

REPORT OF THE 2006 YOUTH ADVOCACY TEAM FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

In the sixth year of the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence, a team of twelve youth peace activists descended upon the headquarters of the United Nations, to lobby over a two-week period from 9th to 20th of October, 2006, for further commitments to the realisation of a Culture of Peace. The following is our report.

The Participants:

Coordinated by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Fundación Cultura de Paz, we hailed from diverse backgrounds.

Our team included *Hilary Jeune*, Jersey Channel Islands (not pictured - UNOY Peacebuilders); *Meghann Villanueva*, The Philippines (Pax Christi Pillapinas); *Hélène Leneveu*, France (Hague Appeal for Peace); *Jessica van der Kamp*, Hong Kong/Canada/The Netherlands (UNOY Peacebuilders); *Hind Ottmani*, Morocco (Rotaract Rabat Chellah); *Hagah Mohamed Ibrahim*,



Egypt (Bibliotheca Alexandrina); *Anika May*, Germany (UNOY Peacebuilders); *Robin Pitt*, United Kingdom (UNOY Peacebuilders); *Elias Deis*, Palestine (The Palestinian Centre for the Rapprochement Between People); *Benjamin Sourice*, France (Global Youth Action Network); *Gabriele De Gaudenzi*, Italy/France (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna); *Nicholas Martin*, United States (University of Peace); *David Adams*, United States (Fundación Cultura de Paz).

Background of the Youth Advocacy Team:

In 1998, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2001-2010 the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World¹. The Programme of Action for the decade identified eight areas of action including: Education for a Culture of Peace; Gender Equality; Democratic Participation; Sustainable Development; Human Rights; Understanding, Tolerance, Solidarity; Free Flow of Information; and International Peace and Security.

In 2005, a Youth Advocacy Team was present at the 60th Session of the General Assembly, to lobby for the recognition of the role of youth and civil society in furthering the Culture of Peace, and in particular, the Mid-term Civil Society Report for the Decade.

On 20 October 2005, the efforts of both UNOY Peacebuilders and Fundación Cultura de Paz were explicitly recognized in the General Assembly by the European Union and Bangladesh. Furthermore, the

¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/52/243 of 1998
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/774/43/PDF/N9977443.pdf?OpenElement>

annual resolution on the Culture of Peace was passed, with an increase of co-sponsorship from 66 to 104, and at the recommendation of the Youth Advocacy Team, an amendment was included in the resolution that:

“Commends civil society, including non-governmental organizations and young people, for their activities in further promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, including through their campaign to raise awareness on a culture of peace, and takes note of the progress achieved by more than seven hundred organizations in more than one hundred countries”².

On-going Challenges in the Culture of Peace:

Although the Youth Advocacy Team succeeded in raising awareness on the Culture of Peace and gaining the recognition of the role of youth and civil society, there remained several challenges for the realisation of the Culture of Peace:

- Only 104 countries have co-sponsored the 2005 resolution, and these do not include any of the European Union or the JUS CANZ³ countries.
- Greater transparency and action being taken by institutions and member states of United Nations towards implementing the resolution.
- Insufficient attention and efforts are being put by member states and institutions of the UN into cooperating and implementing the Programme of Action amongst civil society, especially amongst youths and youth organisations.

The Proposals of the Youth Advocacy Team in Response to the Perceived Challenges:

In response to these challenges, we responded this year with the following proposals:

- Greater cooperation between civil society, and member states and the organs of the United Nations, for the Programme of Action for the Culture of Peace, with a particular focus on youth. Furthermore, support from member states and the organs of the United Nations, for the Youth Report for A Culture of Peace, including its recommendations.
- The inclusion of the Culture of Peace as a concept present in the documents and resolution of the United Nations and its institutions, as well as in the national policies of member states.
- The inclusion of the Programme of Action for the Culture of Peace within the programme of the Peacebuilding Commission; and the involvement of civil society and youth within.

The Training – A Self Sustaining, Youth-Led Approach:

During the first two days, our team received an intensive training in concepts in peace and conflict, the history of the Culture of Peace, as well as in advocacy and lobbying skills. In the philosophy of the youth advocacy team being a self-sustaining and youth-led approach to mobilizing change, the training was led by members of the previous year’s advocacy team. Providing additional insight and advice were *Dr. David Adams*, from the Decade Office of Fundación Cultura de Paz; *Professor Alicia Cabezudo*, from Educating Cities; and *Malaak Shabazz* of the Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center.



Training by the 2005 Advocacy Team

Meanwhile, meetings were held with *Under-Secretary-General, Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury*; and *Shamil Idriss* of the Alliance of Civilizations. These two notable personalities with the United Nations gave insight into the Culture of Peace and the Alliance of Civilizations, and advice on how our youth team could approach the issues we were advocating for.

At the end of the two days, we identified the challenges that we perceived as hindering progress towards the realization of the Culture of Peace; developed several proposals in response to these challenges; and produced a strategy plan for the next two weeks to attain support from those who could implement these

² United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/3 of 2005

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/487/72/PDF/N0548772.pdf?OpenElement>

³ The group consisting of Japan, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand that often align their positions.

proposals.

The Approach of our Youth Advocacy Team:

The advocacy approach of our Youth Advocacy Team was to meet with the representatives of the Permanent Missions, and actors representing the organs of the United Nation who were working in a field related to the Culture of Peace. In the meetings, our Team sought to:

- Inform about the Culture of Peace and the International Decade
- Present and gain support for the Global Youth Report for the Culture of Peace
- Introduce and gain support for the proposals of the Youth Advocacy Team
- Encourage the co-sponsorship and committed implementation of the 2006 resolution on the Culture of Peace

The Two Weeks:



Working out of the Vienna Café, the makeshift headquarters of the Youth Advocacy Team

During the first week, we came across several obstacles to the challenge we had set ourselves. In particular, we had no office to work out of, and there were no additional funds to support our unconventional approach to mobilizing a change⁴. Nevertheless, we found creative ways to skirt the difficulties we faced. Occupying a corner of the Vienna Café in the basement of the UN, our team made use of the free wireless internet access. Furthermore, to make the numerous phone calls that would get us through to an appointment, we also took advantage of the free telephone booths located outside the Committee Rooms.

In the second week, we found ourselves snowballed with back-to-back appointments. Meanwhile, for those countries that expressed reluctance towards scheduling a meeting, our team strategically positioned ourselves outside the Committee Rooms, to pounce upon the representatives for discussion, as they made their way out of their meetings.

112 Permanent Missions were contacted, and meetings were held with 67 missions, in many cases with the Ambassadors themselves. The countries that were met with included: *Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Congo (Republic of the), Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Holy See, Italy, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Liechtenstein, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Nauru, Nepal, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, The Philippines, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Zambia.*



Members of the Team Meeting a Representative of the Permanent Mission of Fiji

In addition our the Team met with the Youth Delegates to the General Assembly from *Australia, Germany, Malta, Mexico, The Netherlands, and Switzerland.*

In addition, meetings were held with *Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury*, the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; *Shamil Idriss* of the Alliance of Civilizations; *Dominic Bach* from the Peacebuilding Commission; *Hélène Gosselin* from UNESCO; *Patience Stevens* from the UNDP Department of Youth Policy and Social



Members of our Team meeting Shamil Idriss from the Alliance of Civilizations

⁴ See endnote for funding which enabled our team to come to New York.

Affairs; and *Shahid Husain* from the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation. Various representatives from the NGO Community were also met with, including *Cora Weiss* from the Hague Appeal for Peace; and members from the Peace Caucus.

As a culmination of the two week, on Thursday October 19th, our team held a special event in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium: “*A Celebration of the Culture of Peace and the Presentation of the 2006 Youth Report for a Culture of Peace*”. Aside from the youth who presented their work, the speakers included *Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury*, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations; *Cora Weiss*, President of the Hague Appeal for Peace; and *Malaak Shabazz*, who also spoke on behalf of *Harry Belafonte*. Opening the event was a ten minute piano recital by *Soheil Nasseri*, a Professional Pianist at the Carnegie Hall, while in attendance were several members of the diplomatic corps; staff from the secretariat of the UN; the NGO community at the UN and in New York; as well as members of the general public.

The Results:

In two weeks, our Youth Advocacy Team succeeded to move the United Nations several steps closer towards their vision of a Culture of Peace.

On November 3rd, 2006, agenda item 44, *The Culture of Peace*, was discussed before the General Assembly. In his speech, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, stated:



The General Assembly during the debate on the Culture of Peace

“we wish to express a gratitude to all actors who have contributed to its promotion... We are particularly thankful to the civil society. Those include NGOs and young people. Particular mention in this regard must be made of the young foot-soldiers of Fundación Cultura de Paz”⁵.

Meanwhile, speaking on behalf of the European Union⁶, Ambassador Klaus Thörnudd of Finland stated that the EU was:

“happy to note that civil society has been engaged in actively furthering the objectives for the Culture of Peace and non-violence”, and that “the role of youth is particularly important in this regard. We hope that youth groups and youth organisations will have a prominent role in all activities related to the Culture of Peace”.

Furthermore, at the suggestion of our Youth Advocacy Team, amendments on including the Culture of Peace in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, were introduced into the 2006 resolution. Introduced to the preambulatory and operative paragraphs respectively, were:

“Welcoming the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission” (preambulatory),

“Encourages the Peacebuilding Commission to promote culture of peace and non-violence for children in its activities” (operative)⁷

Another achievement was that the number of co-sponsorships to the resolution increased from 107 to 114. 7 countries that had previously co-sponsored the resolution, did not this year, co-sponsor it, there were 14 new co-sponsors to the 2006 resolution. They include: *Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Chad, Comoros, Guinea, Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Portugal, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, United Arab Emirates, and Zimbabwe*.

⁵ Chowdhury, Dr., Ambassador. HE., I.A., Speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations, 3 November 2006

⁶ The acceding countries, Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries, Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia; as well as the potential candidate countries of the European Union, Albania, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine all aligned themselves with the statement.

⁷ Last preambulatory paragraph, and operative paragraph 5, General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/45 of 2006 <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/601/04/PDF/N0660104.pdf?OpenElement>

Highly significant among this list is Portugal. Not only were they the first and only member of the European Union to co-sponsor, but also their co-sponsorship is a positive sign ahead of their presidency of the EU in the second half of 2007.

Furthermore, it is notable, that *Botswana, Burundi, Guinea, and Portugal*, all whom were met this year for the first time, contributed their co-sponsorship. In addition, several countries that the team did not meet, but were in contact with, also contributed their co-sponsorship. These countries include *Benin, Chad, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and St. Kitts and Nevis*.

In the weeks following, the Global Youth Report on the Culture of Peace was included in the high-level report of the Alliance of Civilizations that was presented on 13 November 2006, as its first recommendation of for its activities in relation to youth.

The Research Base on Youth for the High Level Group Report states that:

“Research conducted in the area of the youth for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative has revealed specific kinds of projects that could encourage the empowerment of young people”.

“For example, a Global Youth Alliance could serve as a mechanism through which youth can contribute to all projects related to youth. Such an organisation could be supported by a Global Youth Solidarity Fund. This initiative could begin with the convening and mobilization of various youth networks and associations to promote dialogue, alliance and a culture of peace”.

“These organizations have already begun working together to organize meetings that would provide the opportunity for young people of diverse backgrounds to set an agenda for action which they can then present to global leaders to win their support and assistance. In addition, a survey has been conducted identifying 468 youth organizations from 125 countries that could be engaged as partners”⁸.

In the youth section of the High Level Group Report, the Global Youth Solidarity Fund, that is proposed by the Global Youth Report for the Culture of Peace, is proposed in the form of a Global Youth Alliance:

“A Global Youth Alliance should be established as a mechanism through which youth can contribute to the implementation of all of the recommendations set forth in this report (not just those under the ‘youth’ theme)”.

“Supported by a Global Youth Solidarity Fund, this initiative could begin with the convening and mobilization of various youth networks and associations to promote dialogue, alliance and a culture of peace. These organizations have already begun working together to organize meetings that would provide the opportunity for young people of diverse backgrounds to set an agenda for action which they can then present to global leaders to win their support and assistance. In addition, a survey has been conducted identifying 468 youth organizations from 125 countries that could be engaged as implementing partners”⁹.

In recognition of the work of the Youth Advocacy Team, the President of the Government of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, in his speech, called *“the initiatives of the Alliance of Civilizations... a decisive contribution to the Culture of Peace”¹⁰*.

Finally, for the first time the work of the Youth Advocacy Team was taken note of by the media. The special event hosted by our team was included in the Media Alert of the United Nations¹¹, while the

⁸ Kooros, C., *Research Base for the High-level Group Report – Youth: Summary of research based on commissioned papers*, Alliance of Civilizations, New York, 13 November 2006, p.11

http://www.unaoc.org/repository/thematic_youth.pdf

⁹ *Report of the High-level Group*, Alliance of Civilizations, New York, 13 November 2006, p.36

http://www.unaoc.org/repository/HLG_Report.pdf

¹⁰ Zapatero, President J.L.R., *Speech delivered on the completion of the work by the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations*, Istanbul, 13 November, 2006

http://www.unaoc.org/repository/statement_zapatero_ENG.pdf

¹¹ *Special Events*, Media Alert, 19 October 2006

<http://www.un.org/media/accréditation/mediaalert.asp?date=19/10/2006>

efforts of the team were noted by the United Nations official press releases¹². Furthermore, the press release of the Alliance of Civilizations stated that one of the recommendations of the Alliance is the creation of the Global Youth Solidarity Fund:

“The Report puts forward a range of concrete proposals in the areas of education, media, youth and migration to build bridges and promote a culture of respect and understanding among Western and Muslim communities, including the creation of a Global Youth Solidarity Fund, to encourage young people to contribute to the implementation of all of the recommendations set forth in this report”¹³.

Meanwhile, the High-Level Group Report of the Alliance of Civilizations was mentioned by the BBC, and in particular the importance of placing emphasis on the role of youth in diffusing hostilities. The High-Level Group Report, which makes mention of the Global Youth Report on the Culture of Peace, was included on a BBC News website that reported the outcome of the Report of the Alliance of civilizations¹⁴.

Evaluation and the Next Steps in the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace:

Prior to our two weeks of advocacy, the dreams and commitment of the members of our team towards the Culture of Peace had been met with skepticism. Donors were reluctant to give money, and diplomats dismissed the project “overly-ambitious”. Nevertheless, this “overly-ambitious” project succeeded to move what others had dismissed as an immovable bureaucratic institution, towards a vision that was overtaken by other priorities.

Convinced that it was within the capacity of the member states of the United Nations and its various organs, to strengthen efforts to create a Culture of Peace, our determination as youth kept the momentum going of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace. The role of youth and civil society remained recognized as integral to the realization of the Culture of Peace, and the promotion of the Culture of Peace has been furthered by encouraging the Peacebuilding Commission to promote the Culture of Peace.

However, as the Ambassador of Bangladesh stated in his speech to the General Assembly on 3rd November 2006, “we still have a long way to go a much remains to be done”¹⁵ for the Culture of Peace. It remains that many countries, particularly the European Union minus Portugal and the JUS CANZ countries, have not indicated their support for the Culture of Peace by co-sponsoring the resolution. Furthermore, as it is a General Assembly Resolution, the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Culture of Peace is not binding. There is therefore no means to ensure that countries and organs of the United Nations, in particular, UNESCO, and indeed now the Peacebuilding Commission, will include the Programme of Action for the Culture of Peace in their activities, and strive for the Culture of Peace.

It is now up to others who share the same vision, to pick up from the precedents set in place by the Youth Advocacy Teams of 2005 and 2006, to continue advancing the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace.

For Further Information

For further information please contact the Youth Advocacy Team at advocacy@unoy.org or at mail@decade-culture-of-peace.org . Or please visit: <http://decade-culture-of-peace.org> or www.unoy.org

¹² Youth Advocacy Team per una Cultura di Pace al Quartier Generale dell'ONU, United Nations Regional Informational Centre for Western Europe, 27 October 2007,

http://www.unric.org/Italian_Section/Attualita/YOUTH_ADVOCACY_TEAM_PER_UNA_CULTURA_DI_PACE_AL_QUARTIER_GENERALE_DELL'ONU%0D%0A.html

¹³ Politics, not religion, at the heart of a growing Muslim-West divide, new report argues, Press Release, Alliance of Civilizations, Istanbul, 13 November 2006, p.2

http://www.unaoc.org/repository/report_press_release.pdf

¹⁴ BBC News Online, Call to Bridge West Muslim Divide, 13 November 2006

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6142308.stm>

¹⁵ Chowdhury, Ambassador, Dr. HE. I.A., *op.cit.*

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