



High Level Meeting on Youth at the United Nations General Assembly



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Posted on [July 29, 2011](#)

On July 25 and 26, over 500 youth representatives from all over the world came to the General Assembly at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the occasion of the High Level Meeting for the International Year of Youth on Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. The meeting, which included 2 panel discussions, several plenaries and a multitude of side events, was also attended by several official delegations from member countries of the United Nations.

The International Year of Youth, which began in August of 2010, aims to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world's youth in overcoming the challenges facing humankind. Under the theme 'Dialogue and Mutual Understanding,' the Year aims to promote the ideals of peace as well as respect for human rights, freedoms, and solidarity. In addition, it encourages dialogue and understanding across cultures and generations.

In his remarks during the opening ceremony of the High Level Meeting, the United Nations Secretary General strongly condemned the bombing in Oslo and the shooting massacre at a Norwegian summer camp while reiterating that young people play a crucial role in creating a path of tolerance and understanding. "Young people often understand better than older generations that we can and must transcend our religious and cultural differences in order to reach our shared goals."

Mr. Romulo Dantas, a youth representative from Brazil, called for a stronger partnership with governments and the United Nations in order to move further in the direction of trust and mutual understanding. “We all need to understand the fact that is impossible to build solutions for a diverse world once we are still lacking true partnership among all the important players in the youth field in many areas and at all levels.”

Several interventions, both from youth representatives and member countries, noted the discrepancies between the number of young people around the world – in some countries, youth represent over 60% of the population – and the resources allocated to this generation. In addition, many speakers made the case for “youth mainstreaming”, in a manner similar to what is done for gender mainstreaming. This proposal was applauded by all youth representatives present at the event.

Another intervention that was received very positively is that of the youth delegate from Germany who said that “Youth participation is not an investment; it is a value in itself”.

At the end of the High Level Meeting on Youth, an outcome document was adopted. It underlines the fact that, while the International Year of Youth is coming to a close, much still needs to be done and that youth and mutual understanding should remain a top priority for all sectors of the society.

The High Level Meeting on Youth was organized by the United Nations Intern-Agency Network on Youth Development. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is a key member of this network which adopted a statement expressing its plan to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in advocating for and supporting national efforts to accelerate the implementation of international agreements and development goals as they relate to youth.

After the closing to of High Level Meeting on Youth, the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations held its annual meeting nearby. The Director of the UNAOC was invited to take part in a panel discussion about increasing collaboration between the United Nations and youth-led organizations. Building on the calls for partnerships made during the High Level Meeting on Youth, Mr. Scheuer underlined the fact that the UNAOC’s success and impact very much depends on collaboration with youth organizations: “We rely on the energy and innovativeness of youth organizations around the world to mobilize society at large and change the narrative about other cultures and religions. The UNAOC would not reach its goals without strong partnerships with youth organizations. We are now working on getting this great partnership to the next level.” The UNAOC Youth Program, especially through its Youth Solidarity Fund, aims to highlight and promote youth initiatives as well as support the development of partnerships with their respective governments.

For more information about the International Year of Youth, see <http://social.un.org/youthyear/>

For more information about the UNAOC Youth Program, see www.unaocyouth.org

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