

UNYSA-UK Proposal for an FCO Youth Delegate at the United Nations General Assembly



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Introduction

This proposal for a youth delegate in the United Kingdom's mission to the General Assembly of the United Nations is submitted by the Youth Council of the United Nations Youth and Student Association of the UK (UNYSA-UK). The basic premise behind this proposal is to have a young person aged 18-24 as a delegate in the UK's mission to attend the General Assembly on behalf of the UK government and young people in the UK. Below, UNYSA-UK outlines the reasons why such a delegate should be adopted, how they would be selected, and the benefits they would bring to the UK government and its mission.

Who are we and what do we do?

UNYSA-UK is an organisation of school, college and university students and young people from across the UK. Membership is open to all youth living or studying in the UK who are under 26 or who are registered students. We form the youth and student division of the United Nations Association - an organisation founded in 1945. Our aim is to get young people more involved in global governance and foster greater awareness and understanding between people and cultures. We share an interest in issues and concerns related to the United Nations including:

- human rights;
- the environment;
- conflict prevention;
- health;
- sustainable development;
- education and
- building a culture of peace.

We work to further these goals and promote increased public awareness and debate of these crucial international issues.

Our activities are divided between campaigning and learning. We have 20 branches across the country organising local events for our members, including Model United Nations, conferences and debates with keynote speakers, fundraising and lobbying MPs. Our national campaigns range from 'Stop Aids' to 'Adopt-a-Minefield'. The new campaign for the coming year will revolve around promoting citizenship. We currently have approximately 1200 members and membership of UNYSA-UK continues to grow rapidly as we open new university and school branches across the UK. Nineteen of our branches are based at Universities from Oxford to St Andrews. Individual members who join directly via our HQ in London pay £6 a year for membership whilst university branches have autonomy to decide how much to charge their members.

Through the wealth of members and knowledge that we collectively share, UNYSA-UK can provide the FCO with an extended network of young people who are concerned about the UN. Our members join UNYSA because they are interested in global issues. UNYSA is the perfect body for the FCO to gauge the views of youngpeople about the UN and many other global issues.

Why have a youth delegate?

Youth – officially defined by the UN as people aged 15-24 – makes up one-sixth of the world population and one-eighth of the UK population. Yet this group is hugely under-represented in national and international decision-making, despite the fact that issues that affect the world



population also affect youth, often to a greater extent due to their social and economic status within society. The United Nations General Assembly has recommended four times that Member States include a youth representative in their delegations, starting in 1981 with Resolution RES/36/17. In particular, the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, which was adopted by the 50th plenary session of the General Assembly repeated this in calling upon Member States to:

“...Include Youth Representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, thus enhancing and strengthening the channels of communication through the discussion of youth-related issues, with a view to find solutions to the problems confronting youth in the contemporary world.”

Another resolution in 2004 reiterated this recommendation, but acceptance and implementation of these recommendations by Member States has been slow. In 2003, only five countries - Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden - sent a youth representative as part of their delegation. As a founding member of the United Nations, and a member with a permanent seat on the Security Council, the UK should set an example to others by including youth delegates in their missions. In particular, 2005 represents a perfect opportunity for the UK to launch its Youth Delegate programme. The 58th General Assembly has designated the 2005 meeting a special session on youth, with a specific focus on attendance and participation by Youth Delegates. This will be a powerful platform from which to launch the first UK Youth Delegate programme.

What do other countries do?

Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden all have different processes for recruiting their Youth Delegates. Their Delegates also spend different periods of time in New York and working for the government on youth issues.

What should the UK do?

In our view, the UK process could start by having a Youth Delegate spend four weeks during the General Assembly in New York and a week on return working for the FCO in producing a report and feedback on their experience of the GA. This period of time is one that many other nations currently use, designed to coincide with the General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Third Committee's discussions on youth. In terms of recruitment and selection of the Youth Delegate, the most effective and easiest of these selection systems is that operated by Australia, where the United Nations Youth Association plays a key role in organising the recruitment process. It is this process that we have used as a model on which the UK system would be based, in order to ensure that the FCO gets the best candidate for the job, but without much of the burden of the applications process.

How would the UK selection process work?

In a similar vein to the Australian selection process, the FCO would commission UNYSA-UK to select and recruit a short-list of 5 or so potential youth delegates. The timetable of events would be as follows:

Oct/Nov Start of application process. Advertise and publicise the opportunity to become a youth delegate in the UK's mission to the General Assembly to young people aged 18-24. This would be done through our members and branches, through our website, through the FCO's website and through contacting universities and youth groups throughout the country. Application forms would be available from the UNYSA and FCO websites and candidates would return these to UNYSA with a CV and a personal statement on what they believe they could bring to the delegation.



- Jan/Feb** Closing date for applications in mid-January. The UNYSA recruitment panel would then sift the applications and produce a short-list.
- March/April** The panel would interview the short-listed candidates.
- May/June** Following the interviews, UNYSA would provide a final short-list of approximately 5 candidates. These 5 would then undergo second round interviews with the FCO, who would ultimately have the final choice of the Youth Delegate for the UK's mission.
- July/Aug** The successful candidate would undergo security clearance and briefing with the FCO on UK policy and expectations of them at the General Assembly.
- Sept** The Youth Delegate would fly to New York with the UK's mission. After spending the four weeks at the GA in New York, the delegate would return to the UK and work for a week at the FCO, documenting and reporting on their experience and developing the programme for the next year.

The timing for this is deliberately aimed at allowing room for manoeuvre. We have tried to ensure that there is plenty of time to complete the recruitment process and that we have avoided difficult times of year for students, such as exam times, that will affect both the candidates and the UNYSA recruitment panel. We anticipate that such a panel would follow a similar form to that used in Australia. We would have 5 members of the panel – two from the UNYSA Youth Council; the Executive Director of UNA-UK (our parent organisation) or his/her representative; and two previous Youth Delegates. In the first two years of this programme there will not be any previous Delegates from the UK. However, we anticipate being able to use our contacts with other UN Youth Associations to use the expertise of their past Delegates in the recruitment process. Once two years had passed, we would clearly be able to revert to using past UK Youth Delegates. The panel would of course work closely with the FCO during this short-listing and selection process, culminating in a short-list of 5 candidates from which the FCO will have the final choice. We expect to be able to roll out this programme in time to allow a Youth Delegate to attend the 60th General Assembly in September 2005.

What will the Youth Delegate do?

The Youth Representative will work for the government. Internally, they will represent a youth view to the FCO. Externally, they will represent British interests at the United Nations.

Prior to departing, the Youth Representative will:

- Attend briefing sessions with the FCO;
- Liaise with other youth organizations in the UK on issues affecting national and international youth interests;
- Study youth developments at the United Nations and initiatives taken by other member states;
- Work with the previous year's Youth Delegate to secure a good and responsible passing of knowledge and experience in order to facilitate the continuity of the Youth Delegate Programme.



Whilst at the General Assembly, the Youth Representative will:

- Provide policy advice to the UK's mission to the General Assembly on a range of global issues specifically associated with youth;
- Attend discussions in the six committees and the plenary session of the General Assembly, but in particular the youth discussions of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Third Committee (the Committee that deals with issues relating to Youth);
- Present the UK's position on a range of youth issues to foreign diplomats at the United Nations;
- Assist in organising the annual Youth Symposium for Youth Representatives and other young people at the UN in New York;
- Build strong relations with the other Youth Representatives at the General Assembly, attend the annual meeting of Youth Representatives and the annual meeting of the Youth Advisory Body for the UN's Youth Fund;
- Increase the priority placed on youth issues, both by the UK Government and other Member States and encourage other Member States to include Youth Representatives in their missions to the General Assembly;
- Report on the meetings and briefings for the UK's Mission;
- Attend UK Delegation and regional meetings;
- Assist the UK's Mission in administrative tasks.

On return from the General Assembly, the Youth Representative will:

- Attend debriefing sessions with the FCO;
- Write a report for the FCO on their experience in New York;
- Report to the UK community, particularly youth, about their experiences at the UN;
- Assist in the recruitment of future Youth Representatives in the UK;
- Secure a good and responsible passing of knowledge and experience to the following year's Youth Delegate, in order to facilitate the continuity of the Youth Delegate Programme.

In addition, before, during and after the General Assembly, the Youth Representative will be expected to:

- Provide advice on and assist in the development of UK foreign policy with specific regard to youth policy at the UN;
- Advise other British government departments on youth issues where requested;
- Advise youth organizations in the UK on youth issues at the United Nations;
- Work to develop the role of the Youth Representative in UK's Mission.



Who will the Youth Delegate be?

The Youth Delegate will be a British citizen aged 18-24. We recognise that the official definition of youth is 15-24, however, for reasons of security and in order to avoid issues of loco parentis arising, we are recommending initially that all applicants be 18 or over. In addition, they will have various preferred personal traits and skills. Youth Representatives need to be culturally sensitive and be able to represent the diversity of young people in the UK. They must be resourceful, versatile, tactful, able to work as part of a team, and have strong analytical, interpersonal and communication abilities. They should enjoy keeping up with current affairs - whether political, economic, industrial, social or cultural, and have a demonstrable interest in the United Nations. Knowledge of foreign languages is a definite advantage.

What will this cost?

The members of the UNYSA-UK Youth Council are volunteers who act on the basis of good-will and do not receive remuneration, beyond expenses, for their work. In light of this, the UNYSA-UK recruitment panel and the Youth Delegate would continue to work as volunteers whilst involved in the Youth Delegate Programme, and therefore the FCO would not be expected to pay them for their time. The major costs that would need to be covered are outlined below in a provisional budget (although the quoted figures below are approximations and not confirmed costings). However, we will be happy to liaise with the FCO in the future to agree the detail of this. Any monies would be paid to our parent organisation, UNA-UK, and they and UNYSA-UK would be accountable for such funds:

Recruitment and Selection (including travel and accommodation for interviewees and the UNYSA-UK recruitment panel, administrative costs)	£1500
Attending the General Assembly (including flights, accommodation in New York, travel and subsistence whilst there)	£3200
Reporting back on return from the General Assembly (including accommodation, travel and subsistence whilst attending the FCO, speaking at public meetings, schools, universities etc)	£1300
<u>Total Cost</u>	<u>£6000</u>

How could this idea be developed over time?

This programme could be extended on two levels once it has been established. Firstly, it may be desirable to increase the number of Youth Delegates attending as part of the UK mission. Norway and Denmark for example, currently send two youth delegates to the General Assembly. Secondly, the length of time incurred by the Youth Delegate could be extended so that, for example, they spend two or three months in New York for the entirety of the General Assembly, following the model of the Australian Youth Delegate. As the programme evolves, it may be desirable for the Youth Delegate to devote more time on return to the UK, to report on their experiences, both within the FCO; to other young people; and to civil society organisations in order to build on their time in New York and promote the programme nationally. All this would of course be subject to negotiation with the FCO.



How would the UK government benefit?

The government will benefit hugely from the recognition of the importance of youth participation. Young people face many challenges and problems particular to them and while young people aspire to full participation in the life of society, their voices tend to be marginalised. The problems facing youth, challenge not only today's societies, but future generations as well. It is essential that youth be given a role and a voice in seeking to address these challenges. Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. By enabling more effective participation of young people we can benefit from their energy, idealism, unique perspectives and innovative and creative ideas. Young people are the experts on the issues that affect them and as such, are integral to achieving effective and enduring solutions. By empowering young people to participate more fully in society and decision making processes, they become engaged as partners in shaping the world they will inherit and pass on to future generations.

The creation of a Youth Representative position has the benefit of empowering an often marginalised sector of society as well as leading to more appropriate and effective solutions to problems facing young people. The existence of such a position would be a tangible demonstration by the UK government of their commitment to young people, improving relations between the government and UK youth. Promoting youth representation and participation in an organisation such as the United Nations General Assembly can inspire young people to take a greater interest in citizenship and become more involved in international issues. Youth Representatives have demonstrated themselves to be of great value to their Governments and Foreign Ministries who have benefited from fresh perspectives and bold new ideas. Ultimately, a Youth Delegate as part of the UK's mission will allow the UK to claim the legitimacy of representing the views of UK youth and to be, and to be seen to be, promoting the voice of the UK's young people in global decision-making.

Finally, in the words of Kofi Annan;

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