

## The Forum Ain't Over Yet - the real test lies with the Final Report

by Karim Abou Merhi

The 6th UNESCO Youth Forum is over... for the moment. It now all comes down to the Final Report that will be presented at the General Conference. After a long night of restless work in which thoughts were shared, modifications were approved and others objected, the Drafting Committee finally circulated its Report.

The draft included three proposals falling under the theme of "Investing out of the crisis: towards a partnership between UNESCO and youth organizations", which deals with improving the link between education and a changing labor market; a call for National Commissions to coordinate cooperation between youth organizations, civil society groups, and the private sector; and raising awareness with regard to the green economy.

On the theme of youth participation, prolonged discussions took place regarding the inclusion of young people in the delegations of Member States at the General Conference, with the long term goal being to reach full representation of young people in the delegations which attend the meeting, UNESCO's highest decision-making body. In addition, recommendations were presented to include Youth Desks at National Commissions, and create more social networks and online tools.

The last recommendation was to the General Conference, requesting its feedback on the Report. Now it all comes down to the follow-up: much remains to be accomplished.

## Youth delegates rejoice!

Compiled by Enoh Ndri

*Babara Soetan, UK, 22* - I am glad that as a delegation we have agreed on the Final Report; a big well-done to the planning team, volunteers, drafting committee and presenters for their relentless efforts. Attending the forum has given me an even greater impetus to ensure I do not take for granted the opportunity placed in my hand as a UN representative to ensure meaningful youth participation at all levels of decision-making bodies and structures.

*Myriam Al Ansari, United Arab Emirates, 22* - This Forum was one of my best experiences in international activities. I was surprised by the amazing organization and preparation. I also enjoyed knowing about youth issues from different countries. I'm so excited to go back to my country and commit myself more actively to improve the role of youth at home.

## Super last day: Deputy Director General of UNESCO Marcio Barbosa talks to the youths

by Enoh Ndri

Youth delegates at the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum expressed a number of concerns in connection with their participation in the decision-making processes that concern their lives, their livelihoods and their future. During a "Questions & Answers (Q&A)" session on the final day of the Youth Forum, Mr. Marcio Barbosa, UNESCO's Deputy Director General, addressed some of these concerns, by answering the questions the youth delegates had on a number of key issues.

The questions, which were submitted by the youth delegates during the online dialogue and the first two days of the Forum, were filtered and presented by the U-TH team. The questions selected were

those which recurred most frequently, and were relevant to delegates from all five UNESCO regions.

Youth delegates first wanted to know the mechanisms UNESCO has put in place to ensure a follow-up process after the forum. They also wanted to know how UNESCO will guarantee that Member States are active participants in the process of implementing their recommendations. In addition, delegates wanted to know what kind of monitoring mechanism exists at this time to ensure that the recommendations put forth by the Forum are implemented in UNESCO and its National Commissions.

Young people also want UNESCO to further encourage youth participation and empowerment. In this respect, they inquired about UNESCO's willing-

ness to ensure regular and continuous participation of youth in official meetings.

In his answers, the UNESCO Deputy Director General underlined the organization's commitment to addressing the five main concerns of the youth delegates, as outlined during the Q&A session: (i) UNESCO's plan to follow-up on the Forum; (ii) the relationship between the Forum, the General Conference and the National Commissions; (iii) Youth participation and empowerment; (iv) UNESCO's program priorities, in terms of the youth perspective; and (v) the Future of UNESCO's work with young people.

But, added Mr. Barbosa, "if you want to influence the world today, you have to fight. And in order to fight you have to be organized."



Some of the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum delegates. Photo by: By Daniel Coulomb-Herrasti.

## Barbosa and Sané to push resolution on youth participation through General Conference

by Enoh Ndri

During an interview on Thursday October 1, where he discussed the integration of young people in their respective National Commissions, as well as their role therein, the Assistant Director General of UNESCO's Social and Human Science Sector announced that "here, at the level of the General Conference, we will try to push forward a resolution that will commit Member States to open up Na-

tional Commissions to youth participation. If it's adopted, the resolution will mean that National Commissions have to reach out to youth organizations and integrate their representatives in the work of the Commissions". Marcio Barbosa, Deputy Director General of UNESCO, confirmed the good news for young people during a Q&A session on Saturday, October 3. He added that Member States were being lobbied by UNESCO to adopt this resolution.

## Integrating and perpetrating the work (or) Next stop: Mexico 2010!

by Renata Summa

For the first time in twelve years, youth from all over the world will have the chance to participate in another World Youth Conference.

The conference will be held in Mexico City in August 2010. The Director General of the Mexican Institute for Youth, Priscila Vera, invited youth delegates, on the last day of the Forum, to participate in this initiative – a meeting point for representatives of government and civil society organizations.

Reminding youth that this is the "largest generation of young people in the history of mankind," Vera proposed that a bank of best practices is

created in order to give youth the possibility to learn from young people of other regions. She also said that the World Youth Conference will provide a concrete opportunity to follow-up on the youth agenda of the United Nation System.

In the same session, the observers attending the Forum also presented their own final report. Recognizing the value of UNESCO's decision to give a greater voice to youth delegation during the Forum, they called for more space for observers. The observers also called for a greater integration of the work they are conducting with the work being conducted by the youth delegates and UNESCO.

**Prior to the presentation of the 6th Youth Forum's Final Report yesterday, youth delegates organized into regional groups - Africa, Europe/North America, Asia-Pacific and the Arab States - to discuss the previous day's parallel sessions.**

## In love with the Louvre - mixing art with politics



The famous Louvre museum. Photo by: Karim Abou Merhi.

by Shuk-Wah Chung

On a bridge over the River Seine clusters of black-clad hipster French kids are circled together, drinking wine, snacking on biscuits and cheese and belting out rock songs on an acoustic guitar. It's cold, dark and windy, but this is seemingly their Friday night ritual. For the other people passing by they're walking past with just one aim in mind - Mona.

The famous portrait housed in Paris's famous art museum was finally witnessed on Friday night by the UNESCO Youth Delegates. As we made our way out of the UNESCO building we were handed a show-bag of snacks - biscuits, chips and chocolate - offering us the sugar hit that we needed after the long day of Plenary Sessions. Herded onto the metro and coming out onto a busy Parisian street we took the scenic route towards the Louvre: through the Latin Quarter, along the uneven cobbled streets, past the quaint cafes and small galleries, and eventually reaching the beautiful glass pyramid art gallery.

For those who had never seen it before it was an opportune photo moment but more importantly a chance to really talk to each other, find similar-

ties, and discover trivia about everybody's countries. Along the way I met Delegates from Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Jamaica, East Africa and other countries I'd never heard of before and was amazed by the type of projects people were up to. From running projects supporting North Korean women refugees living near the China/Korea border, to establishing radical youth groups in Indonesia it was clear that these Delegates were working towards establishing clear goals and changes in their country.

As we walked through the Louvre's giant halls peering at the religious oil canvases, posing next to ancient marble statues and joining the hundreds of other tourists and gallery enthusiasts to see the real Mona Lisa, it provided the perfect setting to really discuss our thoughts over the Forum. Most remarked that it's social events such as this that gives participants a chance to really air their views and would be a good idea if following UNESCO Youth Forums could offer delegates more of these chances. Others were just happy to walk and talk amongst beautiful art. Nonetheless, if ever there was a debate on whether art and politics should or shouldn't mix, I say it definitely should!

## Op-Ed: Where will the future take us?

by Siena Anstis

The UNESCO Youth Forum is now formally "over." However, as voiced repeatedly during all sessions, the end of the Youth Forum does not indicate the end of discussions concerning youth on national or international levels.

Optimally, the UNESCO Youth Forum is a global 'grounding point' for engaged youth. Every two years, they have the opportunity of bringing forth their ideas, projects, passions and ideals. In turn, these are boiled down into a short list of recommendations presented during the General Conference; a document which could potentially influence international policy on youth issues.

In the long-run, the UNESCO Youth Forum is a small piece in the larger puzzle of youth's work to attain a globally recognized and formalized role in international decision and policy-making.

In order to reach the above goal, youth must first work on a national level where decisions made are both easier to influence and have a deeper impact on their immediate communities. However, over the past few days, some delegates voiced their concern over the lack of commitment or interest shown by National Commissions in incorporating youth issues. Several delegates have used this criticism as an opportunity to present potential solutions.

One suggestion is to institutionalize the role of youth in the Commission. Canada, for example, has a Youth Officer within the National Commission which addresses all youth related issues and coordinates with the "programme sectors": Education, Social and Human Sciences; Science; Communication and Information; and Culture.

It has also been said that National Commissions should consider

including youth in the decision-making processes on a national level. This could be done through a permanent elected "youth advisory group" (another component of the Canadian model) which reflects the demography of the country. This group would appoint a delegate who would have a permanent and formalized voice in government decision-making and planning.

In the end, as Golda El-Khoury, Chief of UNESCO's Section for Youth, Sport and Physical Education, told Karim Abou Merhi, another Youth Journalist, on the first day of the Forum: "[UNESCO] offers the framework, but it is youth's responsibility to benefit from it to the fullest, to put their needs on the table, to tell us what they think, and most importantly to come out with recommendations that can be applicable in our domain of competence, and mainly to be focused and arranged, not spread out all over the place."

## "We're Confident!": 6th UNESCO Youth Forum Ends on a Positive Note

by Shuk-Wah Chung

The 6th UNESCO forum ended positively on Saturday with delegates feeling optimistic about future and effective implementation. Edwin Mokodowpit and Jasmin Rafiq, both 25 and from Indonesia, said the conference has signalled a strong starting point for all young people around the world who are eager to get their voice heard.

"It's not over yet," said Mokodowpit. "The most important thing is the actions and implementations so it's real, not just on paper."

For some, the entire forum has ended surprisingly.

"I wasn't expecting very effective meetings due to previous feedback," says Aya Imai, 20, from Japan. "But I got so much out of it and truly feel all the talented and conscious people here are true change makers."

However, the most important part of the Forum has been the unique opportunity that the delegates received to come to Paris and make their voices actually count and be heard in front of an official body.

"Young people usually think that no one's listening but UNESCO has created that opportunity," said Kendall Kozai, 22, from the USA.

The next Youth Forum will be in 2011, in which hopefully the suggestions made in the Report prepared by the Drafting Committee will be put into action and delegates will meet again, this time with fuel to energise their minds and their stomachs.

"For the next forum I recommend lunch to be provided for us," says Matthew Gibbs, 19, from Trinidad and Tobago. "It'll help things flow more quickly."



Youth delegates listen to speakers during a plenary. Photo by: Siena Anstis.

Let's keep our ideas, proposals, thoughts and projects alive! The youth journalist team created a blog ([www.unescoyouthforum.wordpress.com](http://www.unescoyouthforum.wordpress.com)), a place we hope that we can all share our stories and our ideas from now until 2011. Let's participate, so feel free to send us your contribution. Don't let the spirit of the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum die!