A PRESENTATION OF
YOUTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL
FOR THE

Day of General Discussion on

“The Right of the Child to be Heard”
Speak, Participate and Decide

Children as Active Participants in Society
Geneva - September 15, 2006
Youth for Human Rights International (YHRI) is an independent, non-profit corporation headquartered in Los Angeles, having branches all around the world, under the able guidance of its President, Mary Shuttleworth, and Director, Tim Bowels. It has the purpose to educate young people on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights so they become valuable advocates for tolerance and peace.

Education on human rights issues is an essential factor in enabling young people to participate in broader and deeper discussions on the subject of their rights. Without an understanding of human rights, they are unable to have even a basic self-determination and choice over their options, including how they can assert and protect their rights, determine their own future or participate in the creation of a better society in which they live.

It is therefore one of the primary goals of YHRI to bridge this critical gap in human rights education. If human rights are only portrayed as a dry or distant subject, then they become accessible to only the privileged few who not only have access to education, but are fortunate enough to be educated on their rights in schools. Unfortunately, the vast majority of young people, including those who have easy access to education, are never provided the opportunity to truly know what their rights are and to understand how to practically use and protect these rights.

Of course, the deeper the understanding of fundamental human rights and the earlier in their development this happens, the greater the opportunity for young people to actively participate in their society and be heard on critical issues affecting their rights and their society so as to take control of their own lives, assert their own rights and help their community act in ways that are most optimum and aligned with human rights principles.

**Human Rights Education**

One important means of developing grassroots awareness of human rights issues so that youth may actively participate in society and aid in bettering their community is through the targeted distribution of pamphlets, booklets and audio-visual aids containing educational information on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is for this reason that YHRI has created a series of audio-visual tools to make the subject a living one and to bring home to people what human rights are. To date, 18 such informational publications and 34 audio-visual presentations in as many as 21 languages have been published.
Whilst initially directed towards young people, they have been found to be equally suited to viewing by adults as well.

The latest release just now being made available by YHRI are a collection of 30 short films of less than one minute each, every one of them covering a different article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These films have been produced and sponsored by the Human Rights Department of the Church of Scientology International.

In viewing these films, human rights come alive. They have been written and produced so that the viewer can relate these fundamental principles to their own lives and thereafter look towards how this can be used and applied in their own lives, communities and societies. Harnessing modern audio-visual technology to articulate every right the UDHR grants has brought praise from educators, media industry executives and human rights advocates. The first three PSAs have already aired to more than 130 million people in over 60 countries. After viewing them, a senior executive at a national TV network wrote, "As someone who reviews creative [messages] for hundreds of campaigns a year, I will say that these spots are beautifully produced and clearly articulate the message of Youth for Human Rights International."

They are a basic educational tool for fostering discussion and deeper understanding of the Universal Declaration as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child as they relate to specific articles or topics. They will enable child participation in understanding and applying human rights far more effectively in the home, school, community and broader society.

As involvement and active participation in society is a core subject matter for this conference, we hope that these short films will make a significant contribution to achieving this goal.

Additional instructional tools have already been made available such as the award-winning music video UNITED – a street-savvy, multiethnic five-minute film subtitled in 15 languages – conveying the power of human rights awareness. YHRI also publishes the UNITED Human Rights Handbook, providing educators and leaders with lesson plans and other practical tools with which to teach human rights

The 30 short films were premiered in at an event held in the United Nations in New York on the 25th August 2006. Mr. Enzo Di Taranto of the UN welcomed the group on behalf of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. On the 19th September 2006 the European launch of the films will take place at the International Conference Centre in Geneva.
We work with human rights advocates, legislators, teachers, police and humanitarians to encourage young people to learn and champion human rights and wish to provide easy distribution of these materials around the world. The widespread and sustained character of these educational actions has won the attention of leading human rights advocates, earning YHRI a letter of commendation from the United Nations Development Programme and a Certificate of Appreciation from UNICEF for "your global efforts to raise awareness of the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

Links to know more about the educational program of Youth for Human Rights International:

http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/watchads/index.html
To watch the brand new 30 short films on human rights

http://www.unitedmusicvideo.org/
The official site of the award-winner music video

http://www.txlfilms.com/films/united_index.html
The website of TXL, the independent film production company that created UNITED