



To: IUSY Member Organisations
IUSY Presidium
IUSY Secretariat



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Letter of Motivation of Antonia Verstappen for Candidacy as IUSY Vice-President

Dear friends,

At the upcoming IUSY World Congress in Montenegro, I will stand for re-election as IUSY Vice-President from the Asia-Pacific region. It is a great honour to be nominated again by the New Zealand Young Labour executive.

I have been a IUSY Vice-President since May 2015, after being elected to complete the final 7 months of the previous mandate at Council in Armenia, and then elected to complete a first full mandate at the World Congress in Albania in 2016. During the current mandate, I have been the coordinator for the Asia-Pacific committee, and the feminist coordinator.

My first IUSY experience was attending the 2014 World Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark. That event was my first time leaving the Pacific region and, for a young person from a small agricultural city on the other side of the world, it was quite an adventure! Being a small organisation from a small Pacific nation, having members attend IUSY global events on the other side of the world can be challenging.

Attending that Congress made me think back to when I first joined New Zealand Young Labour, during the 2008 New Zealand election campaign. I was a first-year university student voting in my first election, and I read about this international

organisation we belonged to that was bringing young people that shared the same values, from all over the world, together. IUSY even had a New Zealander - Jacinda Ardern - as its president, and I thought it sounded amazing. So here I was six years later, with Jacinda's cellphone number in my pocket, attending a IUSY World Congress on the other side of the world. Everyone I met at that Congress shared the same values, vision and hope for a better world. In many ways, attending IUSY was like coming home.

It is a dark time for our organisation and our movement, however. The rise of right-wing extremism across the world has seen some of our historically most strong parties and organisations face unprecedented difficulties. In the Asia-Pacific region, there are few examples of where our members are in power, and each day we face further democratic roll-backs. The region faces the challenges of an increasingly powerful China, a more unstable North Korea, and horrific human rights abuses in the Philippines and Burma. With the challenges facing the region, it is hardly surprising that the region struggles to engage with, and grow within, IUSY.

With the Asia-Pacific region being the largest both in terms of physical geography and in population, IUSY cannot afford to continue to overlook the potential of this region. Our region needs solidarity, capacity and support to grow our organisation and overcome these challenges. Part of this is ensuring IUSY is positive and outwards-focussed, campaign-driven and always centring on how we grow our movement and progress forward. There have been some political successes in Asia-Pacific, however, including electing a new Labour government in my own country. I hope to spend the next mandate building and multiplying these successes, and growing the APC into the vibrant and powerful region I know it to be.

IUSY is and must continue to be a driving force for democracy, social justice and human rights around the world. For everything and everyone that seeks to divide us: the distance, the rise of right-wing extremism, the political campaigns and battles for human rights - we are here, we are strong and we continue to fight. I think that is a really special thing.

I hope to have your support and the support of the IUSY World Congress for the position of IUSY Vice-President for the Asia-Pacific region.

In solidarity,

Antonia Verstappen



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Asia-Pacific - A plan for 2018-2020

The Asia-Pacific region faces many challenges. While we are a diverse region with some strong member organisations and strong and organised skills-bases in some areas, our region faces many political difficulties and instabilities. Our member organisations lack finances and resourcing, political representation and, in some cases, the legal protections many of our friends in other regions enjoy. We are also short in numbers, having just two Vice-Presidents to undertake the work such a large, complex and challenging region entails. With these challenges facing our region, it is hardly surprising that APC struggles to engage with, and grow within, IUSY.

We think the APC has an enormous potential to contribute more to the goals of IUSY, and wish to see our region grow to be the vibrant and strong region we both know it to be. We recognise the need for a coordinated and well-thought-through plan to address the challenges of our region, and have outlined the following priorities that we seek to address during the next (2018-2020) mandate of the IUSY Presidium:

Grow the APC region, grow IUSY

Asia-Pacific is a large region, both by geography and population. While we do well to retain an engaged core group of member organisations, there is still an enormous potential for growth. We would like to re-engage members that we haven't seen for some time, as well as seek out new organisations from countries identified by APC committee meetings, including South Korea, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. We plan on using existing members contacts,

as well as other organisations that our members are a part of, to reach out to potential new member organisations from these areas and beyond that we believe would be at home within our IUSY family. The difficult political situations in several parts of the Asia-Pacific make it a ripe region to organise leaders and groups. Reaching out and supporting these activist groups could realise IUSY's vision of influencing change in countries where democracy is still assailed.

Build regional capacity

To fulfil our mission in reactivating and reaching out to more youth groups in the region, we believe there is a real need to increase the knowledge and skills of our members. We would like to work with the leadership and secretariat to apply for grants for APC-specific projects that would allow us the resources to run capacity-building projects in the region. We have had extensive discussions identifying potential partners and funding bodies. These trainings are aimed to capacitate our members ability to launch campaigns, build power in their countries and expand the region's bench of leaders.

Have a long-term campaign focus

One of the most pressing challenges in APC is that of human rights abuses in APC member countries. The Philippines, for example, is somewhere where our member organisation would benefit from support and solidarity from IUSY. A global organization like IUSY could use its resources to support young grassroots movements in countries where it's hard to win campaigns. We see the need for a longer-term project targeting several member countries in APC that will work to develop campaign skills and capacity, particularly in the human rights space, as a key priority and will seek to work with partners and funders to embark on a long-term campaign work-plan. These campaigns would tackle gender equality and feminism, human rights, economic inequality and other issues, building IUSY's engagement and influence in the region.

We hope this plan will provide the IUSY Congress some insight into our region, its challenges and our plans for the 2018-2020 mandate. We hope that the IUSY World Congress will support our candidacies for Vice Presidents of IUSY from Asia-Pacific for the 2018-2020 mandate.

In solidarity,

Antonia Verstappen & Justine Balane