



UNIVERSITY
SCHOLARS
LEADERSHIP
SYMPOSIUM

HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS ASIA

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PRESENTS

14TH UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

LEAD THE CHANGE

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE CENTRE, BANGKOK | AUGUST 4 TO 7, 2026



A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY

Have you ever felt the world's weight on your shoulders, yearning to make a difference but feeling lost and alone in your quest? Global issues, such as climate change and inequality, can be overwhelming. But what if we told you that you're not alone? What if we told you there's a community of passionate young leaders like you ready to take action and make a real impact? Welcome to the University Scholars Leadership Symposium (USLS). Here, you'll enjoy a transformative experience that will equip you with the tools and confidence to tackle the most pressing issues. Through engaging UN workshops and inspiring talks by real-life change-makers, you'll find your voice, purpose, and power to make a difference.



PASSION, PERSISTENCE, PATIENCE AND PURPOSE

Embark on an unparalleled journey with the University Scholars Leadership Symposium (USLS)! This transformative program is crafted to ignite the flame of humanity deep within you, setting your heart ablaze with a fervour to champion justice, give a voice to the voiceless, take action against the climate crisis and unlock your potential to become the destined leader you were meant to be.

At the core of the USLS experience is the cultivation of emerging world leaders, instilling the confidence to spearhead sustainable development projects within their communities. It's a melting pot of ideas, a hub for collaborations, and a space where diverse voices unite for a shared vision of a better world.

Join us at the USLS, where your passion meets the purpose and the 4 Ps guide you to make a lasting impact. Let the flame within you burn brighter as you become the leader the world awaits.

ON THE WORLD STAGE

Build Real Skills

Join interactive, hands-on workshops led by United Nations agencies and gain practical tools to tackle real-world global challenges.

Discover How the UN Works

Explore a curated UN exhibition and get a behind-the-scenes look at global initiatives, multilateral systems, and sustainable solutions in action.

Connect with Global Leaders

Engage with inspiring speakers, humanitarian professionals, and driven peers from around the world in a diverse, inclusive space.

Turn Empathy into Action

Be part of Kindness Day - a community service experience where compassion becomes a real, measurable social impact.

USLS is not a lecture. It's an experience.

It lights the spark, challenges your thinking, and pushes you to step into your power.

This is where youth voices matter.

This is where future leaders rise.

This is where your impact begins.



CHAMPIONING CHANGE

I return from the 'University Scholars Leadership Symposium' by Humanitarian Affairs Asia, and my heart is overflowing with gratitude for this transformative experience. Surrounded by remarkable individuals from 46 countries across the world, I have been profoundly touched by the power of unity and compassion.

The USLS is more than just an event; it's a gathering of kindred spirits who share a common vision for a better world. It's difficult to capture the essence of this extraordinary gathering, but at its core, it radiates hope for a brighter future and an unwavering commitment to action. Among these like-minded souls, I felt a palpable connection that transcends borders, all of us bound by our shared dedication to creating a safer and more sustainable world for everyone.

The atmosphere throughout the event was one of introspection and a deep consideration of our roles in addressing complex social issues. Despite the daunting challenges we discussed, optimism flowed through every moment of the week. The speakers shared their personal journeys of transformation, highlighting a common thread: they saw a problem, and they decided to be part of the solution. Each of them had crossed the threshold from being mere observers to becoming catalysts for change. This revelation was my main takeaway - an understanding that action is not a choice; it's a responsibility, and it is through action that we can pave the way for profound change.

I am inspired to take the message of 'take action' and weave it into the fabric of my daily life. Volunteering and advocacy will no longer be occasional commitments; they will become intrinsic parts of who I am.

Jake Beasley
University of Westminster
London, England



SEEDS OF INSPIRATION



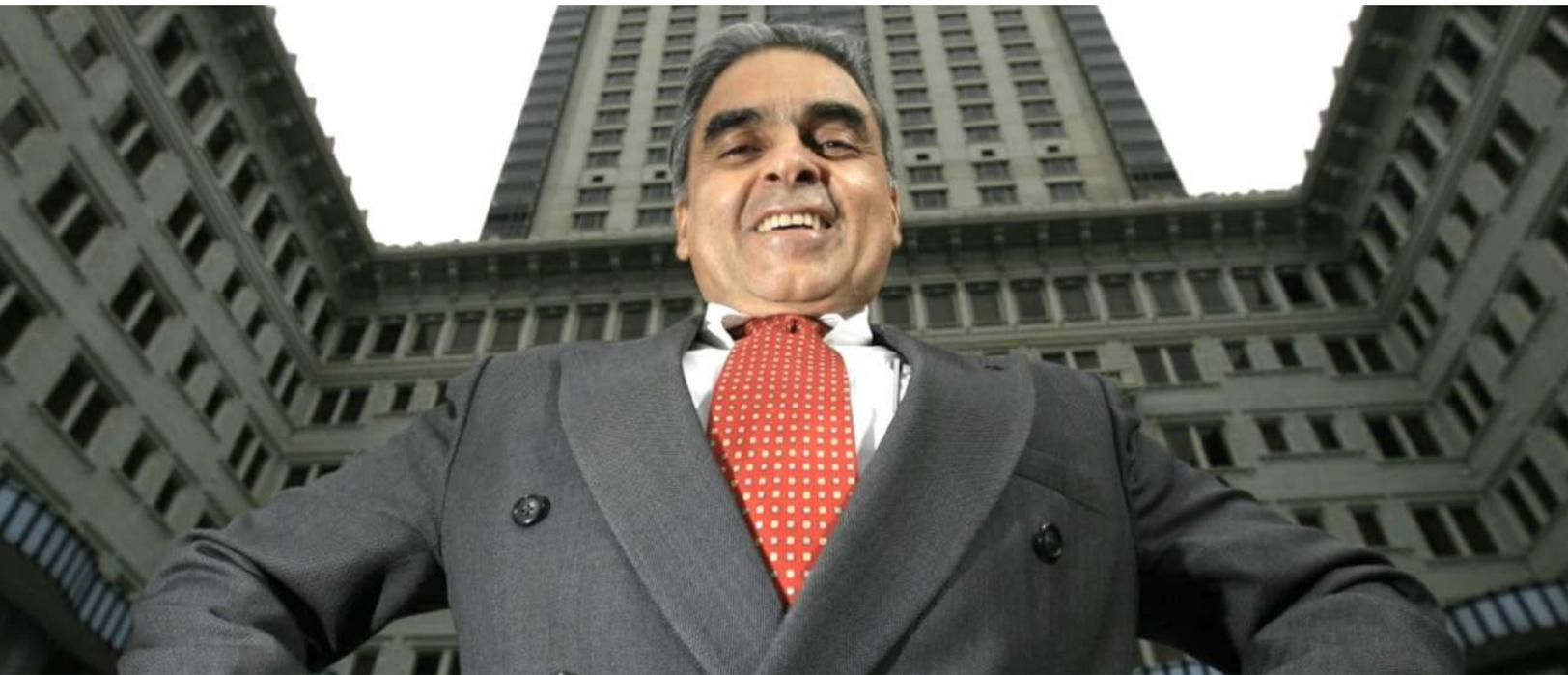
I reflected on the profound impact the symposium had on me. It reaffirmed my belief in the power of one person to make a difference in the world, given knowledge, passion, and determination. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the opportunity life had presented me and was inspired to seize every chance that came my way.

Most importantly, the symposium transformed my dream of working for an international organisation like the United Nations from a distant aspiration into a tangible goal. It opened new possibilities I had never considered, igniting a fire within me to pursue a path of leadership and positive change.

The University Scholars Leadership Symposium was a turning point in my academic journey. It taught me that the world is full of opportunities waiting for those willing to take action. As I continue my studies and strive to make a positive impact, I carry the lessons and inspiration from this experience, reminding me that I can be a force for change in our complex and interconnected world.

Charlie Maher
University of Technology Sydney

LEADERS. THINKERS. DOERS.



Professor Kishore Mahbubani

Political Scientist and former President of the United Nations Security Council

One of Asia's most respected public intellectuals and diplomatic voices, Professor Kishore Mahbubani is a distinguished scholar, seasoned diplomat, and globally sought-after speaker. Born in Singapore to humble beginnings, he rose through dedication and academic excellence to become one of the most influential thinkers on geopolitics and global governance, guided by a deep belief in pragmatism, multilateralism, and the rise of Asia.

Driven by a commitment to bridge East and West, Professor Mahbubani transformed decades of diplomatic experience into powerful insights on international relations and the shifting world order. He served as Singapore's Ambassador to the United Nations and later as President of the UN Security Council, before contributing to academia as Founding Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

Through his lectures, bestselling books, and global engagements, Professor Mahbubani challenges conventional thinking, inspires strategic foresight, and encourages nations and leaders to embrace dialogue, cooperation, and a more inclusive global future.



Brad Ludden Founder First Descents

Brad Ludden is not only a world-class kayaker but also a visionary changemaker. He began kayaking internationally at the age of twelve, exploring rivers across more than forty countries, and quickly realised that his passion could inspire and empower others. At twelve, Brad learned that his aunt had been diagnosed with cancer, and he soon witnessed his mother's volunteer work at a paediatric oncology camp. That summer, he volunteered himself, teaching kayaking to young campers and discovered a powerful way to blend adventure with purpose.

Inspired to make a lasting difference, Brad founded First Descents in 1999 and officially launched the organisation in 2001. Today, First Descents offers life-changing outdoor experiences for young adults affected by cancer, turning challenges into opportunities for growth, courage, and connection. Through Brad's leadership, kayaking has become more than a sport - it is a vessel for healing, hope, and transformation.



Ron Davis Álvarez Founder Dream Orchestra

Alvarez grew up in the favelas of Caracas, Venezuela, where poverty and violence were a daily reality. As a child, he sold ice cream with his grandmother to help his family. Across the street, he noticed children carrying instruments into a local chapter of El Sistema, the world-renowned program that brings classical music education to under-resourced youth. Drawn by the sound, Alvarez joined and discovered music's extraordinary power to inspire, connect, and transform lives.

Years later, in Stockholm, he witnessed thousands of refugees arriving, lost and overwhelmed. Moved by their struggle, Alvarez founded the Dream Orchestra in Gothenburg with just 13 students, all from different backgrounds and without prior musical training. Through music, they discovered friendship, confidence, and hope.

Today, the Dream Orchestra has grown to over 300 members from more than 25 nationalities, including immigrants, refugees, and native Swedes. Alvarez's vision is simple yet profound: music unites, heals, and ignites the human spirit - an idea reflected in every note the orchestra plays.



Francis Kong
Motivational Speaker
Author and Personal Coach

One of the most respected business speakers in the country, Francis Kong is an award-winning and celebrated columnist, business consultant, and personal coach. Growing up in modest circumstances, he learned early the power of perseverance, integrity, and faith - lessons that shaped his journey and fueled his passion to empower others.

Driven by a desire to make a difference, Francis turned storytelling and practical wisdom into a platform for transformation. Over decades, he has spoken to thousands of audiences across the Philippines and beyond, helping individuals and organisations overcome obstacles, unlock potential, and achieve their dreams.

Through his talks, books, and mentorship, Francis ignites confidence, resilience, and purpose, guiding people to embrace change, pursue success with passion, and live their fullest potential.



Jin Dawood Founder Peace Therapist

Jin Dawood is a refugee, survivor, and changemaker. In 2013, growing up in Raqqa, Syria, a bomb exploded just 200 meters from her home, forcing her family to flee to Turkey within minutes. Displaced, traumatised, and facing severe mental health challenges, Jin experienced firsthand the urgent need for timely, compassionate psychological support - a service she wished she had during those darkest days.

Determined to turn her struggles into purpose, she studied computer engineering and joined Re:Coded's inaugural bootcamp in 2018. There, she gained the skills and confidence to create Peace Therapist, a platform connecting refugees, displaced individuals, and others in need with professional psychologists. Through her work, Jin empowers countless people to reclaim hope, healing, and control over their lives.



Estefanía Rebellón
Founder
Yes We Can World Foundation

Estefanía Rebellón is an activist and filmmaker passionate about amplifying migrant voices and transforming lives through education. Her mission is deeply personal—at just 10 years old, she and her family fled to the U.S. as asylum seekers. This experience ignited her lifelong dedication to supporting displaced children.

Determined to create change, she founded the Yes We Can World Foundation, establishing mobile schools that provide education, safety, and hope for migrant children along the U.S.-Mexico border. Each child she teaches reflects her own journey, inspiring her commitment to nurture and empower them.

Since 2019, her nonprofit has opened three schools in critical border cities, serving over 300 children. Through education, Rebellón transforms displacement into opportunity, helping every child dream, learn, and build a brighter future.



Nelly Cheboi
Founder
TechLit Africa

Nelly Cheboi, awarded the 2022 CNN Hero of the Year, left a lucrative software engineering career in Chicago in 2019 to transform education for schoolchildren in Kenya. Growing up in poverty, she experienced firsthand the challenges of limited resources. A full scholarship to Augustana College in the U.S. changed her path, but arriving without computer skills, Nelly was determined to learn. Mastering coding and digital literacy, she gained the tools to empower others.

While working in the tech industry, she noticed companies discarding valuable computers. In 2018, she began personally transporting donated devices to Kenya. A year later, she co-founded TechLit Africa, a nonprofit providing coding, graphic design, and digital skills to young learners—proving that access to technology can unlock opportunity, hope, and a brighter future.



Felipe Queipo
Communications Officer
UN Department of Global Communications

Felipe Queipo is a Programme Management and Communications Officer at the UN Department of Global Communications, dedicated to empowering youth and driving global change. His work is rooted in a commitment to advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and championing young leaders as vital agents of transformation.

A skilled communicator and strategist, Felipe emphasises the power of education, diplomacy, and collaboration in shaping a sustainable future. He inspires youth to take bold action, dismantle barriers, and hold leaders accountable for responsible resource management.

Believing that the next generation's energy, creativity, and passion are essential for a better world, Felipe encourages young people to embrace their roles as global citizens, turn the SDGs into tangible impact, and lead the change the world urgently needs.



UN WORKSHOPS FOR CHANGEMAKERS

Dream, Learn, Lead

Embark on an epic journey with UN superheroes through four mind-blowing workshops that promise to spark brilliance, ignite ideas, and set the stage for a dance with inspiration. These aren't your ordinary workshops; they are secret passages to unleashing the potential within every young mind, turning them into global changemakers. Imagine the curtain lifting on the world's most significant challenges, and in that moment, young minds collide with creativity, passion, and the power to make a difference. These workshops aren't just about gaining knowledge and fostering minds that will lead us to a cooler, more balanced world. Get ready to walk away not just informed but armed with the superhero skills needed to make our world truly awesome.



UN GLOBAL SOLUTIONS SHOWCASE

Elevate. Inspire. Transform

The United Nations Exhibition goes beyond being a mere display of knowledge; it stands as a testament to the boundless power of inspiration and an unwavering dedication to a better world. In the face of unprecedented challenges, the United Nations emerges as a beacon of hope and change, presenting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a roadmap to a brighter future. Yet, these goals require champions, and who are better than today's young and dynamic leaders – YOU?

Humanitarian Affairs Asia recognises this imperative and orchestrates a symphony of purpose at the USLS 2026. Selected UN agencies with remarkable stories of change and progress converge to showcase groundbreaking work and, more importantly, to ignite inspiration among the delegates.

The United Nations Exhibition is not just an event; it's an invitation for delegates to embark on a transformative journey. It's an opportunity to delve into the ocean of global challenges, emerging stronger, armed with knowledge, and motivated to become architects of a brighter, more sustainable future.



KINDNESS DAY

Leave No One Behind

Kindness Day at the University Scholars Leadership Symposium wasn't just an event — it was a feeling. A moment that lingered. A shared pulse of empathy, courage, and hope that reminded everyone why humanity still matters. In that space, kindness wasn't symbolic; it was alive, intentional, and powerful.

This wasn't about big speeches or empty promises. It was about choosing action. About young people stepping forward, believing that even the smallest act can ripple into real change. Every smile, every conversation, every effort carried the same message: youth have the power to care, to lead, and to transform.

More than a gathering, the symposium became a movement — one fuelled by compassion and strengthened by unity. It reached beyond the room, into hearts and minds, igniting purpose where doubt once lived.

Here, youth are not waiting for change. They are becoming it — shaping a future rooted in kindness, courage, and collective hope.



WHERE GLOBAL LEADERS MEET

The USLS will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand. The UNCC is the headquarters of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). As a specialised agency of the United Nations, UNESCAP addresses global challenges and opportunities and promotes a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable development.



WHO CAN BECOME A DELEGATE

We invite all outstanding youth leaders between the ages of 18 to 30 with the following qualities to participate in the University Scholars Leadership Symposium:

Youth Leaders should be able to demonstrate strong leadership potential and demonstrate how they can aspire to learn from others to become better leaders.

Youth Leaders should have an open mind and genuinely appreciate different perspectives and individuals with different backgrounds, interests and ambitions.

Youth Leaders should hold consideration and respect for others and possess an interest in serving society better.



WHAT DOES THE REGISTRATION FEE COVER

The fee of USD 1,500 + 7% VAT (tax) includes:

- 5-night Accommodation on a sharing basis
- Local Transportation during Official Activities
- Meals include 5 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 5 Coffee Breaks
- An Enriching Interactive Experience
- Inspiring Guest Lecturers
- Knowledge-based Plenary Discussions
- A Kindness Day Activities
- One Souvenir T-shirt
- An Electronic Certificate of Participation
- Networking Opportunities