

Practical Guide for Youth Delegates to the United Nations

Tips from Fellow Youth Delegates



This report is produced by Future Agents NOW.

Future Agents NOW is a project, which aims to support the participation of young people in international decision-making processes. The project strives to strengthen and enhance diversity in youth delegate programmes, as well as build the capacities of delegates.

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This report reflects the authors' views and conclusion, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information in contains.

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FOREWORD

Over the past decade, the participation of young people in the work of the United Nations has grown significantly, reflecting a deeper understanding of the importance and value of youth engagement. Across the UN system, more entities have implemented dedicated youth policies and programmes and advanced ways to work with young people and youth-led organizations, with similar commitments seen among Member States. This emphasis on youth participation is also reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where specific targets and indicators highlight the importance of young people in achieving global goals. The involvement of young people is now seen as a key element in advancing sustainable development as they increasingly taking on active roles in the decisions that shape our world.

The United Nations Youth Delegate Programme is an important channel for facilitating youth participation in intergovernmental processes and supporting their active engagement in decision-making processes at the UN. Youth Delegates, as official members of their national delegations, play a pivotal role in representing the views and priorities of their peers in global policy discussions. Their participation goes beyond simply occupying a seat; it ensures that the experiences, perspectives, and priorities of young people are reflected in dialogue and decision-making processes in the UN. This helps us identify more effective and responsive solutions to the challenges faced by youth today.

The increasing focus on youth is evident in the growing number of Member States sending Youth Delegates to the United Nations. From only seven Youth Delegates at the General Assembly in 2000 to 66 in 2023, this upward trend highlights the expanding commitment to youth inclusion in the UN intergovernmental processes. As more Member States recognize and support the value of youth inclusion, this number is expected to grow, further amplifying the voices of young people within the UN.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) oversees the coordination of the UN Youth Delegate Programme at the global level, providing guidance to Member States, sharing best practices, and facilitating key engagement opportunities for Youth Delegates. Member States, in turn, drive the programme at the national level, tailoring it to their unique contexts and priorities. This collaborative approach ensures that youth inclusion is pursued in a sustained and impactful way. For these efforts to succeed, contributions from partners like Future Agents NOW (FAN) are critical as they help expand the reach and effectiveness of the programme.

This handbook, developed by FAN, is a welcome resource for anyone involved in the Youth Delegate Programme. It provides practical insights into the legal basis of the programme, outlines common ways Youth Delegates can engage with the UN, and offers guidance on preparing for participation in consultation with national governments. By drawing on national examples, this handbook serves as both a guide

and source of inspiration, helping new delegates to make the most of their roles during their mandates.

As we continue to work towards a more inclusive and equitable world, young people must be not only heard but also actively participate in shaping our shared future. The UN Youth Delegate Programme offers a unique platform for youth to engage, advocate, and lead in driving global change and contribute to solutions across a wide range of issues. We are proud to support this important work and look forward to the continued growth and success of youth delegates worldwide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Li Junhua' in Chinese characters, written in a cursive style.

LI Junhua

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being selected as a Youth Delegate to represent your country at the United Nations as a full-fledged member of the official delegation! This handbook has been developed by the Future Agents NOW project, with input from former and current Youth Delegates, to help you successfully fulfil your mandate. Although each national youth delegate program is unique in its cultural context and exact implementation, there is quite a bit of common ground between them as well. This handbook aims to introduce some of the more common ways that Youth Delegates get involved in the work of the United Nations. As these programs evolve and youth participation becomes more meaningful, we are sure that new avenues will be created to make the voices of youth heard.

The handbook will give you information about the legal basis for a youth delegates' mandate, the different aspects of participation in international meetings and the events that many Youth Delegates will go to. In addition to being a source of information, we hope that this handbook can also provide you with practical insights on how to plan your mandate, social media strategies, events and consultations, engage with youth locally etc, in coordination with your Government. In creating this handbook, we have conducted interviews with multiple youth delegates from different countries, to get their input, ideas and perspectives so you can tap into your full potential as a youth delegate. Throughout this handbook, you will therefore see words of encouragement from those youth delegates who have come before you as well as examples from various countries on their activities and (perhaps unique) ways of making the most of their mandate.

In addition to this handbook, the Future Agents NOW project has published a Global Youth Voices report that maps the way in which 27 different Youth Delegate Programmes function (in 2022–23). The project has also developed Minimum Standards for European Youth Delegate Programmes to the United Nations, an online learning platform for programme managers that can help assess the status of already existing Youth Delegate programmes and assist in setting up new ones, as well as a diversity self-assessment tool. All of these are free to use (as is this handbook!) and can be shared among already existing programmes as well as anyone interested in setting up a youth delegate programme in their country. You can also find them in Annex 2 “Other resources”.

Future Agents NOW is a project funded by the European Union through Erasmus+ and implemented by the Danish, Estonian and Finnish National Youth Councils. On behalf of the Future Agents NOW team, we would like to thank all the Youth Delegates who have contributed to the development of this handbook with their time and input.

NOTE: Throughout this handbook, the abbreviation UNYD is used, standing for United Nations Youth Delegate, also known as Youth Delegates to the United Nations.

CHAPTER 1:

LEGAL BASIS

Even though Member States at the UN have long recognised that young people need to be included in political processes and are vital to the continued development of our societies, a limited number of Member States actually include young people in their work at the UN through a national Youth Delegate programme. In this chapter you will find a legal basis for the establishment of United Nations Youth Delegate (UNYD) programmes with relevant resolutions and paragraphs in support of the idea that young people and youth delegates belong at the UN. You can use these when you are seeking to change or advocating for your YD programme. For further information, you can always Google the resolutions and read through them to find relevant points to use when you are advocating.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/81

This resolution is also known as the “World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY)” - an international strategy that was adopted by the General Assembly (GA) in 1995 and further developed in 2005. The main priority of the resolution is to support youth participation in decision-making. More specifically, it encourages governments to enhance youth participation in a variety of international forums by considering the inclusion of young representatives in their national delegations to the GA. The resolution also reminds Member States that they are responsible for the implementation of the resolution and therefore need to allocate sufficient funds, resources and time to it.

“Invites Member States, once again, to include, whenever possible, youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly and other meetings of relevant United Nations bodies, with a view to stimulating the participation of young women and men in the implementation of the Programme of Action.” (A/RES/50/81, Page 1, Para 4).

“The capacity for progress of our societies is based, among other elements, on their capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in the building and designing of the future. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.” (A/RES/ 50/ 81, Page 25, Para 104)

“The following actions are proposed:

[...]

(f) Inviting Governments to strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums, inter alia, by considering the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly.” (A/RES/ 50/ 81, Page 26, Para 107)

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 58/133

This resolution titled “Policies and programmes involving youth” was adopted in 2003 and focuses on reaffirming on how important youth participation is in societal development and acknowledges the potential of young people in bringing out positive change in their communities.

“Also recognizes the great importance of empowering young people by building their capacity to achieve greater independence, overcoming constraints to their participation and providing them with opportunities to make decisions that affect their lives and well-being;” (A/RES/ 58/ 133, Page 2)

“Reiterates the call made in the World Programme of Action to Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings, thus broadening the channels of communication and enhancing the discussion of youth-related issues /.../ “ (A/RES/ 58/ 133, Page 3)

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 62/126

This resolution on “Policies and Programmes Involving Youth: Youth in the Global Economy – Promoting Youth Participation in Social and Economic Development” includes a supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). Notably, it marks the first time that UNDESA’s Programme on Youth Unit (PYU) has been officially designated to oversee the participation of Youth Delegates at a global level. The resolution also emphasises the importance of achieving greater geographical balance in youth representation and encourages the utilisation of the Youth Fund to support this goal.

*“18. **Stresses** the importance of ensuring that young people are recognised as active agents in decision-making processes and for positive change and development in society and, in this regard, urges Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations to all relevant discussions in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, bearing in mind the principles of gender balance and non-discrimination, and emphasises that such youth representatives should be selected through a transparent process which ensures they have a suitable mandate to represent young people in their countries;*

*19. **Recognises** the positive contribution that youth representatives make to the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies and their role as an important channel of communication between young people and the United Nations and, in this regard, requests the Secretary-General to adequately support the United Nations Programme on Youth so that it can continue to facilitate their effective participation in meetings;*

*20. **Recognises** the need for a greater geographical balance of youth representation and encourages Member States and intergovernmental and non- governmental organisations to contribute to the United Nations Youth Fund in order to facilitate the participation of youth representatives from developing countries;” (A/RES/ 62/ 126, Page 5 and 6)*

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2250

This resolution, also known as the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, was adopted in 2015 and is seen as a true landmark resolution. It is the first of its kind to recognise the essential role of young people in maintaining and promoting peace and security. The resolution focuses on five action pillars which are: participation; protection; prevention; partnership; disengagement and reintegration. By promoting the inclusion of young people in decision-making, protecting their rights and addressing the root causes of conflicts while fostering positive partnerships, the resolution aims to make significant steps towards more inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding and non-violent conflict resolution. The resolution has not only inspired and empowered many youth-led initiatives but has given rise to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda - a framework that has triggered policy developments in member states and institutions to include more youth perspectives in security strategies. We strongly recommend Youth Delegates interested in peace and security to read the resolution, which is only 5 pages long.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RES 70/1 (2015)

This resolution titled “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was adopted in 2015 and focuses on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets. In this resolution, the Assembly acknowledges that youth has a critical role in achieving the SDGs and therefore are agents of change. Another significant aspect for youth is that the resolution also focuses on the importance of education and employment, and encourages the creation of platforms and opportunities for youth to engage in dialogues at all levels. The resolution, also called the 2030 Agenda, has had an enormous impact on national strategies and many countries have integrated the SDGs into their national plans and policies.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RES 72/146 (2017)

This resolution titled “Policies and programmes involving youth” was adopted in 2017 and focuses on reminding and recognising the contributions of young people to society. The resolution also touches on many topics such as unemployment, biodiversity, quality education etc that all have direct implications to the well-being of children and youth, therefore urging member states to not take these topics lightly and to deal with the increasing challenges.

“Welcoming the effective participation of youth representatives in national delegations at the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and relevant United Nations conferences, /.../” (A/RES/72/146, Page 2)

“Recalling that Member States have an important role in promoting and protecting the rights and in meeting the needs and aspirations of youth, including youth with disabilities, and recognizing that the ways in which young people are able to fulfil their potential as agents of change will influence social and economic conditions and the well-being and livelihood of future generations, /.../” (A/RES/72/146, Page 2)

“Recognizes that youth participation is important for development, and urges Member States and United Nations entities, in consultation with youth and youth-led and youth-focused organizations, to explore and promote new avenues for the full, effective, structured and sustainable participation of young people and youth-led organizations in relevant decision-making processes and monitoring, in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life, including in designing and implementing policies, programmes and initiatives, in particular, while implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; /.../” (A/RES/72/146, Page 6)

“Urges Member States to consider including youth delegates in their delegations at all relevant discussions in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and relevant United Nations conferences, as appropriate, bearing in mind the principles of gender balance and non-discrimination, and emphasizes that such youth representatives should be selected through a transparent process that ensures that they have a suitable mandate to represent young people in their countries; /.../” (A/RES/72/146, Page 6)

CHAPTER 2:

HOW TO START YOUR MANDATE STRONGLY

In this chapter, we hope to provide you with relevant information for the start of a mandate for newly selected Youth Delegates. This chapter encompasses recommendations and best practices developed by Youth Delegates who have been where you are. Not all of these may apply to you or even be possible to do in the context of your Youth Delegate programme, but you will gain a broad overview of how handover processes are structured in different countries.

What are the first steps?

It is most likely that the organisation that chose you on behalf of your Government, whether that is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), a youth council, UN association or something else, will set up a handover meeting for you. In some countries, Youth Delegates have a junior-senior system¹, in which a senior Youth Delegate is allocated to you and will continue to guide you throughout the beginning of your mandate. In those countries where a junior-senior system does not exist, you may wish to organise a meeting with the former Youth Delegate yourself. In some cases, Youth Delegates have a training day or weekend at the beginning of their mandate that facilitates knowledge transfer and capacity building. If a handover or training event has not been organised for you, make sure you ask for the necessary contact details and materials yourself!

TIP: Figure out who would be the most relevant stakeholders for you and get in touch with them via email or set meetings when possible. This could include your previous/senior Youth Delegate, contact person(s) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other relevant ministries, your country's permanent mission to the UN, the National Youth Council, UN association etc.

These meetings are good opportunities for you to ask questions about the various aspects of your mandate, in particular what is expected of you and what the boundaries are for the duration of your mandate. You will quickly realise that Youth Delegate programmes can vary from country to country, and what may be true for some Youth Delegates may not apply to you. For example, some Youth Delegates have to do a lot of national activities in between participating in meetings, while others focus on being

**“Bravely ask questions
– we don’t know everything!”**

part of the political processes going on at the UN and the national preparations for them. Find out whether there is a written document outlining your obligations and if there is not, you may

¹ Several countries with more than one youth delegate and mandates of over a year have implemented a senior-junior system for the replacement of delegates. Instead of replacing all delegates at the same time, the mandates of youth delegates are partially overlapped so that these countries replace their delegates at different points in time, in order to ensure that there is always an experienced delegate in the team.

“Try to not be intimidated by the institutional logistics and all these things, fight for your rights as a YD and for the rights of young people in general.”

wish to create one in consultation with the ministry/responsible body. Youth Delegates across the world recommended keeping contact with the previous Youth Delegate(s) of your country, as they are the ones who can give you the most detailed understanding of what the position entails.

It is also recommended that you establish in what capacity you will be engaging with meetings in the UN. Which meetings are you likely to participate in? What are the engagement opportunities at these events - can you make an intervention (statement), speak in a panel discussion, organise a side event, participate in negotiations? How are the finances organised - will the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) be responsible for your flights and accommodation or is it organised by the partner organisation facilitating the programme? Will you have a daily allowance provided in advance of international events or will you be reimbursed for your expenses?

The processes at the UN can be lengthy, so it is good to familiarise yourself early on with what is going on during your mandate and consider those areas where the perspectives of youth may be missing. The negotiations for declarations often start over 6 months before they are set to be endorsed by Member States, leaving you with plenty of time to create a strategy to gather input into the declaration with other youth delegates or youth from your own country. Furthermore, it is more likely that your inputs will make an impact if you are engaged in the process from an early stage so you are seen as a valuable contributor and knowledgeable about the issues involved.

“Set specific goals
– it will keep you motivated.”

What can you do on your own?

Most Youth Delegates reported that in addition to reading documents on UN processes, procedures and youth-related reports, they found subscribing to newsletters, following accounts on social media (some suggestions are below) and looking at previous materials generated by Youth Delegates were all very helpful in transitioning into the role. There are an enormous amount of processes taking place at the UN and it can be overwhelming to try and understand what is relevant for you. Ask your previous Youth Delegate which sources and materials they found the most useful. Some common recommendations from former Youth Delegates include:

- Go through the materials shared with you by the previous Youth Delegate/Programme Manager
- Read your country's national policies on youth and directions in foreign policy
- Ask/read about the current processes at the UN and familiarise yourself with

what they mean – sometimes this means going back a couple of years to understand the timeline

- Explore the home pages of the UN and other agencies that may be relevant for you, you can often find dates for events and agendas there
- Subscribe to newsletters
- Follow the social media accounts of UN agencies and civil society organisations that engage with the UN
- Ask Youth Delegates from other countries for help if you are not sure where to start

“When someone uses fancy and long abbreviations during meetings, don’t be scared to ask what they mean!”

This is not a comprehensive list and you will have to find what works best for you, but they are a great place to start. Additionally, at the end of this handbook you will find a list of recommended websites, newsletters, social media handles and UN vocabulary that may come in handy. Depending on the processes you engage in, the language and shorthand may be slightly different.

How to get in touch with other youth delegates?

You will notice that the term “Youth Delegate” can be used quite liberally by different organisations and countries, which can make it confusing to understand who your fellow Youth Delegates are. For our intents and purposes, we adopt the approach of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) that an official Youth Delegate participates in international events as a part of a country’s official delegation.

At the time of writing (2024), most of the communication between Youth Delegates takes place via WhatsApp group chats. These are normally created for events, e.g. UNYDs to *a specific edition of the* UNGA, and can be regionally oriented or open to everyone. Usually it is the senior or the previous Youth Delegate who will ask for you to be added to the group chat - it is not a perfect system, but it seems to be what works for now. The key is to get your foot in the door, so to say, as once you are a member of at least one of the groups, the other youth delegates will help you get where you need to be.

At the time of writing this handbook, the Youth Delegates from European Union member states hold monthly coordination meetings that are sometimes open for wider participation and these can be a good way to meet other Youth Delegates before participating in any in-person events. In these meetings, Youth Delegates

“Build personal relationships with other youth delegates and stakeholders since they are your support system.”

can cooperate in the preparation for the events by sharing information and finding partners for side events. However since these meetings are primarily targeted at EU member states, the timings of the meetings will correspond to European Time Zones.

Global preparation events are more difficult to plan because of time differences, but not they are not unheard of, and the relevant information is usually shared in the WhatsApp groups and on social media. It is possible that some other regions have similar coordination efforts, but to the best of our knowledge, this is not the case at the time of writing this handbook. In the future, as Youth Delegate programmes grow, this may change.

CHAPTER 3:

THE POWER OF PLANNING

Whether it is events, social media, or juggling several positions at the same time, the key word for a successful Youth Delegate mandate is “planning”. Usually, high-level international meetings are set months in advance, so as a Youth Delegate you have plenty of time to plan your trip, consultations or national activities beforehand/after the fact, and any other obligations you might be juggling.

We do acknowledge that in many countries, the Youth Delegates will receive short notice about their participation in international events often a result of their ministries’ decision-making processes, funding issues etc. In that case, what you can do to prepare for the events might be different, but this chapter will give some general ideas on what to think about.

While the information in this chapter may seem obvious to some, it is always a good idea to plan your planning as well, and we hope to help you with that.

Putting together a yearly plan for your mandate

As a Youth Delegate, your mandate will include certain international events and sessions that you are required to attend. If these events are not outlined in the description of your role, you may want to discuss with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or equivalent) along with the partner organisation facilitating the programme what these events are and how your participation there could be used in the most meaningful way.

If your mandate has a thematic focus (e.g. climate, gender equality etc), you may want to work out which events, organisations and/or committees are focused on that topic - you could ask the previous Youth Delegate from your country for information, ask your country’s permanent mission, your programme manager or simply use Google.

The UN system is enormous, so you could easily stumble upon something interesting or worthwhile that the people around you have not heard of yet. In chapter 5, we explain some of the more common events that youth delegates participate in.

Planning consultations

Once you know the international events you are attending, and the approximate times for these events, you can build your yearly plan around that in consultation with the government body tied to your programme.

In addition, it would be a good idea to know the different ways you can participate in the events, e.g. are you organising a side event, making a speech on behalf of your country’s youth, meeting with high-level representatives (e.g. Ministers, Youth Envoys, etc), participating in bilateral meetings or something else.

Since you are a representative of youth, you may be tasked with gathering input from diverse groups of youth around your country and organise a few youth consultations, before you develop your approach for these events. These consultations are a great way to increase your understanding of the opinions, thoughts and stances of the youth in your country, which helps your representative position carry legitimacy.

If your country has a national youth council, it may be also important to understand the opinions and policies they hold that are relevant to your area of work, as these organisations represent the points of view of many youth organisations and young people of the countries they operate in.

Some questions to think about when planning consultations:

- What format do you want to use?
- Do you want to travel around the country yourself to talk to youth or rather do a central event that brings a lot of youth together at once?
- Do you want to do a combination of the two (e.g. regional events)?
- Do you want to do an online survey?
- How do you want to gather input and present it afterwards?
- Who can help you in organising the consultations?
- What is the level of knowledge on the UN or topic you are consulting on of the people you are consulting?
- How can you adapt the consultation to their level of knowledge?
- How to make the consultation relevant and interesting?

Keep in mind that as a national delegate representing your country, you may be required to confer with the government body tied to your programme when planning the consultations. This is to ensure that you can take the positions to the UN without any objections from the MFA/Permanent Mission.

In the chapter “Organise your own national event”, we will provide more tips into planning consultations. In addition, there are likely to be various events taking place in your home country/region that may be of use and it’s best to mark down the ones you want to participate in to avoid any overlap.

Furthermore, former Youth Delegates recommend marking down periods where you know you will be busier, such as exam season. That way, you can already indicate ahead of time that you will have less availability during that period and alleviate stress for yourself. Of course, many events and opportunities will pop up throughout the year and you can add them to your calendar, but making a yearly plan can really contribute to a successful mandate as a youth delegate.

Planning a social media & communications strategy

A lot of youth delegates are also responsible for their own social media and communications, and as any person with such a task can confirm: it is a lot of work. Therefore, we would like to give you some tips that could make your life a little easier in this regard. Please ensure this work is carried out in coordination with your Mission.

1. Refer to your plan for the year as the starting point for your (social) media strategy.

Think of the events that you know you are going to and how you plan to cover these in social media. You already know that during international events, you will be very busy with the content and dynamics of the meeting but it is also crucial to show what you are doing and how you are representing the youth of your country. Therefore, it might be a good idea to create some posts or content for social media, a press release, or blog post beforehand so that you can simply share these messages during your trip, or finalise the post with pictures from the events.

It is also a good idea to tag others in your posts or ask them to tag you, so that you can reshare each other's content which means that there is less pressure on everyone to come up with something original.

If you have a social media manager or someone to help you with social media, agree with them beforehand what kind of content you plan to publish, so you can keep it in mind for the events - do you need to take pictures, videos, take notes for writing an article later on etc.

These big events are also a great base for planning the rest of your social media strategy, as you can create content both in the lead-up to the events by attempting to create excitement about the upcoming trip, call for consultations, share information about what is happening, and after the conclusion of the events - show what happened, what you did, and what the outcome of the event was.

In between the big events, you can cover the other events you have taken part in, as well as sharing the behind-the-scenes content of issues you are working on. Since most young people have never attended international meetings like this, the behind-the-scenes insights during the event can also be very interesting to see and will keep your audience engaged. In creating these posts, remember to work with or seek advice from social media managers or your Permanent Mission.

TIP: Here's some things you can do to ease the load of creating content:

- Prepare materials before international events, so then you only have to finalise and post them
- Tag other youth delegates and organisations so you can reshare each others' posts
- Plan ahead what you want to publish after the event, so you can consciously prepare for it throughout the event

Furthermore, it can help build your audience amongst those who aspire to become Youth Delegates or be involved in international organisations in other ways. In between your regular, more serious posts, you could show what the venue looks like, and add some fun facts about the event or the place. For example, what are the different gifts given by member states at the UN headquarters. Try to not only make educational posts, but also make it fun for people to learn!

You can also look up international days to find what topic could be relevant in any given moment or suggest collaborations with other youth delegates. For example, youth delegates have put together short video messages in celebration of the International Day for Peace, International Women's Day etc. You could even do a twist on "non-political" celebrations such as Valentine's Day if you find creative ways to get your message out there in that context (e.g. "my heart is beating for gender equality").

2. Know your message and know your (target) audience

One of the most important things in regards to communication is to be purposeful.

Whether it is the message you are trying to get out, who you are trying to reach or how often you post, think through the goal of what and why you are posting and when. Most likely, your main target audience is other young people. Another audience you might like to reach are decision makers. These audiences are very different in the platforms they use and the type of content they are used to, so make sure to tailor your communications based on the audiences you want to reach.

Keep your messages and language easily understandable, especially when targeting people who are not familiar with international politics. As you get deeper into the world of international organisations, you will become much more familiar with the processes, abbreviations of events and (sub)organisations, and the other people working in the field, but do not forget that your audience is not privy to all the same information as you.

Furthermore, the current social media algorithm tends to promote simple language and words that people are searching for, e.g. if it is a rainy day and many people are posting about it, you could mention rain in your post to increase the likelihood of the article being boosted to wider audiences.

Note that different social media platforms function slightly differently and might have a wider audience among a certain group, so if you are promoting something, tailor the content to a specific platform and the audience there.

However, as learning all of the intricacies is very time-consuming, it is recommended to focus on one or two platforms in which you can develop an expertise and be most active on to build your audience (quality over quantity).

Another aspect of quality over quantity has to do with how often you post. Aim for

consistency - branding yourself as a consistent source of reliable and interesting content will help you reach a larger audience. However, keep in mind the purpose of your posts; if you don't have anything to say, it might be better to not post at all. At the same time, putting out content consistently will help you remain on people's minds. It is a balancing act.

If you have a team (or even a person) to help you with social media, it would likely remove a lot of stress from creating content all the time. If you do not have someone to help out then you may want to ask your programme manager if you can take on a volunteer to help you with this.

TIP: Think of the “what”, “why” and “when” in your social media plan to be successful in reaching the audience you are aiming for and creating buzz around your activities.

- What is the message you're trying to get out?
- Why should this matter to your target audience?
- When is the best time to publish?

3. Working the algorithm

Firstly, we must note that social media platforms change all the time. On the one hand, the way the platforms function will change over time, but in addition, whether or not a social media platform even exists may also change. At the time of writing, we can make some suggestions based on how the most popular and well-known social media platforms work right now. Of course these are also subject to the cultural context of your country and which platforms are most popular there. We are able to give some notes and recommendations on platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook.

Fill out your platform so that it is very clear who you are and what you do. Feel free to add links to other ways to reach you and places to find information about your activities, e.g. you could add a LinkTree to your Instagram bio that will have links to your Facebook page, website, the organisation that you are associated with etc. You should have a text that describes you, a picture of yourself, and your contact information easily available for any interested parties to get in touch with you.

An overall suggestion for posts is to use pictures with people's faces on them so that they feel more personal. For example, if you would like to share some infographics on Instagram, it is recommended to use a picture of a person on the first slide and information on the following slides. Reels tend to get a lot of reach compared to pictures, but the message you want to get across has to be at the very beginning of the video as there is a very small window to truly attract attention. Selfie-stories can help with promotion because it's more personal, e.g. if you want to invite youth to give an input, it feels more like a personal invitation.

For events, it can still be relevant to use Facebook as it is one of the few platforms that actually has a well-functioning option to create events with the time, descrip-

tion, personalised invitations and automatic reminders. Remember to tag people and places in your stories and posts so they can reach a wider audience.

On LinkedIn, likes and comments matter as posts with more interactions are promoted to people who are not your immediate “connections”. To utilise LinkedIn, connect with people right after an event when they still remember your name and you can keep building a relationship by commenting on each other’s posts. Remember that the “life” of a post is longer on LinkedIn and you can still see activity on your posts weeks later.

Something particular to LinkedIn is the length of texts - while generally it is recommended to leave gaps and use lots of emojis to make the text easily readable, the goal on LinkedIn is to get people to click “read more”, so you should write longer texts with exciting beginnings. LinkedIn wants to keep you on the platform, so you might want to be careful about adding links or hashtags that would encourage people to visit another platform.

For measures of success, do not limit yourself to the number of likes and comments, but also consider the number of people you have reached, this can be an important variable. It is often more important to analyse how widely the post has been shared, rather than how many likes it got. Analyse your own posts – is there a specific theme that’s more popular, do you get more reach when you post at a certain time of day etc.

However, you should remember that communication is also more than just social media. To promote the work you are doing and the cause you care about, you need to talk to people in person and be present in “traditional” media as well, whether by writing opinion articles for them or gaining coverage of your activities by a journalist. It is a good idea to have information about the Youth Delegate Programme and yourself on a webpage, whether it is your own, the National Youth Council’s, the UN Association’s or the MFA’s (or all of them). Try to create a holistic brand across the platforms to, once again, make it clear who you are and what you do.

These are only some general suggestions for planning and managing your (social) media presence, but as we have already noted, communication is a very wide area and the cultural context in which you operate might call for different approaches. Some programmes also offer media workshops or courses at the beginning of the mandate to prepare the Youth Delegate, so it might be a good idea to ask your programme manager whether that is a possibility.

Burnout and taking time off

Youth Delegates from around the globe have also emphasised how important it is to plan for time off. Accept that it is impossible to do everything, and that taking breaks is necessary both for your mental and physical health.

The Youth Delegate position can come with an avalanche of exciting opportunities, but please do take the time to prioritise so you don't get burned out. It is completely okay to set boundaries, e.g. only being available during weekdays or only between certain hours, reminding colleagues that you are not an intern, saying no to some events/opportunities etc.

Experienced Youth Delegates recommend picking your battles - figure out your focus and the best way to actually fight for it. It is also important to be able to identify which activities are mandatory in your programme and which are optional.

If you are feeling overwhelmed and/or overworked, reach out to your programme manager to discuss what could be done to make your role easier. Although friends and family are there for you, being a Youth Delegate is often a unique opportunity that not many can relate to. Therefore, we encourage all Youth Delegates to create bonds with your fellow Youth Delegates as they *are* the ones who know what you are going through - they know the struggles, the joys, the frustrations and the pressure to do as much as you can with your mandate.

Remember that if you do not take a break, your body will take it for you, so prioritise your health over all else. You got this!

TIP: Think of these things when you are deciding on whether to join an event/initiative:

1. Is this impactful? How does this contribute to my goals as a Youth Delegate of my country?
2. Is this topic important to me, the youth and the delegation I represent? As a Youth Delegate, we often have thematic areas that we are more passionate about, and it can be far more effective to focus on those topics, rather than trying to do everything.

CHAPTER 4:

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

In the previous chapters, we already noted that a Youth Delegate's mandate and yearly plan will usually revolve around international events. For many UN Youth Delegates, that can mean participating in sessions held at the UN headquarters in New York for the work of the General Assembly, committees, ECOSOC or other relevant organs.

As we have already established, the events that you will participate in will usually be agreed upon with your programme manager and (most likely) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). In this chapter, we will give brief overviews of the instances where most Youth Delegates participate, but this is in no way an exhaustive list.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) works in regular sessions starting in September of each year and that period is usually the time when the most Youth Delegates can be found in New York. However, the exact timing could be different for Youth Delegates as the MFAs may want to include their Youth Delegates in slightly different ways. Usually there are two options for when Youth Delegates will be in New York (or if you are lucky, perhaps a bit of both).

1. **The General Debate**, also known as the **High-Level Week**, is when heads of state and government travel to New York with their delegations.

The head of the delegation (could be President, Prime Minister or some sort of Minister) will give a speech at the General Assembly hall on behalf of your country, but since the so-called high-level persons from all over the world have travelled to New York, the week for them is usually filled with bilateral meetings, high-level meetings on certain issues, side events, perhaps meetings with certain lobby organisations etc. We are likely not exaggerating when we say it is the busiest week of the year for the Permanent Missions to the UN that reside in New York.

For Youth Delegates, it can be an exciting time to be in New York as well, but due to the aforementioned business of the Permanent Missions, it is crucial to understand beforehand how you can be involved and what kinds of events you want to participate in.

This is also where the differences in programmes come in, because for some Youth Delegates, their Permanent Missions prepare busy schedules full of meetings and events, whilst others are left more to their own devices to figure out where they want to go.

We would recommend sitting down with your Ministry of Foreign Affairs contact and/or someone from the Permanent Mission to discuss beforehand what your time in New York would look like and what is expected of you.

During this High-Level Week, there are a lot of “official” side events held by UN agencies and different countries, but also organisations and groups working with the UN in different capacities. If you are responsible for your own schedule or can make recommendations regarding where you want to go, we recommend keeping an eye on the social media of the UN Youth Office, UN DESA, the Major Group for Children and Youth, YOUNGO (Youth Climate Movement) and whichever organisations seem most relevant for your interests. Make sure you keep an eye out early on since a lot of them have pre-registration and if they take place inside the UN headquarters, you will need accreditation to get in the building as the security measures are understandably rigorous.

Furthermore, although it is often not up to the Youth Delegates themselves, be aware that accommodation in New York will get even more expensive during this time as the demand is so high. Be aware and careful of any scams - if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Some Youth Delegates can stay at the residences of their permanent mission, but most have to find a place to stay themselves (and the costs will usually be covered by the national programme).

If it will be your first time in New York, do research beforehand about the different neighbourhoods there and consider safety and transport time in your search as well. Although it is expensive, most Youth Delegates will stay in Manhattan as that is where the UN headquarters is located.

2. The beginning of the work of the [Third Committee](#) is usually the second option when most Youth Delegates will travel to New York.

The first session usually takes place a couple of days after the General Debate closes and the biggest buzz is over as all the heads of state and government have returned home. This is the start of the “real work” of the General Assembly that uses committees to discuss various issues in more detail.

The Third Committee which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues is just one of six committees under the General Assembly. The UN itself describes its work in the following way: “The Committee discusses questions relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination. The Committee also addresses important social development questions such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.”

Despite the existence of the other five committees, the Third Committee is the most usual one for Youth Delegates to work with. A resolution on youth issues is negotiated in the Third Committee every two years, which gives Youth Delegates the opportunity to contribute directly to the work of the committee and suggest changes to the text. Depending on the Youth Delegate programme, the aims of the

Youth Delegate and their Permanent Mission, this may or may not be an option, but the best way to ensure this opportunity is afforded to you is to show interest and prepare well. More on that later on in the chapter.

Another typical way for Youth Delegates to engage in the Third Committee is through interventions on issues important to them. For example, if your area of interest is women's rights, your Permanent Mission can indicate to the Chair of the Third Committee that your country wants to make a statement during the session dedicated to this topic, and then give the floor to the Youth Delegate. Sometimes the speaking time is shared between the Youth Delegate and a Minister or someone from the Permanent Mission. It is important to know that the speaking time is always limited, so make sure you confirm with your Permanent Mission what the length of the speech should be (e.g. three minutes), whether or not you have to share that time with someone else, and if it is shared, who will speak first. As per the typical protocol at the UN, the microphone may be cut off if the statement exceeds the time limit.

In the case of interventions, discuss with the Permanent Mission/MFA how to write the speech. Since the statement is officially made on behalf of your country, you will have to agree on the text beforehand, but often the Youth Delegates are asked to come up with the initial text and the exact focus of the intervention. You can ask for example statements from your previous Youth Delegate, your Permanent Mission, or even find some statements made in previous years online. This should give you an idea of how to structure the speech, how to properly address the person conducting the session etc. Once your first draft is ready, the Permanent Mission/MFA will most likely suggest some changes to the text, but the exact level of freedom that Youth Delegates have in this process will be specific to the programmes.

Additionally, UNDESA usually puts together a programme for Youth Delegates during the first working weeks of the Third Committee. This can include meetings with various high-level officials such as the President of the General Assembly and introductions to various UN entities, such as the UN Office on Youth, the United Nations Development Programme, UN Women, etc. to learn about their work, and particularly how youth can get involved. Some of these meetings also have the option to join online, but many are also only in-person.

Most Youth Delegates can spend one to three weeks in New York, which may not be enough time to participate in both the General Debate week and the work of the Third Committee. This means you have to consider what your aims are during your time in New York and how this time can be best used.

UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum

The ECOSOC Youth Forum is an event that usually takes place in April and is directly focused on youth and youth issues, bringing together youth activists and many actors from the civil sector.

Note that Youth Delegate programmes where a young person is selected for a time-defined mandate and participates in the official work of the delegation is only one way for youth to get involved with the UN. At the ECOSOC Youth Forum you truly see the broad spectrum of youth who are engaged with the UN in various ways, with Youth Delegates only one part of it. You can expect a mix of plenary sessions, regional/topical sessions and a lot of side events. As a Youth Delegate, there are also various ways to engage in these discussions which may include some lobbying on the part of your Permanent Mission.

As someone who is a part of the official delegation, you do not need to apply to become a participant, your Permanent Mission can simply register you and get you a grounds pass that will give you access to all the official sessions of the ECOSOC Youth Forum. Do note that most side events, receptions, bilateral meetings etc, will have to be registered for/agreed upon beforehand and separately from the registration done by your Permanent Mission.

At the various sessions, you may be able to make an intervention at the request of your Permanent Mission, participate as a panellist or as one of the plenary session chairs (this will require lobbying from your Permanent Mission well in advance of the event), or simply ask questions at the smaller sessions and side events. You might want to organise your own side event, perhaps in partnership with some other Youth Delegates, but more on this later.

High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

The High-Level Political Forum takes place every year in July and quite a few Youth Delegates travel to New York to participate, particularly if their country is presenting their Voluntary National Review (VNR) on their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the UN itself, “the HLPF is the central United Nations platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level.”

Political declarations negotiated between governments are adopted at the Forum and contributing to your country’s positions could be one way for the Youth Delegates to get involved, although it does necessitate close cooperation with your MFA and Permanent Mission months in advance of the Forum (as the negotiations start much earlier).

Another way to get involved with processes at the HLPF before the fact is by contributing to the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of your country. For example,

in 2023, the Irish UN Youth Delegates, together with other stakeholders, contributed to writing a youth chapter in their VNR. This is a practice that more countries could implement if they wished and something that you as a Youth Delegate could help lobby for, should you be interested in such an opportunity.

Jessica, the Irish Youth Delegate to the United Nations in 2023 and co-author of the youth chapter in the Irish VNR, says:

“The inclusion of a standalone youth chapter in the Voluntary National Review enables young people to be honest and critical in their assessments of SDG progress. It ensures full autonomy to focus on the issues that disproportionately impact young people and provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the SDGs among youth from diverse backgrounds through the consultation process.”

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP)

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has an annual Conference of the Parties (COP), where the implementation of the Convention and the national communications and emission inventories submitted by Parties are reviewed. The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention.

As with other UN events, there may be possibilities to participate in negotiations (or at least give input), side events or host something in your country’s pavilion if it has one. The pavilion provides Parties and admitted observers with dedicated space to host their own private meetings and office accommodation. The pavilion space is not intended as a part of the formal intergovernmental process and events hosted in pavilions are not part of the official COP programme.

In some countries, there are Youth Delegates specifically for climate-related topics, who participate in the UNFCCC COP. In other countries, “general” UNYDs participate in the UNFCCC COP as it falls under the UN umbrella. If climate change is a topic close to your heart, you might want to get in touch with your programme manager and MFA to see if it would be possible for you to participate in UNFCCC COP as well.

Anna Celine, Estonia’s Climate Youth Delegate who participated in UNFCCC COP in 2023, recommends:

“When planning your participation at COP, check out the thematic program beforehand - during the 2-week conference, each day focuses on specific topics like youth and education, finance, energy, health, transport, land use, oceans, food, etc. Although you’ll be spending most of your time in the Blue Zone², which is open to accredited parties and observer delegates, the Green Zone³ is also worth visiting.

² Blue Zone is a UNFCCC-managed site that is only open to UN-accredited participants

³ Green Zone is open to everyone (no accreditation needed)

Since each COP is held in a new country, don't forget to immerse yourself in the local culture!"

Human Rights Council in Geneva

In addition to UNFCCC COP, which takes place in a different country each conference, the Human Rights Council in Geneva is one example of Youth Delegates engaging with the UN outside of New York. The Council has 47 members that serve 3-year terms and it has three regular sessions a year. Each session of the Human Rights Council usually has certain themes on which the meeting focuses.

Traditionally, fewer Youth Delegates attend sessions of the Human Rights Council compared to other major UN meetings. Therefore, Youth Delegates participating in the regular session often come from Member States that are currently members of the Human Rights Council. As in other UN events, Youth Delegates often give a national statement, and side events can be organised. In Geneva, Youth Delegates tend to have a less 'organised' programme, so you may need to be more proactive in organising your own activities for their trip.

To prepare for a Human Rights Council meeting, you should familiarise yourself with your country's human rights priorities and ask the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which of the three sessions for that year will focus on the themes that are at the heart of your work. It is possible your country will organise civil society consultations before the annual sessions of the Human Rights Council. You might want to get involved in these to get oriented on the topics of the upcoming session and to hear the views of human rights experts from your country on current issues.

In addition to the Human Rights Council, Geneva is home to a number of UN agencies that focus on humanitarian issues. Along with the Human Rights Council and mission personnel of Member States, it could be beneficial to familiarise yourself with these other actors and try to organise meetings with them to discuss the issues important to you and your Permanent Mission.

Paula, one of the United Nations Youth Delegates from Finland, who participated in Human Rights Council summer session 2024, advises:

"It is worth checking whether your country is a member of the UN Human Rights Council and to ask if you could attend the Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva, if it is not an established annual practice in your country. Also, it may be worth taking advantage of a possibly lighter schedule in Geneva. Ask people from UN organisations or other human rights actors for a coffee with you or with all the youth delegates at the Café/Bar Serpent at UN Headquarters!"

Commission for Social Development (CSocD)

The Commission for Social Development is one of the eight functional commissions established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1946 to advise and assist it in carrying out its work. It is also the key United Nations body in charge of the follow up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration And Programme of Action. The Copenhagen Declaration was adopted in 1995 and the Commission has taken up key social development themes as part of its follow up to the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit since 2006. CSocD meets annually in New York, usually in February.

Ilka, one of the German Youth Delegates to the United Nations in 2023/24, who participated in CSocD in 2024, advises:

“For me, participating in the Commission for Social Development was a chance to build upon the insights gained at the General Assembly and to carry forward the discussions initiated earlier in our mandate. To new UN Youth Delegates, I’d therefore say: leverage your existing network to shape global policy- and decision-making. Collaborate with your allies to amplify meaningful youth engagement at the United Nations and beyond through speeches, paperwork, side events, negotiations, and those invaluable coffee talks. Don’t just observe - engage!”

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The Commission on the Status of Women is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights and the empowerment of women. It is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration, adopted in 1992, is an agenda for women’s empowerment and considered the key global policy document on gender equality. (UN Women) Usually in March, CSW has an annual two-week session in New York with representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities.

Sofie and Abdulkarim, UN Youth Delegates from Denmark in 2024, recommend:

“CSW is a great opportunity to engage with your national delegation and civil society actors and other Youth Delegates since this is such a big event. Building a network will help you tremendously when encountering unknowns and when continuing the work back home. When you are there, seek events with specific actors or people you would like to learn from, and find Youth Delegates to do markups of the negotiation drafts with.”

How to prepare for big international events?

Understanding how to engage in an international event and how to prepare for it can be quite overwhelming. Our recommendation is to clarify three main things for yourself:

1. What are the relevant topics or processes at the UN right now related to this event?

E.g. are there negotiations on a youth resolution this year in the Third Committee; are member states working towards a big declaration or resolution within a summit; is there a major agreement being discussed at the UNFCCC etc.

2. What do I want to say with my participation at the event?

E.g. I am very passionate about ensuring equal access to education for women, so I want to organise a side event on this topic; I want to bring awareness to the lack of regulations surrounding AI, so I want to make an intervention calling on member states to address that etc

3. How can I unite these two things?

Try to make your statement, side event or meeting with a high representative relevant to the current topics on the agenda at the UN. If you can show that the topic you are interested in is important in a wider context and related to the interests of your member state or some UN agency, you are more likely to receive positive co-operation from them.

MFAs have very different ways of engaging their Youth Delegates, so it is hard for us to predict how much access you will have to the goals of your MFA within an event, declaration drafts, memos, or the (side) events taking place at and around the UN. Make sure you clarify what the expectations are of you, how the Permanent Mission plans to involve you in its work, and what kind of materials you need access to.

You can also take the initiative and ask for meetings with UN agencies and organisations relevant to you, and ask your Permanent Mission for help in setting them up. They might encourage you to reach out directly, in which case it may be a good idea to ask about the appropriate way to send the invitation. Furthermore, consider whether you would like to meet bilaterally or extend the invitation to other Youth Delegates as well.

In addition to the MFA, Youth Delegates often have group chats (as noted in chapter 2) where they share information with each other, work on collective statements or look for collaborators on side events. Coordination calls with Youth Delegates have become more common, whether

TIP: While some MFAs share more information with their Youth Delegates, others may be less forthcoming due to the potential confidentiality of the documents. Therefore, here are some questions you can ask your MFA in preparation for an international event:

- What are the main topics at the upcoming international event and what are the priorities for the Permanent Mission/MFA?
- Is my country organising a side event that would be relevant for me? Can I participate?
- Are there any declarations or resolutions being planned in the lead-up to this event and would it be possible for me to provide input from a youth perspective?
- Is there a possibility for me to give a statement on behalf of the youth of my country?

they are global or regional, and can be a great way for Youth Delegates to compare notes on anything from the dates they will be at the event to who is organising a side event. Furthermore, as many NGOs and other organisations engage with the UN, it is a good idea to keep an eye on the events they are organising in preparation for the event as you will be able to hear different perspectives on what will be taking place.

Organising a side event

At various international events it is possible to organise official and unofficial side events. An official side event means that it is usually sponsored/organised with your Permanent Mission and/or a UN Agency and is communicated to the participants as part of the programme. For example, at ECOSOC Youth Forum, a list of official side events will be shared by the organisers on the official homepage of the event with links for registration, location etc. In order to have an official side event, it must be registered and approved by the organisers of the conference – the registration usually takes place some months before and the final approval communicated at least a month before. The information regarding this will be communicated to your Permanent Mission at the appropriate time, but both you and they should know well in advance if you want to plan an official side event.

If you miss the deadline for registration, do not get approval, want to do an event a day before or after the official programme, or for whatever reason cannot have an official side event, you can also organise an unofficial side event. The main difference is that it will not be reflected in any of the official programmes and you will be responsible for the communication of the event yourself. It is very possible to have a successful unofficial side event and the organising is often easier as you do not need to submit information or documentation to the UN beforehand. However, we definitely recommend starting the planning sooner rather than later since it can be difficult to get rooms, another event might be happening at the same time or you need to contact speakers etc. We will now outline some common structures and what the side events could look like, along with tips on how to organise one.

Step 1. Think of the topic of the event – why should there be an event on this topic?

- Is this topic important (for a larger audience)? Why?
- Is this topic on the agenda at the UN? How?
- What processes are taking place at the UN right now? Can my topic be tied to these?
- Who would be interested in this topic (who is the target audience)?
- Would the Permanent Missions or organisations co-organising the event be interested in the topic?
- Which speakers could we invite?
- What is the message you are trying to communicate?

Step 2. Think of what you want the event to look like – how should it be structured?

- Will this event be in-person, online or hybrid?
- Do you want to have a panel discussion, a presentation on something, speeches/statements?
- Do you want to engage the audience? How would you do that (would there be an online engagement element? Can the participants ask questions? Will there be discussion groups?)
- Will there be simultaneous translation?

Step 3. Plan the logistics

- Talk to your permanent mission, the organisation that you are collaborating with or other relevant partners about where the event will be held – do you need to book a room?
- How many people are you expecting and how big does the room need to be?
- Is it at the same event venue of the international meeting or how far is it from it? Is it easily accessible?
- What is the best time for the event (might also depend on where it is)? How long should it be?
- When should you start promoting the event (this can help narrow down the timeline for when all the details should be ready)?
- What is the budget for the event? What kind of technology do you need?
- Will you serve food? How much does it cost?

Step 4. Develop a concept note

Once you have a plan for the event, write it down in a concept note for the event. You may need to submit this to the organisers of the international meeting if it is an official side event. If it is not an official side event, it can still be useful to have a concept note to have a clear plan that can be shared with co-organisers. Additionally, you can attach the concept note when you are inviting speakers, so that they have a better understanding of the event as well.

The concept note should include information on the event objectives (what is the goal of the event? why is the event being organised?), the target audience, and a draft programme. If possible, add the time and location of the event as well.

Step 5. Start inviting speakers

As soon as you know the when and where (and of course the why), start sending invitations to speakers – it might take quite a while to get confirmations, especially when dealing with people working in international organisations.

In your invitation, give the potential speaker all the details regarding the time, location and topic, but also tell them why you think they specifically would be a good fit for your event. If the invitation is more personal, they are more likely to try to make time for it.

Usually, once the speakers are confirmed, it is also a good idea to let all of them know who else will be speaking at the event (particularly in the case of panel discussions). If you are expecting them to make a statement, you can give them more specifics about the topic or if it is a panel discussion, send them some questions beforehand so they know what to be prepared for.

Step 6. Start the promotion

As we already covered in chapter 3, think of where and how to best promote your event. If it is an official side event, it will be in the programme distributed to all participants, but this does not mean you should not do any promotion on your own. You should send out a save the date message about a month before the event and an official invitation around 2 weeks before the event takes place.

We definitely recommend inviting the other youth delegates as often the topics will be of interest to them but also if they have time then they are usually happy to show support as well. If you are collaborating with other youth delegates, PMs or organisations, make sure to have a common communication plan. Since people have different networks, that is a great way to reach different audiences as well, so make sure to utilise all your partners. While social media is definitely a tool you should use, do not forget the effect of a simple email as well since it can be much more personal.

Some useful questions to ask your MFA/Permanent Mission

- 1. Who is responsible for organising your accommodation?**
 - a. Is it the MFA, your sending organisation or you?
- 2. Will you get a daily allowance?**
 - a. How much is it?
 - b. When is it paid out? (do you get it up front or will you be compensated after-the-fact)
- 3. When and how will you receive your UN badge?**
 - a. Are there limits to what you can access with the badge? (e.g. during UNGA, security is much higher and a regular grounds pass has a lower level of access compared to the rest of the year; to access the UNGA hall, for example, you may need an additional pass from your Permanent Mission)
 - b. Are there any opportunities outside the meeting venue with the badge? (e.g. in New York, a valid UN badge may give free access to some museums)

4. What kind of diplomatic etiquette must you adhere to?

- a. What is the dress-code at the meeting venue?
- b. How should you address the session-holder when making a statement?
- c. Note that if you are your country's only representative at a session, walking out while someone else is speaking could be noticed and considered as a deliberate action to show unhappiness with the country or their statement - check with the Permanent Mission or Delegation beforehand, what the "rules" are.
- d. You can check the United Nations Manual of Protocol for some information as well, but not everything in it applies to you (it is for Permanent Missions and Delegations). Therefore, it is still best to ask your contact person. You can find the Manual of Protocol in Annex 2.

5. What are some official pages to keep an eye on?

- a. Where can you find the daily schedule of UN meetings?
- b. Where can you find speaking lists?
- c. Where can you see the opening hours for the meeting venue, the cafeterias, the gift shop etc?

6. What are some good places to eat?

- a. Are there any cafeterias at the meeting venue? (e.g. at the UN headquarters in New York, there are several places to eat, including a buffet with a great view)
- b. Where do they usually go for lunch?

7. What are some quiet places to work?

- a. Can they show you a spot within the building where the event is taking place?
- b. Can you have a table or designated place in the Permanent Mission or Delegation?
- c. Do they have recommendations for a cafe nearby?

TIP It is a good idea to ask your Permanent Mission for a brief tour of the meeting venue the first time you are visiting, as it can make it much easier to find the right places during the international events.

CHAPTER 5:

ORGANISE YOUR OWN NATIONAL EVENT

Organising your own national event as a youth delegate is a great way to engage youth, gather valuable input, spread knowledge about UN processes, and increase the legitimacy of your role. These events can take various forms, such as consultations, workshops, or a mix of activities tailored to your goals. Some national Youth Delegate programmes have specific requirements for national activities, whilst others give complete freedom to the Youth Delegate. This chapter presents you with some considerations and practical advice for organising national events. We will also share comments and examples from other Youth Delegates who have conducted different kinds of national events.

Start from the basics

Firstly, consider why you want to organise the event. What is it that you want to achieve and who is your target group for participants? Furthermore, try to put yourself in the shoes of the participants you'd like to have at the event and consider why they would want to attend - what's in it for them?

Your budget and other resources are also key factors when planning your event. Events can cost more or less money, depending on the amount of participants, the length of the event, and whether you're providing catering or covering travel expenses of those taking part. Organising events can also take up a lot of time, so it's good to make sure that you have enough time or you can recruit other volunteers to help you with organising bigger events (so preferably don't plan a massive youth conference on top of exam season).

What kind of event should you have?

Youth Delegates, as part of their mandates, often organise national events in order to either raise awareness or gather inputs from youth. Below are three different purposes and corresponding types of events. You can of course mix those and have multiple elements in one event!

Raise awareness

- **Workshop**
Educate people on relevant issues like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or important and topical UN processes.

Gather input from youth

- **Consultation (in person)**
Gather input from youth through a consultation on specific topics to use for your advocacy work in international meetings.

- **Survey (online)**

Identify topics youth find relevant and gather their opinions.

Engage youth and strengthen their democratic confidence

- **Workshop**

Facilitate reflections and discussions where youth get to explore and voice their own opinions. Eg. through exercises like poster designing or dilemma games where decision-making and UN institutions and activities become more accessible.

When deciding on the type of event you want to organise, consider your needs. Will your event focus on education or facilitation? Is the purpose more to gather input from young people or to impart information to them?

Education and facilitation serve distinct but complementary roles in engaging youth. Education involves imparting knowledge and information, helping youth understand complex topics and global issues. This approach is more structured, with a focus on delivering content and ensuring that participants gain a solid foundation of knowledge.

In contrast, facilitation of dialogue between youth or between youth and decision-makers is about creating a space for open communication and exchange of ideas. This process encourages active participation, critical thinking, and collaborative problem-solving, allowing youth to voice their perspectives, ask questions, and engage in meaningful discussions. While education builds the necessary understanding of issues, facilitation fosters engagement, empowerment, and the co-creation of solutions. *Remember that you can use both in the same event! We just encourage you to reflect upon which approach fits the purpose of your workshop.*

Checklist for organising a national event:

- Define the purpose of your event: What are you trying to achieve?
- Identify your target audience: Who are you reaching out to and why? Youth are a diverse group - what is your age range, are you looking to reach minority representatives etc. What is the level of knowledge of your audience on the topic?
- Choose an appropriate format: Consider group discussions, workshops, or creative assignments.
- Plan your social media strategy: Promote the event and share outcomes of the event.
- Collaborate with other organisations: Partnerships can enhance your event's reach and impact. You can partner up with youth organisations, other events or schools, to name a few examples.
- Consider logistics: Venue, timing, budget, and other resources needed.

TIPS FOR EVENTS:

- Send a reminder one week before the event
- See if you can collaborate with other organisations
- Arrange school visits by contacting schools. You can look for e.g. schools that are part of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network or teachers associations with an interest in democracy education to find especially potential contacts.
- If organising events for youth organisations, it can sometimes be useful to write directly in the invitation that prior knowledge about the UN system is not necessary
- Consider national events or topics that can be relevant to “hook” your event to. For example, you can organise a panel discussion on youth affairs prior to national elections. This can help your event receive extra attention, including from the media, by making it more relevant.

How to organise a national consultation?

National consultations can give your Youth Delegate mandate greater legitimacy by gathering input from a broad group of youth and ensuring diverse perspectives are represented. Here are some steps to organise national consultations:

1. Define the goals and scope:

- Determine what you aim to achieve with the consultation.
- Identify key topics or questions you want to address.

2. Plan the format and structure:

- Decide the format: events or surveys? A series of regional events, a single national event, or a mix?

3. Engage stakeholders:

- Collaborate with schools, youth organisations, youth centres, and other organisations to reach a wider audience of young people for the consultations.
- You can involve local authorities or relevant experts to provide additional insights and support.

4. Promotion and outreach:

- Use social media, newsletters, and other channels to promote the event.
- Send reminders and updates to keep participants informed and engaged.

5. Collect and analyse input:

- Use surveys, discussion notes, and other tools to gather input from participants.

- Summarise the findings and consider how they can be used in your mandate.
- Keep tabs on the amount of young people your activities have reached.

In addition to your own consultations, you can also refer to research studies and surveys by other people and organisations. It's worthwhile to look into whether your country's government, national youth council or research institutes collect and share official data and statistics on youth issues and opinions. You can use this data to help plan the type of consultations you wish to conduct or to complement your knowledge base in your role as a youth delegate.

Practices for diverse representation

To increase the legitimacy and representativeness of your role, consider the following best practices:

- **Diverse participation:** Ensure that youth from various backgrounds and regions are included. To reach youth from diverse backgrounds, consider the channels you are using to find participants for your activities as well as the format and geographical location. For example, if you are only conducting consultations through universities, only youth with a higher education background will be represented. Consider the accessibility of your events and activities: are venues wheelchair accessible, is it possible to participate for youth who are hard of hearing?
- **Transparency:** Clearly communicate the purpose, process, and outcomes of your events. This will make participation more accessible and meaningful. You should also be clear about the accessibility and non-accessibility of your events (e.g. if certain parts of the venue are not wheelchair accessible).
- **Follow-Up:** While conducting consultations, let the participants know how their inputs will be used. Share the results and analyses of your consultations with participants and stakeholders. If their inputs led to concrete advocacy results, it can be a good practice to share such results with the participants as well.
- **Continuous improvement:** Regularly seek feedback and make adjustments to improve future events. Perfect representation is impossible, but you can always be open to improving and educating yourself on how to make youth delegate activities even more representative and reachable for youth from all backgrounds.

Examples from other Youth Delegates

Tsvetelina from Bulgaria did an SDG-training for school children! In a joint initiative with the municipality, Youth Delegates organised for the SDGs to be discussed by the children in relation to their own city. The Youth Delegates first gave an introduction to the SDGs, and the participants were then divided

into groups and given an SDG each. They then had to discuss 3 things within the given SDG that the city was doing well and 3 things where they could be improved. Youth Delegates gathered everything and passed it to the municipality!

In Albania, Youth Delegates decided to make a project where they were to visit cities geographically distributed across the country to be inclusive. During their visits they were to talk and hold workshops on mental health with youth. They asked WHO for help. They proposed that someone from the WHO was to follow them in their tours and help them with technical questions. But when they presented their proposal WHO decided to create a project funded by them, which was supposed to be similar to what they were going to do but big-

ger (more cities, longer meetings with youth, etc). Unicef jumped also on board, as well as one of the Ministries in Albania. This partnership gave them many benefits, for example the Ministry of education allowing them to make workshops in schools in places where there were not many organisations to engage with. In every meeting there was to be at least someone coming from very rural areas. **Moral of the story: partnerships with other actors can strengthen advocacy efforts.**

Other examples of national events:

- A national survey identifying which topics youth find relevant to address
- Multiple youth organisations gathered to discuss the UN Youth Resolution facilitated by Youth Delegates
- Youth Delegates contributed to organising model-UN events or shared their real-life experiences at such events
- Prior to a big summit, Youth Delegates organised events to discuss the topics that will be discussed at the event in an effort to raise awareness of the current processes as well as gather direct input from youth

Organising national events is often a crucial aspect of your mandate as a Youth Delegate. By planning effectively, engaging with local youth, and collaborating with other organisations, you can create impactful events that enhance your role's legitimacy and contribute to meaningful change. Use the tips and examples provided in this chapter to guide your efforts and inspire your activities.

Remember: Successful events require thoughtful planning, clear goals, and a focus on inclusivity and engagement. Good luck with your events and consultations!

Annex 1. Vocabulary

Here are some common abbreviations and phrases that you may encounter during your mandate:

UN - United Nations

UNDESA - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNYD - United Nations Youth Delegate

UNGA - United Nations General Assembly

ECOSOC - Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

HLPF - High-Level Political Forum

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

COP - Conference of the Parties¹

OHCHR - United Nations Human Rights Council

(not to be confused with UNHCR - the UN Refugee Agency)

MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PM - Permanent Mission

CSW - Commission on the Status of Women

¹ UNFCCC COP is not the only COP out there, e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) also has annual COPs

Annex 2. Other resources.

UN resources:

[UNDESA “The United Nations Guide to the Youth Delegate Programme”](#)

[UNDESA Programme on Youth](#)

[UN Youth Office](#)

[UN Youth2030 strategy](#)

[United Nations Manual of Protocol](#)

Civil society resources:

[Major Group for Children and Youth](#)

[Our Future Agenda](#)

[Official Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC \(YOUNGO\)](#)

[Global Youth Biodiversity Network’s guidebook “CBD in a Nutshell”](#)

Subscribe to newsletters:

[Youth2030 Pulse newsletter](#)

Future Agents NOW publications:

[Global Youth Voices report](#)

[Minimum Standards for European Youth Delegate Programmes to the United Nations](#)

[Online training platform for the development of Youth Delegate Programmes](#)

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