

*Upon the request of Mr. Hamid Al Bayati,
Chairman of the Third Committee,
we are proud to present the*

Report on the Current Situation of Youth Delegates to the UN General Assembly

***To:** H.E. Dr. Hamid Al Bayati, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Chairman of the Third Committee of the sixty-first UN General Assembly*

***Written By:** The Youth Delegates to the Sixty-First United Nations General Assembly, of Australia, Finland, Germany, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland*

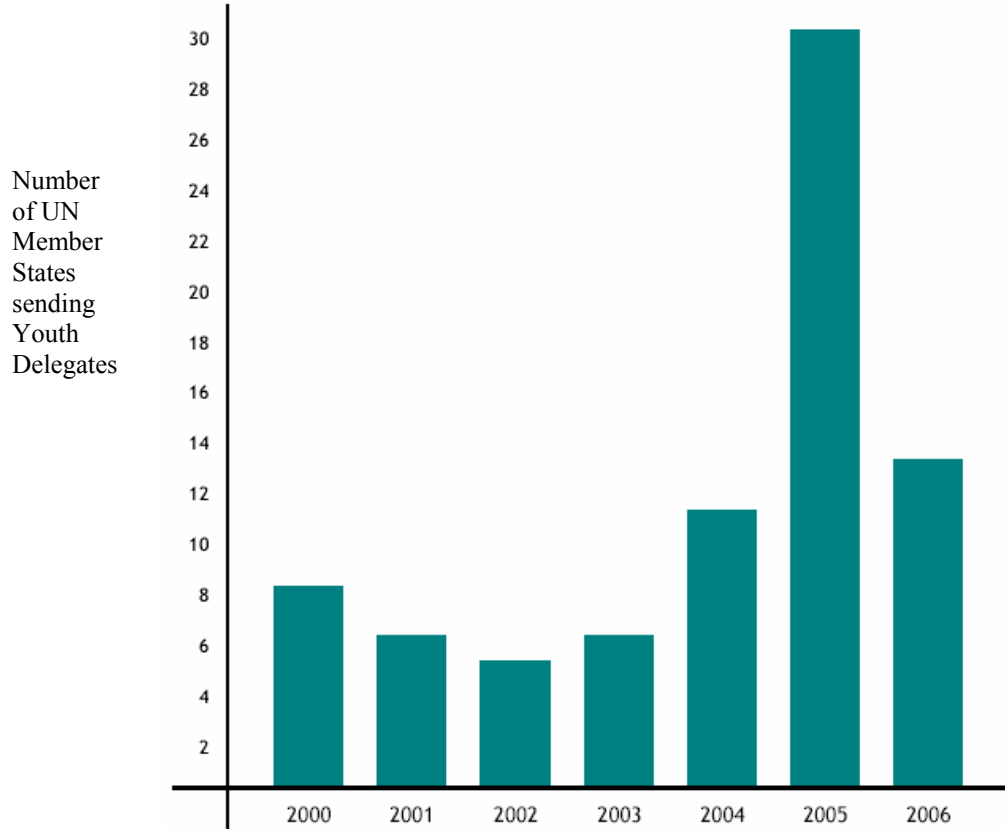
***Appendix:** A Brief Guide to Youth Delegates to the United Nations General Assembly*

New York, October 10th 2006

Background

Youth delegates were included in delegations for the first time over 35 years ago. Several countries started sending youth delegates in the 1990s. In the recent past an increasing number of countries have started sending youth delegates to the UN General Assembly with a peak last year to the sixtieth session.

Youth Delegates to the UNGA since year 2000



UN Resolutions Encouraging Youth Participation

In 1995, on the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, the United Nations formally strengthened their commitment to Ten Priority Areas faced by young people. It did so by adopting an international strategy called the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY).

One of the priorities of the World Programme of Action of Youth is to encourage participation of young people in all levels of decision-making. In particular, it invites governments to strengthen the involvement of young people in international fora by embracing youth delegates into their national delegations. (A/RES/50/81, oc 107, 1995)

This invitation was renewed several times in subsequent resolutions (52/83, 54/120, 56/117, 58/133, 59/148). In the 2005 Resolution (A/RES/60/2), the General Assembly:

- ♦ *Welcomes the participation of youth representatives in national delegations, and urges Member States to consider being represented by youth representatives on a continuing basis during relevant discussions in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, bearing in mind the principle of gender balance (oc 9)*
- ♦ *Invites 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 (oc 10)*

Selection of Youth Delegates

The inclusion of a youth delegate in a national delegation requires the commitment of the government to engage in intra-ministerial coordination. Therefore, selection of a youth delegate varies from one country to another.

In most cases, the process is arranged by a national youth structure that is able to impart knowledge and act as a conduit between the youth delegate and young people in the country. In other instances, the relevant ministry calls for applications and shortlists candidates to be reviewed by representatives of the government and youth organizations. Once approved by the government, the decision is relayed to national Mission to the United Nations.

The role of the Youth Delegate

The work of the youth delegate differs from country to country.

Before the General Assembly

Prior to departure youth delegates engage in activities such as:

- ♦ Running workshops
- ♦ Conducting consultations with young people and youth organizations
- ♦ Being briefed by the government
- ♦ Researching the UN and its proceedings
- ♦ Cooperating with other youth delegates
- ♦ Attending the Youth Delegates Preparatory Meeting held two months in advance, aimed at coordinating the youth delegates' work at the General Assembly

At the General Assembly

The youth delegate, as part of the official delegation to the United Nations engages in:

- ♦ Providing the national delegation with a young person's point of view
- ♦ Strengthening the legitimacy of the government in representing young people living in their country
- ♦ Giving a statement on behalf of the country in the Third Committee on the Agenda Item on Social Development
- ♦ Collaborating with the permanent mission and reporting on the meetings attended to the rest of the delegation
- ♦ Working with other youth delegates in order to raise awareness on youth issues on an international level (through newsletters, side events, and planning future initiatives)
- ♦ Lobbying for more youth delegates to be included in national delegations
- ♦ Learning about the structures and procedures of the UN and national priorities

After the General Assembly

Upon returning home, the youth delegate engages in the following:

- ♦ Giving debriefings with relevant ministries and organizations
- ♦ Acting as a multiplier spreading the knowledge and experience with other young people (through running workshops, working on Model United Nations, visiting schools and youth events)
- ♦ Inspiring other young people to take a role as active citizens, and to keep the process of youth delegates going
- ♦ Attending the Evaluation Meeting (usually taking place two months after the departure of the youth delegates from the United Nations)
- ♦ Giving recommendations on the selection process, and trains the successive youth delegate

Youth Delegates at Other Meetings

Youth Delegates presently attend and bring in a youth perspective to the General Assembly as well as other meetings such as the Commission on Social Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development. However, the concept of having Youth Delegates can be extended to cover many more meetings, committees and conferences.

Challenges

- ♦ Member states do not **prioritize youth participation** on a national level, despite written commitments in several UN resolutions
- ♦ Most national governments are unaware of the fact that youth delegates can also **be included in delegations to other meetings**, and not merely to the United Nations General Assembly
- ♦ Youth issues are **not a high priority area** in the work of the UN General Assembly or at the UN Secretariat
- ♦ There is a lack of **distribution and absorption of knowledge** on how countries can start and maintain the process of having youth delegates
- ♦ There is a lack of **coordination between UN bodies** when it comes to matters and initiatives relating to youth
- ♦ There is lack of **economic investment in youth**, including in the United Nations Youth Fund
- ♦ There is a lack of **human resources** at the Programme on Youth
- ♦ The International Community as a whole is not **aware of the resource offered by young people**, which leads to its being untapped, including the energy, creativity and innovation
- ♦ Member States are seldom aware of the benefits youth delegates offer as **multipliers on the common values of the UN**

Recommendations

Whilst acknowledging the steps taken thus far by all stakeholders concerned, we affirm our own commitment to improving the youth delegates programme. Therefore we believe that it is our duty to share the knowledge we have gained at the United Nations General Assembly to the next generation of youth delegates.

Moreover, we call upon other stakeholders to recognize our work and provide their support in the following ways, as recommended:

All member states are asked to send youth delegates to the UN General Assembly.

The culture change required for this will necessitate the commitment of different stakeholders in the process, including:

- ♦ The Third Committee Secretariat by sending letters to Member States expressing the importance of youth delegates in:
 - National policy-making processes
 - Inclusion in national delegations in international conferences
 - Updating and enhancing resolutions on youth

- ♦ The Third Committee Bureau by:
 - Securing sponsors for the 2007 CSocD resolution on youth
 - Ensuring that there is a separate Third Committee Item on youth
 - Making sure that youth is on the agenda every year

- ♦ Member States should:
 - Support the work of the youth delegates through the hosting of side events, working breakfasts, receptions and dinners
 - Include the youth delegates in their daily work as an integral part of the delegation
 - Provide financial resources to the United Nations Youth Fund
 - Provide an associate expert to the United Nations Programme on Youth
 - Inform the UN Programme on Youth about their progress on having Youth Delegates within their national delegations

- ♦ The United Nations Programme on Youth should:
 - After receiving the required support (financial and human) of Member States and the Secretariat, allocate more resources on disseminating information to the Member States on youth delegate inclusion
 - Create awareness on the benefits youth delegates bring to the national delegations, and the country's political and cultural system

- ♦ The United Nations Secretary-General should keep sending a letter to all Heads of States encouraging them to include youth delegates

- ♦ Commission for Social Development

Member States should be aware of the fact that WPAY will be extended at the next Commission for Social Development in February 2007. It is crucial that youth delegates be included in national delegations to the Commission.

- ♦ United Nations Youth Fund

Following the request of the General Assembly in Resolution 60/2, Governments should contribute to the United Nations Youth Fund.

Conclusion

Progress has been made in the past years; however, this has not been sufficient in placing youth as one of the priorities of development and national agendas. This has led to the exclusion of young people from society. The recommendations set here are meant to improve the mainstreaming process that will lead to a more inclusive society and to young people becoming actors on the national and international stage; specifically as a strategic part of society.