

A brief history of International Student/Young Pugwash

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Tracing back its origins to when national Student/Young Pugwash groups first began to form in the United States of America and Canada in the late 1970s, International Student/Young Pugwash (ISYP) has since evolved into a global network of young people involved in issues associated to the use of science and technology. Inspired by the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, ISYP, with its own goals and agenda, is centered on the interplay that lies at the crossroad of science, technology, and world affairs. ISYP not only helps to introduce the younger generation to the principles and objectives of the Pugwash Conferences, but also provides a plural forum for students and young professionals to critically examine and explore the motivations for scientific advancements and the corollaries of technology on the everyday lives of people. Within this context, this article aims to provide a brief overview of the historical development of ISYP.

The escalating Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War dashed initial hopes for the second half of the 20th century. As the shadow of the superpowers' rivalry unfurled, scientists made several efforts to focus world attention on the critical necessity for new approaches to international security in the nuclear age. According to one observer, 'scientists feared that national leaders and the public little understood the implications of the new and devastating hydrogen bombs' [1].

One of these efforts took place on 9 July 1955, when the British philosopher Bertrand Russell issued a statement to a gathering of international reporters in London. The statement, written by Russell and ultimately signed by 11 eminent scientists (including Albert Einstein, Max Born, Percy Bridgman, Leopold Infeld, Frederic Joliot-Curie, Herman Muller, Linus Pauling, Cecil Powell, Joseph Rotblat, and Hideki Yukawa), was a grave warning about the dire consequences of war in the nuclear age and called upon scientists of all political persuasions to assemble to discuss the threat posed to civilisation by the advent of thermonuclear weapons. Later termed the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, the statement directly resulted in a meeting of scientists hosted in 1957 by the American philanthropist Cyrus Eaton in his birthplace, the town of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada.

The meeting in turn gave birth to the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, taking as its mission 'to bring scientific insight and reason to bear on threats to human

security arising from science and technology in general, and above all from the catastrophic threat posed to humanity by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction' [2]. Consequently, in bringing together, from around the world, influential scholars and public figures concerned with reducing the danger of armed conflict and seeking co-operative solutions for global problems, the Pugwash Conferences provides a forum where participants,

meeting in private as individuals, rather than as representatives of governments or institutions, exchange views and explore alternative approaches to arms control and tension reduction with a combination of candour, continuity, and flexibility that are seldom attained in official East-West and North-South discussions and negotiations. Yet, because of the stature of many of the Pugwash participants in their own countries (as, for example, science and arms-control advisers to governments, key figures in academies of science and universities, and former and future holders of high government office), insights from Pugwash discussions tend to penetrate quickly to the appropriate levels of official policy-making [3]

Since that first meeting, the Pugwash Conferences quickly evolved into a transnational organisation with more than 300 conferences, symposia and workshops that have been held to date. The unique and innovative character of Pugwash has enabled the organisation to have 'a profound effect on the ways individuals and non-governmental actors promote arms control and disarmament' [1] – an important role in recognition of which the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize was jointly awarded to Pugwash and Sir Joseph Rotblat, one of its key figures, 'for their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international affairs and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms'.

However, as has been pointed out, the Pugwash Conferences were not just a forum for senior scientists and decision makers [4]. Within the informal environment of Pugwash meetings, the children and spouses of Pugwashites inevitably attended these events as accompanying persons. Having derived an interest from the discussions that were taking place, many were stimulated to introduce the principles and objectives of the Pugwash Conferences to a younger generation. The first step towards formal student/young participation in the Pugwash Conferences occurred in 1970 when a small group of students were invited to attend the twentieth Pugwash Conference held in the United States [5]. Since then, students were regularly invited to attend the annual conferences.

Although student/young participation in Pugwash events was generally welcomed, persuading Pugwash to allow the formation of formal Student/Young Pugwash groups was a different matter altogether. The reservations of 'senior' Pugwashites in this context mainly revolved around the desirability and feasibility of formal Student/Young Pugwash groups, and, if such groups were indeed allowed to be formed, what the exact nature of the relationship between these groups and Pugwash would be. The then Secretary-General of the Pugwash Conferences, Dr. Martin Kaplan, played an invaluable role in the process that led to the eventual decision to allow the formation of Student/Young Pugwash groups. Consequently, a group was established in 1979 when Jeff Leifer and some of his fellow students at the University of California in San Diego founded International Student Pugwash (renamed Student Pugwash USA, or SPUSA, in the early 1980s). In the same year, a Student Pugwash group was also launched in Canada. Since then, Student/Young Pugwash groups have been formed in over 30

countries around the world, in many cases with the direct involvement of Pugwash members. As time would prove, the successful development of Student/Young Pugwash activities required a symbiotic association with the ‘senior’ Pugwash community, developing an intergenerational exchange of ideas and projects.

Organising conferences for students and young professionals has been one of the most important activities of Student/Young Pugwash [6]. The first Student/Young Pugwash conference was organised in the Netherlands in 1988, followed by similar conferences in St. Petersburg, Russia (September 1990) and Pugwash, Nova Scotia, Canada (August 1992). In 1997 a Student/Young Pugwash conference was held in Lillehammer, Norway, prior to the annual Pugwash conference and thus initiated a tradition that has continued until today. To date, Student/Young Pugwash conferences have been held prior to the annual Pugwash Conferences in Metepec/Jurica, Mexico (1998), Rustenburg, South Africa (1999), Cambridge, UK (2000), Agra, India (2002), La Jolla, US (2002) Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (2003), Seoul, South Korea (2004), and Hiroshima, Japan (2005). In nearly all of these cases, the Student/Young Pugwash Conferences were organised by the local national Student/Young Pugwash groups with the help and support of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and the national Pugwash group in that country.

In addition, two student Pugwash groups have held meetings which were associated to non-Pugwash events. In 2000 the Swedish Student/Young Pugwash group organised a student conference preceding the International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility (INES) Conference ‘*Challenges for Science and Engineering in the 21st Century*’, while in 2001 the Danish Student/Young Pugwash Group convened a student conference prior to the Gender and Science Aand Technology (GASAT) conference ‘*World Wise Wisdom – socially responsible and gender inclusive Science and Technology*’. Student Pugwash USA, the Swiss, British and To-goese Student/Young Pugwash groups have also organised self-standing national and international conferences. Student Pugwash USA international conferences, held roughly every two years throughout the 1980s and 1990s, played an important role in fostering international communication prior to the establishment of regular ISYP conferences.

During the Student/Young Pugwash Conference in Rustenburg, South Africa (1999), representatives from various national Student/Young Pugwash groups formally endorsed a proposal to establish an international Student/Young Pugwash organisation to improve, expand and coordinate the activities of national groups. An Advisory Committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of such an organisation, to be named International Student/Young Pugwash. The members of the committee were Paul Guinnessy (UK, chair), Hugo Estrella (Argentina) and Sandra Ionno Butcher (Student Pugwash USA), while Jeffrey Boutwell from the Pugwash Conferences participated in an advisory capacity. Having received financial assistance from the Norwegian Government (through the efforts from the Norwegian Student/Young Pugwash group) and Pugwash, the Committee invited applications for the position of an interim international coordinator for a six-month period from February to July 2000. Following Estrella’s resignation from the Committee and subsequent appointment to the position of international coordinator, Tannia Falconer (Mexico) joined the Committee.

At the Student/Young Pugwash Conference in Cambridge in July 2000, it was decided that a formally elected Interim Committee should replace the ad hoc Advisory Committee. During the election subsequently held in September 2000, the following persons were elected: Tom Børsen Hansen (Europe, Denmark, chair), Gina van Schalkwyk (Africa, South Africa),

Hugo Estrella (Latin America, Argentina), Jin Xie (Asia, China), Susan Veres (North America and Australia, US), Carsten Rohr (UK), and Lise Østby (Norway). In addition, Sir Joseph Rotblat, President Emeritus of Pugwash, served on the Committee as non-voting advisory member and liaison with the Pugwash Council. The Committee structured its activities in the process towards the establishment of ISYP around three focal areas, namely

- legal aspects (research and establishment of the legal structure of ISYP; drafting election procedures for the election of a Board; holding elections for the Board; and preparing ISYP nomination procedures for Pugwash Annual Conferences);
- fundraising (conducting fundraising; the writing of proposals in consultation with the national Pugwash and/or Student Pugwash groups where appropriate; and writing a budget for ISYP); and
- setting up an ISYP office (designing office structures; establishing first 6-month work plan; researching the best option for office space, and deciding upon its establishment; researching and writing a job remit for the ISYP Executive Director; maintaining contact, distributing information, and gaining input from national groups).

One of the most important results of the work of the Interim Committee was the formulation of the statutes of ISYP as the framework for the functioning of the organisation and its democratic approval by the national Student/Young Pugwash groups. A legal expert from the Netherlands, Guido den Dekker, assisted the Committee in this task. The proposed statutes formalised ISYP as an umbrella organisation of national Student/Young Pugwash groups, consisting of three organs: the General Assembly, the Board, and the Secretariat. All national groups are members of the General Assembly, which is the highest authority of ISYP. The General Assembly elects a Board of seven voting members plus one non-voting representative from the Pugwash Council. Between the meetings in the General Assembly the Board is responsible for ISYP and its activities. The Board can – when sufficient funding is raised – set up a Secretariat, although this has not materialised to date. Following the democratic approval of ISYP by the national Student/Young Pugwash groups, it then formally came into being in September 2001 with the ISYP Board replacing the Interim Committee. The new Board consisted of Tom Børsen Hansen (Europe, Denmark), Gina van Schalkwyk (Africa, South Africa), Alberto Salazar (Latin America, Mexico), Joe Wemin (Asia, Papua New Guinea), Clayton Nall (North America and Australia, US), Hugo Estrella (Argentina, chair), and Magdalena Kropiwnicka (Italy). During the two-year term of the Board, van Schalkwyk, Salazar and Wemin were replaced by Youssouf Salami (Togo), Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra (Mexico) and Nagappan Parasuraman (India), respectively. Sir Joseph Rotblat remained as non-voting advisory member and liaison with Pugwash.

Sir Joseph Rotblat's contribution to the formation of ISYP should be highlighted for it was one of the stabilising elements that allowed the organisation to evolve without great discontinuities. Over the years, Sir Joseph became a crucial supporter of the Student/Young Pugwash community, endorsing many of its projects, and actively participation in several activities and projects. To a certain extent, such participation was founded in Sir Joseph's desire to make of Student/Young Pugwash a voice that could reach other young people and communicate the dangers posed by the nuclear peril and other challenges posed by advancing science and technology.

The newly established ISYP embarked on a range of activities under the leadership of the Board. A new website (www.student-pugwash.org) was designed where information can be shared and stored, announcements made, discussions conducted, relevant documents and links published and contact information for national groups provided. In addition, an electronic newsletter, edited by Gina van Schalkwyk, was sent out on a regular basis. The ISYP Board has also been greatly involved in the organisation of the Student/Young Pugwash Conferences (now known as the ISYP Conferences since the Conference held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada in 2003).

Following the elections in October 2003, Pardo-Guerra took over from Estrella as ISYP chair, while Arthur Petersen (The Netherlands), Pablo Suarez (North America and Australia, US), and Moira Goodfellow (Canada) joined the Board, and Borsen-Hansen, Nall, and Wemin left. The new Board continued to expand the activities of ISYP, giving particular attention to the issues of fundraising and organising the Second ISYP Conference in Seoul, South Korea in October 2004. A series of bylaws was also passed to clarify certain aspects regarding the ISYP statutes. After the elections held in 2004, Rian Leith (Africa, South Africa) and Benjamin Rusek (North America and Australia, United States) joined the Board in the place of Salami and Suarez, respectively.

During the 2004/2005 period, ISYP has made great advances in strengthening and expanding the organisation. In *lieu* of the discontinued electronic newsletter, ISYP has created a general e-mail list and has started to publish an academic, peer reviewed biannual journal, entitled the *ISYP Journal on Science and World Affairs*. Edited by Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra, Arthur Petersen and the other members of the Editorial Board, and supported by an Advisory Board formed by eminent 'senior' Pugwashites, the first two issues of the ISYP Journal were published on the Internet. However, following a generous donation by the Dutch Government, these issues have been reedited and compiled in the form of a yearbook. Further projects have also sought to expand the audience of ISYP and generate an exchange of knowledge between different, often complementing, generations. In particular, since 2003 ISYP organises a symposium prior to the Pugwash Conference in which a panel of important scholars can transmit their points of view to a younger generation. During the ISYP Conference in Seoul in 2004, these regular symposiums were renamed as 'ISYP Sir Joseph Rotblat Symposium on Science and World Affairs' as a modest way to honour Sir Joseph, who at this conference retired from his duty as liaison with the Pugwash Council. His position was taken up by Jeffrey Boutwell.

Furthermore, the activities of ISYP have increased in prominence with time: for instance, the Third ISYP Conference, held in Hiroshima, Japan in July 2005 received wide publicity in the Japanese media. As of October 2005, Irna van der Molen (Europe, The Netherlands), Jessy Cowan-Sharp (Canada) and Wakana Mukai (Japan) have replaced Kropiwnicka, Petersen and Goodfellow, respectively.

ISYP has come a long way since the first Student/Young Pugwash groups were formed more than 26 years ago. In its relatively short history, much has been achieved, but much also remains to be done. As stated in *Mission Possible*, a statement issued by the ISYP during the Third ISYP Conference in Japan, ISYP remains committed to the spirit and ideals of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto in meeting the challenges that lie ahead. Within the context of a rapidly

globalising world, the warning expressed by the Russell-Einstein Manifesto remains as relevant as ever:

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.

Engaging a new generation for peace is imperative.

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Notes

1. Sandra Ionno Butcher, *The Origins of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto*, Pugwash History Series, No 1 (May 2005), p. 5.
 2. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, Mission Statement. (<http://www.pugwash.org/about/mission.htm>).
 3. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, About Pugwash. (<http://www.pugwash.org/about.htm>).
 4. Hugo Estrella, *A brief history of ISYP*, unpublished article (2004).
 5. Sandra Ionno Butcher, e-mail correspondence with the author (10 June 2005). Although some students attended Pugwash events as accompanying persons prior to this Conference, as has been noted, this is the first time that student participants were formally listed.
 6. The following discussion largely draws upon Tom Børsen-Hansen, *International Student/Young Pugwash – the story so far*, unpublished article (2002).
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