



## WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH

### POSITION PAPER

#### ON THE ECOSOC THEME FOR SUBSTANTIVE SESSION - JULY 2002

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#### ***"The Contribution of Human Resources Development, including areas of health and education, to the process of development"***

Mr. Chairman,  
His Excellency Ivan Simonovic, President of the Economic and Social Council  
Mr. Kofi Anan, UN Secretary General  
Excellencies Heads of States and Heads of Governments  
Excellencies Heads of Delegations to this High-Level Segment  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

#### **1. Introduction**

The World Assembly of Youth conducted regional consultations in Africa, Asia/Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe/North America, Latin America and the Arab region, with the aim of obtaining the views of young people regarding the adopted theme for the Economic and Social Council substantive session of 2002. The regional findings were then consolidated into this Position Paper, which came out of an international consultation held in Kuala Lumpur from February 14-16, 2002.

#### **2. "The Process of Development"**

To be able to identify how youth can contribute to the process of development, it is important to define firstly, the concept of 'development.' In the eyes of young people, the foundation of development is the guaranteed availability of food, clothing and shelter. It is a situation in which the health and safety of a population is a sustainable provision, and where systems are in place to transfer knowledge to future generations. But development, at the same time, is not a static situation. If the basic human needs are met, development implies a progression, a continuous movement towards a better existence. This is why we applaud the use of the word "*process*" in the wording of the theme of this substantive session. Development is not a goal but the act of improving the human condition, and upgrading it continuously through the learning experiences of man. In the same sense, human resource development is not an end, but a continuous process in which mankind advances his capacities and skills to survive and make use of his environment. Against this background we have consulted our various regions for their positions and thoughts of how young people can contribute to this process of development.

#### **3 HRD and Youth**

The world youth population, defined by the United Nations as age 15 to 24 - is estimated to be 1.2 billion, almost 20% of the total world population. The majority of the world youth population, about 85% of youth, lives in developing countries. The development of youth is



a critical element if sustainable development is to occur. Any human resources development policy would not be effective unless it had clear and quantifiable development targets for youth. There is presently a global deficit as far as developmental opportunities for young people are concerned.

Key strategies for development of youth should include:

- 3.1 Enhancing the role of youth organisations in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national and international development plans and programmes;
- 3.2 Provision of access to the means of production, land, credit, technologies and information, to enhance the opportunities and development resources of youth in rural and remote communities;
- 3.3 Promoting bilateral, regional and international cooperation to create an enabling environment at the national and international levels in order to ensure the full participation of young people in economic and social development;
- 3.4 Re-enforcing the value of the family unit as an agent of transition and facilitator of learning and education. The importance of the family needs to be engrained into the minds of young people, especially in times when the pace of business and technology have disintegrated the family unit;
- 3.5 Promoting the equal access to and use of new information technologies by young people, and thus bridging the divide between men and women, rural and urban, North and South;
- 3.6 Alleviating any negative impact of economic sanctions on young people;
- 3.7 Supporting the actions of youth in promoting the principles and practices of sustainable development;
- 3.8 Strengthening policies to combat poverty and provide for the needs of youth young people in terms of safe, healthy and secure living and environmental conditions.

#### **4 The Contribution of Youth to Development**

Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. Their imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuous development of societies in which they live.

As youth are full of potential and energy, they are motivated and imaginative, and have a natural drive for action. Youth are the movers and shapers of the world to come. Let us pause and think about what the world will be like fifty years from now. If you see a world of hope and brightness, where everyone has food, clothing, shelter, education and health - then it is because it is we the youth that are going to make this dream come true. The best way of ensuring that the world of the future can be brighter is to realise the potential of developing young people, and enabling them to contribute to overall human development.

We have all seen that the development goals of the 1990s have not been achieved, and that at the rate that the development is going, the targets set would not be achieved in the required timeframe. There is, however, a solution: to utilise the energy and potential of youth, as catalysts for global development.

Youths are the first to recognise and encounter new needs and gaps in present situations. Always in the forefront, youths give fresh ideas and innovation to present existing systems,



making adaptability and acceptance easier for the population at large. While the veterans may know the skills of the establishment, the young possess the new knowledge, and together with their own imagination and innovation, formulate and create new ways of doing things, thereby improving existing work systems.

## **5 Education for Youth**

Millions of young people worldwide cannot afford to go to school, and in many more cases they have no access to any form of educational establishment. There is also inequitable access to education for young women as compared to young men. And an equally important concern is that education, in instances, is not relevant to the needs of young people.

- 5.1 There is a need to develop educational systems that are in line with contemporary society, and taking into account the future developments that information and communication technologies shall bring forth;
- 5.2 International assistance is required for provision of learning opportunities to deserving youths, who may not have the facilities in the local communities or countries;
- 5.3 Vocational and professional training should be developed to ensure that it is relevant to current and prospective employment conditions, and the apprenticeship systems should be promoted.
- 5.4 Entrepreneurship training should be provided from an elementary stage, to encourage innovation and self-employment;
- 5.5 Financial and technical support should be given to encourage youth training initiatives, and to promote the work of youth trainers and youth leaders.

## **6 Health for Youth**

Young people in some parts of the world suffer from poor health as a result of many factors including unhealthy environments, missing support systems, customary attitudes, harmful traditional practices and risky activities such as unsafe sex, drinking and smoking.

- 6.1 All young people should have access to basic health services, and it is the responsibility of governments to ensure this;
- 6.2 Universal access to sanitation, drinking water and healthy environments should be guaranteed;
- 6.3 Serious commitment is required from governments, regional and international organisations to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Resources should be provided to youth and youth organisations for projects and activities that encourage safe sexual behaviour and practices;
- 6.4 Youth organisations need to be sensitized on the need for action to tackle other illnesses such as malaria, tuberculosis and cholera;
- 6.5 Cooperation should be forged between governments, youth organisations and medical institutions, to facilitate the involvement of youth in health matters.



## **7 The synergies between health and education for youth**

Health and education are intricately linked, in that one cannot do without the other. In this regard, the following should be ensured:

- 7.1 Governments should include educational programmes on primary health knowledge and practices in the curricular of educational institutions in primary and secondary levels;
- 7.2 Cooperation should be fostered between youth organisations, educational and health institutions in order to promote personal responsibility for a healthy lifestyle, including teaching legal, social and health consequences of behaviour that poses health risks.
- 7.3 Education and services on family planning should be made more accessible to young people by encouraging youth organisations to play an active role in the provision of these services;

## **8 Conclusion**

We believe that young people have a critical role to play in the development process, particularly in the areas of health and education. As they form a significant portion of the world population, particularly the population of developed countries, it is important to ensure that the development of youth is made a priority always. In the areas of health and education, youth have an essential role to play in disseminating information on safe practices, at the same time education can best be developed by ensuring that educational systems are made more accessible to youth, and involving youth in the development of educational systems.

For development goals and targets to be met, there is a need for great innovation, energy and drive. These three elements are abundant in young people, therefore they, as leaders of tomorrow, should be nurtured into a state in which they can contribute to the overall global development process.

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