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Worldwide Student Movement Heads to United Nations March 26
In Preparation for Heading to Cal Poly This Summer

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- As the White House struggles to democratize Iraq and Afghanistan, they might take a lesson from hundreds of college students around the world who are also strategizing – via the Internet – how to promote democracy.

A computer in Nigeria is giving Eshobode Bello a voice in world affairs he could not have even dreamed of a year ago. Now he is chatting daily with Muhammad Sabbir Al Fattah Khan from Bangladesh, about such heady matters as environmental sustainability and war.

This "rubbing of the minds," as one Nigerian student phrased it, is made possible by the Student World Assembly (SWA), a global network of several hundred "wired" university students that is headquartered at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Cal.

On March 26 at the United Nation headquarters in New York, the SWA will kick off a campaign that will culminate this summer, when delegates arrive in the United States from five continents for their first international convention. (See editor’s note below for details on kickoff event).

The launch of this historic campaign will take place at the speed of light.

"We will actually push the button then to kick off an on-line democratic process, building a non-governmental world assembly to represent people, in much the same way that the United Nations represents governments," explains Paul Raynault, president of the Raynault Foundation, which has provided initial funding for the SWA.

Raynault, a Canadian entrepreneur who has been featured on the cover of Fortune magazine, compares the idea for the SWA to the environmental movement, which "sprang from concerned individuals, not governments, and yet it has changed the world."

Two U. N. groups, the National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union and the Youth Committee
of the Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations (CONGO), are co-sponsoring the March event, along with the Raynault Foundation.

Invited guests include ambassadors to the United Nations, university presidents, international students, acting SWA student officers, professors and advisors.

Currently located at California Polytechnic State University, the SWA was founded last September. Within two weeks, it was flooded with membership applications from students at 28 universities in 22 countries such as China, Costa Rica, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Venezuela.

Raynault expects the network to continue its logarithmic growth, with 25,000 students talking to each other eventually.

For more information on the SWA, go to www.studentworldassembly.org

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Editor’s Note: The kickoff event on March 26 will be held at the Church Center for the United Nations from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Interviews and photo opportunities can be scheduled at other times that day or the preceding week. Call Leah Kolt at (805) 756-1600 to schedule.