Over 2 days in May 2011 85 people from 45 countries gathered in North London for the global youth policy symposium, ‘Meaningful Youth Participation in International Decision Making’. The gathering brought together young people, multilateral agencies, NGOs and researchers to share practice, explore challenges and develop recommendations for more meaningful international youth participation.

Why?
The number of youth gatherings and opportunities to influence decisions internationally is substantial and growing rapidly; it has been quoted recently as being a “100 million dollar industry”. However, despite such a large investment in international youth participation there has been surprisingly little analysis of the extent to which these initiatives are effective instruments for youth advocacy or policy development.

From research and reports, to informal discussions with young people and activists, to meetings with UN officials, there are numerous stories of charters, declarations and recommendations drafted in advance or without youth input, or written by young people then ignored. Reports suggest that the outcomes of much international participation run from tokenism, manipulation or propaganda at worst, to unfulfilled good intentions, profile raising and networking at best. There is a clear need, and expressed demand from young people and organisations, to shine a light on this field and to explore ways to improve the situation.

Aims
The London Symposium aimed to begin steps towards more meaningful international youth participation. Specifically, the aims were:

- To share and learn from the experience and perspectives of others
- To challenge ourselves to think about what meaningful participation is and could be
- To develop shared principles, considerations, standards and actions

(The term ‘international youth participation’ refers to all structures and processes through which young people can influence policy and programme decisions at a transnational level)

Outcomes
This was just a start, but we covered a lot of ground in two days and the participants developed a number of concrete recommendations for better international youth participation. Details are toward the end of the report but headlines include:

- Recommendations for meaningful youth participation need to be targeted at specific stakeholders: conveners, governments, NGOs and young people
- There needs to be processes for tracking the outcomes, including the pledges made by delegates (young and old), following international decision-making forums. These need to be accessible to young people and facilitate monitoring over long periods of time
- There is a need for an overarching ‘Youth Participation Index’ to help set and adhere to standards
- A comprehensive mapping of international youth participation spaces is needed. This should begin with an audit of youth participation within the UN system and institutions
- Greater investment in capacity building for participation by and with all stakeholders is required
- All youth participation networks (national and international) must be transparent, accountable and take seriously the issues of access and inclusion

"Imagine if all the promises that had been made to young people had been kept..."
Who?
80 participants, 45 countries and a huge diversity of experience and perspectives on international youth participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young representatives</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
<th>Conveners</th>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Decision-makers</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How?
- Bringing different stakeholders together
- Sharing and mapping what's out there
- Introducing new ways to think about the issues
- Capturing recommendations & considerations
- Networking
- Making personal commitments
- Young social media team sharing the proceedings
- Rapporteur producing an independent report
- Creating an online web portal – youthpolicy.org
- Following up on the outcomes

Day One

Introduction from the organisers

The event began with a welcome and a few words from the sponsors and organisers:
Gordon Blakely, Director Youth, British Council
Noel Soleyzi, Director, Open Society Youth Initiatives

“Gordon is challenging us to think of the questions that we never thought would be asked. Let’s be creative and ask questions. #youthpolicy”

“As put by Noel Soleyzi, any vibrant and tolerant democracy features young, engaged people and those who assist them. Yet, he cautions, most attempts at youth consultation are “window dressing” and ultimately, youth perspective are ignored by policy makers. Noel also identifies flaws with the sense of entitlement held by some youth advocates: “Too often youth want a seat at every table – really, just because they are under 30?””

Setting the scene

Jennifer Corriero, Co-founder, Taking IT Global
To launch the Symposium, in recognition of the many different stakeholders present and the need to learn from and work together effectively Jennifer began with her poem ‘How does change happen?’ Here is an extract.
Is your belief defined by your role
or is your role defined by your belief?

How does change happen?

POLICY says the policy maker
MARKETS says the business manager
MASS MOBILIZATION says the organizer
DIALOGUE says the convener
SYSTEMS CHANGE says the academic
IMAGINATION says the artist
INVENTION says the scientist
INNOVATION says the technologist
INVESTMENT says the banker...

... And so we ask ourselves
where we stand, where we shine
and where we fly.

We ask whether or not
we are defined
by the roles we take
or the collective outcomes that emerge
when our efforts and beliefs collide.

Is it magic or tragic that we disagree?

Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy, University of Glamorgan
Howard set the tone perfectly with a presentation summarised by these two slides.

Howard made a strong challenge
to the legitimacy of much
international participation and
outlined considerations
including, representative
accountability, diversifying
platforms for engagement,
interdependency in decision-
making and involving the ‘adult
young’ v the ‘young young’.

“Howard Williamson, about EU structured dialogue on youth: "Sometimes those arrangements can become very cliquey" #youthpolicy"

“Youth participation since 2000s was used as a mantra for point scoring #HowardWilliamson #youthpolicy #GYS Must move beyond to specifics”

“A simple story! Absolutely! The complexity of youth participation is a huge barrier in itself. Great points #howardwilliamson #youthpolicy”

Chad Blackman and Anne Gammon, Planning Team members
Chad asked if a youth implementation index was needed to hold both the youth and policy makers accountable for pledges made and not acted upon, while Anne encouraged the delegates to come up with
a simple story to tell the world about why youth participation is important.

“Chad Blackman’s frustrated. Read one communique, you've read them all! Are young people any better off than last conference? #youthpolicy”

“By the end of the morning session the questions raised by both speakers and delegates were coming fast and furious. But at this stage there are no answers yet. As Anne made clear, this is the beginning of a dialogue – over time those gathered in Enfield – and the wider youth policy community – will come up with practical suggestions about how to make youth participation better.” (Dwain Lucktang)

Overview of the youth participation landscape

Mapping
The make up of the participants at each table had been carefully selected so as to maximize the diversity of countries, age and types of experience. The tables used the framework below to map their experience and begin to discuss what meaningful participation meant to them.
**Mapping Youth Participation in International Decision-making – Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Structures</strong> for youth participation represented at the Symposium included: Co-management - young researchers network - youth board - young trustees - UN observer status - advocacy network - regional youth council - interagency network - youth advisory panel - youth media representatives - youth sub-committee on human rights - regional youth council - structured participation in official meetings - activist network - global young leaders network - youth responsive budgeting committee...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLICIES / COMMITMENTS</strong> Work towards specific outputs, eg: • Quality standards • Youth Charter • Communicué • Self-assessment framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies and outcomes</strong> that participants had contributed to include: youth policy - quality assurance framework - self assessment framework - legislation - action plan - youth charter - organisational development plan - advocacy manual - convention on the status of women - gender mainstreaming guide - youth commission on alcohol - curriculum framework - new youth funding initiatives - international programme of action - partnership agreement - policy evaluations - national development policy - business plan - journalistic articles - youth participation guide - UN resolutions - communiqués - quality standards - organisational review of practice...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISSUES</strong> Issues around which young people are involved in decision-making, eg: • Justice &amp; Equality • Sexual and Reproductive Health • Employability and Jobs • Minority Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SPACES and PLACES</strong> The spaces, places and decision-making arenas at which decisions are made or influenced, eg: • Multi-lateral, Bi-lateral, Regional... • Private Sector, Civil Society, Online...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spaces</strong> at which young people had participated in include: UN commission on the status of women - regional conference on women in Latin America and Caribbean - European Presidency - CARICOM Forum - Council of Europe meeting - University on Youth and Development - COP15 - World Youth Conference - Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings - International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations - World Youth Congress - Commonwealth Youth Forum - World Urban Youth Forum - Africa Youth Forum - World Economic Forum - International youth forum on climate finance - Global Engagement Summit - World Conference on Sustainable Futures...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... So much more than just international forums and events.

We hope that initial work can provide the foundations for a comprehensive mapping of youth participation in international decision-making and inform an ongoing review of practice.

A full breakdown of the outcomes from the mapping can be found at [www.youthpolicy.org/participation](http://www.youthpolicy.org/participation)
What is meaningful participation?
The outcomes of these conversations were extremely rich, particularly as they drew from the participants’ broad and varied experience. Much of it recurs through presentations and subsequent discussions but some headlines include:

- Mobilises other young people
- Focuses on the quality of youth input
- Has transparent processes
- Is fully inclusive and accessible to all
- Includes spaces for youth to lead processes
- Is visible and recognised by other stakeholders
- Is carried out with young people with legitimacy
- Has clearly defined roles of young people involved
- Supports capacity building of young people to participate
- Includes an implementation and monitoring mechanism
- Is not just young people going to fora but leaders going to youth spaces
- Takes national contexts into account, ensures local implementation of international decisions
- Individually meaningful (almost always) or world changing (almost always not)?
- Leads to meaningful action with a sense of social responsibility
- Disseminates learning and “best practice” and has a cascading effect
- Is connected to policy and impact, and to everyday realities
- Needs others to let go of some power. It changes power dynamics in the long term

Examples of practice
A snapshot of different forms of youth participation in international decision-making.

Co-management in the Council of Europe
Ulrich Bunjes, Head of the Youth Department, Council of Europe

“Nothing about young people – without young people.”

Co-management is a unique decision-making system at the level of intergovernmental organisations. “We walk the talk”, as Ulrich puts it.

47 governments meet with 30 youth NGOs (60% INGYOs, 23% national youth councils and 17% other NGOs) meet twice a year to decide on policies and standards within the Council of Europe, and on programmes and grants to youth NGOs. [www.coe.int/youth](http://www.coe.int/youth)

Global alliances of youth organisations
Bernadette Fischler, Senior Advocacy Coordinator, World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)

1. Youth UN Global Alliance (YUNGA) - Set up by UN FAO and funded by SIDA, YUNGA aims to establish a network of young people and organisations active at local level and facilitate their cooperation, particularly on environmental and social concerns. [www.yunga.org](http://www.yunga.org)
2. International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO) - A loose global alliance coming together and finding common ground. ICMYO does a lot of advocacy towards the UN.

Advantages: coordination, stronger voice and negotiating power, knowledge sharing for greater impact, networking

Disadvantages: can become a club of selected organisations which is difficult to get in, requires resourcing so needs organisation’s support, e.g. WAGGGS, can limit the diversity of youth voices with influence if “ICMYO is used by UN” for consultation
Youth participation in decision-making in the Caribbean
Devon Rachae, CARICOM Youth Ambassador (former), and youngest senator of Grenada

CARICOM consists of 13 member countries and others affiliated to the Caribbean Community. The CARICOM Youth Ambassadors programme aims to give young people a voice in regional development and to work together on cross-regional projects. The Ambassadors (1 male and 1 female from each country) are appointed by national NGOs and are endorsed by the national Ministry of Youth and Cabinet and then approved by the Secretary General of CARICOM.

Strengths: Government buy-in and respect for Ambassadors through involvement in their appointment, supports youth development, implementation of HIV/AIDS and other projects tailored to country context
Weakness: lack of finance, ideas not followed through, lack of audience with Heads of Government, no measuring of impact. “On paper a very strong programme but not on the ground.”

International youth representation from the UK
Lucy Gillet, UK Young Ambassador & Shahina Bahar, International Representation Coordinator, British Youth Council

UK representation at international platforms has been, and often is, ad hoc and unrepresentative. The UK Young Ambassadors project was set up to address this and to make international youth representation more inclusive and effective by rooting representation in the voice and experience of young people across the UK. The project also aimed to share practice and work with the sector to create a more enabling environment for meaningful participation.

Lucy shared her experience of being a Young Ambassador and the importance she places on trying to be really representative and accountable, something that’s not always apparent at international forums. She told a story of working extremely hard with other young people to help develop and present the Communiqué at the last Commonwealth Education Ministers meeting. After it was endorsed by the Ministers she took it back to the UK and met with one of the UK education Ministers who told her, “I see hundreds of communiqués, they are practically worthless” (!)

Challenges identified:
- Knowing what success is - a paragraph in a statement? Mobilizing other young people? Personal development? Sometimes visibility – just being there - can be important first step
- How different young people can play different roles
- How young people can be accountable to each other

Why are we involved in this? And what does that mean?
Personal reflections and stakeholder dialogues

The 'Why Pie'
From our review of practice we identified 4 primary motivations for engaging in youth participation in decision-making.
1. For young people to claim their rights
2. To strengthen democracy and civic life
3. To develop and deliver better policy
4. To prepare the ‘next generation’
5. A piece of the pie is left empty for participants to think about and share their rationale

Participants shared their rationale and questioned each other about their assumptions and perspectives in small groups of different stakeholders. For example, a young representative and an NGO discussed a rights based approach with the question, ‘How are youth rights balanced against the rights of other groups?’

See www.youthpolicy.org/participation for more details and the ‘assumptions matrix’.
Why does power matter?
Steadman Noble, a public and youth participation consultant, presented a framework for analyzing power and change in the context of international decision-making whilst participants reflected on their experience via a worksheet. Key points emerging:

- To make a sustainable impact on the structures and processes of international decision-making we need to understand the underlying, often hidden, power dynamics
- The motivation for, and approaches to, participation within different decision-making spaces varies greatly and different strategies for influencing them need to be used
- A framework, such as the one presented, can give us a tool and shared language to think about our work, gaps and opportunities and how we might collaborate more effectively
- Linear v messy – we can see decision-making as a linear process with identifiable intervention points and ‘monitorable’ cause and effect, but we can also see it as a messy process which includes the dynamics of pubic perceptions, influences of family and media, and unexpected outcomes

You can find the framework and presentation at www.youthpolicy.org/participation

What are the barriers and challenges for meaningful and effective participation?
Panel presentations and questions and answers

Lisa Ainbinder, UN Youth
Lisa set out the structure and workings of the UN Department for Youth, the activities supporting the IYY and the UN High Level Meeting on Youth that will mark the end of the year. She made the point that it is important to understand the limitations of the UN Youth department – it is small and not very well resourced. Also, some themes, young women for example, falls under a different department’s remit. There needs to be an integrated response to this agenda, not just within the UN but also with each other and with the UN agencies, as well as alternative platforms opened up for young people.

Lobbying your individual government, especially where there’s a youth Minister can be the most effective way to change things – more than going to UN – and we also advocate alternative strategies to member states. So... lobby us but also support us.

Layne Robinson, Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat
Helen Jones, Deputy Chief Executive, Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
Samuel Kavuma, Chairperson, Commonwealth Africa Regional Youth Caucus

This group discussion between different stakeholders in Commonwealth youth representation highlighted some key challenges:

- Who is speaking for youth internationally and why these people over others? There needs to be a broadening of representation
- More consideration of succession planning for young representatives is needed
- Encourage young people not to wait to be given resources but to see themselves as resources
- There is a need to strengthen national youth councils across the Commonwealth
- There is a big issue about the cost of representation and resources needed to create new and alternative platforms for change
- How can we balance decision-makers’ desire for unified messages from young people and the need to diversify representation and share the differing, maybe conflicting views young people have
- How do we get member countries to take up suggestions that have emerged at the international level

Barriers to #youthpolicy: condescending attitudes, no commitment & low ministerial importance of youth. Panelists from @commonwealthsec
David Woollcombe, Director, Peace Child International & World Youth Congress
Key points captured by some of the many tweets that were prompted by David’s presentation.

...David continues with barriers: the #UN: "pathetic representation" not a cent from member states - institutional indifference.”
...Medieval exploitation of young people in Mexico. We should be protesting from the rooftops”
...David Woollcombe of @PeaceChild: 1st define meaningful; also know it’s [rubbish] to put trust in carefully worded communiqués
...You try to get the EU to think about youth participation in decision-making. It’s not even on their radar”
...David Woollcombe of #PeaceChild says that to bring about change, we should do things that politicians and diplomats DON’T do.
...The herd mentality can be a barrier to youth engagement and activism

David challenged us to think about how we get into BRIC, G8 and G20, OECD – these organizations have so much power and young people could make a real difference. Rio +20 is also a big opportunity.

And three final points of guidance:
1. Do what diplomats don’t do – be imaginative  2. Know your stuff  3. Never ever ever ever give up

Amina Doherty, FRIDA and Young Feminist Fund
Amina is working on a fund for and by young women for capacity building and made the case for greater investment in capacity building for young people to be effective activists, advocates and representatives. She also posed two challenging questions:
1. Are we limiting ourselves by only being involved in youth spaces? Are we engaging with other social movements? And connecting and learning – cross sectoral engagement
2. Structural change is not just about being in spaces – capacity, access to knowledge and information and resources are all crucial.

How can we make sense of these issues and what needs to be done?
'World Café' conversations around key themes

1. Access and inclusion
2. Youth mainstreaming
3. Power and change
4. Conditions and capacity building
5. Accountability & representation of young people
6. Transparency of organisations and structures
7. Measuring the impact of youth participation

Round 1: Defining the issues
Round 2: Identifying practice and innovation
Round 3: Identifying actions and ways ahead

The outcomes of these conversations set the foundations for the following days group work towards concrete proposals, principles and recommendations.

Day Two

How can we do things better? Towards more meaningful international participation
A look at approaches and innovations that are pushing forward practice, providing ideas and inspiration in advance of group discussions on future recommendations and action.
UN-HABITAT Youth Advisory Board
Mutinta Munyata, UN Habitat and Kristoffer Sunday, UN Habitat Youth Advisory Board

Part of a wider Urban Youth Programme, the 1st Board, of 18-32 year olds, was elected 2008 at the World Urban Forum in China and participates in UN-HABITAT Governing Councils and WUYA.

The group provides strategic advice to UN-HABITAT on urban youth-led development and supports meaningful participation of young people in UN-HABITAT's responses to policy and programme development for the urban youth.

http://unhabitatyab.wordpress.com/

Emerging spaces
Jennifer Corriero, Co-Founder, Taking IT Global - www.tig.org

Jennifer’s presentation was about seeing the big picture and making connections, illustrated by Taking IT Global’s experience of harnessing the power of ICT to link up, learn from and support social movements globally.

We also heard about practical responses to some critical questions, including:
- How do we shift the perception of youth?
- How do we cultivate regional leadership?
- How do we showcase best practice?
- How can we generate commitment from established leaders (Youth-adult commitments desk (IAS))
- How do we connect the local and the global and grow networks of influence?
- How can we learn from our experiences (Youth Hub (Habitat Jam & WUF))
- How do we provide training and capacity building (MTV Staying Alive Foundation)

What do youth need in order to participate? *Create flexible formal/informal spaces which are authentic* #JenniferCorriero #youthpolicy #GYS

Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers
Sarah Huxley, DfID/CSO Youth Working Group & author of Youth Participation in Development Guide

Sarah explained why this guide is important, reinforcing much of what had been discussed the previous day. She talked through the youth partnership process of drafting the guide and the idea of ‘3 youth lenses’ through which we can focus on young people in development. (See below)

Objectives of the Guide
- To assist donor agencies and policy makers working with and for young people
- To provide a strategic framework for approaching youth participation
- To offer practical case study examples
- To publicise additional resources and support structures available for agencies

www.ygproject.org
Setting Standards for youth participation
– IPPF’s self evaluation guide - www.ippf.org/en/Resources
Kat Watson, Adolescents/Young People team, IPPF

- Developed by young people and youth staff members from all regions
- Aiming for 100% compliance with youth participation policy at governance level.
- “We are not just talking about giving young people a voice, but getting adults to have an ear” (Youth volunteer, Asia)

Recommendation and considerations
The following recommendations are a summary of the outcomes from the group discussions that were either presented at the Symposium or have been prioritised by the group to share in this report.

For the full, detailed outcomes go to www.youthpolicy/participation

1. General recommendations on the process of participation
- Build on the mapping of international youth participation begun at the Symposium to develop a comprehensive picture of this field
- To be meaningful, some recommendations need to be targeted at specific stakeholders: young people, NGOs, conveners - in an integrated process.
- All aspects of youth involvement, including planning, budgeting, delivery, and monitoring influence the quality of participation in decision-making and therefore need to be considered
- The use of ICT is under-developed in this field and the opportunities need to be researched
- An overarching ‘Youth Participation Index’ gained strong support

2. Transparency and accountability to enhance participation
- Young people should be held accountable to each other and to their peers in their home countries, and for the outcomes of their involvement
- Conveners should develop an accountability index that sets standards for eligible participation in decision-making and clarifies who young people are representing by their presence. NGOs and young people might choose not to take part in forums that do not meet a minimum standard
- Young representatives need capacity-building and support before, during and after their representation – but they also need to commit themselves to work beyond an event or forum
- The UN should undertake an independent ‘youth participation audit’ by an experienced youth NGOs, in order to determine current UN levels of youth participation, representation and expenditure, recognizing that the UN can lead the way
- Organisations and supporters of young people need to improve their access to information, including where, when and how important information is made available
- There needs to be a balance between democratic representation and appointed categorical representation where appropriate
3. Measuring the impact of youth participation

- There needs to be processes for tracking the outcomes, including the pledges made by delegates (young and old), following international decision-making forums. These need to be accessible to young people and facilitate monitoring over long periods of time.
- Participatory monitoring practices need to put in place. The process of monitoring and reporting participation should itself be participatory.
- Clear and measurable indicators need to be developed. There are different stakeholders and objectives and some things will be difficult to measure, but developing some shared indicators would help monitor the impact of participation across this broad field of practice.
- The work shared and discussed at the Symposium should inform the development of an overarching 'Youth Participation Index'.
- Manage the expectations of young representatives. Some spaces and structures are new to participation so may be tokenistic, and some are simply not effective or impactful anyway.

4. Capacity Building

- Need to identify the different approaches, styles and spaces of international decision-making to map the stakeholders and identify differing capacity needs.
- The way capacity building programmes are framed can in fact be a barrier to meaningful youth participation by only encouraging young people to behave in particular ways. More young people need to be involved in capacity building program design to address this.
- Make a strong case to convince donors to invest in capacity-building.
- Explore on-line tools to reduce the financial cost of participation in international decision-making.
- Young people and youth organisations must learn, and come to terms with, working within the politics of high-level agendas.
- Peer-mentoring and peer-education by young representatives to their peers is an effective means of capacity-building.
- Need for support structures for more disadvantaged young people to effectively participate, feedback to their constituencies, and become keen advocates.

5. Inclusiveness

- Conveners, NGOs and young people all share responsibility for access and inclusion in international decision making, including reflecting on the structural barriers that exist.
- Endeavour not to select individual and detached young leaders but operate through democratic and inclusive processes, for example, youth delegate programmes, national youth councils, etc.
- However, NGOs must consider their role as gate-keepers and what barriers they might present.
- Young people need to be aware and honest about who, if anyone, they represent.
- Conveners should take the lead role in addressing the practical barriers for youth participation, for example access to information, timely information, visa issues and travel logistics.
- NGOs should coordinate more in order to widen access international youth participation spaces and maximize the opportunities that arise.

6. Wider strategies to mainstreaming youth

- More reliable and consistent data on youth demographics needs to be collected and made widely available for effective policy making and donor investment, for example, census data which is then shared through open source means.
- More evidence need to be collected on what works, what doesn't and new ideas and initiatives.
- An inter-agency network, involving young people, should be supported to develop effective advocacy and action to follow up the recommendations of this Symposium.
• All policy proposals should include a ‘Youth Impact Statement’ to provide assessment information on how a policy affects young people and youth organisations. Youth Ministries should lead on conducting a cumulative impact assessment on the state of youth in a country.
• Youth civil society and the private sector should be in a dialogue with the aim of creating an Action Plan for investment; a debate via social media can usefully begin this process.
• Government funding for youth structures or youth programmes should be linked to constitutionally mandated governance roles for young people within them. This should connect to decisions made internationally and implemented nationally.
• A clearly defined age-range for youth should be expressed at the onset for all platforms, with a clear rationale.

Personal commitments
Below are written commitments made by participants, however they have been edited into general statements that can serve as prompts and ideas for everyone.
I will:

- Work with my network to develop a participation index and impact statement
- Research the benefits of youth participation to provide evidence based proposals to funders
- Get out more! Seek to learn from best practice in participation across the sector
- "Not come back" - make sure I develop the capacity of other youth to participate in symposiums like this
- Run a follow up youth forum to share the outcomes of this symposium
- Make our information more youth friendly
- Revisit our youth strategy in terms of governance
- Explore the idea of an Accountability index
- Help organise a youth audit of the UN
- Advocate strongly for youth mainstreaming in Africa
- Work on our national youth policy in the coming year
- Think more about preparing the next generation to take over
- Commit to cascading the lessons from this symposium to my youth networks
- Take stock of our membership as part of 'accountability index' or 'representativeness'
- Ensure that 60% of my organisation's board is made up of young people
- Attend UN high level youth meeting and will not do what diplomats do while I'm there!
- Keep writing in order to achieve change. I will keep looking for people who still believe
- Follow up the information about youth policy symposium to all of my networking organisations
- Evaluate the project I am running against an established participation framework
- Dedicate myself to work with NGOs who care about youth to address their role in the international arena
- Take forward the YPI and YDI initiatives at the world youth congress series
- Continue to challenge power structures and power relationships personally and politically
- Keep on with the struggle for youth participation – it is going to be hard but I am in for the long haul
Closing remarks

This is just a start. We need to move from the what to the how. From the analysis, the research, the networking and the dialogue to action towards more meaningful international youth participation.

Through this Symposium we have been seeking some common ground on which to build shared ideas and actions between the different stakeholders who can make a difference. We have shared experience about how difficult it can be to bring about change in this area but we have found common ground; we have some powerful ideas and we have a committed and influential network with extensive reach across the world.

Youth participation is currently on the international agenda, with young people's role in the Arab Spring, and the need to respond, and also through the International Year of Youth. But the year is coming to a close and other global issues will soon take the stage; we need to maximise the opportunities that exist now. We hope you will follow up on your personal commitments and hope that you will also continue to work with us to take your ideas and recommendations forward.

Resources and follow up

See the website for presentations, slides, resources, participant list, photos, and all documents referred to in this report - [www.youthpolicy.org/participation](http://www.youthpolicy.org/participation)

Watch participant interviews at: [www.vimeo.com/youthpolicy/videos](http://www.vimeo.com/youthpolicy/videos)

Watch presentations & panel discussions at: [www.ustream.tv/channel/youthsymp osia1/videos](http://www.ustream.tv/channel/youthsymp osia1/videos)

The London Symposium was convened and sponsored by the British Council and the Open Society Foundations.

It was organised by the British Youth Council and the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council in partnership with a fantastic youth steering group of:

Adizah Tejani
Lucy Gillet
Eunice Obianagha

Chad Blackman
Anne Gammon
Isaac Musyoka

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