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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: World Programme of Action for Youth

Policies and programmes involving youth

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Commission for Social Development resolution [51/1](#) of 15 February 2013. This comprehensive progress report focuses on national programmes and policies related to young people, in accordance with the Five-Year Action Agenda of the Secretary-General.

* [E/CN.5/2014/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [51/1](#) of 15 February 2013, the Commission for Social Development requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its fifty-second session a comprehensive progress report on national programmes and policies related to young people, in accordance with his Five-Year Action Agenda. Also in the resolution, the Commission encouraged Member States to develop comprehensive policies and action plans that focus on the best interests of youth, particularly the poor and marginalized, and address all aspects of youth development, and further develop and improve the existing international framework on youth, including the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The Commission also encouraged youth involvement in policy development and called upon Member States to collect data to measure progress towards the implementation and monitoring of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The present report is based on the responses obtained through a note verbale sent to Member States¹ and a request to the members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.²

2. Around the world, three major developments have dominated the youth agenda in recent years, namely, youth protests, youth employment, and violence, particularly against girls and young women. A series of youth-fuelled political developments have caused dramatic shifts not only in the lives of young people, but also their societies. Young people have emerged as a force for catalysing change in their societies. In a number of countries, recent youth movements and student protests have altered traditional power structures. Young people have asserted themselves as powerful agents of change. These developments have amplified youth voices and put young people at the centre of global development debates. However, in several parts of the world, young people continue to remain at the margins of the political, social and economic mainstream and often lack access to education, training and job opportunities, as well as human rights.

3. One factor that has precipitated the rise of young people as a global force is technology. Rapid changes in information and communications technology have

¹ Brazil, Colombia, Georgia, Greece, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

² Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Youth Employment Network secretariat.

revolutionized the world of young people. The unprecedented access to information has galvanized young people to express their aspirations and concerns freely and allowed them to mobilize in large numbers and collaborate with other young people across borders to seek and create solutions to persistent problems. Greater access to information has also allowed young people to access capital, markets and training needed to pursue a career or get an education, increased their participation in political processes, and enhanced their recognition as change agents in their societies.

4. Youth unemployment and underemployment remain stubbornly high around the world. Unemployment among young people tends to be higher than among adults. The global financial crisis and subsequent recession have further increased this gap. Between 2000 and 2011, the youth labour force participation rate decreased globally from 52.9 to 48.5 per cent, indicating that less than half of young people aged 15 to 24 were actively participating in the labour markets.³ The global youth unemployment rate, which rose to 12.6 per cent in 2012, is expected to increase to 12.9 per cent by 2017 according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).⁴ In 2012, 73.8 million young people (12.6 per cent) remained unemployed. In developed countries, 35 per cent of unemployed youth have been out of a job for six months or longer. In Europe, a staggering 12.7 per cent of all young people are neither employed nor in education or training.

5. Girls and young women are at the core of development frameworks, such as the Millennium Development Goals. Not only is investing in girls and young women a human rights imperative, but evidence demonstrates that unleashing the potential of girls and young women is an effective tool to address poverty, fight disease and foster growth.⁵ Despite this, girls and young women face multiple and interlocking forms of discrimination and are often among the most marginalized, vulnerable and hard-to-reach young people. Gender-based discrimination in the labour market, traditional practices, fewer opportunities and the lower value placed on women's economic contributions leave young women with higher rates of unemployment or tied to unpaid, family-based work.⁶ Moreover, according to a 2013 global review of available data, 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence.⁷ National violence studies show that up to 70 per cent of women have experienced violence in their lifetime.⁸

³ See Key Indicators of the Labour Market accessed on 5 November 2013 from <http://kilm.ilo.org/kilmnet/>.

⁴ See International Labour Office, *Global Employment Trends 2013: Recovering from a second jobs dip* (Geneva, 2013). See also International Labour Office, *The youth employment crisis: Time for action* (Geneva, 2012).

⁵ See World Bank/International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *World Development Report 2012: Gender equality and development* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2011) available from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf>.

⁶ See International Labour Organization (ILO) Brief: Youth employment: Breaking gender barriers for young women and men (International Labour Office, Geneva).

⁷ See World Health Organization, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*, available from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf, page 2.

⁸ For individual country information (2012) available at UN-Women, see "Violence against women prevalence data: surveys by country", available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures#notes>.

II. Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth for comprehensive youth development

6. The World Programme of Action for Youth provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people. The range of challenges facing young people are directly related to the 15 priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth, namely, education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, globalization, information and communications technology, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and intergenerational issues. Member States and United Nations entities reported on a variety of initiatives geared towards addressing the priority areas as laid out in the Programme of Action. These efforts are enumerated below.

A. Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth by Member States and United Nations entities

Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making

7. Young people are a fundamental force for development and increasingly demand to be involved in the decisions that shape their societies. With a view to bridging the gap between young people and their governments, several Member States have established new youth structures and programmes to bring the voices of young people to government representatives. Greece has created local youth councils to empower young men and women and give them the opportunity to become active change agents in society. In Spain, the European Commission-backed programme “Youth in Action” supports initiatives for greater youth participation and non-formal education. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the “Positive for Youth” strategy has led to an increase in the involvement by young people in youth councils and youth cabinets, greater representation of young people on steering and management committees, and greater involvement by young people in policy development. To underscore the rising importance of youth issues, the responsibility for the Youth Voice programme, which empowers the voice of young people through national and local initiatives and is implemented by the British Youth Council on behalf of the Government, has been moved from the Department of Education to the British Cabinet.

8. Member States are prioritizing youth participation in their national strategies and laws. In line with the ninth five-year national plan, Saudi Arabia developed its first national youth strategy. This strategy identifies youth participation as a key priority for the Government. In Switzerland, a new federal law on children and youth encourages the political participation of young people at the federal level, with a particular focus on those from disadvantaged sectors. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia, in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), conducted a workshop on youth participation and developed a matrix that identifies hindrances to youth participation, indicators for success, and specific activities to promote participation.

9. In Lithuania, the national youth policy 2012-2013 outlines steps to create favourable conditions for the inclusion of young people in all societal processes.

One of the priorities for Lithuania's national youth policy development programme 2011-2019 is the development of youth work. Youth work is defined as social, educational, cultural, informational or any other kind of activities that empower young people to participate fully in their lives and society. To that end, the National Working Group for structured dialogue with young people also provides a channel through which young people in Lithuania can provide their perspectives on the development and implementation of youth policies. In addition, to encourage youth participation and instil a culture of volunteerism, the Parliament of Lithuania enacted the Law on Voluntary Work, which sets out the principles of voluntary work, the requirements for volunteering and the rights and duties of a volunteer.

10. Youth engagement is a key priority for the United Nations system. Several entities such as the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNICEF and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations have involved young people in priority issues and actions. The Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat has also prioritized youth involvement in its efforts. The Division conducted an online survey in 2012 to identify relevant measures and commitments for the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. The survey contained questions on each of the thematic areas identified by the Secretary-General for an action plan on youth: employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship, protection of rights, and education, including sexual and reproductive health education. Over 13,000 respondents from 186 countries participated in the survey. In many cases, the responses confirmed the United Nations system's prioritization of issues that needed to be addressed within the thematic areas of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. As part of the preparations for the *World Youth Report 2013*, the Division launched a five-week interactive discussion platform on the Internet, which allowed the voices of young migrants and other young people affected by migration to shape the *World Youth Report 2013* directly.

11. The Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) hosted the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development open meeting with youth-led organizations, networks and movements from 18 to 20 September 2013 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting brought together representatives of the member entities of the Network and over 100 youth-led organizations, networks and movements. The aim was to find innovative ways to partner with young people in the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth and to strengthen institutional mechanisms for youth participation in the United Nations system. The main outcome of the meeting was an agreement between youth-led organizations and the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development on strengthening partnerships, collaboration and participation in its work, including work related to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth.

12. In its 2012-2014 cycle, the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is supporting 35 projects with a total value of almost \$8 million across all regions, focusing on ensuring youth participation in governance processes and adequate representation of young people's concerns in policies and strategies. Trust Fund-assisted projects in 2012 emphasized the empowerment of young people as participants in democratic governance. In the last cycle, projects were supported in, inter alia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia,

Jordan, Mongolia, Paraguay, Uganda and Uzbekistan. Many initiatives used innovative, creative strategies to inspire the enthusiasm and tap the energy of young people, both of which are essential to progress on sustainable development. Common activities across the projects include strengthening youth advocacy groups, providing quality research to inform public policymaking, training young people as effective leaders, extending access to justice, opening space for young people to interact with public authorities, and fostering the creation of national youth councils and plans.

Girls and young women

13. UN-Women has been working to enhance young women's capabilities to amplify their voices and influence decision-making processes at the national, regional and global levels. One highlight of this effort is a UN-Women programme in Uruguay, where both women and young people are underrepresented in parliament, and programmes such as the UN-Women African young women's leadership programme, and the Empowering local women heroes programme in the United Republic of Tanzania, which promote young women's participation and leadership.

14. Girls and young women suffer from violence, but young people have also been strong allies for the United Nations system in promoting the message of women's safety and well-being. The Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women prioritizes youth engagement in violence prevention efforts. The first Global UNiTE Youth Forum was hosted in Bangkok in May 2012 and resulted in the creation of the Global UNiTE Youth Network, which issued a statement declaring its commitments and priorities. Members of the Network carry out regular activities at the national, regional and global levels and have declared the twenty-fifth of each month as "Orange Day", a day to highlight and take action against violence against women and girls. Orange Day has become a popular moment for mobilization among young people around themes such as "Safe schools for girls" and "Cyberspace as safe spaces for women and girls". UN-Women, in partnership with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, has developed a global non-formal education curriculum to engage young people in efforts to prevent and end violence against girls and women. A first of its kind, "Voices against violence" is a coeducational curriculum designed for age groups ranging from 5 to 25 years that can be adapted to national contexts. It provides young people with tools to understand the root causes of violence in their communities, educate and involve their peers and communities to prevent such violence, and learn where to access support if violence is experienced. The International Day of the Girl Child programme is estimated to reach 5 million children and young people by 2020.

15. In order to improve the overall well-being of girls, UNFPA is supporting programmes to protect the rights of adolescent girls, delay the age of marriage and childbearing, empower the most marginalized girls, and elevate their status in communities in Ethiopia, Guatemala, India, Mozambique, the Niger, Sierra Leone and Zambia. With targeted investments at scale over five years (2013-2017), the World Bank's Adolescent Girls Initiative is supporting tens of thousands of vulnerable girls at risk with interventions that primarily consist of community-level girl groups providing opportunities for social participation and leadership, life skills, literacy and access to health-care services, including family planning and HIV services. These programmes simultaneously create a more favourable environment for adolescent girls and marginalized adolescents and young people at the national level.

Employment

16. Against a backdrop of staggering unemployment, several Governments have instituted programmes to improve the employability of young people and promote youth entrepreneurship. In response to the employment crisis, Greece and Spain have taken strong measures to turn the tide of unemployment among young workers. In Greece, the General Secretariat for Youth of the Ministry of Education is collaborating with private companies to set up programmes to promote entrepreneurship and provide skills training to young workers. The General Secretariat has created numerous entrepreneurship and innovation competitions to encourage young people to create and develop their own business ideas for self-employment. In Spain, the 2013-2016 employment strategy of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security focuses on improving youth integration in the labour market. The National Youth Institute of Spain, a branch of the Central Administration dedicated to young people, in collaboration with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, provides grants to local entities to increase youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in their respective territories.

17. Similar programmes have also been reported by other Member States, such as Colombia, where the Youth in Action Programme is a national government programme that supports young people who have successfully completed their secondary education to continue training for their entry into the labour market. Lithuania's national youth policy is strongly focused on promoting youth employment. In the Republic of Moldova, the National Employment Agency has been empowered to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market. The country's Organization for the Development of the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Sector was established in 2010 by a Government decision to increase youth access to information on financial resources and provide them with the skills and know-how to develop their own businesses. For the first time, Brazil's Federal Government Multi-Year Plan has a special programme for young people. The programme focuses on the implementation of the national Decent Work Agenda.

18. United Nations entities have implemented various programmes to complement national efforts in this direction. UNDP has an extensive portfolio of programmes that empower young people and boost their employment prospects through a special focus on employment generation, entrepreneurship, self-employment, small business expansion and market participation for vulnerable youth. To provide rural youth with entrepreneurial skills and opportunities, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been implementing programmes in West and Central Africa and the Near East and North Africa. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) supports young workers in industrial settings and has expanded employment opportunities and youth-led enterprise creation in Armenia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. UNIDO also supports skills development in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Western Asia. The Youth Employment Network, an inter-agency partnership created to find durable solutions to the youth employment challenge, has developed a toolkit that will be a resource for project managers and organizations replicating the Youth-to-Youth Fund model. The toolkit was launched in December 2013.

Information and communications technology

19. Highlighting the rising importance of information and communications technology, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Government of Costa Rica co-organized the Beyond 2015: Global Youth Summit, held in San José from 9 to 11 September 2013. A key aim of the summit was to bring young leaders together to showcase how they are using information and communications technology for social good. The outcome of the summit is the 2013 Costa Rica Declaration, which urges greater access to information and communications technology as a means to empower young people.

HIV/AIDS

20. In line with its mandate to build leadership within the HIV response, the youth programme of the secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) works with youth-led and youth-serving organizations, with a particular emphasis on young people living with HIV and young key populations at higher risk, to create broad alliances for social change within the HIV and broader health and development agendas. At a landmark meeting in May 2013, 25 youth-led and youth-serving civil society organizations identified five key priorities for the young people in the AIDS movement, referred to as the PACT Framework. The PACT Framework was officially launched on 12 August 2013, on International Youth Day. Since its launch, over 300 youth organizations have signed on to advance its priorities.

Armed conflict

21. To promote the active involvement of young people in maintaining peace and security, the Sub-Working Group on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development developed guiding principles on young people's participation in peacebuilding. The principles offer guidance to peacebuilding actors to enable the development of inclusive and intergenerational peacebuilding strategies and programmes that systematically promote the participation of young people.

B. Monitoring and reporting relating to the World Programme of Action for Youth

22. Member States reported on specific mechanisms in their countries that monitor the situation of youth. In Georgia, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, in partnership with UNFPA and UNICEF, has started working on a comprehensive statistical and analytical survey on the state of young people in Georgia. This annual survey will be the key mechanism for evaluating the progress made on specific policy areas in the State Youth Policy document and will be available to the public in the first half of 2014. Lithuania's National Youth Policy Development Programme for 2011-2019 is aimed at facilitating the development of coherent, evidence- and knowledge-based youth policy based on data generated from consistent assessments of the situation of young people.

23. The Spanish Youth Institute houses a youth observatory dedicated to studying youth trends and producing youth indicators. The observatory produces a report on youth in Spain which includes indicators on the current situation of young people at

the national level in Spain. Brazil's "Participatório" or participatory youth observatory is a dedicated space for the collaborative production of knowledge on youth, by governmental agencies and civil society.

24. At the regional level, ESCWA established a working partnership with the League of Arab States through its affiliated Pan-Arab Project for Family Health, focused on developing a comprehensive list of youth indicators following the World Programme of Action for Youth framework. The collaboration also resulted in a joint report on the existence and use of the indicators in select Arab countries. The collaboration will result in country-specific recommendations for the adoption of youth-related indicators in national statistics, surveys, and research exercises.

25. To date, no Member State has provided feedback on the Secretary-General's proposed set of indicators related to youth development, which are draft guidelines for Member States to consider when developing national monitoring and evaluation frameworks in consultation with young people.⁹

C. Additional efforts for youth development undertaken by United Nations entities

26. In addition to the implementation of actions in support of the priority areas of the World Programme of Action on Youth, United Nations entities have undertaken a host of actions to improve outcomes for young people. Some of those efforts are highlighted below.

Technical assistance to Governments

27. United Nations entities provided technical assistance to Governments in youth policy design and implementation. ESCWA assisted the Government of Yemen in developing a national youth development agenda and in reviewing the current national youth strategy. ESCWA also engaged with the Secretariat of the National Dialogue Conference overseeing the democratic transition in Yemen to mainstream principles of youth participation in governance mechanisms during and after the transitional period. Iraq and the State of Palestine were directly assisted in developing implementation plans for their respective national youth strategies. Jordan and Tunisia also received direct technical assistance. Similarly, ECA reported that over the course of the biennium (2012-2013), its efforts had enhanced the capacity of Member States to integrate youth in development processes and policies by providing technical advisory services to intergovernmental organizations and Member States, and by developing tools that could be used by policymakers in the process of policy formulation, in particular of youth policies.

Partnerships at the international level

28. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the permanent co-chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. From March 2013 onward, UNFPA acted as the rotating co-chair. Consisting of 40 United Nations entities, the Network works to enhance collaboration and coordination on youth issues across the United Nations system. The Network meets monthly to discuss work and joint initiatives,

⁹ E/CN.5/2013/8, annex.

while also convening thematic subgroups to draw further attention to specific issues where entities work, such as the subworking group on education and the subworking group on youth participation in peacebuilding. In addition, two new subworking groups — the subworking group on volunteerism and the subworking group on youth in the post-2015 agenda, were formed.

29. Throughout 2012 and 2013 the Network focused a significant portion of its attention on enhancing inter-agency collaboration through the development of activities and actions related to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth and the hosting of an open meeting with youth-led organizations, networks and movements. For the purposes of the Action Plan, the Network employed thematic subworking groups to move forward the five thematic areas outlined in the Action Plan.

Partnerships at the regional level

30. At the regional level, ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC developed partnership mechanisms to promote youth development. In coordination with other United Nations entities, ESCAP formed the joint Asia-Pacific Thematic Working Group on Youth at the end of 2012. It is the first partnership related to youth issues in the Asia-Pacific region. The partnership will focus on the Five-Year Action Agenda of the Secretary-General. Similarly, in the Latin America and Caribbean region a primary network for youth development is the regional inter-agency working group on youth. Working closely with country offices and non-governmental organizations, in particular the Iberoamerican Youth Organization, the Network supports the efforts of the United Nations Development Group for Latin America and the Caribbean towards greater coherence among United Nations organizations and coordination with external partners in their efforts to reach common goals for youth development. In the ESCWA region, the Inter-Agency Technical Task Team on Young People is a coordination body for 11 United Nations agencies working on youth issues.

Projects in support of youth development funded through the United Nations Development Account

31. ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC reported on activities funded by the United Nations Development Account. Those initiatives have enhanced government capacity to develop sustainable, inclusive and participatory policies and programmes to ensure better outcomes for young people. ESCAP, in collaboration with ECA and ESCWA, is undertaking, as part of the ninth tranche, a Development Account project on strengthening the capacity of Governments in the ESCAP, ECA and ESCWA regions to respond to the needs of youth in formulating inclusive and sustainable development policies. A toolbox of policy and programme options, knowledge-sharing and the provision of technical advice, the project will strengthen the capacity of Governments to implement and sustain effective youth policies, especially in the context of youth participation and decent work. Youth and youth-led organizations will also be engaged in the initiative.

32. In the ESCWA region, the demand for technical support on such emerging issues as youth in conflict, social cohesion and intergenerational relations has been on the rise. ESCWA has been addressing those demands through a seventh tranche Development Account project designed to improve country responses to the World

Programme of Action for Youth. The main emphasis of the project is on institutionalizing youth participation in decision-making processes and enacting grass-roots level programmes on such themes as youth employment and well-being. As part of the project, ESCWA is developing a regional toolkit for youth policy reform that provides guidance on the design of national policies and programmes of action for youth, following the World Programme of Action for Youth framework for policymakers.

33. ECLAC recently initiated a Development Account project on youth social inclusion and youth violence. The context of violence associated with social exclusion is a widespread problem in Latin American and Caribbean societies. The project develops the capacity of Central American Governments to assess and design effective policies to confront youth exclusion and violence and foster knowledge-sharing on critical economic and social challenges for youth in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Efforts to improve the situation of refugee youth

34. UNRWA and UNHCR have been active in providing a range of services to refugees, encompassing health, education and skills development. In the Syrian Arab Republic, through the “Engaging youth” approach, UNRWA runs short vocational and life skills courses; e-learning and remote management; job mapping in a contracting market; career guidance; and computer and language courses. UNHCR has taken several actions to increase support to young refugees and to the leadership, empowerment and participation of asylum seekers. UNHCR recently created a youth initiative fund within the Division of International Protection to provide support to projects that demonstrate youth leadership development, empowerment and participation, community participation, sustainability and impact.

Participatory forums, conferences, side events and expert group meetings on youth issues

35. ECLAC, ESCAP, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, OHCHR, UNDP and UNIDO have organized events which examine the priority issues before youth, promote greater awareness of the youth agenda and promote engagement with young people themselves. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs hosted an expert group meeting on youth, development and rights in November 2013. The meeting convened experts and representatives of youth organizations, academia, Member States, United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations to examine the barriers facing young people in exercising their rights to participation in civic, political and economic life.

Communications, awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns

36. ECLAC, ESCAP, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, UNICEF and UN-Women have undertaken communication, awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns to put a spotlight on issues related to youth. The scope of those efforts has included a range of issues such as participation, intercultural dialogue, health, environment, girls’ education, and peace and security. UNICEF led the organization

of the International Day of the Girl Child and selected the theme “Innovating for girls’ education” in recognition of the need for creative solutions for expanding girls’ access to education. The Office of the Special Representative has initiated a global campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces in armed conflict by 2016. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, through the Inter-Agency Task Force of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, launched an online campaign for children and youth on going land-degradation neutral, to raise awareness about the outcomes on desertification, land degradation and drought of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012.

III. Evolving emphasis on youth in the United Nations

37. Young people are a great resource for advancing youth development. Participation in decision-making is one of the priority areas of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth, and a key strategy of United Nations efforts on youth issues has been to partner with young people themselves. New developments within the United Nations have emphasized the engagement of youth. The Five-Year Action Agenda of the Secretary-General identified working with and for women and young people as a top priority. To ensure greater youth engagement and exchange with young people, the Action Agenda has led to the creation of a United Nations youth volunteering modality under the auspices of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the appointment of an Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth to facilitate greater youth engagement.

A. United Nations Volunteers

38. Underscoring the fundamental importance of volunteerism, and in response to the Action Agenda, in 2012, United Nations Volunteers conducted a comprehensive review of its existing youth volunteer schemes and programmes; established a youth volunteering trust fund supported by voluntary contributions targeting an initial investment of \$5 million; and worked closely with entities of the United Nations system, youth networks and organizations, Member States, volunteer organizations and academic experts at the national, regional and international levels to define the parameters of a youth volunteering strategy for the period 2014-2017. The UNV youth volunteering strategy 2014-2017 was released at the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development round table held on 19 September 2013 in New York, hosted by the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the participation of the partner Governments of Norway and Sri Lanka as well as the Microsoft Corporation.

39. The UNV youth volunteering strategy emphasizes skills development, knowledge and personal growth in its United Nations youth volunteering modality, while also compelling UNV to not only increase the quantity of volunteering opportunities available to young people globally, but also to improve the quality of their volunteer experience. The strategy aims at (a) increasing the recognition of the contribution of youth to global peace and development through volunteerism; (b) improving the capacity of stakeholders to support an enabling environment for

regional, national and community youth volunteering; and (c) increasing and diversifying opportunities for young people to contribute to the global peace and development work of the United Nations, through a United Nations youth volunteer modality. United Nations Volunteers moved towards implementation of the strategy by allocating \$987,000 to initiate the development of the UNV youth volunteer programme. In that regard, UNV has established a youth unit at its headquarters in Bonn, Germany, and has also established a regional office in Cairo.

40. UNV is currently working with Governments, civil society, youth groups and the United Nations system in several countries to support the national policies, legislation, statutory frameworks and budgets that enable and strengthen nationally owned and sustainable volunteer schemes. The projects include support to the drafting of a national policy on volunteerism, the establishment of government bodies on the promotion of volunteering (Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Viet Nam) and youth volunteering programmes targeting young graduates (Indonesia, Lesotho and Peru) as well as programmes focused on youth employability and non-formal education (Bosnia and Herzegovina). In 2013, more than 41,500 young persons benefited from such projects. In 2012, UNV mobilized nearly 1,000 international and national United Nations Volunteers under the age of 29. In 2013, UNV deployed 87 United Nations youth volunteers fully funded by the Governments of Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland.

41. A key feature of the new United Nations Volunteers youth volunteer programme is the establishment of a youth volunteer modality. Through this modality, UNV will engage youth between the ages of 18 and 29 as volunteers to enable them to contribute to global peace and development, while enhancing youth volunteers' own skills, expertise and capacities. The youth volunteer modality recognizes and responds to youth as a distinct and heterogeneous population group, with particular needs and capacities which stem from their formative ages. Diverse youth volunteering schemes such as young professionals, university-linked programmes and short-term assignments for youth groups will be created or enhanced to broaden the range of opportunities for volunteering. Underpinning those efforts will be a focus on gender parity, South-South and national placements, and the inclusion of marginalized youth. The modality will include three types of volunteers mobilized by UNV: national United Nations youth volunteers, international United Nations youth volunteers and online youth volunteers. UNV is in the process of defining the conditions of service for the modality, which is expected to be ready for implementation during the first quarter of 2014. In preparation for the roll-out of the youth volunteering modality, UNV has initiated an extensive effort to identify the demand for such a modality among the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. UNV is hosting consultations with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, the International Labour Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, UN-Women and UNAIDS jointly to ensure successful volunteer assignments, including supportive, properly resourced and secure environments for the new United Nations youth volunteers, as well as ensuring the necessary learning, development and well-being of the youth volunteers. The advanced stage of consultations with some United Nations funds makes it possible to predict deployment of the first 200 United Nations youth volunteers during the second quarter of 2014.

B. Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth

42. On 22 January 2013, the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly of the appointment of Ahmad Alhendawi of Jordan as the first-ever Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth. As part of the United Nations commitment to engage and empower young people across the world, the appointment of the Envoy contributes to enhancing the focus of United Nations programmes on young people. Housed in the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information in the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth draws on assistance from the Department of Public Information and receives substantive support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Office works closely with the United Nations entities that are members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (see para. 1), the regional commissions and United Nations country teams. The Office depends on extrabudgetary funding from Member States. To date, several Member States have provided financial support. Several United Nations entities have seconded staff members to the Office or nominated focal points for coordination.

43. Guided by the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Envoy's workplan focuses on two thematic areas, namely economic empowerment and civic engagement, and the four principles of participation, advocacy, partnership and harmonization. Having convened and actively participated in a series of high-level panels, forums and consultations, the Envoy promotes youth-led, youth-serving organizations and the participation of other youth stakeholders in the United Nations system and beyond. On 4 September 2013, the Secretary-General called for the establishment of youth advisory boards to United Nations country teams.¹⁰ The advisory boards will ensure the representation of marginalized groups, young women and girls, indigenous youth and youth with disabilities in providing advice to United Nations programmes at the national level. The Envoy is piloting the youth advisory boards in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

44. In 2013, the Envoy undertook five initial coordination visits to regional intergovernmental bodies to strengthen coordination with the United Nations on youth-related issues. At the global level, the Envoy worked closely with a number of global youth forums aiming to promote the youth agenda, including with the Economic and Social Council to support the global youth forum. The Envoy undertook 31 official missions to all five regions to participate in major youth-related conferences and to engage with government officials, youth-led organizations, the private sector and United Nations country teams to strengthen United Nations programmes on youth at the national level. Events attended included the World Economic Forum, World Youth Day in Brazil, the National Youth Volunteering Award ceremony in Colombia, the International Telecommunication Union Global Youth Summit in Costa Rica, a meeting of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development in New York, the United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East in Turkey, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Warsaw and the preceding meeting of the youth non-governmental organizations, including the youth constituency of the United

¹⁰ See <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/news/un-secretary-general-announces-new-youth-participation-mechanisms/>.

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a series of Model United Nations conferences, the Youth Forum of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, the Anna Lindh Mediterranean Forum, the Eighth Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in Papua New Guinea, a series of events with think tanks and academic institutions, the Building Tomorrow's Europe conference in Bonn, the One Young World Summit in South Africa, a round table on youth in conflict and post-conflict in Nairobi and the World Bank Group Youth Summit in Washington, D.C. In addition, the Office of the Envoy actively participated in International Conference on Population and Development regional review conferences held in Geneva (ECE), Cairo (ESCWA), Montevideo (ECLAC) and Addis Ababa (ECA).

45. Through extensive engagement with both traditional and new media outlets in different languages, the Envoy has contributed to increased visibility for youth issues. On 5 September 2013, the Envoy, supported by the Department of Public Information, launched an online platform,¹¹ creating for the first time one source for all youth-related information emanating from across the United Nations system. The website offers a more accessible and youth-friendly platform for youth-related news and opportunities in the United Nations system.

46. The Envoy works to mobilize youth voices in the post-2015 development process at all levels. He has supported and participated in numerous post-2015 related events, such as the thematic consultations on education in Dakar, the energy consultation in Oslo, and the Arab Development Forum: Priorities for the Post-2015 Agenda in Amman. The Envoy has been supporting youth participation in post-2015 development agenda consultations at the national, regional and international levels, and has been promoting the "My world 2015" survey and "The world we want" platform. The Envoy has also presented to the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda a set of eight recommendations on the inclusion of youth in the future development agenda. The eight recommendations constituted the consolidated result of numerous consultations, which were compiled in close collaboration with members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

C. Creating a strong knowledge base on youth issues

47. In order to provide a deeper understanding of youth development, many entities have undertaken research on issues such as youth employment and participation. ESCAP, UNDP, IFAD and UNWTO have undertaken extensive research to examine the issues before young people and have produced a variety of reports, policy briefs and technical papers. The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs consistently examines emerging issues in its publications. The *World Youth Report: Youth Migration and Development* (forthcoming) offers a multidimensional account of the life experiences of young migrants and young people affected by migration. The report highlights the rights of migrants, including those of workers, students, refugees and victims of trafficking. The report examines the legislative framework and covers the principal legal instruments that have been adopted to address migrant issues. A forthcoming technical paper will look at the social inclusion of young

¹¹ www.un.org/youthenvoy.

people with mental health conditions. UNDP reported that three of the winners of the 2013 Human Development Report awards for excellence were on the topic of youth: *Egypt 2010: Youth in Egypt — Building our Future*; *Nicaragua 2011: Las juventudes construyendo Nicaragua* and *Somalia 2012: Empowering Youth for Peace and Development*. The winners' reports excelled in the inclusiveness of their preparation, the quality of analysis, their innovation in measurement and analysis, and their impact. Several national human development reports on youth have been produced, and a total of 23 reports on youth are now available on the website of the UNDP Human Development Report Office.

D. Youth participation in the post-Millennium Development Goal 2015 agenda

48. In the years approaching 2015, young people have been at the forefront of social movements and have led dialogues on global development. They have continually demonstrated their progressive ideas and forward thinking on issues of concern at numerous international forums such as the International Year of Youth and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Young people's needs and concerns must shape the post-2015 agenda, particularly in the realms of education, employment and youth participation. To that end, UNFPA is supporting a youth peer education network to mobilize communities and partner organizations on the national and international levels under the "10 days of activism" campaign from 1 to 10 December 2013 to advocate for meaningful involvement in the post-2015 agenda and to address key population issues in the agenda. The campaign is building on its remarkable success in the past two years, during which it mobilized more than 100,000 young people in 50 countries to turn the commitments made during the International Year of Youth into action at the national and local levels. For 2013, the theme of the campaign is "The world we want".

IV. Collaboration between United Nations entities: development and implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth

49. In response to requests by Member States to enhance inter-agency arrangements on youth policies and programmes, the Secretary-General called for the development of a system-wide action plan on youth. The United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth is a blueprint that identifies key priorities of the United Nations system related to youth and offers a strategy for enhancing collaboration among United Nations entities at the global, regional and national levels. Grounded in the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth provides strategic guidance to the United Nations system as a whole in its work on youth. The Action Plan focuses on the following thematic areas: employment and entrepreneurship; protection of rights and civic engagement; political inclusion; education, including comprehensive education on sexuality; and health. The thematic areas touch upon and leverage the potential and benefits of the work of the United Nations in other areas affecting youth development, inter alia, sustainable development and climate change, and culture. Information and communications technology is seen as

enabling for the Action Plan. The Action Plan aspires to improve the situation of young people in both peaceful and conflict-affected settings. It recognizes the full diversity of young people and addresses issues relevant to different age groups of young people within the thematic areas, including adolescents (aged 10-19 years) and youth (aged 15-24 years), in accordance with agency mandates.

50. At its spring session in April 2013, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination¹² endorsed the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth as a framework to guide youth programming for the United Nations system. Following the endorsement of the Action Plan, the United Nations system is moving into the implementation phase. The activities undertaken to implement the commitments and measures contained in the Action Plan will necessarily differ by region and country and will reflect national and regional priorities and specificities. A majority of activities to implement the commitments and measures contained in the Action Plan will take place at the country level. Important activities to implement the Action Plan will, however, also take place at the regional and global levels.

51. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development has developed and is implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. The implementation of commitments and measures contained in the Action Plan relies on the involvement of all entities at the national, regional and global levels. At the global level, the Network co-chairs the core group of the Action Plan and the communications group. The Network created subworking groups to develop effectively the measures and commitments identified under each of the thematic areas of the Action Plan and to coordinate efforts under those areas. Each subworking group is linked to a thematic area and chaired by an entity with a strong focus in the area. The employment and entrepreneurship subworking group is led by the International Labour Organization; the protection of rights, civic engagement and political inclusion subworking group is led by UNDP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme; the education subworking group, including comprehensive education on sexuality, is led by UNESCO and UNFPA; and the health subworking group is led by UNICEF and WHO. The co-chairs of each of the thematic subworking groups convene relevant meetings and prepare progress reports within their thematic areas.

52. Participation of youth as partners and rights holders in the implementation of commitments and measures contained in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth is vital. Three levels of youth participation are envisaged for the Action Plan: informing and consulting with youth regarding the Action Plan; encouraging their inclusive and meaningful participation in its implementation; and engaging youth as partners and in the monitoring and reporting on the Action Plan. In addition, to give young people the opportunity to hold the United Nations system accountable for the implementation of commitments and measures contained therein, youth organizations are encouraged to monitor all efforts related to the Action Plan.

¹² The Chief Executives Board brings together the executive heads of 29 United Nations system organizations to deliver as one at the global, regional and country levels. It is the prime instrument for strengthening the coordination role of United Nations intergovernmental bodies on social, economic and related matters.

53. Efforts are under way at the regional level to implement the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. The ECLAC inter-agency working group on youth is currently involved in developing a regional implementation plan for the Action Plan. As a part of those efforts, the working group is considering establishing an advisory group, comprised of youth leaders from the region, to facilitate effective, continuous and structured consultations between youth and the United Nations agencies in the region. At ESCWA, the Regional Inter-Agency Technical Task Team on Young People is developing a regional implementation plan for the Action Plan, which will be gradually rolled out by thematic issue and in pilot countries by 2014. ESCWA is co-leading the thematic pillar on youth employment in the regional Action Plan. The Asia-Pacific thematic working group on youth is compiling updated analytical information on the situation of youth to assist in planning and implementation of the activities of the Action Plan. Its report is set to promote understanding of the situation, issues and challenges for youth in the region and is expected to be launched on International Youth Day 2014.

54. Reporting on the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth is crucial to show impact and results, but also to identify scope for improvement and lessons learned. Reporting will take place once a year (in mid-April). Efforts are already under way by entities at the national and regional levels to begin compiling reports on activities they have undertaken collectively as well as individually in the context of the Action Plan.
