

Norway – 1993

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Original: UN Doc. A/C.3/48/SR.13, 21 October 1993, p. 2

Youth Delegate Search: <https://youthdelegatesearch.org/norway-1993/>

1. **Ms. HJERTAAS** (Norway) said that young people, who made up more than half of the inhabitants of the planet, were, in many countries and for various reasons, obliged to wait longer until they were taken into consideration as full members of society.
2. The current period was characterized by unprecedented political change with the end of the cold war, progress in South Africa and the conclusion of the Washington agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and Governments had a duty to support those positive developments by providing the United Nations with the resources it needed.
3. Furthermore, countries must meet their political responsibilities with regard to young people by enabling them to participate in preparing their own future. Young people had a contribution to make by informing leaders of their concerns and their vision of the future. Admittedly, young people were not a homogeneous group. It was for that reason that cooperation at the international and national levels between young people's organizations, and tolerance and solidarity, were so important. In spite of differences between living standards, political opinions, religious belief and ethnic origin, young people throughout the world shared common ideas such as the rejection of war and love of peace.
4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, recognized the right of children and young people to education. That right must be respected since it was not only in the interest of young people but also that of society as a whole that young people should be educated. It was an investment in the future. Although most of the United Nations Member States had ratified the convention, it was not being implemented. Whilst it acknowledged that children had specific rights in addition to the fundamental human rights, the most basic rights of children and young people were being ignored. In that regard it was enough to cite the case of children living in shanty towns, street children and child victims of prostitution. The international community should therefore achieve the impossible to ensure that the Convention became more than just words.
5. In all societies the family had primary responsibility for ensuring children's welfare. It must be given the means to do so. However, when there were problems within the family, society must take responsibility for protecting the child. The appointment of an ombudsman or mediator might be the best way of defending young people's

interest at the international and at the national levels. It was equally important to encourage the creation of organizations to represent children and young people for all human beings, no matter what their age, sex or race, had the right to make their voices heard.

