

Letter of Intent (required 750 – 1,000 words typed):

Please submit in English on a separate sheet describing a) your reasons for applying to this program, b) your main fields of interests in the program, c) how you hope to benefit from the program, and d) the human rights issue of concern that you would like to address at the conference and when you return home.

Application Essay for Publication (Essay Contest):

We are requesting that all selected participants submit a human rights related essay to complete your application. Once you are selected to participate in the 2009 Forum, you will have 3 weeks to confirm your participation as well as submit the final application essay. In this essay, you should draw upon either the Millennium Development Goals or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discuss one of the following human rights issues: Use of the Media, Conflict Resolution, Restorative Justice, Communication and Organization of Human Rights Groups, HIV/AIDS, Law as a tool for social change, the Plight of Children/Child Soldiers, Nutrition/Hunger, and Clean Water/Environment. Drawing upon a particular goal of the Millennium Development project or a specific Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, you are to use your experiences as a young human rights leader to discuss one of these issues and what you believe you and others can do to address this problem. Please limit the length of your essays to between 1250 and 1750 words. Information regarding both the Millennium Development Goals and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be found on the following web-pages: www.civicus.org/mdg/title.htm and www.un.org/overview/rights.html. Select essays will be compiled and published as part of the Forum proceedings.

Additional essay tips and guidelines:

In drafting your essay for a wider readership beyond the conference attendees, please consider dividing your essay into sub-headings that would make it easier for the reader to follow. The following sub-sections should be used to guide your essay:

- 1) **Problem Identification:** Define the issue or problem that your essay is attempting to answer. What is the problem? For example, environmental degradation. Then, spell out the nature of the problem and why you think it is important for the reader to learn about it. In other words, summarize the various aspects of the problem in this section.
- 2) **Human Rights Framework:** Outline the larger intellectual and regional (or global) framework of human rights debates in which you are considering the problem. Then indicate that you are viewing the problem from a human rights perspective. In other words, why should the problem identified by you fall under the umbrella of human rights? Put differently, discuss the relevance of the problem to human rights. Here, you should cite relevant human rights instruments (documents). In this section, try to put the problem in human terms by illustrating how the problem affects the self-fulfillment and dignity of particular individuals and groups e.g. homeless people, immigrants, women, agricultural community, etc. The illustrations should help bring your essay to life.
- 3) **Cross-reference or comparative analysis:** Where possible, try to find out whether the problem you are discussing has been written about in a different region of the world. What were the manifestations of the problems in different cultural or material contexts? How, if at all, did people in a different region of the world deal with a similar problem?

What do approaches by other people tell you about best practices in tackling the identified challenges? In this section, you should attempt to draw out the significance of cross-fertilization.

- 4) **Looking forward as a youth:** As a young person looking to the future, how bad or good do you think the problem will be? Do you have hope that the problem will be tackled effectively? And, what role should young people play in fashioning solutions to the problem you have identified? Are there examples of young people engaging proactively to tackle similar problems, which can be used as model or inspiration? This section should present a wide and international range of young voices on how to achieve particular human rights. It should be a collection of novel ideas by and for the next generation of human rights activists and thinkers. and what your goals are and you could achieve them.
- 5) **Proposal for possible solution:** Having discussed the problem, you should think about affirmative or positive ways to solve or at least ameliorate the problem. You could, for example, suggest that we could begin to tackle the problem by first educating people so as to raise awareness about the nature of the problem and/or organizing people in groups, etc to work on the problem. This section should contain some kind of action plan.
- 6) **Conclusion:** In conclusion, try to answer whether, given the problem you discussed, you think that human rights are universal or relativistic. In what ways should/could the current conceptions of human rights be expanded or reaffirmed?

It is hoped that the guidelines above will help you clarify your ideas and organize your essays. There is no doubt that these essays will make enormous contribution to the debates about the various human rights and accordingly expand the frontiers of human rights. Of vital significance is the fact that the essays are written by young people who are committed to the cause of human rights and who bring refreshing perspectives on the various issues that affect the future of human rights. Best wishes!