Strategic Engagement

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Anna Gumenyuk and Theodor Himmel



Interviewer: Theodor Himmel

Interviewee: Anna Gumenyuk

Theodor Himmel: Thank you for joining us, Anna. To start off, could you tell us a bit about who you are, what you do, and what your mission is?

Anna Gumenyuk: Thank you so much. My name is Anna, and I have lived in Switzerland for about seven years. I've always been fascinated by international relations and how organizations like the UN operate beyond just their main offices. Last year, in 2025, I served as a youth delegate to UNCTAD 16, where we worked on the Youth Declaration. Currently, I am an intern in communications and partnerships at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focusing on recovery, risk reduction, and

development. I also coordinate the UNDP Student Ambassadors Program in Switzerland, acting as a focal point for students at the Graduate Institute and the University of Geneva. My mission is to identify the "missing pieces" in current global discussions and find ways for young people to contribute and bridge those gaps.

Theodor Himmel: You mentioned your educational background is in management, but you also have experience in education. Why did you start with that path, and did you originally intend to be a teacher?

Anna Gumenyuk: I believe education is the foundation for everything. While I am a manager by education and prefer to grow in that professional direction, I did have a teaching experience at 19. I taught conflict resolution at a business school in the Czech Republic to students from three different continents. That experience taught me how exchanging different perspectives and cultures helps expand horizons and makes one more aware of the world.

Theodor Himmel: Many of our students are interested in working for international organizations. Can you sketch the path of how you actually became a youth delegate?

Anna Gumenyuk: It isn't a direct pipeline where a resume just gets picked up. It's about "showing up" and being prepared for rejection. The selection is incredibly tight—the year I went, there were 6,000 applicants for only 100 spots. You need to give 100% to your application, but you also shouldn't take rejection personally. It's often about whether your specific platform or message is the right fit for that specific mission at that specific time. Also, while speaking multiple languages is a minimum requirement, you need more than just conversational skills; you need to be able to lead professional discussions in them.

Theodor Himmel: Beyond language skills, what other talents do successful candidates usually bring to the table?

Anna Gumenyuk: There isn't just one single talent that guarantees success. I've met peers who have given TED Talks, others who produce high-quality video materials for NGOs, and many who are incredible public speakers. Public speaking is often out of people's comfort zones, but the ability to open up and not let fear control the delivery of a message is a vital skill. Being a strong writer and having the ability to lead a conversation effectively are also key traits I have noticed.

Theodor Himmel: You are quite active on social media, specifically vlogging about your daily life and mission in Geneva. What made you start that journey?

Anna Gumenyuk: I wanted to create a space that was useful for others. I like to think of my blog as an "opportunities thrift store." I share scholarships, Master's programs, and Erasmus projects I've participated in because I know they are high quality and can benefit someone else. It's not about me; it's about sharing opportunities that allow other people to enjoy and join these international experiences.

Theodor Himmel: Since we are opening the floor, I'll take a question from Alicia. She asks: what are your main takeaways from your time as a delegate?

Anna Gumenyuk: The biggest takeaway is personality growth. It makes you realize that while you are representing your home, you are part of a much larger community of passionate, intelligent people. It's an opportunity to understand that the "whole world isn't watching you" in a spotlight sense; rather, it's a chance for you to connect and work toward common goals, like creating a youth declaration.

Theodor Himmel: Anna-Maria is curious if there were specific milestones or programs that helped you stand out during your application process?

Anna Gumenyuk: Honestly, I don't know exactly what made me stand out, but I believe it's about having a strong sense of self. You don't need to hunt for life-changing experiences because every life situation is a chance to grow. Strategically, you should study the core goals of the program you are applying for and align your passion with their mission. Don't just bombard them with a list of every project you've ever done; package your experiences in a way that relates to the core topic of the application.

Theodor Himmel: Finally, Youssef asks about the effectiveness of the UN and what someone should do if they want to have a real-world influence beyond just joining the organization.

Anna Gumenyuk: The UN is not a single organization; it has many different platforms like the Youth Advisory Boards or the "Youth for Climate" project at UNDP. If you want to have an impact, you must pick a specific field—whether it's food security or climate change—and narrow your focus. Don't do it just because you want a "blue badge" to post on social media. Engage because you want to learn and grow within that field. Access to bigger opportunities and the badge itself will come as a byproduct of that genuine engagement. My advice is to stay open-minded and explore until you find that core focus.

Theodor Himmel: Thank you very much, Anna. This has been a great first step for our new youth ambassador program.

Anna Gumenyuk: Thank you!