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Decent work and chocolate bars

A schoolgirl from the Czech Republic wins first prize in the UPU's 2009 International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People

A letter to her sister about a chocolate bar and how fair trade can improve working conditions in developing countries: that is how 14 year old Dominika Koflerová of the Czech Republic won the first prize in the 2009 International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People staged by the UPU. "The chocolate I had just been eating was no ordinary chocolate. The Zambian producer who made it received enough money to give him and his family a decent living."

Almost 60 countries and more than 2 million children took part in the competition – the 38th – on the theme: "How decent working conditions can lead to a better life". The theme had been chosen jointly with the International Labour Organization, which launched a wide-ranging campaign on [decent work](#) last year.

"Not only did she take an original approach but Dominika also clearly explained how rich countries can help to improve working conditions by consuming fair-trade goods. Her understanding of the issue came over well in her letter. Whenever we eat a chocolate bar in the future we shall think of the prize winner's letter," said the judges. The five members of the jury represented the UPU, UNESCO and the ILO.

A young girl from Viet Nam, 13-year-old Nguyen Dac Xuan Thao, won the second prize, for a "beautifully structured letter." The jury agreed that "centred on her father's working accident, her composition was a fine example to readers all around the world." To quote her letter: "Unless they can guarantee safety, factories cannot obtain a production permit... This is intended to reduce the number of accidents at the workplace and to help realize the dream of better working conditions for all."

Two contestants tied for third place: Belarus' Alina Beiner – 13 years old – who "wrote an inspired letter, full of warmth, on technical issues such as workers' pay and technology", and Montenegro's Dejan Kovač – 12 years old – who expressed the hope that when he is old enough to work he will be "at one with the world, nature and society, in harmony with my needs... enjoying inner peace". Special commendations went to Alanis Todeschini Marca (11), from Brazil, Sandhya Ramani (13), from India and Aditya Gupta (12), from Aruba.

Talking about AIDS and ways of protecting yourself

The theme chosen for the 2010 competition is: "Write a letter to someone to explain the importance of talking about AIDS and protecting oneself against this disease."

This issue comes under the major awareness-raising project that the UPU has launched this year at post offices in various countries, putting up posters on HIV prevention. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNI Global Union are all cooperating with the UPU in this project.

Further information – aimed mainly at teachers – is available at:
www.upu.int/about_us/en/hiv_prevention_campaign.shtml.



Some facts and figures from the first 38 years of competition:

- Entries from China (People's Rep.) have won the competition four times (1981, 1983, 1994 and 1999).
- Viet Nam has had five prize winners. Each year about 2 million children enter the competition.
- Ethiopia, Jordan, Malta and Mexico have each been home to two top prize-winners.
- Entries from Ireland won the competition two years running in 1986 and 1987 – the only country to do so.

About the Universal Postal Union

The UPU, a United Nations specialized agency based in Berne (Switzerland), is the primary forum for cooperation between Posts. In addition to maintaining a genuinely universal network which offers modern products and services, the UPU lays down the rules for international mail exchanges among its 191 members and makes recommendations aimed at stimulating growth in mail volumes and improving quality of service for customers. Each year, more than five million employees process and deliver 430 billion domestic letter-post items, 6 billion international items and more than 5.4 billion ordinary parcels.

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