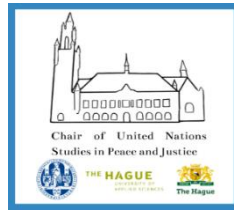


**UN Youth Impact x the Chair of UN Studies x Lions Club International**  
**The UN at 75: Improving Image and Visibility Through Education**  
Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2020  
Leiden University



On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> of March, [The Chair of UN Studies](#) and [UN Youth Impact](#) in collaboration with [Lions International](#), held a joint workshop at [Leiden University](#) to examine access to education and the current and future perceptions of the UN. This event was based on the proposals connected to SDG 4: Quality Education. The focus on education was twofold – touching on how the UN's image could be changed through education, and how a quality education could aid the implementation of UN ideas and values. The attendees included representatives of the municipality, university officials, Lions members and young people interested in getting involved with the issues and challenges confronting the UN. The event was also the first of four UN@75 dialogues organised by the [Chair of UN Studies](#).

**Part 1: Lions Club International and the perception of the UN**

The event began with opening words from Lions representative Chairman Ria Schutte, and a welcome on behalf of the municipality of The Hague by Deputy Mayor Saskia Bruines. After the opening remarks the winner of the 2019 Lion's club Peace Poster competition was announced. In this part of the event we were all reminded that no matter the age of a person one can embody and be involved in promoting the UN values and principles.



*Winner of the Peace Poster Competition*



*Finalists of the Peace Poster Competition*

After the awarding ceremony attendees witnessed the signing of the cooperation contract between Lions Club Netherlands and Healthy Athletes. This partnership enables special need athletes to compete in the Special Olympics. The Lions Club helps these athletes to attend health screenings and to resolve issues that might otherwise prevent their participation.

After the signing, Ms. Elisabeth Haderer, International Director of Lions Clubs International until 2019, reflected on the past and future collaborations between Lions International and the United Nations. Upon reflection on past challenges, attendees were reminded of Lions International efforts around the world and encouraged to get involved in their future projects and activities.

Following Ms. Haderer, Professor Alana O'Malley, Chair of United Nations Studies in Peace and Justice spoke about the link between education and the perception of the UN. Professor O'Malley stressed the importance of youth participation in the UN, at every level possible, and how a quality education could help improve the image, visibility, and knowledge of the UN and its role in the international community. To end part one Professor O'Malley shared with the attendees the upcoming UN@75 dialogues scheduled to take place in 2020.

## **Part 2: UN and education – how to foster the adoption of a global mindset and UN values**

Part two began with a panel that was moderated by Ms. Ria Schutte and it had three themes: the image, visibility, and values of the UN. The panel consisted of Professor Judi Mesman, Dean of Leiden University College; Ms. Hajar Yagkoubi, Dutch UN Youth Representative and



Mr. Pepijn Kruijswijk, representative of the Dutch UNESCO Youth Commission. The three panellists discussed the image of the UN and agreed that the UN is often seen as an unreachable organization. They each stressed that the key to changing the current perception of the UN is by giving young agents of change the chance to get involved as Ms. Yagkoubi and Mr. Kruijswijk have done.

The panellists shared their experiences and talked about what motivated them to join the programmes they are currently involved in. Both youth representatives provided insights into their roles as youth commissioners and shared their thoughts regarding the future of the UN, the role of the UN in an international community, and the role of education in promoting the UN values and principles. From an educator's perspective, Professor Mesman provided insights on the panel themes and explained that the measures taken in the current Dutch education system were a good start but emphasised that more needed to be done. She also

highlighted the importance of integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into the Netherlands education curriculum to improve the image, visibility, and knowledge about the UN and its efforts to meet the 2030 SDG targets.

After the panel, Francesca Lavè introduced [UN Youth Impact](#) and explained how this youth movement is trying to embody UN values and promote UN principles, improve visibility of UN, as well as encourage the involvement of young people in activities related to achieving the SDG targets. Francesca took this opportunity to highlight some of the ways that young people in the Netherlands are working outside the classroom to improve the image of the UN and interest in the SDGs.

Before the break out session, Caitlyn Broeders a student at The Hague University of Applied Sciences introduced CAS, which stands for Creativity, Activity, and Service. CAS is a program that provides opportunities for students to enhance their personal and interpersonal development by learning through experience. It is a clear example of how an education curriculum could embody UN values, promote UN principles, and integrate knowledge about the SDGs into its syllabus. CAS combines several different types of activities including art exhibitions, musical performances, sports tournaments, colour runs, beach clean-ups, tutoring and much more. Caitlyn's presentation gave an insight to how SDGs could be integrated into a school syllabus and examples of the kind of activities available to young people at school.

### **Part 3: Discussion groups**

In the final part of the event, attendees split into smaller groups and they were given a set of questions to discuss regarding their individual perception of the UN, the future of the image of the UN, ways to increase youth visibility in the UN, and how education can be used to promote UN values and principles.



After the discussion, a representative from each group explained their discussion process and outcomes. With regard to the image of the UN, there

was an overall feeling that the aspects which could be identified from the UN seemed to be unreachable for all participants. Some criticisms were explained such as ineffectiveness, which was something the participants hope will change in the next 25 years. In the discussions there was a strong focus on improving the UN's image so that it may be considered a more effective organization. Additionally, attendees agreed on the importance of education as a way to improve the way the UN is viewed at a grassroots level. What was common between the

groups was that improving the image of the UN relied on two main factors: integrating the SDGs into school curriculums and increasing awareness of the UN's activities in countries like the Netherlands and how the UN is working with local governments to meet different SDG targets.

As for the visibility of the UN, attendees agreed on the importance of education and social media as a tool to bridge the gap between young people and the UN. The idea with both is to change the approach in which discussions are being held, while increasing physical presence through talks and seminars. As a way to address the visibility issue one group suggested there should be direct inclusion of youth in UN conferences as well as the inclusion of UN officials in the activities of local youth groups working on the SDG targets. It was suggested that an exchange between UN officials and local activists could help increase awareness of the UN's activities and help clarify the role and capability of the UN as an international organisation.

Finally, attendees were asked about the ways in which school curricula could include UN values and promote UN principles. A recurring answer was to introduce classes on the SDGs and provide young people the opportunity to get involved in at least one SDG project during their time at school. Ideas ranged from things like CAS, Model United Nations, physical reminders such as puzzles and stickers, visits from UN representatives and the involvement of NGOs. The main idea was that exposing people to the ideas of the SDG's during their formal education is a good way to raise awareness of the UN and to promote its values.

The event provided insights on the perception of the UN that people of different ages have, and on what should be done in the future to help change negative perceptions. Through this, attendees discussed how they could help reach the SDG targets at a local level and shared some innovative ideas on how to address the questions raised during the discussion groups about the image and visibility of the UN.

The Chair of UN studies, Lions International, and UN Youth Impact would like to thank the attendees for their enthusiasm and participation. Your questions, comments, and recommendations have all contributed to an on-going global dialogue about sustainable development and our shared vision for the future. We are compiling the outcomes of this event to be [fed directly back to the UN](#), which we will do in April 2020 to inform the [UN@75](#) declaration which will be launched in October. We look forward to seeing you at our next UN75 dialogue.