Special blog post by Lauren Bernadett, UCLA School of Law 2L

A striking feature of the 17th Conference of Parties (COP17) is the extensive youth involvement. The International Convention Centre in Durban is constantly abuzz with young interns and volunteers from various delegations, including some delegations exclusively comprised of young people. The youth network is surprisingly extensive, and this presence is not unnoticed by negotiators.

One party delegate from Bangladesh works exclusively to empower youth to engage in international climate change discussions in conjunction with the British Council's international "Climate Generation" project. When the delegate realized Bangladeshi youth's need and demand to recognize its country as particularly vulnerable to climate change, he founded the Bangladesh Youth Movement for Climate. Jonathan Pershing, the U.S. Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change and head U.S. delegate for the first week of the conference, held a meeting particularly to address youth delegates from the United States. During the Q&A after Pershing spoke, many young delegates engaged Pershing with their timely, thoughtful, and difficult questions. Although their inquiries did not shake Pershing (as was hoped), their dedication to working towards successful international climate change negotiations, and recognizing the U.S.'s shortcomings in the matter, was clear.

YOUNGO (Youth Nongovernmental Organizations) represents around 50 youth organizations from different countries. This year, YOUNGO was awarded full constituency status, so its delegates are allowed to speak, or "intervene," in COP meetings and took full advantage of the opportunity. They were scheduled to intervene in five different large meetings during the first week, and Thursday was "Young and Future Generations' Day." In a meeting regarding a carbon market mechanism that provides for the implementation of emission reducing projects in developing countries, a YOUNGO delegate raised various concerns. These concerns included the mechanism's neglect of least developed countries because of its bias towards rapidly emerging economies, the underutilized opportunity for technology transfer, and two projects that were registered despite their contribution to human rights abuses. The youth constituency's intervention received applause from the plenary, a rare occurrence in the large COP meetings.

Many believe that a consensus upon a future legally binding international climate change agreement under the UNFCCC process is unlikely, if not impossible, considering the current financial and political conditions. Whether the youth organizations' optimism is wrongly or rightly placed, it shows a strong will in

individuals worldwide to continue international climate change negotiations with the next generation. Perhaps they will learn from their predecessors and be able to provide for a better outcome in the future.