



## **Report on Founding Conference Nairobi Kenya, January 16-20, 2007**

### **Introduction**

This report has been prepared by the first steering committee of the Global Young Greens (GYG), and contains information on the background, program and outcomes of GYG's founding congress. Also included here are the formal documents worked on and endorsed by the congress: the statutes, objectives and statement of principles of GYG, and the voting methods employed by the congress. Please also see the action plan which is being developed by the steering committee. Not included, but also endorsed by GYG, is the Global Greens charter. And finally, we also include a thank you card, which is a small way of expressing thanks to the many individuals and organisations who supported this conference and the birth of the GYG. While no card could ever really be adequate, we hope that our achievements in the following years will do justice to the support we have been so fortunate to receive.

### **Background**

The objective of this GYG conference was to bring together the next generation- or as many as possible- of young Green activists and explore the possibility of working together globally. Inspired by the Global Young Greens conference of 2001, in 2005 members of the Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG), Campus Greens USA, and many young Green groups and individuals began discussing via email holding another conference. In 2006 Caroline Ayling and Maarten Coertjens began working out of the FYEG office in Brussels and that year many wonderful people became actively involved. Thomas Millen traveled to Nairobi for three months prior to the conference to organise on the ground; Janna Schönfeld made mammoth contributions to the financial and political aspects of the meeting, and Paul Santman stoically took care of registrations and fund raising, communications and design. In addition to these people, literally hundreds of young people around the world contributed in various ways- writing fund raising applications, contributing to the political foundation through wiki and the mailing list, holding preparation meetings and more. We can't mention everyone's names here, but those who put time and effort and great belief into GYG, you should be very proud. The steering committee wishes to particularly thank the Babel team of translators who worked so hard towards common understandings before and during the conference.

Thanks also to the volunteers from the MF Hostel and USIU, who treated the invasion of young Greens with good grace and provided fantastic assistance and input.

The highest credit and gratitude must go to the supporters who enabled this project to go ahead. GYG would like to loudly and proudly thank: the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Swedish Green forum, the Green Belt Movement of Kenya, the Manzingira Green party, the Green Group in the European Parliament, in particular Marie-Hélène Aubert, Alain Lipietz, Carl Schlyter, Michael Cramer, Frithjof Schmidt and David Hammerstein, the European Green party and all the guest speakers in our opening and closing ceremonies; the national parties who gave generously, in particular the French, Austrian and Italian and Australian Green parties; and finally, to each and every organisation and individual who contributed. This humble thank you card is for you!



## Overview

The GYG conference, held from January 16-20 2007, was attended by 156 people, with 133 voting participants, all under 35. Despite efforts of the organisers, the gender balance was still 2:1 male to female. The numbers were approximately as follows:

Africa: 89 (50 Kenyans)  
Americas: 5  
Asia Pacific: 31  
Europe: 26



Accommodation was at the MF Hostel, a leafy property on the outskirts of Nairobi. Tents were rented, and mattresses and blankets were bought. These were later donated to two local facilities in Nairobi, caring for orphans suffering from AIDS and terminal diseases. Video footage of these facilities is online, with the link appearing at the end of this report. Further details of these facilities will appear soon on [www.globalyounggreens.org](http://www.globalyounggreens.org). Thanks goes to Tom Millen for taking this initiative.

The conference was held in the nearby United States International University (USIU), a twenty minute walk away which participants did as a group at the beginning and end of each day.

## Day one

Most participants arrived on January 15th, and thankfully had time to get to know each other and recover from their travels. So on the morning of day one, after some additional registrations, the group set off for the university where the conference was to be held. People continued to arrive throughout the day, and indeed throughout the conference! The opening ceremony began with introductions by Juliet Mugure and Peter Mungai of the Green Belt Movement, kind hosts of the GYG in Nairobi. Keynote speaker Anna Luhrmann, the youngest Green ever to be elected to parliament that we know of (nineteen when elected- in case anyone knows of someone younger), gave a fantastic address and continued to provide a source of sanity and inspiration throughout the conference. Addresses from Juan Behrend, Secretary General of the European Green Party, Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Catherine Greze of the Global Greens then set the conference in motion.

After the opening, participants had the chance to introduce their organisations and themselves to the group. Around thirty people gave short explanations of their various works, and it was a great shame we had to move along quickly, as this activity visibly engaged the participants.

In the afternoon participants were randomly divided into groups for discussions to see what they could make of four questions:

- What are the issues of the Global Greens?
- What are the issues of the GYG movement?
- Do we need a GYG congress?
- If so, how do we achieve it?



Each group had a lively debate, from which a collective vision for GYG began to take shape.

## Day two

Each group nominated presenters to relay what happened in the various discussions. Results will appear on GYG's wiki page, which is linked from our main website.

In the afternoon consensus was found on the objectives of GYG, and presentations were made for possible statutes for the organisation. Janna Schönfeld and Markus Drake had both prepared drafts prior to the conference and presented them to the group. The discussions on principles were extremely time consuming, but it was not wasted time- it demonstrated that everybody had deep interest in the content of the GYG.

Later that evening still more group discussions were held at the hostel on the subject of the statutes. There was wariness about forming an overly-centralised or structured organisation, but equal concern that too loose a network would simply disintegrate. In addition, many finer points, such as composition of the steering committee needed serious consideration. Talks went late into the night but were ultimately extremely constructive.



### Day three

Early in the morning the group left to visit a tree planting project of the Green Belt Movement. In an attempt to offset some of the carbon emissions generated by the conference, organisers arranged for a "GYG forest" of a thousand trees to be planted. However, as January is the wrong season for planting in Nairobi, we could only plant a few and have the others planted later.

So it was a ceremonial occasion, but also a wonderful opportunity to see first hand the work of the Green Belt Movement. After a walk in the forest, each region planted a different species of tree to establish the GYG forest. Thanks goes to Green Belt for arranging this activity and for their continuing work towards a greener Kenya.

Participants returned two hours later in the afternoon than anticipated, which unfortunately meant the afternoon's program had to be cut down. We had a series of workshops scheduled, and while they still went ahead, it was with severe time restrictions. Even so, the energy during these sessions was amazing. After spending so long focusing on the organisation of GYG, it was great to focus on the issues that motivate us to be young Greens in the first place. Not only this, but there are not too many opportunities to discuss these things with twenty or so other young people from across the globe. Participants responded really well to having the opportunity to speak about subjects they are passionate about.

The workshop themes were:

- Health and ethics in the supermarket age
- Climate change, Green energy and transport
- Focus on Africa
- Electoral campaigning and media skills
- Water problems and solutions
- Gender and GYG
- Critical health: HIV/AIDS and the GYG response
- How GYG will communicate and disseminate
- Youth advocacy: formulating a GYG method
- Starting/running a political group or NGO



At the close of the day, a brief plenary session was held and voting methods agreed on.

### **Day four**

While other participants were attending the tree planting excursion, a new statutes proposal was being worked on at the university. Having listened carefully to the debates, suggestions and concerns of the group, Markus and Janna sat down together and came up with a new draft. So on day four, with Anna Luhrmann facilitating, the group turned its attention to finding consensus on GYG statutes.

Fighting time restrictions, amendments were made as we went along. The aim was for consensus but voting was necessary several times. By lunch, the statutes were finished and the relief and sense of achievement were wonderful.

During lunch the regions held meetings. With the statutes now finished, it was definite that a steering committee would need to be appointed. Each region appointed representatives in different ways- Europe in a secret ballot, Asia Pacific in a vote with hands, and Africa with a lively group debate. With only five representatives in attendance, the Americas process was slightly simpler.

Overseen by an election committee, the congress then voted on the candidates put forward by the regions. After the incoming steering committee was announced and a quick photo opportunity taken, the statement of principles was debated and decided upon.

The closing ceremony featured really wonderful speakers. George Paz Martin, a veteran of the USA Green party and the American Peace movement, gave a rousing address which was a great antidote to the tension of the day. Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers of the Heinrich Böll Foundation again graced us with his presence and gave an encouraging address. Ulrike Lunacek and Phillippe Lamberts, spokespersons of the European Greens, gave us a great double act and some sound advice. Lastly, in a very memorable and moving address, Mr. Ryuhei Kawada of the Japanese Greens shared his struggle living with HIV and his passion for the Green movement.

The congress closed with all the participants rushing onto the stage and later, an evening of celebrations. By this stage there was a strong sense of community amongst the participants.

### **Day five**

With the congress over, many participants attended the opening ceremony of the World Social Forum. Meanwhile, the new steering committee held its first meeting. Good progress was made: in terms of our communication, we agreed to have weekly web-chats at fixed times which people can join when they are able to. We use a google group, which provides group mailing, a forum and the possibility to store and edit shared documents online. We also worked on the action plan, still in progress.



In the afternoon, we held a conference with members of the European Parliament. The three Green deputies Alain Lipietz, Marie-Hélène Aubert and Carl Schlyter discussed with us the outcomes of the GYG congress, the situation in the different regions and our future cooperation. The group was then broken up into smaller groups, each led by one deputy, to discuss certain topics more in-depth.

This exchange was really worthwhile and interesting for all those involved; and the steering committee believes that similar initiatives and exchanges with members of parliament is something positive to explore for future activities.

## Outcomes

Please find attached:

- 1) Statutes
- 2) Objectives and principles
- 3) Action plan
- 4) Voting methods



## Steering committee



As is evident in the statutes, the steering committee must be gender balanced, and this has been achieved. What was not achieved in appointing this steering committee was regional balance; despite efforts, both the Americas and the Middle East were underrepresented at the 2007 conference.

The steering committee is now charged with the task of reaching out to youth contacts in these regions with the aim of recruiting members and addressing this imbalance, both within the steering committee and within the wider organisation.

Members of the first GYG steering committee are as follows:

Africa: Marie Madeline Boni (Benin), Eric Dombou (Cameroon), Rim Nour (Tunisia), Douglas Arege (Kenya)

Americas: Andrea Horan (Canada), Juan Manuel Zorraquín (Argentina)

Asia Pacific: Raju Pandit Chhetri (Nepal), Elena Zakirova (Kyrgyzstan), Murtaza Mir Ghulam (Pakistan), Caroline Ayling (Australia)

Europe: Janna Schönfeld (Germany), Ognyan Kovachev (Bulgaria), Sarah Trichet Allaire (France), Andreas Birnstingl (Austria)

Profiles and photos of the steering committee will shortly appear on [www.globalyounggreens.org](http://www.globalyounggreens.org)

To contact the steering committee, please email [steering@globalyounggreens.org](mailto:steering@globalyounggreens.org)

## Multimedia



The GYG website, [www.globalyounggreens.org](http://www.globalyounggreens.org), has unfortunately not had much love over the past year. Despite efforts to find web helpers within our own ranks, this has not been forthcoming and the website has left much to be desired.

However, during the conference a web working group formed and has been busy working on the renovations. The new site will be incredible and functioning within the coming weeks, so be sure to check back there! The website will be as interactive as possible, as the world wide web will be a major platform for GYG.

Photos of the conference are being collected to be archived on our website. Please send any pictures to [gyg.pictures@gmail.com](mailto:gyg.pictures@gmail.com)

A video of the facilities the GYG mattresses and blankets were donated to is here:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEwfQMT5Zco>

In addition, video footage is being collected in the hope of collating a video documentary of the founding conference. Anyone who is keen to co-ordinate this project, or anyone with footage, skills in editing and enthusiasm to get involved in a documentary project, please send an email to:  
[caroline.ayling@gmail.com](mailto:caroline.ayling@gmail.com)

Video of the conference is already online here:

Day 1 - <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8064767775863705773&hl=en>

Day 2 - <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1258839615116353798&hl=en>

Day 3 - <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5661644310999991706&hl=en>

## The last word

The support and advice of older people involved in the Green movement was incredibly important to the GYG founding conference. Beyond financial help, we received vital assistance from seasoned activists, some that we don't even know about and probably never will.

The relationship between the Global Greens, Green parties and GYG is still to unfold but we do know a few things. There has obviously been a strong relationship from the beginning, as the GYG founding conference was supposed to be a 'side conference' to the Global Greens 2008, which was originally slated for 2007. GYG hopes for a strong relationship with Green political bodies but also wishes to remain an autonomous organisation. Many of GYG's members are from political parties, but roughly half of the conference participants are involved with NGOs. There is no pressure in GYG to sign up to a Green party, and it must be acknowledged that there are parties existing in some countries that our members would not consider joining: either because they feel the organisations are unacceptable or they feel it is too dangerous.

It was so worthwhile to establish GYG as open to anyone identifying as Green and subscribing to the four principles. The conference was much better for the diversity in backgrounds, and the work we did there developed a strong ideological unity. While our members may only be individuals, we believe that holding this Global Young Greens conference has in some way helped to seed the Green principles and movement around the world. When's the next one?!