

PRESS RELEASE

J8 Summit ends officially: Young delegates pay courtesy call at South African Embassy and continue work on Action Plans

27 June, 2009... Following the official closing ceremony at Rome City Hall and a tour and viewing of ancient artefacts and statuary at the Museum of Rome, the four young South African delegates to the J8 Summit were today received at the South African Embassy by Samuel Mashita, Chief of Staff to the Minister of International Cooperation along with Embassy officials.

The young people, Refilwe Tsumane and Richmond Sajini of the Northern Cape, Aletta Dhlamini of the Free State and Yumna Jackson of the Western Cape described their exciting yet intense experiences, frustrations and triumphs over the past five days of discussions at the Junior 8 Summit or J8, a youth summit which runs parallel to the annual G8 meeting of global leaders.

These discussions culminated in the drafting of a Declaration calling for action on some of the world's biggest challenges, climate change, quality education, development in Africa and the global financial crisis. It was presented by a delegation of 14 young people from G8 and non-G8 countries to the leaders of the G8 nations at their meeting in historic L'Aquila, yesterday.

Richmond Sajini who was selected by the child delegation to represent them at L'Aquila recalled, "We were happy to work together to come up with this Declaration. I met President Zuma and the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation. She was proud and happy to see a South African child there. I also met Mr. Obama and the rest of the G8 leaders."

"Even though we did not go to L'Aquila to present the Declaration, the ideas that we, the South African children contributed, were part of that Declaration. It was also good to discuss an issue like poverty which affects so many children in our own country and in the rest of Africa," said Refilwe Tsumane.

The young people also spoke about their participation in various working groups during the parallel youth summit namely, the evaluation and follow-up group, the drafting group, the media group and cultural group.

Yumna Jackson, who sat on the drafting panel, told embassy officials that it was a great pleasure to take on the task of putting together the day's discussions as a single idea. "It was also sometimes a very tough job because of negotiating just a single paragraph. However, I appreciated the friendliness and cooperation of the teams and learned a lot in the process."

Responding to the presentations, Mr. Mashita described some aspects and modalities of the work on the Embassy's agenda which included some issues that take a long time to resolve.

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“You will learn to make compromises as you grow up,” he said, congratulating the group for the work they had done on behalf of South African young people. He also encouraged them to consider becoming public servants. “I hope that one day one of you will become Chief of Staff.”

Planning for the next J8 youth Summit

Tonight, the young people will present a cultural programme and on Saturday, they will resume talks and forward planning on their Action plans to be implemented in their own communities. They will also be brainstorming on the next J8 meeting to be held in Canada, next year.

The ‘J8’ is an annual event where young people from around the world meet to share their concerns and propose solutions on how to solve the world’s big challenges with G8 leaders and the world. The South African delegates joined teams of young people from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Russia, as well as participants from eight non-G8 countries, Brazil, China, Egypt, India and Mexico to discuss the same topics that global leaders discussed during their gathering.

This year’s topics included: poverty in Africa, climate change and the global financial crisis. The young people also added education to the list which aims to amplify the message to world leaders that children from all over the world are equally affected by G8 decisions.

Ends.

**To make arrangements for interviews upon the children’s return please contact Kate Pawelczyk:
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