

# SAUDI STUDENT AT CHANGEMAKERS IN THE RUNNING FOR WEF SELECTION



An 18-year old Saudi student, Joud Kashgari, is among a group of 60 participants who attended the Guildford forum in the UK in January, 2009 under the Global Changemakers project. He could also be among the six youths to be selected to go on to the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, at the end of January.

Joud represents Saudi Arabia and shares his work with the rest of the candidates from around the world. A political science and economics student at the American University in Cairo (AUC), Joud is involved with the activities of the Model United Nations Environmental Programme. The programme helps raise awareness about environmental issues and launch environment-friendly projects around the Cairo area and the AUC campus. He is also attached to the Student Action for Refugees, which helps teach English and Arabic to mostly Cairo-based refugees.

The Global Changemakers project, which has been introduced to Saudi Arabia by the British Council, aims at enhancing the capacity of future leaders to meet global challenges. It links young community and future influencers from diverse backgrounds around the world in a sustainable global network. The participants are emerging talents, aged 16 to 25, who are committed to positive social change in

their communities.

The British Council received around 30 highly competitive applications from Saudi Arabia. The best three were nominated and their applications were sent to the UK for final selection. Sixty applicants were selected from a total of 160 from all over the world to go to Guildford. Joud was one of them.

The participants coming from different backgrounds and cultures shared their enthusiasm at Guildford and discussed challenging issues such as climate change, education, intercultural conflict and the devastating impact of poverty. Finally, six will be selected to attend the WEF in Davos.

Speaking about the project, Martin Davidson, chief executive of the British Council, said, "Young people around the world are making amazing personal contributions in politics, in climate change, in social activities. We, and the WEF, want to give them an opportunity to challenge the world's leaders on a range of issues. The youth of the world are not passive recipients of education or passive consumers; they want to take responsibility into their own hands. The issues discussed at Davos are global issues that concern them as much as the world leaders."

## What is a Changemaker?

A Changemaker is a young activist operating through a range of national and international networks, who is able to influence his or her community as well as speak to authority with confidence and passion. Changemakers are not afraid to challenge either accepted ways of thinking or their convictions. Changemakers are forward looking, they take their ideas and put them into practice.

A Changemaker accepts difference, is flexible, is able to take on new ideas and skills and will communicate them to others.

Becoming a Changemaker takes longer than one or two weeks: participants have to be prepared to commit to the programme for longer - but in return, the British Council commits to the Changemakers. The engagement may take a number of forms: for instance, taking part in regional or global think tanks, participating in awareness-raising campaigns and developing and

running community projects on their return home. These projects will be supported by the *Global Changemakers* team, by country offices and by partner organisations.

*Global Changemakers* will create and support a large global network of future young activists and social entrepreneurs aged between 16 and 25 and develop them into Changemakers. It builds on the existing *Road to Davos* and *Learning from the Future* projects. The British Council is currently working with the World Economic Forum (WEF) and, based on the success of this collaboration, will work with other international forums such as the UN to ensure that the youth voice is heard and the participants' skills are shaped by the experience.

The aim is to create a powerful global network for action that provides opportunities to share experiences and help young people make practical and visible differences in their communities, countries and regions.