



unesco's
Commitment
to youth:

The youth forum

UNESCO's

commitment to

Youth: The Youth Forum

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1. Introduction: UNESCO's strategy for action with and for youth

UNESCO's involvement in the field of youth stems from the creation of the organisation in 1946. After the Second World War, UNESCO (with only 20 Member States at that time) helped organise international volunteer youth work camps to aid in the reconstruction of Europe. Almost fifty years later in November 1996, 186 Member States at the 29th Session of the UNESCO General Conference reaffirmed and stressed their unanimous commitment to youth as a priority for the whole Organisation.

The current policy, i.e. the promotion of 'youth' as a mainstreaming issue of the Organisation in all its activities, is guided by the *World Action Programme for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1995. It has also been inspired and informed by a number of recommendations, declarations and plans of actions of diverse regional and international youth meetings and forums held in recent years.¹



The overall objective of UNESCO's action with and for youth is the empowerment of young people to ensure and enhance their full participation in society as equal and valuable partners, especially in the design of the knowledge society. To empower young people means to enable them to use their visions, creativity and aspirations in the service of society's development: UNESCO's action strives to be one that reaches out to young people, responds to their concerns and expectations, and fosters skills which are useful and long-lasting. However, young people are not only considered as a major focus group of UNESCO's programmes and activities, but are equally involved as the agents and actors with whom programmes should be envisaged, implemented and evaluated.

UNESCO thus seeks to promote a policy of mainstreaming youth which is geared to be comprehensive in order to address all of youth - a heterogeneous group in constant evolution - and equally to respond both to practical and strategic needs of youth and to initiate actions aimed at young people's empowerment. It mobilises support from countries and from other partners in order to ensure that

¹ Major Youth Forums and meetings pertaining to youth:

- 1991: First World Youth Forum of the United Nations system (Vienna, Austria)
- 1996: 2nd World Youth Forum of the United Nations system (Vienna, Austria)
- 1998: 3rd World Youth Forum of the United Nations system (Braga, Portugal), First World Youth Festival (Lisbon, Portugal), First World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth (Lisbon, Portugal), UNESCO Youth Forum held at the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, France)
- 1999: UNESCO Youth Forum held at the World Conference on Science (Budapest, Hungary), French-speaking Youth Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland), Youth Forum held at the 30th session of the General Conference of UNESCO
- 2001: 4th World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (Dakar, Senegal), Youth Forum held at the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO
- 2003: Youth Forum held at the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO

Young men and women are present in UNESCO bodies (Secretariat, delegations, National Commissions), in workshops, meetings, conferences and in all events organised by UNESCO or its partners

Youth views and priorities are taken into account in the elaboration, implementation and increasingly also in the evaluation of projects and programmes in the areas of UNESCO's competence. This allows the Organisation to establish partnerships with young people and with youth organisations which assist in mobilising youth participation in social development

Youth concerns and issues are included in countries' policies and programmes in education, science, culture and communication in order to create opportunities for the participation of young people and to recognise their contribution.

The Section for Youth of the Bureau of Strategic Planning has, since 1998, been in charge of giving an impulse and a coherence to UNESCO's action with and for youth and benefits from direct communication with youth through a wide network of associations and youth NGOs and its active participation in numerous youth events. Its main objective is to define ways to establish a real partnership in order to help UNESCO open up for young people's participation and to foster the creation of interfaces allowing youth to make a difference.

The approach of the Section for Youth

- ▼ Youth is a resource, not a problem
- ▼ Youth are partners, not a target group
- ▼ Youth interests, visions and contributions need to be taken into account

The role of the Section for Youth

- ▼ Development, mainstreaming and coordination of UNESCO's strategies and programmes pertaining to youth
- ▼ Building partnerships (Youth NGOs and networks, IGOs, National Commissions, Foundations etc.)
- ▼ Act as a 'clearing house' with regard to youth (publications, info pills)

Bridging the inevitable gap between young people and a huge and highly complex international organisation with its many partners and networks is a challenge demanding continuous efforts. One essential aspect is the creation of appropriate mechanisms to channel the voices of youth into the functioning and the activities of UNESCO. Apart from co-operation with National Commissions as a crucial actor in this respect, the UNESCO Youth Forum - organised for the third time at the recent 32nd General Conference at UNESCO headquarters in Paris - has emerged as a highly important vector in the process.

Held for the first time at the 30th General Conference (1999), the organisation of a Youth Forum has been - first of all - a significant expression of UNESCO's choice and commitment to involve young people in its work at all levels and to encourage the participation of young men and young women in major events. Bringing together young delegates from different cultural backgrounds to exchange views, share experience, reflect together and, above all, to detect common pre-occupations and problems, the UNESCO Youth Forum has become a unique space for debate and reflection on how to make young people part of the solutions to the manifold problems confronting them.

At the subsequent two Youth Forums in 2001 and 2003, the questions on how youth can work together in order to substantially contribute to UNESCO's objectives were directed into the development of strategies and concrete proposals which could be channeled into UNESCO's programmes and actions.



The success of the Forum at the 32nd General Conference culminated in a resolution, adopted unanimously by the Member States, which institutionalised the Youth Forum as a permanent feature of the UNESCO General Conference, the Organisation's highest decision-making body. Over the next few months, the Section for Youth will examine the impact of this decision more closely and consider what conceptual and practical changes will be possible in the lead-up to and during the 2005 Youth Forum.

The Section for Youth provides below an outline of the concept and experience of the three UNESCO Youth Forums held to date.

2. A renewed commitment: UNESCO's Youth Forum

2.1. Youth Forum of the 30th General Conference of UNESCO (3-5 November 1999)

The first Youth Forum was attended by more than 120 participants from Member States and by observers from non-governmental organisations active in the youth domain. The session consisted of five meetings where three interrelated themes were discussed by the young delegates. The first one addressed national youth approaches and structures, the second dealt with strategies, projects, programmes and youth policies, and the third discussed the UNESCO Draft Programme and Budget with the objective of rendering the Organisation's fields of competence and activities more transparent. All sessions were in a plenary format and strict formal rules of international meetings were in place: during the first session, a president and rapporteur as well as a drafting committee were elected from the floor and the agenda of the three-day meeting was adopted. Subsequently, the delegates drafted proposals within UNESCO's sphere of action, which were included in the final report adopted at the last meeting.²

² The final report of the Youth Forum of the 30th General Conference of UNESCO is available as document 30C/INF 44 and can be accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001179/117959e.pdf>

The recommendations of this first UNESCO Youth Forum can be seen as additions to the strategy for UNESCO's action with and for youth, which was endorsed by the Forum.

A summary follows:

Important recommendations of the first UNESCO Youth Forum

1. Relating to UNESCO's Fields of Competence, the YF recommends:

- ▼ **Education:** efforts to reach rural youth, indigenous youth, physically challenged youth and other groups who are normally excluded from the standard educational system should be strengthened
- ▼ **Science:** measures should be taken in order to ensure the active participation of youth in the follow-up to the World Conference of Science held in Budapest, and world-wide communication and cooperation between young scientists should be strengthened in order to mitigate the effects of the brain-drain
- ▼ **Culture:** UNESCO's efforts to promote cultural diversity should be maintained and intensified
- ▼ **Communication:** a mass-media communication strategy should be pursued by UNESCO and reinforced in order to achieve higher visibility

2. Relating to the Forum itself and its organisation, the YF recommends:

- ▼ The institutionalisation of the Forum as a permanent entity of the General Conference and nomination of official delegates of Member States as youth representatives
- ▼ A recruitment and staffing policy of UNESCO paying special attention to mentorship and training of interns and new employees, and aiming at 25% of staff members under the age of 30

The first Youth Forum marked a decisive step in the Organisation's action to involve young people as delegates in the conceptualization and implementation of UNESCO's future orientation and programme, and to integrate youth perspectives to this end.

The first session of UNESCO's Youth Forum underlined the need to describe the functioning and activities of a complex organisation to young people; so as to encourage further youth contributions and participation. Furthermore, young people exchanged many ideas and expectations that reflected the diversity of the world and the multi-cultural nature of the debate. Although the range of topics was very wide, this did not mean that it was impossible to identify and define common interests. Another important aspect of this premiere for UNESCO is the fact that the Youth Forum was given the opportunity to express its opinion on the Draft Programme and budget for 2000-2001 as well as on youth strategies and priorities for future programmes.

2.2. Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference of UNESCO (12-14 October 2001)

Learning from the experience of the first event, the second Youth Forum incorporated a number of improvements in terms of conceptualisation, design and organisation. The main objective of the second Youth Forum was to yield a qualitative and very clear opinion of youth on the cross-cutting themes set out in UNESCO's medium-term strategy for 2002-2007: '*Eradication of Poverty, especially extreme poverty*' and '*The contribution of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to the development of education, science and culture, and the construction of a knowledge society*'.

131 participants from 83 Member States and international youth organisations gathered in Paris from 12 to 14 October 2001 aiming to prepare, discuss and adopt a report reflecting the young people's views and concerns on the Organisation's mid-term strategy's cross-cutting themes. This time, plenary sessions were held only at the opening and closure of the Forum in order to establish the working rules and adopt the report. The bulk of the debate took place in discussion groups.

The first discussion group session converged around the cross-cutting theme '*Poverty Eradication*', with a sub-theme '*The need for a broad poverty paradigm*'. The second session dealt with the theme '*Globalisation: challenges, opportunities and negative effects*'. Stimulating presentations from young delegates and representatives of UNESCO Sectors preceded both sessions. The item on '*Information and Communication Technologies*', which constituted the third session, comprised a first sub-theme '*Youth and e-governance*' and additionally prompted a discussion on the promotion of a wider diffusion of information and knowledge about the realities of different cultures.



The high quality of these debates was all the more important since the success and achievements of the Youth Forum are linked to the delegates' ability to arrive at an engaging final report. At the closing plenary session of the Youth Forum, the draft final report was debated and adopted³ and it was decided to include a youth *Declaration on Terrorism and War* as an addendum to the final report. The plenary session closed with a sense of achievement and optimism about the possibilities created by the recommendations. The President of the Youth Forum presented the final report to the Member States at a plenary session of the 31st General Conference.

³ The final report of the Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference of UNESCO is available as document 31C/INF 17 and can be accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001239/123995e.pdf>

The 2001 Youth Forum – an assessment by the Director-General of UNESCO

'It is noteworthy how much the deliberations of the Youth Forum focused on the digital divide, along with other key themes and issues. I was very happy that we managed, with a minimum of resources, to organise this Forum. And I was even happier when I learned of the relevance of the Forum's recommendations. Let me just single out three of them, as they are pertinent to the agenda of this General Conference:

▼ *With respect to poverty, the youth delegates proposed 'a new vision of globalisation, putting people before material values' and stressed that 'poverty is a denial of basic human rights'. While they called for specific action, they also offered themselves as a resource, emphasising that peer education and non-formal education in general are essential to achieve development goals.*

▼ *With regard to the role of information and communication technologies, the Youth Forum underlined that 'using the appropriate technology is vital and ICT projects must not be limited to the Internet'. Traditional media will remain important instruments to spread information, and UNESCO should support training and networking of student radio stations and assist in creating telecentres.*

▼ *In the Youth Declaration on Terrorism and War, the Forum delegates expressed their wish 'to build a future based on education for all, a culture of peace, scientific co-operation, respect for cultural diversity and call for a permanent dialogue among cultures and civilizations'.*

We all should be proud of having created this opportunity for exchange and dialogue and for seeking solutions. I wish to commend all the participants, organisers and sponsors for this successful event, for their dedication and for the quality of their deliberations. I hope we can organise such a Forum again in the future.'

2.3. Youth Forum of the 32nd General Conference of UNESCO (26-28 September 2003)

'UNESCO and Young People: a mutual Engagement' was the theme of the third UNESCO Youth Forum, held from 26 to 28 September 2003 at UNESCO Headquarters. The 154 participants aged 18 to 30 from 105 Member States and observers of 22 NGOs considered following the recommendation of the Executive Board, the three following themes: *'Education for sustainable development, in particular freshwater management'*; *'Youth and HIV/AIDS, preventive education'*; and *'UNESCO and young people, ways of co-operation and communication'*.

The three themes were discussed and worked on by participants during sessions commenced in plenary, wherein participants were introduced to a range of perspectives by speakers from within and outside of UNESCO, including youth NGOs and the private sector. Delegates then split into six working groups, where the themes were discussed and recommendations recorded by

rapporteurs appointed by each group. These recommendations were conveyed to the Forum Rapporteur at nightly sessions of the Drafting Committee, which was responsible for putting together the final report. A draft final report was debated and adopted at the final plenary session on the afternoon of Sunday 28 September, and presented to Member States at the General Conference the next day.⁴

The success of the third UNESCO Youth Forum culminated, as already mentioned, in a draft resolution calling for its institutionalisation as an integral part of the UNESCO General Conference, responding to requests voiced by young people since the first Forum. The resolution was adopted unanimously at the General Conference session on 17 October 2003. This decision demonstrated the increasing interest in youth as a mainstreaming issue and the desire of Member States to see youth even more involved in UNESCO activities and their needs mainstreamed in all programmes.



3rd UNESCO Youth Forum website

In cooperation with youth-led Canadian-based NGO TakingITGlobal, UNESCO has set up an official Youth Forum website conceived as both a search tool (containing all the background documents to the three themes discussed in French, English and Spanish) and an interactive forum of exchange and discussion. This website is also open to follow-up initiatives and to recommendations from participants in view of future themes and procedures of the UNESCO Youth Forum.

<http://unesco.takingitglobal.org/index.en.html>

⁴The final report of the Youth Forum of the 32nd General Conference of UNESCO is available as document 32C/55 and can be accessed at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001318/131814e.pdf>

Voices from the 3rd UNESCO Youth Forum

▼ *I encourage you to participate, [...] because I do not have doubt that another world is possible. We have a great deal to say, and we are going to say it in Paris, 'where there is a dream, there is a road' [...] I remain at your disposition and I expect to be able to participate with you, of the hopes, desires and illusions of the persons and young UNESCO.*

Fernando Redondo Benito, Centro UNESCO Castilla - La Mancha

▼ *My name is Rehopotsoe Kikine (17yrs old) and I'm a representative from the Kingdom of Lesotho. I'm preparing mostly on the HIV/AIDS theme. Coming from Southern Africa I think it should be my number one priority. This is my first time attending the Youth Forum and I must say I am very excited to meet you all. Since I'm new to this sort of thing I'm sure I'm going to gain some very invaluable knowledge and that this is going to be a life-altering experience.*

▼ *My name is Laia Corral and I am from Catalonia. I am 24 years old and I will be in the UNESCO Youth Forum as a representative of the Catalan Federation of UNESCO Associations and Clubs (NGO). I am working in the Catalan Federation of UNESCO Associations and Clubs as a coordinator of the Youth Network for Peace-Building (YNPB) (www.unescocat.org/youthnetwork). The YNPB aims to maintain a network of relations between young people from all over the world who are working for peace and non-violent conflict resolution and also gather and publish initiatives for the construction of peace and democracy that could be of particular interest to young people. Such a network is integrated by young people from all over the world and allows them to exchange information and experience, to learn from others and to participate in international meetings pursuing common objectives.*

▼ *My name is Masanori Kono and I am from Japan. I am 29 years old, perhaps the oldest participant at the coming UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris. Honestly, I feel so aged after reading some of your posts! I recently joined the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, trying to revitalize the UNESCO spirit in Japan. Before that, I worked at an NGO reaching out to asylum seekers and refugees in Japan. Through befriending courageous men and women from around the world, I learned the importance of human rights, freedom from fear, hope etc, which many of the Japanese youth take for granted these days. Well, I am very much excited to meeting with you all and be a part of this great gathering to share our experiences.*

▼ *My name is Mohammed El Batta, I will be representing Greece (Hellas) at the third UNESCO Youth Forum. I was a member of the Greek delegation, which attended the second forum. Our attendance resulted in the establishment of The Hellenic UNESCO Youth Forum. We are eager to participate in this important meeting where a large number of promising young people from all around the globe, with enthusiasm, fresh ideas and commitment to the human values and idealism will be there. Looking forward to meeting all old friends, and to making many new ones.*

3. What did the concept of the Youth Forum achieve for UNESCO's policy pertaining to youth?

As a result of the resolution adopted by the General Conference at its 32nd session, the UNESCO Youth Forum will become an integral part of the meetings of the Organisation's highest decision-making body. This decision marks a cementation of youth participation at this major event and opens up new opportunities for young people's active involvement in UNESCO's activities. It also provokes a number of questions as to the present achievements of the Youth Forum for UNESCO's policy related to youth and its future role and functioning derived from it.

In the light of its first three editions, the UNESCO Youth Forum was successful in increasing Member States' and delegates' understanding of youth interests and needs and the value of reinforcing their inclusion and participation in UNESCO. This evolution is particularly evident in the interesting debate following the presentation of the final report of the Youth Forum within the plenary session of the 32nd General Conference. From a mere side-function to the General Conference in 1999, the Youth Forum subsequently achieved a high visibility within the Organisation and attracted strong support for lobbying youth interests at different levels. In a first approach, it emerged as a strong mechanism for the promotion of a number of issues important to youth especially at the level of UNESCO National Commissions (which are responsible for nominating



the official youth representatives of their country) and across the different thematic sectors of UNESCO (which were invited to the plenary sessions of the Youth Forum to present their activities targeting and involving young people). Also, the adopted procedure of drafting a final report touching on the respective themes discussed in the sessions and workshops of the Youth Forum has proven to be a valuable way of getting a clear-cut expression of youth interests and concerns on these themes and to make them heard at the General Conference.

For the young participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, the Youth Forum is a singular opportunity to share their experience, concerns and visions and, across all differences, to attempt to define universal ideas and common denominators for action. This facet of the Forum as a colourful space of multicultural encounters has always been a rewarding learning experience for both participants and UNESCO staff.

The Youth Forum lastly seeks to contribute to the emergence of a network of young people from all over the world, connected with UNESCO, in order to promote concrete action. The young delegates must be prepared to accept responsibility upon their return home for promoting and supporting the initiatives put forward during the Forum and to keep the Section for Youth regularly informed of relevant activities in their countries. With young activists and representatives of youth organisations invited to present their experiences and projects in specific fields, the Forum provides tangible arguments on how youth can make a difference and as a consequence encourages young people to become active and to disseminate best practice in their own countries.



The sustained impetus the Youth Forum has provided for highlighting youth perspectives and the participation of young people in UNESCO programmes and activities, can be greatly enhanced by a close cooperation with UNESCO National Commissions, the different sectors of UNESCO and the pro-active support of Member States. In order to fulfill UNESCO's strategy of action with and for youth, it is hoped that all these actors will incorporate youth views and priorities via real partnerships with young people. Successful mainstreaming also entails the inclusion of young people in delegations of the General Conference,

in National Commissions and Permanent Delegations as well as across UNESCO bodies.

UNESCO National Commissions - Key actors in mainstreaming the needs of youth

The UNESCO National Commissions are UNESCO's privileged partners charged with facilitating the outreach of the Organisation to civil society at national level. The final reports of the three UNESCO Youth Forums call on National Commissions to :

- ▼ Open their doors to young people*
- ▼ Create resource centres for youth*
- ▼ Improve and increase their cooperation with youth NGOs and organisations*
- ▼ Assist young people to build networks with youth NGOs in other countries.*

In return, young people are expected to help National Commissions as volunteers.

4 The UNESCO Youth Forum as a permanent feature of the UNESCO General Conference: perspectives for follow-up and future meetings

UNESCO firmly believes in the added value of global networking amongst youth and would like to contribute to its development. Over the years, young people the world over have shown a remarkable sense of initiative. By pooling their resources, they have become important actors in international cooperation at all levels in the fields of education, science, culture, communication and information. UNESCO wants the voice of young people to be heard and their views to be integrated into its overall policy. Hence the UNESCO Youth Forum.

Youth can make a difference!

The three UNESCO Youth Forums have provoked a number of questions and themes for discussion which the Section for Youth will examine, in cooperation with youth organisations and youth representatives, in preparation for the 2005 Youth Forum. The principal questions relate to new consultation mechanisms, i.e. identifying the issues most relevant to young people and which could have a significant impact on UNESCO's work at all levels. Also needed is a continuous follow-up of the recommendations made in past Youth Forum reports.

Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of Youth Forum participants and Member States represented. This has enabled a wider participation of young people from developing countries and enhanced the diversity of views and possibilities of cooperation. Our goal is to achieve the universal participation of Member States. Simultaneously, the profile of the youth delegates

has considerably improved. National Commissions and Member States have been more attentive by nominating young people who have experience in raising and debating youth issues and, most especially, who are key interlocutors as members of youth organisations. Finally, UNESCO's Youth Forum is unique in uniting government and NGO representatives in a debate and drawing up of conclusions. We believe that the conviviality and partnership displayed in the various forums is a good example of what the young generation is capable of.



5 Further sources of information

▼ 3rd UNESCO Youth Forum, 26 – 28 September 2003

<http://unesco.takingitglobal.org/index.en.html>

▼ Reports of the Youth Forums held at the 30th, 31st and 32nd General Conference of UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001179/117959e.pdf> (30th General Conference)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001239/123995e.pdf> (31st General Conference)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001318/131814e.pdf> (32nd General Conference)

▼ Websites:

Section for Youth, Bureau of Strategic Planning: www.unesco.org/youth

The Section for Youth has prepared a variety of publications on diverse issues pertaining to youth. All of these can be consulted at www.unesco.org/youth/publications.htm

We also suggest to consult the website of the United Nations Youth Information Network at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/>

▼ Publications by the United Nations

• Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy

Adopted during the 4th World Youth Forum of the UN System in Dakar, Senegal, 5-10 August 2001, UN website on this Forum <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/forum/index.html>

• Braga Youth Action Plan

Adopted during the 3rd World Youth Forum of the UN System, Braga, Portugal, 1-7 August 1998. UN website on this Forum <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/yforum98/wyforum.htm>

• Lisbon Declaration

Adopted during the 1st World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, Lisbon, Portugal, 8-12 August 1998. UN website on this Conference: <http://www.un.org/events/youth98>

Annex

6 6.1. Reports of the three UNESCO Youth Forums

Report of the Youth Forum of the 30th General Conference of UNESCO (1999)

Report of the Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference of UNESCO (2001)

Report of the Youth Forum of the 32nd General Conference of UNESCO (2003)

6.2. General Conference Resolution ‘32 C/Resolutions, 82 Youth Forum of the UNESCO General Conference’



Paris 1999

➤ **Conférence générale**
30e session
 Document d'information

➤ **Général Conférence**
30th Session
 Information document

➤ **Conférence Général**
30ª reunión
 Documento de información

Генеральная конференция
 30-я сессия
 Информационный документ

المؤتمر العام
 الدورة الثلاثون
 وثيقة إعلامية

大会
 第三十届会议
 资料性文件

inf

30C/INF.44

12 November 1999

Original: English

Report of the YOUTH FORUM 3-5 November 1999

The Youth Forum, organized by UNESCO following 156 EX/Decision 7.2 adopted by the Executive Board at its 156th session, held five sessions on 3,4 and 5 November 1999. At its first session, Ms Carolien RUIGROK (Netherlands) was elected as Chairperson. The delegates of Argentina, Burundi, China and Uzbekistan were elected as Vice-Chairpersons.

Ms Hanane CHAIBAINOU (Morocco) was elected as Rapporteur of the Forum. The agenda was then adopted.

At its second session, a Drafting Committee was designated, composed of delegates of the following Member States: Australia, Canada, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Dominica, Kirghizstan, Republic of Korea, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Norway and Tunisia, along with the observer of 'Pax Romana MIEC'.

We extend sincere thanks to the members of the Drafting Committee and to the Rapporteur for their considerable work during these three days. However, for both practical and technical reasons, it was unfortunately not possible to present a report of the Forum debates which could be approved in a democratic manner and which satisfied all the delegates. We therefore concentrated our efforts on drawing up our recommendations.

The 1999 UNESCO Youth Forum commends UNESCO for demonstrating its commitment to young people, through convening this inaugural Youth Forum. The Forum endorses the Strategy for UNESCO's Action with and for Youth and makes the following additional recommendations to the Organization:

1. That Youth remain a priority group within UNESCO. This priority should be reflected not only in the full participation of youth as a serious and reliable actor in all UNESCO domains of action, but also in the budget allocated to the Youth Programmes;

2. That the Youth Forum be established as a permanent entity of the General Conference made up of official youth delegates from all Member States and from all NGOs with whom UNESCO has a partnership. The Forum should be of at least one week's duration. Further, the President and Rapporteur of the Forum will be invited to officially present recommendations to the General Conference plenary;

- 3.** That UNESCO encourage the organization of youth fora to be held at national and regional levels. That regional youth fora be held at least biannually. That delegates for the fora be selected by national youth unions (or equivalent bodies), and UNESCO National Commissions. UNESCO should ensure that whenever possible the different types of youth representatives be represented in these regional fora and grant them the right to express their views. UNESCO should ensure the involvement of international and national Youth NGOs during the preparation and realization of these fora and grant them the right to express their views;
- 4.** (a) That the recruitment and staffing policy of UNESCO endeavour to ensure that 25% of staff members be under the age of 30. Further, that a policy of gender equality ought to be respected. Further still, that mentorship and training be provided to interns and new employees; (b) That in the future the recently-created Youth Council should have its members elected through criteria established by youth representatives;
- 5.** That our proposed youth initiatives be funded through the reallocation of existing budgetary resources, considering that UNESCO has adopted a zero nominal growth strategy;
- 6.** That the funding balance between top management and programmes should be redressed in favour of programmes. In the field of competence of education:
- 7.** That UNESCO develop special criteria for scholarships which promote a greater development of informal education;
- 8.** That the Organization continue to support preventive educational programmes in the areas of drugs, AIDS/HIV, and sex education; and create educational programmes for tolerance and against racism within and between nations;
- 9.** That efforts be strengthened to reach rural people, women, youth, children, indigenous people, physically challenged people and any others who are normally excluded from the standard educational system;
- 10.** That UNESCO encourage publishers to produce low-cost text books by using low-cost materials;
- 11.** That the Organization continue to support adult-education programmes, and alpha learning centres in the community;
- 12.** (a) That the Organization take heed of the condition of youth living in regions devastated by war and natural disasters, and take action wherever possible. Voluntary service appears to be an ideal means for this endeavour, including work with the already existing voluntary-service NGOs. A concept such as 'teachers without borders' ought to be developed; (b) UNESCO should promote international voluntary service, reinforcing its collaboration with already existing NGOs in this field; (c) That UNESCO promote and co-sponsor international and regional congresses and events for young students. In the field of competence of science:
- 13.** That linkages between the natural and social sciences be encouraged in youth fora, including on-line media, in order to promote understanding, ethical awareness and foster synergies between the two sectors;

14. (a) That measures be taken to ensure the active participation of youth in the follow up to the World Conference on Science held in Budapest. This should cultivate a new social contract between political systems and the new generation of young scientists. The participants in the International Forum of Young Scientists and other scientists' NGOs should play an important role in this process; (b) That UNESCO, all countries, and international and regional institutions significantly increase support for science and technology projects. In particular, we call for the establishment of a global science and technology fund to support international collaboration, research and development; (c) That communication and cooperation between young scientists worldwide be fostered in order to mitigate the effects of brain drain. In the field of competence of culture:

15. That UNESCO's efforts in promoting cultural diversity be maintained in order to: preserve countries' ability to develop and maintain their own cultural policies; promote mutual understanding and tolerance; promote multiculturalism internationally and nationally, in order that every cultural group be taken into consideration and that threatened cultures be protected;

16. That the Organization promote youth cultural exchange, notably via UNESCO Clubs, UNESCO Associated Schools and youth NGOs. Again, voluntary service can be seen as useful to this end;

17. That UNESCO support the creation of publishing houses promoting young writers;

18. That international youth cultural festivals and exhibitions be organized on both regional and international levels, organized for example by UNESCO Associated Schools. In the field of competence of communication:

19. Mindful that UNESCO has very little visibility among youth and the public in general, measures to plan and implement a mass media communication strategy should be ensured such as those taken in favour of the Culture of Peace Programme;

20. That a minimum quota of space be attributed to information concerning youth in existing UNESCO publications such as The UNESCO Courier and/or Sources;

21. That National Commissions privilege a link with young media. This will hopefully lead to more frequent coverage of UNESCO youth programmes and therefore considerably increase visibility;

22. That UNESCO strongly encourage Member States to adopt appropriate action against child pornography due to its devastating effect on children and youth;

23. That the Organization further recognize the importance of community radio in rural areas and enlarge visual communication in countries where literacy is low;

24. (a) That special emphasis be placed on developing stronger communication among youth, through existing youth programmes and to mobilize the establishment of an international programme for the development of communication among youth. This will enable youth to create stronger links and therefore facilitate integration and solidarity among them; (b) UNESCO's Youth Coordination Unit should endeavour to help less developed countries in the establishment of telecommunications namely internet, e-mail, and faxes. In the transdisciplinary programme of a culture of peace:

25. That there be an International Youth Forum for the Culture of Peace, to be held in 2000, International Year of a Culture of Peace, with the specific aim of bringing young people together, particularly those who have suffered the scourges of war, to formulate proposals, strategies, and resolutions for the development of a culture of peace;

26. That these young people be provided with the opportunity to express their views and visions to the international community and world leaders and that the young people's declarations be heeded by them;

27. That UNESCO strongly encourage Member States and the international community to adopt appropriate action against the phenomenon of child soldiers due to its devastating effects on the youth culture of peace.

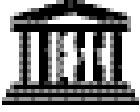
Certain opinions were strongly expressed by individual delegates, but their proposals were not approved by the Forum for inclusion in the recommendations. These are available in the form of an Annex for consultation in the Youth Coordination Unit.

Carolien RUIGROK

Chairperson

Hanane CHAIBAINOU

Rapporteur



Paris 2001

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Final Report of the Proceedings of the UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st session of the General Conference held in Paris, France 12-14 October 2001

Preamble

The UNESCO Youth Forum, organized by UNESCO from 12 to 14 October, embraced 131 participants from 83 UNESCO Member States and international youth organizations. This Forum held two plenary sessions and four discussion group sessions. The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, opened the Youth Forum with a speech of encouragement, in which he expressed his high expectations for the outcomes of the Youth Forum and UNESCO's commitment to take account of the Forum's proposal in the deliberations of the General Conference and in its work with youth in general. Following the speech of the Director-General, musician Mr Jean Michel Jarre shared his motivations as Goodwill Ambassador to UNESCO with the participants. The Youth Forum then proceeded to the election of Chairperson and Rapporteur. Ms Fama Amadou Diao (Senegal) and Mr Jetze van der Ham (Netherlands) were respectively elected President and Rapporteur of the Youth Forum. The President of the General Conference, Ms J. Moserová, acted as co-Chair.

The first discussion group session converged around the cross-cutting theme Poverty Eradication, and had as sub-theme 'The need for a broad poverty paradigm'. One delegate from Nigeria and another from Senegal, as well as two representatives from the Social and Human Sciences Sector of UNESCO, made brief introductions to the theme and prompted many reactions. Following these presentations, we split up into three brainstorming groups, identified by red, blue and yellow colours, in order to allow the delegates to experience a better environment for generating ideas. Each group identified two persons to be responsible for taking notes and to be members of the Drafting Committee. The designated Drafting Committee was composed of delegates from Australia, Benin, Czech Republic, Greece, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Netherlands, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Senegal, Sweden, and the International Union of Socialist Youth.

The second session dealt with the theme 'Globalization: challenges, opportunities and negative effects'. Two delegates of Nigeria and Latvia and two representatives of UNESCO, from the Education and Natural Sciences Sectors, made stimulating presentations on the theme, before the departure of all delegates into the brainstorming groups.

The item on Information and Communication Technologies, which constituted the third session, followed in the afternoon. 'Youth and e-governance', the first sub-theme under examination, was developed by delegates from Japan and Norway. The representative from the Communication and Information Sector presented his views on the theme that were examined further in the brainstorming groups.

The fourth session developed the ICT theme further, with a discussion on the promotion of the wider diffusion of information and knowledge about the realities of different cultures. The session was co-Chaired by the Chairperson of the Executive Board, Ms S. Mendieta de Badaroux, who also contributed to the session in her speech on the use of the Internet. After a presentation by the Culture Sector about the different programmes UNESCO is pursuing in this field, the delegates of Iceland and Nigeria gave inspirational speeches on their views of the topic at hand.

At the closing plenary session of the Youth Forum, the draft final report was debated and adopted. Finally, it was decided to include a declaration on 'Terrorism and War' as an addendum to the final report. The plenary session closed with feelings of achievement and optimism about the possibilities created by the recommendations.

The Youth Forum of the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO congratulates the Organization, in particular the Youth Coordination Unit, for having testified, once more, its interest in young people by convening this second encounter and for its good development. We appreciate the opportunity given to us to be together. We are conscious of the stakes of the Forum, in what relates to, its potential contribution to the 31st session of the General Conference, evoked by the Director-General of UNESCO in his opening speech. We underline the need to improve it further, particularly by adapting the resources available for the Youth Forum to the expected outcome by starting the preparation of delegates sufficiently ahead of time and by allocating sufficient time and sufficient resources.

Eradication of Poverty

Definition

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that poverty is a global problem and agrees to pay special attention to extreme poverty, which primarily exists in LDCs;

The youth of the world proposes a new vision of globalization, putting people before material values;

Aims at the eradication of poverty while recognizing that the alleviation of poverty is more achievable in the short- and medium term;

Stresses that since we as young people are the future, urgent and sustained action to eradicate or alleviate poverty among young people will further the development of the whole of humankind.

▼ Causes of poverty

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Agreeing that poverty is a denial of basic human rights, including basic necessities for survival such as food and shelter,

Recognizing that poverty among young people has multiple causes, of which the Youth Forum would like to highlight:

structural inequalities in the present world system of trade and distribution of financial resources,

insufficient levels of democracy or proper access to decision-making structures that put young people at a disadvantage because of age discrimination,

lack of health or access to adequate health care and health education that, due to, for instance, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, is particularly serious for young people, and a good public health-care system being fundamental for the possibilities of a country to combat poverty,

lack of access to resources such as credits, land or titles to land,

corruption originating in the developed as well as in the developing world, as it diverts funds meant for poverty eradication,

discrimination against young women and girls,

foreign debts that are incurred by older generations and burden young generations,

lack of peace and political stability, including foreign occupation,

Stressing that young people of today show an unprecedented interest in the global issues that need to be addressed in order to eradicate poverty, actively participating in the new social movements and contributing to the formation of a global civil society,

Encourages UNESCO to facilitate the discussion of and the search for alternative models for development and poverty eradication, in which young people are engaged.

▼ The minds of human beings

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Acknowledging that the empowerment of people, especially young people, living in developing countries is fundamental to the eradication of poverty,

Noting the indifference of many people in developed countries towards poverty which results from a lack of knowledge as a problem in the eradication of poverty,

Noting that feelings of shame connected to poverty, as well as the stigmatization of poor people, are obstacles in the struggle to eradicate poverty,

Acknowledging the importance of combating discrimination against marginalized groups, including indigenous people, immigrants and ethnic minorities,

Encourages politicians, who play a crucial role in the fight against poverty and who have financial power, to improve the public's knowledge and perception of poverty;

Calls for actions to stimulate community ethics that encourage people to work for the common good.

▼ Awareness

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing the need for awareness-raising particularly among young people in both developing and developed countries on the causes, implications and consequences of poverty,

Further recognizing the need to spread information, in order to raise awareness, about poverty and especially about the exclusion that results from poverty,

Acknowledging that global poverty concerns everyone, not only because of its moral implications, but also because international crime, terrorism and human trafficking are direct results of poverty and exclusion,

Calls for the implementation of awareness-raising programmes on poverty in education, particularly in higher education curricula.

▼ Information

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing insufficient access to knowledge for young people about our political and economical context as one of the main reasons for poverty,

Identifying the information gap between producers and consumer markets as a cause of poverty,

Acknowledging the exchange of knowledge between young people from developed and developing countries as one of the most effective ways to create understanding and insight into the world's economic situation, and that young people should be enabled to critically judge the information they receive,

Urges the agencies of the United Nations system to improve their information to young people, in order to enable us to participate efficiently in the design, implementation and evaluation of United Nations policies and programmes;

Stresses the need for enhanced coordination of the youth-related programmes of governments, aid agencies and NGOs;

Calls for data collection, particularly on the situation of young people living in poverty in developing countries, as this is crucial to the design of efficient poverty eradication programmes for youth.

▼ Education

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing the need for education for all, especially for victims of discrimination, such as young women and youth with disabilities,

Acknowledging cooperation between both secondary schools and universities, from different regions of the world, as highly effective in the spreading of information, knowledge and ideas, as well as stimulating efforts to eradicate poverty. The problem of the 'brain drain' should be addressed by increasing the quality of education and the possibilities for advancement in developing countries,

Acknowledging the importance of peer education: young people training young people are an underestimated resource,

Identifying radio and recorded information as a successful bridge across illiteracy barriers and which provides education for all,

Encourages students to participate in community projects;

Calls for education to aim at helping young people to create employment and generate income, particularly by adapting education to local employment opportunities and resources;

Calls for support for the young people who have missed the opportunity to be educated, such as street children;

Calls for an improvement of access to education in order for young people to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to fully participate in society;

Particularly stresses the need to focus on reducing the gender inequalities in education, including access to technological development;

Calls for efficient policies to end the deprivation of education and exploitation of children through child labour, notably by offering their families other sources of income;

Calls for an increase in the value placed on teachers, by providing them with comprehensive training, as they are assisting young people in shaping their futures;

Calls for a particular focus to be placed on projects where young people train other young people to train, whether in formal or non-formal types of education;

Calls for a better recognition of non-formal education, through closer cooperation between formal institutions for education and regional or national branches of youth NGOs;

Further calls for UNESCO National Commissions to make it a priority to educate key decision-makers and institutions about the aims and necessity of the education for all programme;

Stresses that the economic resources necessary to ensure education for all are already available; political will is needed to turn this essential objective into reality;

Demands free education for all; basic education is a basic human right.

▼ Strategies for development

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing the need to spend a greater portion of development aid on education,

Recognizing that for any programme for the eradication of poverty to be effective, it needs to be compatible with sustainable development,

Supporting the idea that to a certain extent the solution for eradicating poverty lies within the poor countries. People confronted with poverty need to be stimulated to utilize their country's resources,

Acknowledging the need to reform the way international trade is organized as a fundamental part of the efforts to eradicate poverty, because only less unequal terms of trade would give developing countries an opportunity to expel poverty from our society,

Recognizing the need to establish land tenure systems that favour the just utilization of land,

Further recognizing the need to monitor the process of poverty eradication, making sure that Member States give young people the possibility to participate in the monitoring of the use of funds and financial support,

Stresses that long-term development has to be the main priority, leading developing countries to become independent from foreign aid;

Celebrates local youth initiatives that have direct or indirect consequences in alleviating poverty;

Points out that it is vital that any technology projects for developing countries be based on the needs of the local community, who must be involved in selecting the appropriate technology and allocation of resources;

Calls for the implementation of the United Nations objective of 0.7% GDP of developed countries to be spent on development aid;

Calls for alleviation of the burden on rural areas, brought on by debts and measures from international financing organizations and for the renegotiation of foreign debt in order to increase opportunities for rural youth;

Calls for an appropriate infrastructure of education in the developing world;

Calls for a reduction of military expenses in all countries, making these funds available for worldwide education;

Calls for protection and the right of education to HIV-positive youth and people with disabilities or who are differently abled;

Recognizes the importance of access to health and health care for all.

▼ Concrete projects

In order to achieve the goals mentioned above and to enable young people to participate fully in society and contribute to poverty eradication, the UNESCO Youth Forum proposes that UNESCO support the following concrete projects:

Micro-finance projects that enable young people to start up their own business;

South-South cooperation: exchange of successful projects among the developing countries;

The provision of an information channel about UNESCO's specialized programmes for youth;

UNESCO should host a database of young trainers and experts who can work as volunteers for UNESCO;

UNESCO should share information about successful projects through an interactive website;

UNESCO should encourage the United Nations and other international organizations to protect national and local cultures in their projects;

UNESCO should assist with the creation and the sociocultural role of universities in developing countries;

Development of a standard process for systematic contribution of ideas from youth delegates to country representatives to UNESCO;

Youth programme on the protection of the environment and natural resources, especially water resources, to involve young people in preserving and improving the environment at local, national, regional and global levels;

UNESCO should cooperate with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to support youth action by granting financial assistance.

➤ Information and Communication Technologies

1. Types of technologies

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing that as there are different types of information and communication technologies, using the appropriate technology is vital and ICT projects must not be limited to the Internet,

Stressing that traditional media such as radio and television remain important instruments to spread information and should not be underestimated, for example by using them to build literacy, especially among women and girls, and that they may be used to distribute information about important issues such as AIDS,

Calls for printed literature and the telephone to be complemented with ICT solutions. For example, we could develop small printing presses to develop local newspapers, or provide telephone lines to villages so that they can have equal services.

2. Creating the basic conditions

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recognizing that basic education remains the most important prerequisite for development,

Stressing that for the majority of today's young people computers are not as needed as books and teachers,

Recognizing that access to electricity and hardware is essential for the development of ICTs,

Calls upon UNESCO to encourage the development of alternative energy sources, as a key prerequisite for the development of ICTs;

Calls upon UNESCO to ensure that in all of its projects, the development of ICTs does not exceed the ability of the local population to use or sustain them;

Calls upon UNESCO to explore multi-sector projects which utilize ICTs as a component of a broader strategy.

3. Access to ICTs

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that access to information is important to be a full citizen;

Stresses that having access to the Internet must be made affordable so it is of use;

Calls for public spending on information infrastructure to provide free access, or at least low-cost access;

Recognizes that ICTs provide a resource for human development;

Recognizes that this resource for human development is largely unexploited;

Recognizes that ICTs can also be a resource for semi-literate people, for example interactive media;

Calls for fund-raising to provide the funds for new technology in less-developed countries, for example the development of telecentres;

Calls upon UNESCO to raise awareness of the potential to recycle computers;

Stresses the participation of young people in the development of new technologies. By involving them in the design of projects, young people will develop transferable and economically useful transferable skills to help on other projects. It will add youth expertise to the project which will ensure it is user-friendly, as most users will be young people;

Stresses that the use of ICTs in schools is crucial for e-literacy among young people;

Recognizes the need for each school to implement the use of ICTs;

Recognizes that there has been progress, but that youth NGOs need to be supported more in their efforts to increase the use of relevant ICTs in the developing world;

Calls for partnerships to be set up between UNESCO and youth NGOs that are promoting the use of ICTs.

4. Use of ICTs

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Stresses that computers cannot yet replace the learning provided by human teachers;

Acknowledges that a shortage of teachers may be addressed by ICTs, as long as they do not replace teachers in the long term;

Calls for regular training courses on human rights for the teachers who teach new technologies in formal and non-formal settings;

Calls upon UNESCO to ensure ICTs are central to the Associated Schools Project;

Calls for new technologies to be used to strengthen the networks between schools in the North and South;

Calls for the development of programmes encouraging young women's participation in the ICT sector;

Recognizes that using the Internet offers an even wider range of opportunities for young people who are differently abled;

Recognizes that developing skills in ICTs is crucial to future economic development and can be used to combat the 'brain drain' by opening up new opportunities, such as distance learning;

Calls upon UNESCO to promote linkage between various existing media;

Calls upon UNESCO to host a conference of student radio stations to build a global youth radio network;

Further calls upon UNESCO to develop such a network through distribution of technology and education, such as in a kit-format 'radio in a box'

Calls upon UNESCO to affirm its commitment to popular cultures, through the exchange of different world music online, or in other formats;

Calls upon UNESCO to create music and other media and technology festivals as a means of distributing culture and promoting cross-cultural communication, considering development of a 'World Youth Communication Week'.

5. Free information and communication

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Supports the promotion of the interactive aspects of the Internet and the combating of censorship;

Calls upon UNESCO to use all the tools at its disposal to encourage free movement of information and access to the Internet without censorship;

Acknowledges that it is not possible to have binding universal codes of conduct-ethics as far as ICTs are concerned, but that a dialogue about local and regional codes should be developed;

Stresses that education must include the development of media literacy and critical thinking and that UNESCO should create a resource to develop these skills in young people.

6. Increasing youth participation

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Noting that ICTs can be used to generate new policy ideas by facilitating discussion and communication between the government and youth,

Noting that governments are not listening enough to young people and that there is a lack of political will to involve them in decision-making processes,

Calls for the new opportunities presented by ICTs to be fully exploited, so that there is an increase in young people's awareness and involvement in decision-making;

Calls for ICTs to be used to enhance transparency, including in government resource management;

Supporting the idea that young people appointed as UNESCO youth representatives must be able to use ICTs so that they can communicate with their constituencies and each other,

Calls for access to the Internet to be introduced at all the UNESCO National Commissions;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions to open their doors and create resource centres to which young people may have access.

7. Multiculturalism on the Internet

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that there is a major language barrier with the Internet as much of it is in English;

Recognizes that the Internet could be a tool for better presentation of and communication within cultural and language groups;

Calls for more information to be provided in local languages on the Internet;

Calls for improved access to education of a variety of languages;

Calls for support for further development of interpretation software in order to enhance the

ability to translate into a variety of languages.

8. Internationalism

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Recognizes that the Internet can be used as a direct tool to educate people in the aims of internationalism;

Recognizes that ICTs can bring together communities in friendship and within the global community. This can lead to a desire among youth to contribute and take action on important global issues;

Recognizes that the Internet can serve as an open platform to share information about cultures across previously daunting geographic barriers;

Calls upon UNESCO to set up a project to increase awareness of UNESCO and the ideals of a culture of peace and Education and Information for All.

9. UNESCO as a resource centre

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference

Congratulates UNESCO on the video-conference that it organized during the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system in Dakar. It was a good example of how to use ICTs to enhance participation;

Calls upon UNESCO to use ICTs, such as video-conferencing, in future events if they increase participation;

Recognizes that ICTs offer new opportunities for UNESCO to support education;

Recognizes that for UNESCO to promote internationalism it should provide resources for teachers;

Calls upon UNESCO to provide high-quality interactive courses for teachers, for professional development and for their pupils, via the Internet, for example in human rights;

Recognizes that because there are no transport or publication costs, UNESCO can begin to provide resources for individual students instead of just high-level resources and that a central online resource to provide all available useful publications would be an excellent commitment to the freedom of ideas;

Recognizes that a free online library would be an excellent present from UNESCO to the world at the start of the twenty-first century;

Calls upon UNESCO to develop, in partnership with universities in the developed world, a central online resource to act as a free online library for all students in the developing world;

Recognizes that ICTs offer UNESCO new opportunities to provide services to individuals as well as governments and institutions;

Recognizes that because there are no transport or production costs, if the developmental costs

are met centrally, even complex software programmes could be provided free to everyone in the world;

Recognizes that software, such as translation software, voice-recognition software and language-learning software, would all be ways in which UNESCO could offer useful free services to the world. These would increase international communication, and provide positive press and perception of UNESCO at a far cheaper rate than commercial advertising. This press would generate future funds for other UNESCO programmes;

Calls upon UNESCO to establish a major project to develop free, complex software which is unlikely to be provided elsewhere on the Internet, particularly in regard to language programmes;

Recognizes that there is a lot of junk information on the Internet that can make it difficult to contact other organizations and get the maximum benefit from the technological opportunities to increase international communication;

Recognizes that the impact of globalization has moved more quickly in commerce than other areas. This difference is true for communications between non-business organizations worldwide;

Recognizes that an updated central list of youth and educational bodies worldwide would be very useful. UNESCO, with its National Commissions, is well placed to do this;

Recognizes that if a lot of people used UNESCO's website services, there would be a better perception of the value of UNESCO and more traffic to the other areas of the UNESCO website;

Calls upon UNESCO to provide useful services such as an international list of youth organizations active in the fields of competence of UNESCO and educational bodies worldwide;

Recognizes that a central resource of bulletin boards for specific areas of academic development would be a great resource. There would be thousands of professors worldwide who could take responsibility for writing the introductions and contributing to the discussions on a specific subject;

Acknowledges that many of these lists already exist, but that they are increasingly unclear and therefore not easily accessible to students;

Calls upon UNESCO to take advantage of its ideal position to provide the software and coordinate, via the National Commissions, the subject of young volunteers. This would be a great resource for students, especially if they could post questions to the list;

Calls upon UNESCO to empower and facilitate youth cultural exchange and dialogue among civilizations through the means of ICTs.

UNESCO Youth Forum

The UNESCO Youth Forum of the 31st General Conference,

Recalling that one of UNESCO's most important tasks is to function as a meeting place,

Acknowledging the importance of having a UNESCO Youth Forum, since the exchange of ideas and formulation of concrete proposals by young people is strengthened by such platforms,

Recognizing that face-to-face dialogue and discussion among young people is as important as technology and cannot be replaced, it is vital that UNESCO continue and fully support with the necessary resources the UNESCO Youth Forum, as part of the General Conference,

Recognizing it is crucial that we, the young delegates, utilize ICTs to facilitate follow-up to the Youth Forum,

Calls upon UNESCO to work with and help coordinate already existing youth-led structures and networks, particularly at the regional level, in order to improve young people's possibility to influence international policy-making;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions to improve and increase their cooperation with youth NGOs and organizations in our respective countries, particularly by promoting and facilitating the unification and coordination of youth efforts, for instance in youth-led national youth councils;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions to work particularly with youth NGOs and organizations that are active within the areas of competence of UNESCO and assist us in building networks for the sharing of information, experience and best practice with similar youth NGOs in other countries;

Calls for a permanent youth-controlled body composed of young people, set up by the Youth Forum and based at UNESCO Headquarters, to follow up this Youth Forum, and prepare and organize the next UNESCO Youth Forum, in cooperation with the Youth Coordination Unit of UNESCO;

Calls upon Member States to endeavour to bring youth representatives within their delegations to the General Conference. These youth representatives should participate in the Youth Forum, report to the UNESCO National Commissions and serve as contact persons for the follow-up of the Youth Forum;

Calls upon UNESCO National Commissions and Member States to assist in the fund-raising for youth delegates;

Calls upon the United Nations to ensure greater coordination and support for all youth-led forums within the United Nations system and calls upon UNESCO to take part in assisting the United Nations Youth Unit in this aim;

Calls upon UNESCO to include the Youth Forum in its regular budget;

Calls upon UNESCO to re-establish and reinforce coordination and cooperation between the UNESCO Youth Forum and the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system in order to enable the participants to be informed about adopted policies.

Addendum

Youth Declaration on Terrorism and War at the 31 st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Youth Forum

We, the youth delegates from (country list) various countries, representing different regions,cultures, social and economic backgrounds gathered at the first International Youth Forum since the negative events of September 2001,have decided to express our voice, visions,hopes and dreams to encourage world leaders to:

follow our example and discuss common problems, challenges and disagreements through peaceful mechanisms such as the United Nations system, where each nation is assured its voice will be heard;

consider that we understand that there is no justification to killing innocent people, and that North-South dialogue, mutual understanding of religions and cultures,respect for each other and eradication of illiteracy are ways to prevent terrorism and war;

demand that the current world order be revised by searching for practical ways to integrate the millions of people who lack access to resources,are not politically represented and are willing to participate in the social and economic development process.

We, therefore, as young leaders, representing over 90 countries,wish to build a future based on education for all,a culture of peace, scientific cooperation,and respect of cultural diversity and call for a permanent dialogue among cultures and civilizations.



Item 5.8 of the provisional agenda

Report of the UNESCO Youth Forum 2003

‘UNESCO and Youth: A Mutual Commitment’

1. Introduction

Within the framework of the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO and arising from the event of the Third Youth Forum held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 26 to 28 September 2003, as a precursor to the General Conference, delegates from 104 Member States and Observer States and 22 youth NGOs discussed issues of critical concern for youth at the global level. These included HIV/AIDS, sustainable development and UNESCO and youth, as well as other critical issues under these general themes. In this document the delegates present their views on the essential role that UNESCO must play in efforts to increase sensitization and promote awareness and understanding through education, and to propose steps to strengthen collaboration between youth and UNESCO.

The meeting was convened by Ms Maria Helena Henriques Mueller, and was opened by the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Koichiro Matsuura. The opening day among other things saw the election of the Chairperson of the Youth Forum 2003 and of the Rapporteur.

This third session of the Forum created a unique opportunity for youth to discuss issues of critical concern and provide tangible input to the discussions of the 32nd session of the General Conference. The theme of the Forum, ‘UNESCO and Youth: a mutual commitment’, reflects our desire for UNESCO not only to develop programmes for youth, but forge partnerships to actively support the initiatives of young people themselves.

2. Education for sustainable development: fresh water

The youth of the UNESCO Forum are of the conviction that potable and fresh water is a universal resource that should be respected and adopted as a human right. Therefore, everyone should have access to fresh water, and that human right must always take precedence over economics. This principle should be included in the manner and policies that are used in the privatization programmes of water collection, treatment and distribution and other water-related services. Further, that the policies must reflect reasonable prices and social tariffs and set out regulations for the efficient and sustainable control of this critical and important resource. But as the resources of fresh water are known to be limited, current industrial policies of some countries threaten the quality of fresh water that currently exists. Acid rain, agricultural and industrial run-off lead to the death and destruction of many coastal and riverine ecosystems and significantly effect groundwater, rivers and aquifers.

Youth have a direct role to play in the promotion of freshwater management. Youth participation cannot be achieved without the support of governments, which is the key to building awareness. UNESCO as a knowledge-based organization has a key role to play in this regard. This role begins with providing clear definitions, guidelines and manuals to catalyse the appreciation of freshwater management and mainstreaming education on sustainable development and freshwater management into the formal education sector.

More specifically, UNESCO can assist youth in addressing freshwater management by:

- sponsoring freshwater management research to:
 - provide a clear understanding of what freshwater management is through formal and non-formal education;
 - make clear distinctions between freshwater management in rural areas and urban areas as well as in developed countries and developing countries;
 - provide an understanding of waste, contamination and pollution as it concerns water;
 - outline the differences between urban and rural waste;
- stressing the importance of integrating freshwater management into society and integrating youth into water-management initiatives;
- encouraging water-management awareness through targeted campaigns;
- coordinating training and workshops on freshwater management, as well as vigorously marketing these workshops to civil society groups and governments;
- advocating for international rules governing the disposal of waste and industrial by-products;
- restoring through its modalities the cultural implications of water;
- building the capacity of young people in water management to include a clear distinction between fresh water and potable water; realizing that access to potable water directly impacts the ability of people to achieve acceptable levels of human development; surviving illnesses such as malaria and water-borne diseases as well as HIV/AIDS depends heavily on access to adequate supplies of potable water;
- promoting and coordinating research and water issues and creating an international agency for the management, treatment and distribution of potable water;
- setting out and proposing an international convention that governments should make legal provisions to ensure access to and availability of potable water;
- as the pursuit of munitions and artillery development and production for biological, nuclear and conventional warfare has a proven impact on the quality and availability of fresh water; the convention on accessibility and protection of freshwater resources should also call on the nations involved in these industries to cease this activity also in the pursuit of peace.

3. HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a global crisis. Over 13,500 people a day contract HIV, the vast majority of these new cases arise via heterosexual contact. One in two of all new infections in 2001 occurred in 15-24 year olds. Sixty per cent more young women than men are living with HIV/AIDS. This contributes to the cycle of poverty, unemployment and discrimination, poses severe challenges to human development and threatens to thwart the ability of developing countries to achieve national and international development targets. It has been disclosed that the Millennium Development Goal that aims to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS is the one most likely to be missed by developing nations. In light of this we call on UNESCO to ensure that this reality should be reflected in the policies and approaches of the developed countries towards the developing countries. This includes the policies and approaches to the cost and availability of education programmes, and the provision of resources to support such programmes and include the availability and costs of retroviral and other medicines used in the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

We recognize the diversity of approaches required in different parts of our world, including rural communities and regions in conflict. Further, the problem of HIV/AIDS does not only concern developing countries. Developed countries, which appear increasingly apathetic to the problem, also need to urgently strengthen their HIV/AIDS educational strategies.

▾ Education

Preventive education is accepted to be the most successful modality proven to empower young people with life skills and the ability to make responsible and informed choices on their reproductive health, lifestyle and generally important to their holistic development as young persons. Educational strategies however need to be grounded in and sensitive to local realities and cultural contexts of nations and communities as well as religious and traditional beliefs. Negative reactions to HIV/AIDS will not help address the issue and improve public attitudes. Youth need to be given information and life skills required to make responsible choices that reflect their values and ethics and which are informed by biological and health knowledge in a direct and appropriate manner.

Education for HIV/AIDS prevention can take place in many ways – formal, non-formal and informal, and in the best cases these should be complementary and integrated. In involving youth in HIV/AIDS prevention, UNESCO should:

- partner with pre-existing professional, youth, cultural and religious groups, tapping into established and respected organizations, as well as the family, to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of UNESCO programmes;
- use traditional practices, such as initiation and rites of passage, to integrate sexual and reproductive health education;
- encourage interfaith and intercultural dialogue and joint initiatives;
- not focus only on sex, but on holistic, reproductive health;
- focus in the education programmes teaching methods on the importance of the deep values of sexuality, fidelity and love as well as the institution of marriage;

- include youth in all the stages of the development of education programmes. Formal education should take into account the sexual development and health of young people throughout their school experience. To support teacher, parent and community training and classroom instruction, UNESCO can support the development of practical tools such as curriculum, and promote peer-to-peer education.

Many non-formal HIV/AIDS programmes already exist, and these have often proven more effective than government or school-based programmes. UNESCO and governments should partner with and strengthen these initiatives, such as theatre programmes and train-the-trainers workshops.

▼ Media and awareness campaigns

An effective tool to promote preventive education around HIV/AIDS is the mass media and other communication tools.

UNESCO should support a comprehensive range of local, national and international projects such as:

- media campaigns, including advertisements involving both famous personalities such as athletes, musicians and actors, and those traditionally marginalized, including people infected by HIV/AIDS;
- radio programming, reaching a broad and significant audience worldwide and especially in rural areas, including drama, (anonymous) talk-back radio, and other local content that is respectful of local cultural norms and traditions;
- other media programmes, especially those developed by young people themselves, including newspaper inserts, short educational films, animations and comics;
- online networks that provide space for discussion of issues and sharing of best-practice projects.

▼ Engagement of youth organizations

Young people are most influenced by their peers, and UNESCO should capitalize on youth as a powerful channel for education for HIV/AIDS prevention by:

- developing training, centres and other support mechanisms for young volunteers to act as peer educators and care workers;
- supporting projects and cooperation between youth organizations, including their forums, publications, media and exchange programmes;
- facilitating youth advocacy around HIV/AIDS issues.

▼ Global strategy

A global challenge of HIV/AIDS requires a global response, through cooperation and communication. The Youth Forum recognizes UNESCO's effective programmes and suggests these should be scaled up, replicated and promoted. At the same time, UNESCO needs to ensure that programme evaluation indicators are locally relevant and not disconnected from the context in which they operate.

UNESCO in partnership with young people, and all groups – governments, the media, educators, international agencies and non-State actors to work hand-in-hand to stop the spread of HIV through preventive education.

4. UNESCO and youth: ways and modalities for communication and cooperation

Listening to and involving young people in the issues and decisions that affect them is not only a right, but also a necessary prerequisite for sustainable development. UNESCO's mission can only be realized if it listens to our vision, harnesses our energy, responds to our needs and supports our action. UNESCO has already taken steps towards meaningful inclusion of young people within its programmes, but these need to be significantly enhanced and expanded at every level – nationally, regionally and internationally. As a principle, young people need to be involved in all aspects of programme conceptualization, implementation and evaluation.

The UNESCO Youth Forum 2003 identifies the following key principles for youth engagement at UNESCO:

- **Institutionalize the Youth Forum** by adopting it as an integral feature of its General Conference and including it in its regular budget.
- **All countries should have youth delegates.** All countries should send representative youth delegates to attend the Youth Forum and the General Conference itself. The Youth Forum should not be seen as a substitute for the participation of young people in the General Conference and other UNESCO decision-making bodies.
- **Subregional youth forums.** UNESCO should organize and facilitate subregional youth forums as part of the preparation towards the general youth forum.
- **Promotion and dissemination of the Youth Forum.** More attention should be paid to the promotion of the Youth Forum's existence and diffusion of its results, especially through youth organizations, schools, youth-related media and National Commissions. A preparatory committee should be elected from the youth participants in order to prepare the next Youth Forum to reflect the interests and needs of youth as expressed by youth.
- **Evaluate and report on the Youth Forum's success.** To ensure the Forum's message is heard and its impact recorded, a report should be produced presenting an evaluation of the results of the Youth Forum and the response of both UNESCO and young people to achieve its goals. National delegations should report to the Youth Forum on the activities they have implemented as a result of the Forum.

- **Follow-up to the Youth Forum.** To realize the mutual commitment of youth and UNESCO there should be a coordinated structure established by the Youth Forum, continued via email discussions, and implemented at a local level by every national delegate using relevant local methods.

▼ **Participation of young people at national level**

We recognize that most of the tangible follow-up to the Youth Forum will be implemented at a national level, either as part of specific UNESCO programmes or through the activities of National Commissions and their partners. To strengthen the engagement and partnership of young people in country-level activities, the Youth Forum proposes:

- **Involve Youth in National Decision-Making.** National Commissions should fully integrate the involvement of young people in their decision-making and work processes. Dependent on the differing structures of National Commissions, this could take the form of permanent board members/representatives, formal and informal consultations with local and national youth organizations and associations and the establishment and support of National Commission Youth Networks.
- **National Youth Policy.** Once a method of communication and integration is established between youth and National Commissions, all groups, including voluntary youth-led organizations and National Youth Councils, should work together to define national action plans to practically implement this new commitment. UNESCO should also work to globally promote and distribute best practices between national youth policies. The responsibilities of youth in these new commissions need to be clearly defined.
- **Inclusion of youth in the national political agenda.** It is important that youth issues are put on the political agenda in every country. Therefore it is important that the National Commissions in countries who don't have a national youth policy promote the importance of having a national youth policy towards the government and decision-makers. It is of high importance that youth are involved in this work.

UNESCO should urge governments as a principle to develop youth policies and to include youth participation and involvement in a real way in this process. Where youth policies already exist, UNESCO needs to help in the implementation of the most prioritized issues at the national level.

▼ **UNESCO worldwide**

- **UNESCO youth section:** The Youth Forum considers the youth section a vital component of UNESCO. Not only does it coordinate youth activities within the Organization but also actively builds linkages between youth at an international level, running information programmes and promoting youth participation. Its work connecting youth organizations from the grassroots to global levels into UNESCO programmes so that they might mutually reinforce each other's abilities granting further prominence and, if necessary, resources.
- **Research programme:** UNESCO should conduct a major youth research initiative together with young people and our organizations to explore the potential, role and needs of young people in international development to complement our input at the Youth Forum.

- **Funding for youth projects:** To provide young people with the funds to implement local community development initiatives, UNESCO should consider the establishment of a global 'basket of funds' within the regular budget to support mini-grants for youth social enterprise.
- **Media and communication:** UNESCO should create innovative ways to communicate with youth depending on the needs of different regions, such as the establishment of a youth television and radio channel, Internet sites and mobile youth centres.
- **Involvement at Headquarters:** UNESCO should tap into the expertise of young people, not only as representatives or as recipients of programme support, but as paid staff, paid interns and as decision-makers.

Chairperson	Uganda	
Rapporteur	Australia	
Drafting Committee	Gambia	Georgia
	Ukraine	Tunisia
	Netherlands	Kenya
	Senegal	United Republic of Tanzania
	Costa Rica	Jamaica
	Finland	United Kingdom
	Mexico	Sweden
	Canada	Nigeria
	France	Holy See
	Belgium	CISV International

6.2. General Conference Resolution '32 C/Resolutions, 82 Youth Forum of the UNESCO General Conference'

82 UNESCO General Conference Youth Forum⁴

The General Conference,

Recalling the success of the third UNESCO General Conference Youth Forum, held in Paris from 26 to 28 September 2003,

Recognizing the importance of youth participation in the development and implementation of UNESCO's programmes,

Welcoming the Report of the UNESCO General Conference Youth Forum 2003,

Taking note of the positive reception of this report by delegates of the 32nd session of the General Conference,

Reaffirming that the needs and concerns of youth shall be mainstreamed throughout all programmes of the Organization, as envisaged in document 31C/4,

Recognizing the importance of youth involvement in all levels of decision-making,

Decides that a Youth Forum shall be an integral part of every session of the General Conference and

requests the Director-General to incorporate a Youth Forum in the preparations for the 33rd session of the General Conference.

⁴ Resolution adopted at the 21st plenary meeting on 17 October 2003.



United Nations Educational
Scientific and Cultural Organization

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