



# ISMUN

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOVEMENT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS  
REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

1 April 1973

FOR THE PERSONAL ATTENTION OF:

Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim  
UNITED NATIONS  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

The past few years have witnessed an increasingly expressed concern on the parts of various officials and agencies of the United Nations with the overall issue of youth, often talked of as the issues of "communication with" and "participation of" young people and international student and/or youth organizations in the affairs of the United Nations. The World Youth Assembly in the summer of 1970, for all of its problems, was a symbol of the recognition of the pressing need to involve at a much greater level of depth and participation, young people from around the world in the issues confronted by and confronting the United Nations. You yourself most recently at the unveiling of the controversial youth mural on 10 January 1973 expressed your attitude that

This mural does not only commemorate the World Youth Assembly. It should be considered as a symbol of the commitment of the United Nations and the world community to a better and more effective co-operation with world youth. An effective and sincere dialogue is essential if the United Nations is to fulfill the purposes for which it was created.

We in ISMUN have closely followed with great eagerness and interest, but also with building apprehension, the relationship between the U.N. system and international student and/or youth organizations. Most recently we have taken special interest in General Assembly Resolution 3022 (XVII) approved on the basis of your Report (A/6743) regarding "Channels of Communication With Youth and International Youth Organizations." And, of course, ISMUN as a student and youth organization with what might be called a "special relationship" to the U.N. has followed very closely the proposal to establish an ad hoc advisory group to the Secretary-General on youth affairs.

We feel that it has become imperative for us to clearly state our perspectives and attitudes in regard to your "Channels of Communication" Report, the General Assembly Resolution, and the proposed ad hoc advisory group on youth. It has become vital, in our opinion, that a realistic and candid exchange of opinion take place in view of increasing differences in outlook and the growing tendency for young people and international student and/or youth organizations to question and challenge the operations, structures, procedures, and even the worth of the present United Nations system.

We begin with the strong belief that it is absolutely crucial to the U.N. and to the continuing development of a progressive and peaceful international society that young persons be given the opportunity and challenged with the responsibility to learn about and to become participants at a much more meaningful level than at present in the affairs of the United Nations. Indeed we strongly endorse the statement in paragraph 16 of your "Channels of Communication" Report where it is clearly expressed that

Unless communications with young people are improved and their participation in the United Nations activities increased, the United Nations, as a vehicle for the development of the international community, is in danger of losing the interest and commitment of the future generation.

We also wish to draw your attention to a number of other statements made in the "Channels of Communication" Report because we feel they substantially reflect our attitudes and help explain our basic position. Our basic position is that we most strongly oppose the creation as now envisioned and at this time of an ad hoc advisory group on youth. Instead, at this time we strongly propose that a high level working group be constituted at the level of the Office of the Secretary-General to fully reconsider what steps should be taken by the U.N. to encourage the interest and participation of young persons in the affairs of the U.N. This basic position and this new proposal reflect our belief that the present substantive plans do not adequately take into account some of the basic ideas and sentiments emphasized in the "Channels of Communication" Report, such ideas and sentiments as:

The question of establishing open and effective two-way channels of communication with youth and youth organizations is a policy question, involving changes in existing patterns of action within the United Nations. This will require a political decision by the General Assembly, which should be followed by the establishment of mechanisms capable of making the views and interests of young people actually felt. (paragraph 29)

Without the political decision to "open up" the Organization to young people, such opportunities, where they exist, will continue to be token opportunities only. At the same time, the political "opening up" in itself, without specific opportunities for participation, would be purposeless. At this level, the question of communications becomes essentially a question of participation. (paragraph 31)

Young people in many, if not most, parts of the world, are wary of being co-opted into a system that promises communication and participation but may prove in practice to be so closely tied to established procedures or special interests that these processes turn out to be little more than a means for ratifying the status quo. There is an uneasiness among many young people over whether international political, economic and social institutions, including the United Nations, are in fact what they represent themselves to be. Many youth do not hesitate to question the utility and the effectiveness of these institutions for political, social and economic progress. Channels of communication should be formulated in light of and to some extent to cope with this uneasiness. There will have to be a willingness within the United Nations to accept the consequences of "opening" up the system to young people. (emphasis added -- paragraph 20)

As an organization founded upon support for the ideals and the principles of the United Nations and which has for over 25 years dedicated its efforts to supporting and strengthening the U.N. system, we in ISMUN feel that these statements and your own statements are a substantial indication that there is a genuine and sincere interest to strengthen the linkages and to move toward greater cooperation between the U.N. system and young people throughout the world. And yet, especially in view of the serious difficulties that have been experienced in past years between the United Nations and international student and/or youth organizations, we view with increasing apprehension and a growing sense of frustration the very slow progress and the serious excess of words over deeds that continue to pervade the relationship between young people and the U.N. system.

In our opinion, the creation of an ad hoc advisory group composed of a dozen or so individuals selected by the Secretariat and meeting once a year operating as a U.N. Committee will do little if anything to improve the present situation or to increase the interest and involvement of young people throughout the world in the affairs of the U.N. and in the serious problems and obstacles that the U.N. faces. It is our understanding that such an ad hoc advisory group is now being created within the structure of the overall U.N. bureaucracy. We feel that such an approach will not be productive unless certain basic structural and procedural principles are incorporated into the very nature of such an ad hoc committee, and we have outlined our ideas in an attached memorandum.

As is indicated in paragraph 22 of the "Channels of Communication" Report, "Youth, youth organizations, and the United Nations should avoid creating new structures for their own sake," and we might add, or for the sake of image or institutional self-gratification. Further, we feel that the current proposal for an ad hoc advisory committee runs the very serious danger outlined in paragraph 20 of your Report which indicates that less than effective channels "will not last very long and [are] likely to have negative results in the long run." It is difficult for us to understand how a body of a dozen young people scattered throughout the world, linked by a once-a-year meeting, and joined only by their common selection by the U.N. Secretariat and their chronological age can be anything other than another detached structure based upon a continuing fallacy that so-called "Youth Experts" meeting in yearly conferences can seriously make for increased communication with and participation by young people and by international student and/or youth organizations in the affairs of the United Nations system.

Certainly, if you and members of your Secretariat seek a high level body of young people separated from the international student and/or youth NGOs, meeting once-a-year, and operating within the framework of a standing committee, this is your prerogative and we will hope to be able to cooperate. However, it is vital to recognize, we think, that such an ad hoc body should not in any way be thought of as the culmination to years of seeking better methods of contact and cooperation between youth and the U.N., and it should not be thought of as fulfilling the requirements laid down in the "Channels of Communication" Report. As yet, we in ISMUN do not see in practice a "willingness within the United Nations to accept the consequences of 'opening' up the system to young people" -- we see only the rhetoric and in the cases of a few individuals the sincerity. We do not as yet see "changes in existing patterns of action within the United Nations" in regard to youth of a scope designed to meet the urgency and the importance of the situation.

The basic issue continues to stare us all in the face. Indeed, if the risk is of "losing the interest and the commitment of the future generation," what issue can be of a greater significance requiring more consideration followed by effective action?



We believe that the Secretariat under your leadership should be seeking methods of involving young people in the actual planning, workings, and programs of the entire U.N. system. This goes all the way from employment of young people at all levels to participation on such bodies as the Founding Committee of the International University to cooperation and involvement on social, cultural, and developmental issues and projects. No longer is it satisfactory to consider youth or youth NGOs simply as participants at the ECOSOC level of U.N. activities. Economic, social, and cultural issues are of great concern, yet political, ideological, and procedural issues are of even greater impact and importance -- and in "reality," we all know that all of these issues are merged and inseparable. If the events of the past decade can be summarized in a few words and phrases, one summary is that young people throughout the world have demonstrated the compelling necessity to be involved in the major issues of their local societies and of world society. The U.N. should capitalize upon and stimulate this sense of involvement and this commitment to bettering the human condition.

ISMUN began as primarily an educational and cultural organization, but, as you know, at our General Conference in Kampala, Uganda, in 1969, we recognized the impossibility of separating political issues from economic, social, and cultural issues. Consequently, ISMUN has developed into an organization dedicated to the principles and ideals of the U.N. but not necessarily to all of the policies, approaches, or methods of the U.N. or its related agencies. Young people are now demanding an overall voice and participation as equals, and no effective, meaningful, and lasting progress will be made until this realization penetrates the U.N. organization. We also feel it crucially important for the U.N. to enlist the interest and possibly the support of the so-called "radical" and "militant" youth who are often the most committed and the most active forces of the young generation. While we recognize the United Nations to be an intergovernmental organization, we also view it as the common thread of world society. Any attempt to work strictly with "government approved" youth groups to the exclusion of other youth constituencies will be, we strongly feel, counterproductive and to the detriment of the United Nations.

With all of the above thoughts in mind, we must restate our grave doubts about the proposed ad hoc advisory committee on youth in view of the present plans for the creation of such a body. We include as an attached memorandum to this letter our comments concerning the structural and procedural prerequisites which we feel might make such an approach meaningful and potentially effective. But in view of the importance of this whole issue of the communication with and the participation of youth in the affairs of the United Nations we feel it our responsibility to suggest a high-level review by a small task force or working group. Such a working group established at the level of the Office of the Secretary-General and possibly under the direction of such persons as Mr. Yasushi Akashi or Mr. Bradford Morse, both men who have shown their great interest and appreciation for the ideas and the abilities of young people, should fully consider the past and present situations with an eye toward realistic and effective steps that can be taken. Holding frequent meetings over a period of approximately six months such a working group might well be able to examine in depth all of the issues and questions raised so frequently over the past years and recommend directly to you what steps should be taken.

In conclusion, we wish to take this opportunity to express personally to you ISMUN's continuing support for the institution of the United Nations. We expect that our deliberations at our 21st General Conference in Santiago this July will partly focus upon improving our organization's ability to more adequately fulfill its responsibilities as we have outlined them over the past years.

Respectfully,

  
Mark A. Bruzonsky  
ISMUN Chief Representative to the United Nations

cc: Mr. Yasushi Akashi  
Mr. David Exley  
Mr. John Plate  
Mr. Curtis Roosevelt



# ISMUN

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOVEMENT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

1 April 1973

MEMORANDUM ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CREATION OF AN AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AS AUTHORIZED BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 3022 (XVII). Submitted in connection with 1 April 1973 letter to Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim from Mark A. Bruzonsky, ISMUN Chief Representative to the United Nations

### CHARACTER & STRUCTURE:

We feel it is necessary to make some firm and definite decisions regarding the structural and procedural basis upon which any ad hoc advisory committee will operate. Only in this manner will it be possible for all parties to begin with a good understanding of what the Panel actually is and might become and what new relationship and opportunities it makes possible. Without some defined approach to these areas it would be extremely difficult for all parties involved to actually know the character of what they would be agreeing to participate in and thus to begin with a sense of dedication and commitment.

Selection of Panel members is, of course, one of the major key questions and we recognize that there are some rather difficult problems involved which will require understanding on the parts of the Secretariat, governments, and non-governmental organizations. We agree that the Panel should have a total membership of between 12 and 15 and we suggest the following approach to selection based upon a preferable size of 12:

- 1) Secretary-General to directly appoint 2 members.
- 2) Director-General of UNESCO in consultation with UNESCO Youth Division to appoint 1 member.
- 3) 6 selected International Student and/or Youth Organizations each to appoint 1 member.
- 4) 2 members with experience in government youth programs to be appointed by the Secretary-General.
- 5) IYNGO Geneva Informal Youth Meeting to appoint 1 member in cooperation with U.N. Headquarters Youth Caucus.

Regarding which international student and/or youth organizations will be selected for participation on the Panel, we feel it necessary to define criteria which an NGO must meet and that selection of six should be made by the Secretary-General in consultation with his Secretariat, with representatives of NGOs, and with other appropriate parties. Obviously, the necessity to pick and choose between NGOs will present difficulties. We see these difficulties as unavoidable. However, selection of an NGO should not necessarily be the same from year to year. This question, along with the overall questions of membership, should be considered yearly.

All appointments should be for a 1 year term renewable for up to 3 years. Members should serve in their individual capacities and not as representatives of either

NGOs, governments, or any other groups. Normally an individual should serve for at least two years and in no year should more than one-half of the Panel be comprised of new members. As a general rule, 25% of the Panel members should be below the age of 25 and 90% should be below the age of 30.

Once established, the Panel should consider itself fully responsible to itself for its agenda, its procedures, and its recommendations. Of course, the Secretariat, other NGOs, private individuals, and all other categories of persons and organizations should feel free and encouraged to bring issues forward to the attention of the Panel either on a person-to-person basis or through written submissions to the Panel through its Chairman.

The Secretariat of the U.N. should make available to the Panel all needed secretarial facilities. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel should have full authorization to use these facilities to ensure the effectiveness of the work of the Panel.

The Panel itself must decide its operating procedures, method of work, agenda, method of coordination and contact with the U.N. Secretariat, and all other aspects directly relating to the work of the Panel. In the case of formal relations with any agency or part of the U.N. system, such arrangements should be subject to the approval of the Secretary-General.

The IYNGO meetings in both Geneva and New York should continue since it is at this level, and not directly at the level of the Panel, that student and youth NGOs will continue to have contact with the U.N. system directly. The Panel and the IYNGO caucuses may wish to establish a working relationship, or even a formal relationship, and the Panel should feel free to consider this matter fully.

#### PROCEDURES:

The major issue here is internal autonomy of operation. Of course, the Panel once established will want to establish its own procedures; the following is simply presented as a probable framework with which the Panel might begin its work.

A minimum of three meetings should be held each year lasting between 3 and 7 days each. At the first meeting of the Panel a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman should be elected for a 1-year period. At any point during the year a majority of the Panel members present at any meeting may determine to select a different Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman. The first meeting of each year should be used to determine the agenda for the year, the time-table for the year's work, and the number, place, and dates of meetings to be held that year. The Secretary-General of the United Nations should be requested to present to the first yearly meeting of the Panel his full recommendations regarding agenda items, his suggestions concerning the work of the Panel for the coming year, as well as any criticism of the work of the Panel from the previous year.

Recommendations, statements, and reports can be submitted either formally or informally, confidentially or publically, to the Secretary-General at the discretion of the Panel. If the Panel so desires, the recommendations, statements or reports should be considered official documents of the United Nations and made available by general distribution in English.

A financial allocation of \$20,000 U.S. should be made to the Panel yearly, this amount to cover the costs of transportation and associated actual costs. The Panel itself should be fully responsible for the allocation of these funds and a Treasurer from among the members of the Panel should be selected. This amount should not be used to cover costs of secretarial facilities and documentation costs, these to be covered generally by the U.N. system as included in Secretarial facilities. It is likely that the Panel will wish to determine its use of these funds more in accordance with a spirit of voluntary efforts on the parts of the Panel members than in traditional fashion -- and in no case should any Panel member receive funds other than for actual reasonable costs incurred.