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Top UN official urges young people to use their voices to promote understanding



Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyoo Akasaka

18 August 2010 – The second annual Global Model United Nations conference, bringing together hundreds of students from more than 60 countries, wrapped up in the Malaysian capital today with a call by a senior official from the world body for greater dialogue and understanding.

During the five-day [event](#) in Kuala Lumpur, participants took on the role of foreign diplomats and held simulated meetings of UN multilateral bodies, including an emergency Security Council session at this year's conference, whose theme was "Towards an Alliance of Civilizations: Bridging Cultures to achieve Peace and Development."

The ideas generated at the event will feed into other international forums in the coming months, including those organized by the UN Alliance of Civilizations, set up under UN auspices in 2005 to promote better cross-cultural relations worldwide.

At the closing of the latest conference, Kiyoo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, lauded students for "[debating] ways to diffuse religious and political extremism," as well as for discussing ways to tackle and prevent conflicts.

"In all of this, you have seen that the issues and challenges that nations face today cut across borders, religions and cultures," he added.

“But, most importantly, you have discovered, working together, that finding sustainable and long-term solutions to these complex problems requires persistence, open dialogue and respect for different perspectives.”

Mr. Akasaka encouraged the students to continue creating and maintaining networks linking people from across borders on issues affecting young people.

“Remember: the United Nations needs your imagination, your ideas, your initiatives and your dynamic energy,” the official said. “I assure you that you will not regret your life-long engagement with the UN.”

Last week, the world body launched the [**International Year of Youth**](#), stressing the need to harness the talents and energy of the world’s young people to promote better understanding and dialogue between different generations, cultures and religions.

Dialogue and mutual understanding is the theme of the Year, which kicked off on 12 August, observed annually as International Youth Day.

Several hundred Model UN conferences are organized each year at all educational levels from primary school to university. While preparing for the conference, students develop leadership skills and research, writing, public speaking and problem-solving skills that they can use throughout their lives. In addition, participation also encourages consensus building, conflict resolution and cooperation and the enhancement of leadership skills.

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