



Besart Çopa – Albania

My name is Besart Çopa and I am a delegate from Albania. The solution that I will be dealing with is a target actually, its target as SDG 4.b. The target aims at increasing the number and access of scholarships, it is that target over there 4.b, “...To expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed states in Africa etc.” When I first saw this target I was so happy because I’ve been doing this since 10th grade, I have been Scholarship Consulting students in Albania on how to get scholarships to

international boarding high schools, which offer scholarships.

I know that many of you here come from developing countries, like I do, and you know that you don't know about the scholarships, either in high school or university. When I saw this target I was so happy that they put it over there, because you're surprised when you hear that there is no system out there which gives scholarships to students from developing countries deserving students, students who have the academic potential, who have every potential, but they just don't have the information therefore that's how I got the idea of the International Scholarship effort.

A system which incorporates the main Western scholarship offering institutions, so that would necessarily be the US top schools which give, according to US news, they give more than 570,000 dollars per year on scholarships to international students and yet you have international boarding schools in the US and in Switzerland, where I graduated myself on a full scholarship, which don't have representation from every country. So you have, for example, Phillips Andover, it's very famous school in the US and gives over 20 million dollars per year to scholarships. Yet, out of a hundred and ninety six countries they're 45 represented. Then you have bigger scale Academic Institutions like Yale University, where they give something like a hundred twenty million dollars per years in scholarships 12,000 students and yet 51 countries are not represented in their student body. These Universities, these Academic Institutions, they make a yearly effort to get students from developing countries and increased representation, but there is an absence of an international collaboration, SDG 17, to get all these Universities, all these Institutions to cooperate in order to get under represented countries in their institutions to study. The impact of the student from a developing country has when they go to these Universities is going to be huge because developing countries, like Albania, are like tight communities, things go around, like you hear that the son of your neighbour went on an American full scholarship you're going to want to know how you can do the same for your children.

So, to talk in terms of practice, the problem here is that the applications to the US schools or Western institutions in general are exclusive since the moment the application starts. They assume that the applicant is going to have something simple like a College Counsellor. The position of College Counsellor students here from developing countries know that that does not exist. That's not a thing. You should have a teacher who can give you nice recommendations in English, that also does not exist. And, if you go to very poor countries, you assume that you have Internet to know what Common App, to know what UCAS is in the first place. Many students from developing countries do not have Internet or that access to do that individual research. So those are the problems, that applications are exclusive since the first moment that the students try to apply.

How I thought about this in practical terms, how this gap between representation and universities and high schools wanting to get students from developing countries could be closed, is through a collaboration between the UN SDSN, which has to do the mobilisation and has to foster this collaboration, the universities, the main universities which give scholarships and high schools which give scholarships and national governments. If these three different factors collaborate together we can have students go to these schools on scholarships. We can have active recruitment of these students. I was thinking how the International Scholarship Effort can hold a yearly fair where they can think about the main obstacles and how to tackle them and they can also have national fairs in developing countries where they notify students, teachers and families how they can prepare their students for excellent education in Western institutions and how they can prepare for academic rigor in terms of starting very early.

Some of the main problems of this idea, and how I think to tackle them is, well there is the argument that the students will not be able to handle the academic rigor. I went to Madagascar; it is the sixth poorest country in the world, and I met some of the smartest students studying Computer Science and there was a kid, Cedric, that had passed three grades and self taught himself English. So I think that argument just goes away.

Then there is the argument of “brain drain”, that you are getting the smartest people out of these countries and taking them abroad, so how are you going to make them to come back? The reality is that “brain drain” is a thing in Albania and other developing countries, it is still occurring, but if you give them a system, if there is an international organisation which deals with this. You are going to create a network of these people, they are going to know each other and they will cooperate in the future because national governments are going to participate in the initiative so the governments too will know who their most able people are and where they are studying and what they are studying and they can contact them in the future, ideally to have their intellectual leaders come and cooperate in their countries. So that is the International Scholarship Effort idea. Thank you.