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Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organizations

From vision to reality: Youth Representatives flock to DPI/NGO programmes

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In an effort to capitalize on youth activism and attract more young people to the work of the United Nations, the DPI/NGO Relations Section introduced in 2010 the concept of the NGO Youth Representative. Their response to our suggestion was immediate and encouraging. Scores of Youth Representatives came on board.



Following the successful launch of its Youth Representative initiative, the DPI/NGO Relations expanded its programme by offering DPI/NGO Youth Representatives the opportunity to meet monthly in order to discuss and chart activities for their peers. The Representatives moved into virtual communications by creating a closed Facebook page where the young people could regularly exchange ideas with each other.

The groundbreaking achievement took place on 25 March 2013 when the first Youth-led Briefing titled, “Raising and Empowering Youth to Break the Cycle of Violence against Women and Children” was organized by Youth. Youth Representatives, working closely with NGO Relations Briefing team, chose a topic, invited speakers and even introduced a new twist into the panel discussion format with an interactive session designed and led by them. Tevia Clarke, a Youth Representative from Jamaica observed, “To me, our interactive section was the highlight of the event. It was fully inclusive, which allowed practical participation from all who attended, whether in person or watching online. I hope that Youth-led Briefings will have longevity; it showcased collaborations of youth, thus promoting enthusiasm in partnering with the UN to accomplish a goal. We started with an idea and made it a reality.”



In the last two years, NGO Relations has seen the mushrooming of its youth outreach initiative to include more than 320 Youth representatives from 48 countries representing 207 NGOs while, at the same time, designing and implementing programmes which would meet their needs including an

annual Youth Orientation Programme, monthly Youth Representative Meetings, and a Youth Representative-led Briefing.

Another initiative for the Youth Representatives was the 2nd Annual Youth Orientation Programme held at UN Headquarters on 28 February, which served as an opportunity to learn about the United Nations and what it actually means to be NGO Youth Representatives. The NGO Executive Committee Chair, Charles Hitchcock, who represents over 1,300 DPI NGOs enthusiastically, remarked, “The Youth Representatives’ questions were very interesting, and their level of enthusiasm quite heartening!”

Youth Representative Olga Mun of Kazakhstan, who attended both events, observed that they were significant because they demonstrated a concerted effort by the United Nations to recognize the youth of the world as worthy partners in resolving world issues.

These events were also a chance for the Youth Representatives to network with their peers in order to build on existing partnerships and form new ones. Participants attending the programmes came from Australia, Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The highlight of the events was the presence of the Secretary-General’s new Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Alhendawi. Mr. Alhendawi’s goal during both events was to instill a sense of purpose in the Youth Representatives and to share with them his thoughts on his role as the first UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. He promised to involve youth actively in both achieving the Millennium Development Goals and planning the UN’s post-2015 development agenda.

Youth Representatives left both events excited with their newfound knowledge, lists of diverse and international contacts and abundant plans with which to actively engage their peers around the world and the United Nations.