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## Young people set the agenda at unprecedented Security Council meeting



New York City school students at Security Council event

21 December 2010 – From tackling terrorism and climate change to ending poverty and conflict, young people from around the world made their voices heard on the most vital challenges facing their generation during a unique event held today with the 15 members of the Security Council at United Nations Headquarters.

More than 150 New York City school students and other young people from around the world participated in the event, entitled “Your World, Your Future: Voices of a New Generation,” which sought to bring the voices of youth – who make up nearly half of the global population – directly to the Council.

“You have a stake in our debates everyday, but today you and your generation will have a voice as well,” Ambassador Susan Rice of the United States, which holds the rotating Council presidency for this month and organized the event, said as she welcomed those gathered.

“This type of informal meeting is not what we usually do, but in my opinion, it’s one of the most important events this month,” she added.

Ahead of the event, young people around the world between the ages of 13 and 21 were invited to tell the Council, through video and written submissions, about the most vital challenges to peace and security facing their generation. Almost 1,000 young people from 90 countries took up the challenge.

Among them was a 17-year-old girl from Venezuela who encouraged world leaders to “exchange a weapon for a smile,” a young girl from eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo who appealed to leaders to help “bring back durable peace to our country,” and a young man from Tunisia who described terrorism as the most serious threat to international peace and security today.

“The message these young people send us today is very simple and direct. Act. Deliver. Match words with deeds,” noted [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon, who also [addressed](#) the event. “We have no shortage of crises before us. The Security Council must deliver – now. Not in some far-off future.”

Listening to the voices of the young people, Mr. Ban – who grew up in war-torn Republic of Korea – said he felt very strongly that he could have been one of them.

“I, too, grew up in war. I, too, saw my village destroyed,” he told them. “The United Nations helped rebuild my country. It shaped my life. It defined who I am. For my generation, the United Nations was a beacon of hope. It should be for this new generation as well.”

In an effort to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world’s youth in overcoming the challenges facing humankind, from enhancing peace to boosting economic development, the UN has proclaimed the International Year of Youth, which began on 12 August 2010.

In proclaiming the Year, the Assembly called on governments, civil society, individuals and communities worldwide to support activities at local and international levels to mark the event, which is intended to advance the full and effective participation of youth in all aspects of society.

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[UN proclaims International Year of Youth in 2010](#)