

yoUNg@70

Progressive Schools network on board for YoUNg@70

30 October was a momentous day for the UN Information Centre for India and Bhutan as well as the National Progressive Schools Conference (NPSC), a 40-year-old association of senior secondary schools across the country. At Springdales School, Pusa Road, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two organizations pledging to collaborate over the next one year to organize a number of events to promote the 70th anniversary year of the UN, and the values of internationalism and diversity.

"Working with schools is a natural outcome of our efforts to involve young people in the achievement of the UN's goals," UNIC National Information Officer **Rajiv Chandran** said in his address. "It is also a conscious strategy – through Model UN conferences, UN orientations for students and a number of campaigns and contests, we have sought to 'demystify' the UN for our young audiences."

And educators play "a critical role in this regard", turning young people into informed and curious global citizens, he added. "We are hopeful that our partnership with NPSC will help fulfill the UN's mission of empowering the marginalized and the vulnerable."

The keynote speaker, Member of Parliament **Dr. Shashi Tharoor**



participated in an interactive dialogue with the teachers present on the theme "Why UN Values?" and addressed questions and comments from the audience.

Dr. Tharoor pointed to India's participation in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, the ILO Permanent Membership in 1922, the League of Nations and then the UN as proof of India's longstanding stature in international affairs. "India was a founding member of the UN and a leading voice in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," he added. India also gave a major boost to the world's decolonization efforts, is one of the largest contributors to UN Peacekeeping and has been a longstanding advocate of global cooperation. And "there is a lot more

that India can still do as a member of the global body, on issues such as democracy, development and human rights" Dr. Tharoor said.

Dr. Rajni Kumar, the spirited 91-year-old founder of Springdales School, echoed Dr. Tharoor's vision. "We must engage children's hearts and minds with the values of the UN," she urged. "just as they were in the 1950s with the movement to end apartheid."

Other teachers lauded UNIC's efforts to promote UN values through Model UN conferences and the need to magnify these initiatives.

Dr. Ameeta Wattal, Principal of Springdales School, Pusa Road, and Chairperson of the NPSC, said the members were delighted with the collaboration. The NPSC appreciated the UN's recognition of the profound role of educators in nurturing young people, she said, adding that the schools looked forward to participating in the series of activities planned during the campaign year.

NPSC has 150 leading private schools under its umbrella. Its members work with government institutions such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training, the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, the Indian Institutes of Management and the Indian Institutes of Technology to bring about qualitative changes in education.

