In an effort to harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world's youth in overcoming the challenges facing humankind, from enhancing peace to boosting economic development, the United Nations proclaimed an International Year of Youth commencing on 12 August 2010.

Under the theme “Dialogue and mutual understanding”, the Year aims to inspire dialogue and understanding across generations and promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and freedoms, and solidarity. It encourages young people to dedicate themselves to fostering progress, including the attainment of the MDGs.

Within this framework, UNOG involved youth and youth organizations in harnessing their initiatives to overcome global challenges through several events and programmes.
**Involving youth through the Graduate Study Programme**

> Over half of the world’s population is under 25. They represent our present and our collective future. I hope that while you are here, you will spend some time reflecting on what your vision for the future is. And I hope that you will leave here with determination to work to realize it.

The Director-General’s remarks at the opening of the forty-eighth United Nations Graduate Study Programme (5 July 2010).

For over four decades, UNOG has organized the Graduate Study Programme, which brings a large number of postgraduate students to Geneva from all over the world. The Programme takes place during the first three weeks of July to take advantage of the summer break in courses at most universities and institutions of higher education. The students are selected on the basis of their academic experience, motivation and equitable geographical distribution, as well as gender balance.

The Graduate Study Programme forms part of the United Nations outreach activities and reflects its commitment to enlist the support of the younger generation through targeted educational programmes. It aims, more specifically, to provide an opportunity for these outstanding postgraduate students to deepen their understanding of the principles, purposes and programmes underlying the work of the United Nations system through first-hand observation and study at the Palais des Nations.

From 5 to 23 July, 60 students, representing 36 different nationalities, participated in the forty-eighth Graduate Study Programme that was held at the Palais des Nations.

The mornings were devoted to plenary sessions, during which experts from the United Nations system made presentations on their activities. In the afternoons, the participants broke up into three working groups, focusing respectively on social and economic development, the environment and human rights, and were given specialized briefings.

Under the guidance of their respective moderators, each group produced a report, which was then merged into one document entitled “United to combat climate change to safeguard international peace and security”. This was then published and distributed to the permanent missions in Geneva, as well as to United Nations Information Centres and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices worldwide.
Involving secondary school and university students

In a joint initiative by UNOG and the Swiss Mandat International foundation, 22 high-school students spent a day at the Palais des Nations on 5 May 2010 to explore the various jobs that exist at the United Nations. In groups of two or three, the students “shadowed” UNOG staff during their daily activities. Some followed security guards, others worked with sound technicians, mail operators, conference assistants, television technicians and press officers. Two were assigned to the catering services.

They discovered that the United Nations is composed not just of diplomats negotiating complex conventions or resolutions, but also of people filling a multitude of different functions. “A world in itself”, one said afterwards, still astonished at the maze of printing shops, mail sorting rooms and engineering units he visited in the basement of the Palais. Another wondered how so many people from so many different nations and backgrounds managed to communicate and work together on a daily basis.

The project is part of the expanded outreach activities organized by UNOG aimed at giving young people an inside look at the important work of the United Nations.

In another outreach project undertaken with Mandat International, a team of diplomats from permanent missions and staff members of United Nations agencies in Geneva faced a team of high-school students for a football match on 17 September to mark the International Day of Peace, the start of the International Year of Youth and the “Stand Up against Poverty” campaign. Organized with the support of UNDP and the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP), the final score of the game was 8 to 1 in favour of the younger team.

Before the match, the Director-General of UNOG, the Mayor of the City of Geneva, Ms. Sandrine Salerno, and the Director of the UNDP European Office at Geneva, Ms. Cecile Molinier, had addressed the teams, urging them to score at least eight goals, one for each of the MDGs. The final result, with a total of nine goals scored, thus exceeded expectations (see the 2010 Highlights for more details).
International, the International Federation of University Women, Women in Europe for a Common Future, the University of Geneva, and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.


### Building legal capacity for the future

In conjunction with the meetings of the International Law Commission, UNOG organized the forty-sixth International Law Seminar on the basis of General Assembly resolutions, as it has every year since 1965. The Seminar is designed for postgraduate students of international law, as well as young scholars or government officials from all Member States of the United Nations exposed to issues of public international law in their work. Since 1965, 1,060 persons from 163 countries have participated in the Seminar.

The aim of the Seminar is to familiarize the participants with the work of the International Law Commission as well as with the codification and progressive development of international law. It also serves as a forum for jurists representing different legal systems to exchange views on the topics under consideration by the Commission and on international law in general, as well as to discuss the various activities of the United Nations and other international organizations based in Geneva. The participants can also benefit from the opportunity of meeting the members of the Commission and asking them for legal advice on various matters.

The 26 participants in this year’s three-week seminar attended public meetings of the International Law Commission and a series of lectures delivered by Commission members. They also studied subjects in small working groups. Lectures and briefings were also organized to introduce the work of other United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and ICRC. Cooperation between UNOG and the Geneva academic community was further institutionalized through interactive sessions of the Seminar held at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and the University of Geneva.
“Adults have much to learn from children and young people. The future belongs to them and they have a clear vision of the world we need to build together: peace, the preservation of our beautiful planet, the opportunity to make a better life. Young people will inherit all our work – our successes and our failures.”

Secretary-General’s remarks on the International Day of Youth (12 August 2010).

Young people represent the leaders of tomorrow and the future of the United Nations. UNOG is continuing its efforts to engage the younger generations, to mobilize them in support of the values and objectives of the Organization and thereby carry our mission forward.