



AZERBAIJAN 2017
41ST WORLD SCOUT
CONFERENCE



DOCUMENT

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Concept Review of the World
Scout Conference and the
World Scout Youth Forum

World Scout Committee



SCOUTS
Creating a Better World

Concept Review of the World Scout Conference and the World Scout Youth Forum

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Languages

The official languages of the World Organization are English and French. The World Scout Bureau will make all Conference Documents available in both languages. When possible, it endeavours to make them available also in Arabic, Russian and Spanish - the three additional working languages of WOSM. In the event of a conflict arising out of the interpretation of this Conference Document or any other official document of the World Organization, the English text shall prevail.

Introduction

The triennial plan 2014-17 states that the World Scout Committee will "Review the concepts of the World Scout Conference and World Scout Youth Forum to ensure both events meet the needs of the Movement"

The format for World Conferences has remained similar for a number of years and good practice indicates that periodical review is necessary to ensure our approach remains relevant to our needs and changes in society. Evaluations from previous conferences mentioned the need of more transparency, more dynamism, better decision-making processes, more meaningful and equal participation, more creativity.

Youth Forums formally became an established part of the consultation and decision making structure of WOSM with the passing of resolution 1993-10 at the World Scout Conference in Bangkok. Since 1996 World Scout Youth Forums have been run in partnership with World Scout Conferences and there has been an increasing link between the two events with reports and resolutions being brought from the Youth Forum to the Conference and Youth Advisers to the World Scout Committee being elected by the Youth Forum.

However, it has always been clear that, as stated in resolution 2005-11 (adopted in Tunisia) the World Scout Youth Forum was "*not the final solution(s) to meet Strategic Priority 1 on Youth Involvement but [is] considered as a transitional tool in order to increase youth participation in World Scouting*". This sentiment was reinforced in Conference resolutions 2011-08 and 2014-09.

Review Process

In undertaking this review the following steps were taken:

- Review of resolutions relating to both events over the last ten years;
- Review of evaluation documents and surveys from both events wherever available;
- Review of circular 17/2013 "Assessing the impact of the World Scout Youth Forum and Youth Adviser system"
- Group discussion with members and Youth Advisers at WSC in September 2015;
- Comprehensive review of Conference approach and links with WSYF by planning team for 2017 Conference;
- Review of these proposals by the planning team for the WSYF in 2017

Summary of the Current Situation

World Scout Conference

Reviews of the **World Scout Conference** indicate that participants are generally satisfied with structure and content of the event. However, within this overall statement there are several areas where it is felt improvements could be made.

There is a general desire for more engagement and interaction around decision making. The plenary sessions were rated as uninspiring and too "one-way". The increase in breakouts and small groups discussions which has been introduced in recent conferences, has been welcomed by participants

There is also a clear desire for more networking and cooperation opportunities between NSOs and for these to be more than region based.

One area which has been identified as needing update and improvement was around decision making, from the presentation of resolutions to their discussion in plenary. Remarks have been made on how the existing process was not cultural sensitive and had the potential to approve unrealistic proposals.

Some of the weaknesses recognised in the current conference model have been overcome in the WSYF which is seen as dynamic, meaningful, relaxed, participative and personally empowering. There is also this general agreement that the Conference participants that were in the World Scout Youth Forum are normally very well informed and prepared to participate in the discussions of the Conference and bring valuable and refreshing inputs. They also contribute significantly to the overall positive atmosphere of the Conference.

World Scout Youth Forum

Reviews of the **World Scout Youth Forum** indicate that the participants feel they gain a great deal from their involvement in the event. Specifically, they report an increase in confidence and skills, better global

understanding and an increased ability to contribute to the World Scout Conference. It is clear that currently the WSYF is meeting the twin aims of providing an effective educational opportunity and helping young people take a more active role in the Conference.

Circular 17/2013 noted the increase in young people attending the Conference. Whilst these increases were noted as relatively small they continued in 2014. Anecdotally the number of the contributions by young people has increased over the past five conferences. Whilst it is not possible to prove empirically, the general view is that moving the WSYF to a date immediately prior to the Conference and the focus of the programme on empowering young people has made a major contribution to this development. Concern has been expressed that without the WSYF immediately prior to the Conference both the participation and contribution of young people will decline. Whilst difficult to prove this is a generally held view.

In terms of the WOSM decision-making process, there is no support for establishing a parallel structure of a youth forum alongside the main World Scout Conference – in other words developing the WSYF into a “mini conference” for young people discussing the same issues but without decision making powers. The focus on training, briefing, empowering and supporting young people to contribute to decisions made at the Conference in partnership with adults both supports our youth involvement policy and models good practice for the rest of Scouting.

Consideration was given as to whether running the WSYF in the same venue and location as the Conference would increase its impact. This was not considered an important factor and, due to the smaller numbers, would add to the cost and logistical issues for the hosts and was therefore discounted.

The future of the World Scout Conference and the World Scout Youth Forum

The Planning Team of the World Scout Conference 2017 recognised some of the weaknesses of the current model (for conferences) and put down a number of proposals to be adopted immediately in order to overcome some of the identified challenges. Some of these includes:

- A new decision-making process that is cultural neutral and enables more responsible, solid and shared decisions. The WSC, and subsequently the NSOs, approved the Rules of Procedure which caters for this new approach
- The introduction of e-voting will help the voting procedures to be more effective and efficient. It is hoped that this will both reduce the time used but also to be less intrusive to the smooth flow of the sessions concerned
- Space in the programme for NSOs to network and form collaborations
- Frequent breakout sessions with mixed international groups (managed, to ensure a spread of cultures and nationalities). These will be used to discuss resolutions (and amendments) or finances (transparency), for example
- Extensive use of digital means as a way of engagement, before and during the Conference (including those not present in the venue)
- Chairs of plenary sessions that are politically neutral, suitably skilled, well-briefed, well-trained and well-scripted
- Active showcasing, both from WOSM and the NSOs
- A solidarity program that only supports youth delegates (participating both in the Conference and the WSYF)
- A strong recommendation to NSOs to include women and young people in their official delegations

These measures (and others) are seen as a start. Further initiatives, and probably more ambitious ones, should be thought for the Conferences in 2020 and 2023 with the aim of turning the event to a more meaningful one, an opportunity for the Organisation to come together, take decisions, celebrates successes, exchanges, and envision the future.

From the youth perspective, there is considerable support for ensuring that the World Scout Conference is a learning experience for the young people who attend. This is in line with our Scout Method which refers to “young people and adults working together”. To achieve this, it is clear they continue to require support and empowering to make a bigger and better contribution to the Conference.

In 2017 the aim is to continue the path of profiling young people in key positions at the conference. The aim is to ensure wherever possible that suitably trained, briefed and supported young people are given high profile roles, such as chairing sessions or giving presentations. However, this must be done in a way which demonstrates genuine involvement and responsibility and is not seen as tokenism. This approach must stay true to the values in our Youth Involvement policy.

Whilst the Youth Forum focus goes beyond preparing young people to contribute to the Conference, it is clear that exploring the issues being addressed by the Conference before arrival has assisted many to take a more active and influential role. This approach should continue in 2017 & 2020. Indeed, the benefits of enabling all participants to consider issues before arrival is being considered by the planning team for 2017 with the aspiration that we can offer on line learning or a webinar before arrival to assist all participants with their preparations.

Since the conference in 2014 an effort has been made to reinforce and demonstrate the links between the WSYF and Conference. The aim has been to see them as "one project" by ensuring that the branding, theme and imagery support the position that the WSYF and Conference are one project with two complimentary parts. Efforts have been made to progress this in 2017 with further developments foreseen in 2020.

To encourage further developments and innovation beyond those in this document it has been proposed that an agenda item at both events in 2017 focusses on how the voice of young people can more effectively contribute to and influence the debates and outcomes from the Conference with a view to implementing further changes and improvements in 2020. For example, considerations might cover the format of the conference programme, the working methods of the conference, how delegations select and brief their members and how young peoples' views might be better heard and acted upon.

It is proposed that after the incremental changes and improvements mentioned above have taken place that the two events are replaced by one event in one location for 2023. Such a move would require careful planning to ensure that the educational benefits of the WSYF are not lost but the review group have considered models that they feel would enhance the quality of both events. For instance, a model which enabled specific (but optional) sessions for young people, within the context of conference sessions for interest groups, mixed with joint sessions for all attendees and with the addition of a robust support structure for the young people attending would bring us the best of both events in a truly integrated model.

If this approach is accepted there would be an impact on how the Youth Advisers to the World Scout Committee are appointed. Further consideration of this issue is required. Some suggestions from the review group include integrating their election with that of the World Scout Committee members during the conference, the young people attending the conference voting for Youth Advisers, whether they are official delegates or not, or (more radically) having reserved places for those under 30 as full members of the Committee. Some of these proposals, if accepted, may require constitutional change in the future and these would be brought forward in due course.

It is perhaps also important to stress that the educational content of the Youth Forum will not be lost. With a more integrated approach at Region and Global level using a wider variety of opportunities to educate and empower young people, the impact of our Youth Involvement policy would be strengthened. Continuing to improve the quality and impact of Regional Youth Forums and youth involvement in regional and global events (namely the youth events such as Jamborees and Moots) as well increasing meaningful and supported youth involvement in all aspects of our work will see the impact continue to improve.

Finally, the issue of the number of young people attending the World Scout Conference requires further consideration. The last four Forums have seen attendance numbers as follows – 150, 200, 169, 160. Most of these young people have gone on to attend the full Conference as either delegates or observers. These numbers mask an uneven representation of countries, with some countries always sending young people – and others never being represented. The very generous solidarity programme for 2017 may encourage an increase in these numbers, as was seen in 2008 (the 200 figure above). However, further work needs to be done to both assist NSOs to understand the benefits of young people attending and participating in the Conference and support those financially unable to send participants. To support this aspiration the solidarity programme for 2017 is open only to those able and eligible to attend both the Youth Forum and Conference. We believe this approach should continue to ensure wide representation of young people and is a matter which will be explored with the potential hosts for 2020.

As a consequence, the World Scout Committee moves the Resolution below for consideration by the 2017 World Scout Conference.

2017-G Inclusive decision making – Developing the World Scout Conference and the World Scout Youth Forum

The Conference,

- reaffirming its commitment to inclusive decision-making at all levels of WOSM,
 - reaffirming its commitment to the World Scout Youth Involvement Policy agreed in Conference Resolution 2014-09,
 - noting Conference Resolutions 1999-11, 2005-11 and 2008-15 which confirmed the transitional and interim nature of the World Scout Youth Forum in the decision-making processes of WOSM,
 - noting Conference Resolutions 1990-24, 1993-24 and 2005-12 which called for more inclusive methods to be used at World Scout Conferences,
 - welcomes the “concept review”, Conference Document 10, of the World Scout Conference and World Scout Youth Forum undertaken in the last triennium,
 - welcomes the progress that has been made to ensure inclusivity in decision making processes at this Conference,
- requests the World Scout Committee to continue to innovate and progress further changes to working methods to ensure increasing inclusivity and effectiveness of decision-making at the World Scout Conferences and in other WOSM bodies;
 - urges the World Scout Committee to investigate and introduce further innovations in the structure of the World Scout Conference programme which support the values of transparency, inclusivity, and sharing of good practices;
 - calls upon the World Scout Committee to introduce further developments for the World Scout Conference in 2020 to ensure that young people are fully engaged in the decision-making process with the aim of merging the World Scout Conference and World Scout Youth Forum into a new event in 2023;
 - calls upon the organisers of future World Scout Conferences to focus any solidarity programme on the attendance of young people under the age of 30 years.

Proposed by: The World Scout Committee

Annex 1 – Concept Review Diagram

