

UNESCO YOUTH FORUM 2015

Young Global Citizens for a Sustainable Planet

26 October, 2015



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Youth Forum
9th Edition
26-28 October 2015

THE AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY 50
of PARIS YEARS



WELCOME TO THE YOUTH FORUM:

"Everything that we say on this stage is true"



Melissa Halabe/AUP

The 9th edition of the UNESCO Youth Forum started off with a determination and imagination that immediately brought positive feelings and energy to the audience. The speakers were inspiring and uplifting individuals, each powerful with their own stories, background, and dedication to contribute to sustainable development. This forum allows young participants to empower one another, although young people should spend their lives committed to this cause as Hao Ping, the President of the UNESCO General Conference, reminded us.

He pointed out the challenges and issues that mankind encounters from a contemporary perspective. His discourse focused mainly on the transition to a sustainable lifestyle, which is a central point on the 2030 Agenda for peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. Hao Ping also read a letter from Jinping Xi, the President of the People's Republic of China, in which young generations were described as playing an essential and omnipresent role in our future society.



Melissa Halabe/AUP

"Future is open, you are the future. Future is today in this room. Youth is the future but also the present, there is no need to wait. All together you are the face of global youth," Ms. Bokova said.

She explained that the difficulties and crises in the world should not discourage us: they are not representative of what our future will look like.

The last to speak was Ahmad Alhendawi, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, who embodied the fact that the UNESCO Youth Forum is a vision to advance our thinking, channel ideas, and impact the world with action.



Melissa Halabe/AUP

"Economy that is not investing in young people, is an economy that is failing {...} Life is short but it will be meaningful if you fight for your dreams," said Hao Ping.

Next to address the forum was Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO. She mentioned that the forum was a historic moment, a turning point for the future. She explained that this is the most educated, outspoken, connected generation that has ever existed, the first generation that has the resources to end extreme poverty and create a better future for all. It is the duty of the youth representatives during these three days at UNESCO to work together to imagine the future by acting now.

"...ALL TOGETHER YOU ARE THE FACE OF GLOBAL YOUTH."

-UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova

Alhendawi supported the idea that every single day must be used to realize extremely important achievements as a forward looking approach:

"Learn more, do more, become a global citizen," said Mr. Alhendawi.

The world of tomorrow is possible today, when we see how much progress humanity has made it gives us hope. The power of culture can be used to fight terrorism, radicalism, and forces that are divided. The speeches of the opening ceremony reminded us that though we all come from different countries, cultures, and have different points of view, we can use this difference as a power to invoke change. Working together will help us to change the world.

• Lucille Befort

GARCIA: EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH ADVOCACY



Melissa Halabe/AUP

Cecilia Garcia, is a driving force for youth change and hopes to see the progress of human rights in her home country through her organization Espolea. "We are by youth, for youth, with youth," she said, "to foster and catalyze processes that will ensure the young are really engaged."

From gender-based discrimination to sexual health, Garcia targets specific issues in Mexico, invigorating her peers to advocate for more rights for all.

"My organization is the platform, feminism is my steering wheel, eliminating gender discrimination is my goal," she said. "By promoting sexual reproductive health and the rights of young people, by engaging youth globally, and also by defending the right of young women and young people to participate and be the agents of change and become the decision makers."

This very determination lead her to win the 2013 Impact Award for her and her organization's work in the field of girls' and women's health.

Espolea hopes to accomplish these goals through political advocacy on both the regional and national levels. They offer capacity-building workshops to empower and inspire young people to accomplish the goals she outlined.

The Youth Forum, which has similar capacity-building workshops, is much in line with Espolea's vision.

"I want to see the next three days empower those here to challenge the power dynamics and change the paradigm," Garcia said, "It's the time to think outside the box."

The pursuit of education forms the basis of the future of sustainable development in the world. Quality education for all is what is necessary to further mold the future that youth envision. "Girls shouldn't have to worry about forced marriage, but instead have access to learn. These rights must be acknowledged and respected," she said.

Garcia believes that it is only through a drive for change that the goals and aspirations of the Youth Forum will be accomplished.

"This is a place for inspiration and a place for networking, so we can be energized and from this create and sustain important initiatives, policies, and programs," she said "When this forum is over, we need to feel the momentum and continue it on in our daily lives. Young people, and young girls, must have the certainty of a space to use their voices, use their power, and use their potential to make this a better world for all." • **Cody**

Campbell

ALSAGOB: INSPIRING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SAUDI ARABIA

Sustainable and innovative solutions to the problems facing the world's youth are the goals of Manar AlSagob, a 21-year-old university student working as a Program Officer at Tasamy. "Our organization is there to challenge people and they are to rise up to challenge by either creating new products or just trying and building beautifully," she explained.

Tasamy is a non-profit organization focused on sustainable solutions to social problems by encouraging social entrepreneurship. Instead of providing temporary relief, the organization strives to ensure individuals in the community become long-term leaders and influencers of change. "Temporary moments of satisfaction do not provide the complete change that is necessary," AlSagob said.



Melissa Halabe/ AUP

She exemplifies this with a story of a young boy named Abdullah. AlSagob met him during Ramadan when she and her friends set up a temporary hunger relief effort. Instead of suffering through another night of impoverished starvation, Abdullah ate healthily and finally went to bed with a full stomach. AlSagob was happy she could influence this change in a child, "I remember asking him what he wanted to be when he grew up and he said, "Just like you."

But AlSagob could not forget the sobering event, which inspired her to work towards more lasting change with Tasamy. "Social entrepreneurship is a passion that is necessary to create and change the world. Temporary improvements work in certain situations, but sustainable, permanent change is what is most important," she said.



Melissa Halabe/ AUP

This aligns with the objectives of the Youth Forum, which hopes to empower the young participants to make their long-term sustainability ideas a reality after the three-day conference ends. "I hope the ideas in the forum are communicated clearly," she said, "and that those here are empowered to go out and take action."

As an example of permanent change rather than temporary relief, AlSagob praised the invention of a plate that reduced food waste by 30 percent. "We need people to build, to teach, to guide," she said, "Materialistic things expire, knowledge and guidance are forever."

• **Cody Campbell**

SALAMAH: ACTIVISM HITS CLOSE TO HOME FOR SYRIAN REFUGEE

Salim Salamah has witnessed devastation in his Syrian homeland--devastation which he attributes to a political catastrophe rather than a humanitarian one.

Salamah, a Syrian-Palestinian blogger and human rights activist, has lived as a political refugee in Sweden since 2013. As such, he feels "the obligation to tell the story as a survivor of the tragic war in Syria."

Born in Yarmouk Camp for Palestinian Refugees in Syria's Damascus, Salamah studied law at Damascus University and is currently studying international migration and ethnic relations at Malmo University in Sweden.

In his home village, he witnessed death and suffering due to starvation, poverty, and war conflicts, disasters that drove millions of Syrians to evacuate their home country. While he is now thankful that many countries are now trying to accept as many refugees as they can, he said that

it is important to remember that this reaction was not immediate.

"It is fundamental for the young people to construct the knowledge about what's really going on in Syria," he said. He continued to implore citizens worldwide to gain as much knowledge about the Syrian political situation as possible, but to focus on the daily struggles faced by civilians.

The youth generation, he said, should join or be part of "Planet Syria" and "Syria Campaign," organizations created by local Syrian people and activists with the intent of spreading awareness to a global community.

There is no need to victimize those refugees but it is essential to understand their pain, he said.

"Think about those who cannot be among us today, those who are limited by borders and checkpoints... think of them," he said • **Yuri Jong**



Melissa Halabe/AUP

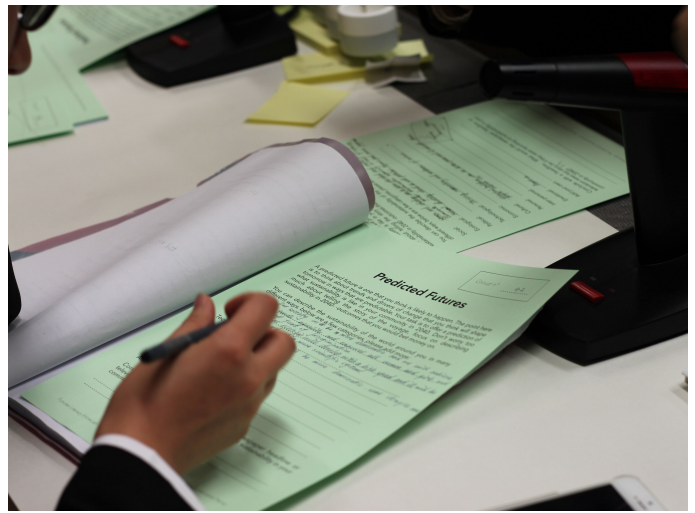


Alice Preat/AUP

SMALL GROUPS WORKING ON BIG, FUTURE SOLUTIONS



Melissa Halabe/AUP



The Futures Literacy Knowledge Lab 1.1 began with a bang this morning as subgroups organized by theme met throughout UNESCO. Small groups of five to seven youths gathered to discuss their predictions and forecasts for the future.

"We are capturing the energy of youth," Lauret Bindle of France said.

As participants stood atop their chairs and cheered in communal excitement, Bayo Akomolofe of Nigeria advised his groups, "Share your vision, share your ideas, but mostly, have fun."

The groups of young forum attendees discussed and brainstormed their visions of the future. Regarding climate change, many predicted that resources will continue to be limited and individuals will struggle to sustain self-sufficiency.

Other groups considered a post-2015 global landscape. Victor Groenne of Denmark predicted that global wealth distribution will not change yet, but there will be greater equality amongst marginalized communities. • Jessica Romer

TECH COMPANY ENVISIONS GLOBAL FUTURE FOR YOUTH GENERATION

Perfect World is an online gaming company based in China, well-known in the field for its Perfect World license. It is part of the Perfect World industry, which was established by Michael Yufeng Chi in 2004. Perfect World not only produces online games, but also produces film, television and educational material.

Perfect World has been rewarded by the Chinese government and is considered as a solid cultural actor, which enables the promotion of culture around the world.

What are Perfect World's motivations behind investing itself in cultural and educational exchange around the globe?

We hope the next generation of Internet technology, lead by Perfect World, could incorporate games with medicine, FMCG, education, communication, IT, finance, etc. to become a widely available and happy experience that enables the culture and entertainment industry to serve as an important carrier of cultural and educational exchange worldwide.

As cultural and educational exchange deepens and progresses, the development of overall cultural industry and national dimension will be significantly boosted. We are dedicated to global culture and exchange in the hope that the business we are engaged in, including our own company, can achieve a more favorable environment for a healthier development.

What were the motivations for Perfect World to sponsor the 9th UNESCO Youth Forum? What does Perfect World hope to get out of the conference?

As a representative of emerging Internet companies in China, Perfect World's employees are 27 years old on average and makes youth the main target customers in its market. Perfect World concentrates on the development of global youth, and embraces the philosophy that only when youth achieve better development can Perfect World enjoy a fruitful future. It's our overarching goal to realize sustainable development of youth and harmony in diversity and flourishing of the human spirit for the long term.

The logo for Perfect World, featuring the words "PERFECT" and "WORLD" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. A red curved line arches over the word "WORLD".

What are other projects in which Perfect World currently takes part? How do these relate to the UNESCO Youth Forum?

Earlier this year, Perfect World co-initiated the "Global Youth Leaders Laboratory" plan with Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Commerce, and other ministries and agencies. The plan covers long-term investment in the UNESCO Youth Forum as well as in youth scientific research, career development, and poverty alleviation projects. Perfect World hopes that youth from various countries will share the era of opportunity, coupled with innovation to pave a path for promising youth to rise.

Is there anything else Perfect World would like conference attendees to be aware of, whether regarding the organization or its participation in the conference?

Youth is the future of the world. The UNESCO Youth Forum delivers a platform for young people to be engaged in discussing current global politics, economy, society and environmental change, while developing action plans to allow them to influence the world from various perspectives and contribute their wisdom to the sustainable development of the world as "global citizens".

This is what Perfect World expects for the youth.

HEARD AT THE FORUM

"I am so inspired by many projects created by young people like me."

Drane Faridha, 19, Burkina Faso



Melissa Halabe/AUP

"I'm curious about different points of views. I feel so energized and stimulated by the possibilities."

Alice Guerin, 21, France

"Many people say we (the youth generation) are the future, but I believe we are not the future, but rather, we are the ones who have to start taking actions right now."

Marcelo Lopes, 19, Brazil

"More action and aid to young people are necessary. I'd like to find ideas and advice to help better the planet. In Africa, this is also important to start helping entrepreneurial activity."

Briand Idossou, 24, Benin

"I was so surprised to know that even though we are all from different backgrounds, we have similar ideas and opinions on the current issues. I also realized that we are all the citizens of 21st century and we are all open to different opinions and cultures."

Aleksandra Andelie, 24, Serbia

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9th Edition
26-28 October 2015



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UNESCO YOUTH FORUM
9TH EDITION- 2015 DAY ONE