the week of 3 to 7 October 2005.**

Additionally, youth representatives may 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. Very often they liaise with youth representatives from other countries to exchange information and build upon their experiences. They may be invited to speak at various side events or panel discussions organized by their Mission or the United Nations Secretariat.

It is best if the Mission provides a short briefing to youth delegates upon arrival to clarify their role in their delegation. The UN Programme on Youth also provides an orientation to the United Nations system that is open to all national youth delegates each year.

### *After the General Assembly Meetings*

Upon return from UN Headquarters, most youth delegates prepare a report to submit to the various Ministries within the Government and/or make presentations to relevant departments. In some cases, they undertake similar outreach activities as those they undertook prior to their time in New York, to share their experience with other young people through youth organizations, schools, radio programs and other media.

Some delegates continue to interact with their Government to implement various parts of the World Programme of Action for Youth or to support related Government programmes and projects. It is also very useful for the returning delegate to be involved in the preparation and briefing of the next year’s youth delegate.

## **The Selection of a Youth Delegate**

---

The inclusion of a youth delegate on a national delegation to the General Assembly involves a level of intra-governmental cooperation and coordination.

The selection of a youth delegate varies from country to country. Past youth delegates have stressed the importance of selecting a representative young person through a transparent process, often with the involvement of young people in the decision-making process. In many instances, the process is arranged by the National Youth Council or similar youth structure that is able to transmit information to a diverse membership and organize a peer review process. In other instances, the relevant Ministry circulates a call for applications and then shortlists candidates to be jointly reviewed and/or interviewed by government and youth representatives.

The selection process is frequently overseen by the Government entity directly responsible for youth (e.g. Ministry of Education, Department of Youth and Sport, Ministry of Cultural and Social Affairs, or equivalent). The name of the selected delegate(s) is then transmitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) and later to the country’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations. It is also

helpful to inform the United Nations Programme for Youth, so that the youth delegate can be appropriately directed to resources and supported in understanding the work of the United Nations.

The logistical arrangements for the youth delegate are typically supported by the Foreign Ministry or Permanent Mission, as they are accustomed to bringing their nationals to functions at the United Nations. The associated costs are borne by the Government, either entirely or partially, or the youth delegate is asked to raise funds needed for his or her participation.

## **For further information and support**

---

The United Nations Programme on Youth supports Member States and their Permanent Mission to the United Nations in the inclusion of youth representatives in national delegations to the General Assembly.

For general information, please contact:

Mr. Joop Theunissen, Focal Point on Youth  
Division for Social Policy and Development  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations, 2 UN Plaza, Room DC2-1318  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: (212) 963 7763, Fax: (212) 963 3062  
Email: [theunissen@un.org](mailto:theunissen@un.org)

For information on events for the ten-year review  
of the World Programme of Action for Youth,  
please contact:

Ms. Julie Larsen, Associate Social Affairs Officer  
Division for Social Policy and Development  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations, 2 UN Plaza, Room DC2-1308  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel: (917) 367-6036, Fax: (212) 963 3062  
Email: [larsenj@un.org](mailto:larsenj@un.org)

All UN documents referred to in this guide can be obtained at: [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth) under the pull-down menu “Resources”.