

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

Prepared for:

Member States of the United Nations

Prepared by:

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

April 2006



UNITED NATIONS



# T O C

ABLE  
F  
ONTENTS

- 5 Introduction
- 6 Background
- 8 The role of a youth delegate
  - 1 Before meetings at the UN
  - 1 During meetings at the UN
  - 1 After meetings at the UN
- 11 The selection of a youth delegate
- 12 For further information

# I Introduction

*The purpose of this guide is to provide Government representatives with information regarding national youth delegates to the General Assembly and other relevant meetings 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 (see box p.7). 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.*





## BACKGROUND

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 (52/83, 54/120, 56/117, 58/133, 59/148). In its recent resolution pertaining to youth policies and programmes, adopted on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 2005, the General Assembly:

- n Welcomed the participation of youth representatives in national delegations, and urged Member States to consider being represented by youth representatives on a continuing basis during relevant discussions in the General and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, bearing in mind the principle of gender balance; (para. 9)
- n Invited all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute inter alia, to the United Nations Youth Fund for the participation of youth representatives in national delegations, in particular from developing countries; (A/RES/60/2, para. 10)

The underlying principle to youth participation in the work of the United Nations is that it leads to better 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 often act as a resource to promote continued progress in youth policies at the national level 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 had youth delegates in the past and for more information on their work, please visit:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/uny/youthrep.htm>

### The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)

The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond was adopted by the General Assembly in 1995. It is a blueprint for the development of national youth policies in relation to the following ten priority concerns:

- education
- employment
- hunger and poverty
- health
- environment
- drug abuse
- juvenile delinquency
- leisure-time activities
- needs of girls and young women
- the effective participation of youth in decision-making

On the occasion of the ten-year review of the WPAY in 2005, the General Assembly decided to add the following as additional priority areas to the Programme: the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men; the use of and access to information and communication technologies; the dramatic increase in the incidence of HIV infection among young people and the impact of the epidemic on their lives; the active involvement of young people in armed conflict, both as victims and as perpetrators; and the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in an ageing society.

The Programme is available at:  
<http://www.un.org/youth>

## THE ROLE OF A YOUTH DELEGATE

The role of a youth delegate to the General Assembly or to the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions differs from country to country. It is generally determined by the authority responsible for youth development in a country, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or its equivalent) and a country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations.

### Before meetings at the United Nations

Before attending meetings of the General Assembly or its related bodies, it is helpful for youth delegates 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 on page 12*).

Ideally youth representatives are also well informed on existing policies and programmes for young people in their country and youth delegates often attend an in-country briefing with the Ministry of Youth or similar authority responsible for youth development. In some cases, youth representatives initiate events, public or Internet discussions, consultations, school visits or other forms of outreach in order to inform others of their role as a national youth delegate to the UN General Assembly. Some years, a national youth council or similar organisation will host a preparatory meeting for all the national youth delegates. Some Governments support this work, either financially or by integrating these activities into existing programmes. Because a youth delegate is expected to inform resolutions and other policy and programme recommendations on youth, the most effective delegates are those who are well-versed in current national youth policies, who are linked to youth organizations, structures or networks in their home country and who are knowledgeable on some of the key issues confronting their generation.



### During meetings at the United Nations

Each country determines the amount of time its youth delegates spend at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Some countries enable their youth delegates to participate in the full duration of the General Assembly, which is generally in session from September to mid-December. However, the main focus of a youth delegate's work is usually the processes that take place in the Third Committee, the arm 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 Governments in the Third Committee.

Matters that pertain specifically to youth currently 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". Generally, this agenda item is considered in the Third Committee during the month of October, however, this is subject to change based on the annual programmes of work adopted by Member States. The agenda of the General Assembly, including that of its Third Committee, is usually available in late summer at: <http://www.un.org/ga>. The agendas of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, which take place during the months of January to July, are also available at this link.

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, the United Nations Secretariat, or non-governmental organizations.

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.

## After meetings at the United Nations

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 programmes 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 representatives of both the Government and youth organizations.

The selection process is frequently overseen by the government authority 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 on 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. Following the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 60/2, Governments may wish to make contributions to the United Nations Youth Fund to support the participation of youth delegates, in particular from developing countries.



### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

The United Nations Programme on Youth offers support to Member States and their Permanent Missions to the United Nations to assist in the inclusion of youth representatives in national delegations to the General Assembly.

For general information, please contact:  
United Nations Programme 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 2791, Fax: (212) 963 3062  
Email: [youth@un.org](mailto:youth@un.org)

All UN documents referred to in this guide can be obtained at:  
[www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth)