

**Report of the Expert Group Meeting**

**Youth in Africa:**  
**Participation of Youth as Partners in Peace and Development in**  
**Post-Conflict Countries**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) convened an Expert Group Meeting on “Youth in Africa: Participation of Youth as Partners in Peace and Development in Post-Conflict Countries”, in Windhoek, Namibia from 14 to 16 November 2006. The Expert Group Meeting was organized in cooperation with the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).
2. The purpose of the Expert Group Meeting was to critically analyse the complexity and gravity of the challenges facing youth<sup>1</sup> in post-conflict countries in Africa, explore opportunities to collaborate with young people as partners in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and sustainable development, highlight the positive role youth can play, encourage inter-generational dialogue, and promote a positive image of young people as a key resource of stability, peace and sustainable growth and development in Africa. The core objective was to devise specific strategies and mechanisms to include youth as central stakeholders and key actors in rehabilitation and reconciliation processes, as well as in the rebuilding of war-torn communities and contributing to sustainable development in their countries.
3. The Expert Group Meeting on “Youth in Africa: Participation of Youth as Partners in Peace and Development in Post-Conflict Countries” was conducted in plenary and working groups in the form of youth-led multi-stakeholder dialogue forums focusing on two key issues: (i) social and political integration of youth, including the reintegration of ex-combatants into societies and access to basic services; (ii) economic integration, in particular creation of job/work opportunities and income-generating activities for youth.
4. The meeting was attended by 30 participants including representatives of local and national governments, regional organizations, United Nations entities, local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), academia and the media. The participants included six youth leaders identified by the United Nations in consideration of regional and gender balance, and six youth representatives from the host country.
5. The meeting discussed the urgent need for policy-makers to develop clear strategies and policies aimed at promoting the participation of young people as important stakeholders, actors and partners. Such strategies included: setting youth issues as a national priority; identifying youth leaders and involving them in policy-making processes; exploring policy options; providing opportunities for policy dialogue with youth; and building institutional capacity.
6. The main outcome of the Expert Group Meeting was a set of action-oriented policy recommendations, based on the analysis provided by the experts and the outcomes of the youth-led interactive working groups. The recommendations aimed to promote the

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as persons between 15 and 24 years of age, as reflected in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/50/81). The term “young people” may be used interchangeably with the word “youth”.

productive inclusion of youth in social and economic development and their participation as partners in post-conflict peacebuilding and conflict-prevention efforts.

7. The decision to convene the meeting was made in response to a number of developments occurring in the international arena which aimed to promote, develop and protect the rights of young people in post-conflict environments. At its 60<sup>th</sup> Session, the General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/60/223 (December 2005), called upon the United Nations system and Member States to assist African countries emerging from conflicts in their efforts to restore security, promote and monitor human rights and increase income-generating activities, especially for youth and demobilized young ex-combatants. Furthermore, the Assembly noted with concern the tragic plight of youth in conflict situations in Africa, particularly the growing phenomenon of child soldiers, and reiterated the need for post-conflict counselling, rehabilitation and education.

8. Member States resolved to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work” (Millennium Declaration, paragraph 19). Towards this end, as part of their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>2</sup>, Member States have committed to making the goal of decent and productive employment for all, including women and young people, a central objective of their national and international policies, as well as their national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies.

9. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/50/81) identified 10 priority areas, namely, education, employment, hunger and poverty, health issues, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure, girls and young women, and youth participation. The General Assembly agreed on adding five emerging issues, one of which is youth and armed conflict, along with globalization, information and communication technologies (ICTs), HIV/AIDS, and intergenerational relations (A/58/133).

10. The World Youth Report 2003 expressed serious concerns about the effects of armed conflict on the physical and mental well-being of young people involved in protracted conflicts – both as victims and as perpetrators, and called for strict adherence to existing prohibitions against the use of child soldiers. The report also identified young people as active agents for building peace, preventing conflict, and promoting a culture of peace.

11. The promotion of peace and security, and sound political, economic and corporate governance in Africa, with the participation of all segments of society including youth, are key priorities of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). African leaders who formulated NEPAD in 2001 incorporated the MDGs within their plan, including goals which explicitly and implicitly addressed youth<sup>3</sup>. NEPAD has identified the challenges facing young people, namely, lack of skills and training and of access to funds for project implementation, and fully supports the principle of empowered, informed and enabled

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<sup>2</sup> 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1, paragraph 47).

<sup>3</sup> MDG goals of reducing by half the number of people living in poverty by the year 2015, achieving universal primary education and increasing the literacy rate for 15-24 years olds, combating HIV/AIDS and provision of full and productive employment for the youth.

youths. In this context, through NEPAD initiatives African youth leaders have established ongoing networks to coordinate efforts to advance the MDGs and other development goals.

12. From the review and discussion of the papers presented at the Expert Group Meeting, a number of critical issues and recommendations emerged. It was recognized that young people in post-conflict societies were facing a variety of challenges and that youth were trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, poverty, illiteracy and vulnerability that has been exacerbated by armed conflicts. They often lacked access to education, health, and other opportunities as basic infrastructure had been destroyed and human resources were displaced.

13. Many youth, especially those with limited education and economic opportunities, were easily mobilized for political purposes. Unfortunately, youth, stereotypically, are often seen as negative agents, closely associated with violence, delinquency and drug abuse, and as a result, continue to be marginalised from the decision-making processes that affect their lives at the local, national and regional levels.

14. The participants concurred that young people had great potential for contributing to peace, security and development in Africa, if their energies could be positively directed by creating space for addressing their needs and concerns and providing adequate support to foster their political, economic and social participation.

15. The meeting highlighted the successful reintegration of youth in mainstream economic activity as a major element of the post-conflict peace and security strategy. This would be critical for preventing the recurrence of violence as it would de-link youths from high risk activities such as recruitment to petit crimes, illegal conduct, prostitution and exploitation, and hazardous labour.

16. The participants agreed that, in addition to creating jobs/work, it was equally important to prepare youth to be good employable citizens and productive members of society. This required long-term systematic support for their capacity building, including literacy and skills training, civic and peace education, and a fast-track education system for older ex-combatants.

## **II. Opening Session**

17. The opening session consisted of welcome and opening remarks by the Chief of Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, opening address by the Under-Secretary-General of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and statements by the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Namibia, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation and Economic Integration of the Government of Liberia and the Keynote address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia.

## **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

*Cheryl Larsen, Chief of Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit, OSAA*

18. The Expert Group Meeting commenced with opening remarks by Ms. Cheryl Larsen, the Chief of the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit of OSAA, who chaired the three-day meeting. Ms. Larsen articulated the background and rationale for the conference, highlighting the centrality of youth to peace and development in Africa and OSAA's commitment to providing support to the process of mainstreaming meaningful youth participation in social development, economic growth and political stability in Africa and in the rehabilitation, reconciliation and rebuilding of war-torn communities, as well as contributing to sustainable development in their countries.

19. On behalf of OSAA and UNDESA, Ms. Larsen thanked the Government of Namibia, particularly the Prime Minister and the Minister for Youth and Sports, for their leadership and support in hosting the event. She also thanked other United Nations agencies based in Namibia for their logistical support in organising the Expert Group Meeting. She welcomed all the participants to what she anticipated would be an enriching and stimulating meeting which would generate concrete and effective strategies and policy options for the participation of Africa's youth as partners in peace and development in post-conflict African countries.

## **Opening Address<sup>4</sup>**

*Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, Under-Secretary-General and United Nations Special Adviser on Africa*

20. The Expert Group Meeting was formally opened with an address by Mr. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, Under-Secretary General of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the United Nations Special Adviser on Africa. Mr. Legwaila began by welcoming the participants and thanking the host Government of Namibia. He highlighted the demographic significance of youth, pointing out that 564 million of Africa's 906 million people were under the age of 24, and yet it was in this group that low school enrolment, high unemployment rates and high rates of HIV/AIDS were most prevalent. He stated that at 21%, youth unemployment in Africa was much higher than the world average of 14.4%, and that in post-conflict societies the situation for youth was even worse.

21. The Special Adviser on Africa emphasised that many youths were caught in a vicious cycle of violence, fear and poverty generated by armed conflict, which eroded opportunities for development due to the absence of a secure and supportive environment. He added that youth policies were too often driven by negative stereotypes of youth as 'violent and delinquent' and as such, youth continued to be excluded from decision-making processes at community, national, regional and local levels.

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<sup>4</sup> The full texts of presentations made at the Expert Group Meeting are available on the website of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa: [www.un.org/africa/osaa/youthandconflict.htm](http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/youthandconflict.htm)

22. Reflecting upon this, Mr. Legwaila emphatically stressed the urgent need to develop strategies and policies which promoted the participation of youth and recognized them as important stakeholders, actors and partners. It was against this background that the Expert Group Meeting had been organised by OSAA, in order to examine the challenges which youth faced in post-conflict environments through the facilitation of interactive, open and frank dialogue between youth representatives, local, national and international policy makers, civil society organisations, academics and the private sector.

23. Emphasizing the importance of Africa's youth to the development and stability of the continent, the Special Adviser encouraged all participants at the Expert Group Meeting to utilize the meeting as a platform for the sharing of ideas, knowledge, experiences and perspectives, which would help address the challenges faced by Africa's youth. Doing so would not only help to provide options and strategies for decision-makers but also to empower Africa's youth to play a more central and active role in shaping the future of their continent. Growth, stability and development in Africa were, to a large extent, predicated on this pressing priority.

### **Opening Statements**

*Simon Nhongo, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Namibia*

24. Mr. Simon Nhongo, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Namibia, further emphasised the risks which youth faced in contemporary African societies, in particular the ongoing battle against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He also highlighted the enormous potential of youth in contributing to the positive development of their countries if their energy, enthusiasm and ideas were given creative outlets for expression and actualisation.

25. Mr. Nhongo stressed that limited employment opportunities for youth not only weakened national economies but also created the potential for increased crime, violence and social unrest. He stated that where opportunities for gainful employment and job security existed, young people were less likely to become involved in illicit activities or armed conflict and were more likely to contribute to the positive and peaceful development of their countries.

26. The United Nations Resident Coordinator contended that young people in post-conflict environments were in critical need of support, since many had grown up in an environment of insecurity and instability. It was these youths, both ex-combatants and non-combatants, who held the future of their countries in their hands, and thus it was these youths who must be nurtured, encouraged and supported.

27. Mr. Nhongo commented on the extensive destruction of social relations, human capital, infrastructure and educational systems which occurred during conflict. In these situations, he stated, what was needed was not only the rebuilding of physical infrastructure but also the rebuilding of the social structures of these societies beginning with trust between people, their governments and their institutions. Economic growth and social and political stability would be more achievable when these fundamentals were in place.

***Honourable Conmany B. Wesseh, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation and Economic Integration, Government of Liberia***

28. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation and Economic Integration of Liberia, Mr. Conmany B. Wesseh, provided a rich historical backdrop to the discussions by highlighting the role African youth have played in Africa's development, particularly in the struggles for independence, both in colonial and apartheid Africa. He recognised the latent power of idealism and innovation of contemporary African youth. He added that where governments have failed to recognise and harness the capacity and capabilities of Africa's youth for positive and productive purposes, the legitimate grievances of these youth including poverty and marginalisation were too easily used by negative societal actors to mobilise them to participate in destructive dimensions of crime and conflict.

29. The Deputy Minister went on to discuss the situation in Liberia, where the youth population comprised a significant percentage of the population and where unemployment rates were particularly high among the youth population. He stated that in order to address this potentially volatile situation, Liberia's four pillars of security, economic revitalisation, social infrastructure development and good governance were being structured to ensure that youth would not be manipulated or ignored, but instead given the rights and the roles they deserved.

**Keynote Address**

***His Excellency, Honourable Nahas Angula, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia***

30. The keynote address was delivered by Honourable Nahas Angula, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia. He welcomed all participants and thanked OSAA for organizing an important meeting for Africa's youth and the continent's development. He also thanked the United Nations Special Adviser on Africa for the central role he had played in negotiating Namibia's independence and restated Namibia's commitment to the process being facilitated by OSAA on the role of youth in peace, stability and development in Africa.

31. The Prime Minister saw it as fitting that Namibia hosted the United Nations Expert Group Meeting, in the context of the issues and challenges that Namibia experienced in the aftermath of the independence struggle. He specifically highlighted the key challenge of re-integrating the ex-combatants who had fought for national liberation, those who had fought for the colonial army as well as large numbers of internally displaced persons into post-conflict Namibia.

32. This challenge, he stated, was compounded by widespread poverty, unemployment and inequities in wealth distribution. However, the post-conflict policy of national reconciliation laid the basis for sustained peace and security and allowed the government to implement further socio-economic reforms and broad national rehabilitation programmes which aimed at eliminating the vestiges of apartheid.

33. Drawing upon Namibia's experience, the Prime Minister highlighted a number of lessons for successful post-conflict reintegration and rehabilitation which were applicable to youth in contemporary post-conflict African societies. These include the fact that peace, stability, inclusiveness and political will are essential prerequisites for successful post-conflict reintegration and rehabilitation; training and employment programmes must take into account the economic realities of the country and be tailored to meet actual labour requirements; and sufficient financial and human resources must be committed to ensure that reintegration and rehabilitation programmes are sustainable, integrated and comprehensive.

34. Mr. Nahas Angula concluded by stressing the importance of combining the innovative views of youth with the guidance of experts as well as including knowledge gained from different country experiences in formulating recommendations which were both holistic and responsive to specific contexts.

35. The Prime Minister wished all participants fruitful deliberations and encouraged all participants to produce constructive recommendations which would help to address the challenges of youth in post-conflict African countries and in particular promote their inclusion in societal development, economic viability and nation-building.

### **III. Presentation of papers**

36. The Opening Session was followed by the presentation of papers in the plenary on the participation of youth as partners in peace and development, reintegration of youth into society in the aftermath of war, the creation of job opportunities and income-generating activities for youth and the community-based rehabilitation, rebuilding and reconstruction of society in post-conflict countries. In addition, there were presentations of youth-related activities in the United Nations system by three United Nations agencies.

#### ***Participation of youth as partners in peace and development***

37. The plenary session began with a presentation of the overview paper by the Lead Consultant, 'Dapo Oyewole, Executive Director of the Centre for African Policy and Peace Strategy (CAPPS). In his overview paper on "The participation of youth as partners in peace and development", Mr. Oyewole presented a broad array of issues and challenges facing youth in post-conflict African environments and emphasised, in particular, the need to move away from the negative perceptions of youth and focus more on the positive roles they could play as central agents and partners for peace, growth, stability and development in Africa.

38. Mr. Oyewole stated that while policy debate often centred on youth as instigators of violence and conflict and as a 'problem in need of a solution', youth were actually crucial to the solution of the complex and multifaceted crises which afflicted many countries on the African continent. He provided an analytical overview of the historical and contemporary issues and dynamics of youth involvement, both as victims and also as perpetrators of conflict.

39. Mr. Oyewole asserted that Africa today was at a critical crossroads and that it was time to make a fundamental decision whether to allow the negative environment that made youth susceptible to conflict and the impacts of marginalisation and poverty to prevail, or instead to create a more enabling policy, social, economic and political environment that would harness the enormous untapped potential of its youth to become key partners and agents of peace and development on the continent. Mr. Oyewole said that this decision would, to a great extent, determine Africa's growth trajectory for the continent's foreseeable future.

40. Mr. Oyewole emphasised that ad-hoc youth-focused programmes and initiatives would remain limited in impact and sustainability until youth were placed at the centre of these processes as central stakeholders and active participants who played a meaningful role in conceptualising, shaping and implementing them.

41. What were needed were programmes and initiatives which were culturally and contextually sensitive and, most importantly, had youth at the very centre, owning, spearheading and implementing key aspects of the process. Without youth playing a central active role in the formulation of programmes, the opportunities to harness their insights, capabilities and energy would be squandered and the remedial strategies would fall short of the desired outcomes.

42. In outlining the issues and challenges facing youth in Africa, Mr. Oyewole addressed the question of demographics. Youths make up over half of the continent's population, and statistics indicate that Africa's demographic is getting increasingly younger. This 'youth bulge' has profound and far-reaching consequences in terms of development, growth and good governance. Mr. Oyewole stated that perceptions of and reactions to the youth bulge had been disproportionately negative, focusing more on youth's potential roles in fomenting instability and insecurity rather than their obvious potential to play positive roles in fostering peace, security and development on the African continent.

43. Exploring the nexus between conflict, poverty, unemployment, and social and economic marginalisation, Mr. Oyewole identified trends across Africa indicating an intensification of poverty and economic malaise in most regions. Moreover, youth were the group most affected by poverty in Africa, especially given their demographic preponderance and social exclusion. He also noted that youth poverty was exacerbated by high levels of unemployment and underemployment.

44. Access to quality education remained a key problem for many youth, and even when youth were educated, it did not guarantee secure or meaningful employment. Efforts to break the conflict, poverty and underdevelopment nexus urgently needed to focus on long-term, sustainable and inclusive policy initiatives which responded to the needs of Africa's youth through more effective and holistic programme planning and implementation.

45. Discussing political marginalisation, Mr. Oyewole contended that despite the central involvement of large numbers of youth in Africa's independence struggles, the post-independence era had been characterised by the political exclusion of youth at community,

local and national levels fostered by the advent of military rule and the institutionalisation of one-party systems with hierarchical and increasingly gerontocratic systems of rule.

46. Mr. Oyewole warned that if youth continued to be denied legitimate channels for political participation, social expression and gainful economic endeavour, the belief that crime and violence were the only accessible means for achieving self-expression and empowerment would become harder to dispel. This eventuality, he emphasised, posed a grave threat to long-term human security in Africa.

47. African youth remained gravely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other decimating diseases which posed a key challenge to attempts to increase the capacity of Africa's youth to become agents of economic growth, peace, stability and development on the continent. Fostering economic growth through youth capacity-building and skills development would become more challenging when large numbers of Africa's limited skilled professionals fell prey to the decimating effects of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. This was a key issue that was currently eroding Africa's capacity. If left unchecked, it would compound the skills and capacity shortages on the continent as well as deprive youth of opportunities to develop the essential skills needed for meaningful participation in the continent's development.

48. Another issue Mr. Oyewole highlighted was the enormous challenge facing youth in the area of education. Access to education remained inextricably linked to socio-economic status and unfortunately, most people, particularly in rural areas, were poor and socially excluded. There were deep-rooted problems with the nature and quality of education provided in many African countries as well as particular problems in matching the school curriculum and the knowledge this provided to the actual skill sets and knowledge bases needed to meet the pressing demands of Africa's societies and economies. In post-conflict situations, these problems were compounded by the concomitant effects of conflicts, such as social dislocation, disruption of educational services, the devastation of infrastructure, limited funding and human capital flight which inevitably led to 'brain drain'.

49. Mr. Oyewole presented the issue of economic reintegration, outlining the various challenges facing ex-combatants, such as lack of marketable 'peacetime' skills, homelessness, and rejection from host communities. The main challenge facing ex-combatants following demobilisation was reintegration into mainstream society, indeed this was crucial to maintaining peace and security and to promoting sustainable economic growth. Post-conflict environments were a rare window of opportunity to address the failures of the past and the root causes which may have enticed the youth to bear arms.

50. Mr. Oyewole noted the increased prevalence of the emergence of National Youth Policies as part of post-war reconstruction programmes, but emphasised the need to move beyond policy announcements towards implementation of concrete strategies to increase the political participation of youth.

51. Finally, Mr. Oyewole remarked that in order for the positive potential of youth to be unlocked, governments and the international community must re-conceptualise how they

perceived, engaged with and responded to the needs of youth. Young Africans must be involved in decision-making processes at all stages and needed to be given legitimate political and legal avenues through which they could express their opinions, grievances and aspirations. It was only through fair participation in the economic, social and political spheres that the marginalisation of youth could be ended, the root causes of conflict addressed and post-conflict re-construction rendered meaningful and sustainable.

### ***Reintegration of youth into society in the aftermath of war***

52. In her paper on “The reintegration of youth into society in the aftermath of war”, Ms. Alcinda Honwana, Director, International Development Centre, Open University, the United Kingdom outlined the difficulties facing former youth soldiers when attempting to reunite with their families and reintegrate into their communities, highlighting the inadequacy of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes in focusing on the particular needs of young ex-combatants. Specifically, DDR programmes tend to focus only on the immediate and short-term needs of demobilised child and youth soldiers with little attention to long-term social integration issues.

53. Furthermore, child soldiers under the age of 18 and female combatants were frequently excluded from official DDR programmes, which are often directed at males aged 18 and above. Young combatants under the age of 18 are not considered soldiers under international law. Underage combatants taken to containment centres are often not given the same reintegration packages as their adult counterparts, and tend to be dealt with mostly by humanitarian organisations.

54. The presenter addressed the problems of family and community reunification, and whilst acknowledging the importance of family reunification, she also stated that the key challenge in this area was in providing effective support and assistance once youths were back in their communities, again highlighting the need for long-term reintegration strategies which addressed the needs of both ex-combatants and civilian communities.

55. Regarding the challenges to the social and political reintegration of ex-combatant youth, Ms. Honwana stated that ex-combatants who were recruited into militias at a young age would have been socialised in a war environment and missed out on the education, job training and initiation which allowed them to survive and function in the civilian world. Yet despite this, returning ex-combatants were expected to be independent.

56. Many experienced considerable psychological stress at the thought of returning to communities, fearing they would be rejected. This was particularly the case for female ex-combatants who might have to contend with the social stigma of rape and sexual abuse which could damage or destroy future marriage prospects and severely restrict social reintegration.

57. Ms. Honwana strongly emphasised the importance of community-based strategies in aiding the re-socialisation, healing and rehabilitation of youth ex-combatants. She stated that political reintegration for ex-combatants is particularly difficult since many struggle with trying to secure livelihoods, employment, education and skills training. They felt excluded

from local and national political processes, and thus there was a critical need for political education to be provided for youths in post-conflict environments in order that they could enter into constructive dialogue with the government about issues which affected them.

58. Ms. Honwana moved on to explore the challenges facing ex-combatants with regard to economic reintegration, stating that many expressed considerable anxiety over the prospect of entering the labour market with few marketable skills and little or no formal education. Without access to education, many youth found themselves facing an uncertain future without secure employment due to the opportunities they missed out on while they were combatants.

59. Discussing the policy environment, Ms. Honwana outlined the legal framework for protection and prevention of children and youth from armed conflict. Several international instruments protected the rights of children and affirmed that children should not be made active participants in the engagement of war. Ms. Honwana referred, amongst others, to the Geneva Conventions; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol which raised the minimum age for military recruitment to 18 years of age; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in 1998.

60. Ms. Honwana noted that although much had been achieved in protecting children and youth from armed conflict, more work needed to be done to ensure effective enforcement of these international standards and to make sure that violators could not act with impunity.

61. Referring to recent programmes aimed at improving the complex process of DDR, such as the Stockholm Initiative for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (SIDDR), the United Nations' Integrated DDR Standards, and the African Union's policy work on small arms and light weapons, Ms. Honwana noted that these programmes had resulted in increased understanding of the DDR process and of the place of youth and children within these processes. Critical to the improvement of DDR programmes was the recognition that youth are a potentially positive force for peace, security and development.

62. In regard to social and political reintegration, Ms. Honwana remarked that links needed to be established between short-term and long-term reintegration strategies for youth and ex-combatants. Programmes which emphasise youth empowerment and security amongst youth ex-combatants are crucial. Traditional, culturally accepted methods of healing and reconciliation should be used together with the involvement of communities in the planning and implementation of reintegration strategies. In terms of political reintegration, it is important to advocate a strong political agenda which respects and recognizes youth as key agents of peace and development and which promotes and rewards positive citizenship amongst ex-combatant youth. Reintegration programmes should give special attention to the needs of young women who may have experienced sexual abuse and find themselves stigmatized within their communities.

63. With regard to the economic reintegration of ex-combatant youth, Ms. Honwana pointed out the critical need to identify specific training needs to ensure short-term and medium-term

relief, while supporting the planning of long-term training for their job security and empowerment. The reintegration of youth must occur in conjunction with a more comprehensive strategy of social development and poverty eradication which aims to address the structural causes of armed conflict.

64. Finally, regarding DDR programmes, Ms. Honwana emphasized that they should be holistic in approach and each phase of the DDR process should be integrated and coordinated by actors at the local and national levels with central youth involvement. Furthermore, DDR programmes must be culturally and contextually sensitive to local belief systems, norms and values. The only way to ensure the successful reintegration of ex-combatants is to address the total societal crisis of post-conflict states which requires fundamental economic, political and social change.

### *Creation of job opportunities and income-generating activities for youth*

65. In his paper on “The creation of job opportunities and income-generating activities for youth”, Mr. Francis Chigunta, Professor of Development Studies, Department of Development Studies at University of Zambia focused on the creation of job opportunities for youth in post-conflict countries. He began by considering the term ‘youth’ in the African context, stating that youth can be defined not only in terms of age but also as a social construct defined by a number of factors including culture, economic independence and responsibility. Furthermore, there were multiple categories of youth, all with different and often contradicting needs and aspirations.

66. Mr. Chigunta outlined the economic challenges facing youth in post-conflict environments, stating that war has far-reaching and long-term consequences on post-conflict economies. In war-affected countries where social and economic infrastructures were often devastated, youth unemployment and labour absorption were critical problems. The youth unemployment rate could be as much as triple the adult unemployment rate, affecting both educated and uneducated youths, and girls in particular. He pointed out that the causes of youth unemployment were numerous, including poor and inappropriate skills, poor economic growth and burgeoning youth populations. In rural areas, lack of access to resources, sometimes due to inter-generational conflicts, was a key problem.

67. Mr. Chigunta also highlighted the growing concentration of youth in urban areas and the rise in rural to urban migration, particularly in post-conflict countries. This, he said, often led to increased marginalisation amongst urban youth who found themselves unemployed and on the streets with no social support structures to help them. Large numbers of street youths inevitably leads to an increase in criminal behaviour and drug use as these youth struggle to survive in harsh conditions. Many rebel groups found a ready source of fighters whom the state had failed to adequately support and protect amongst these disaffected youth.

68. Mr. Chigunta stressed that lack of skills training and jobs are key challenges facing ex-combatant youth in post-conflict societies. Many youths remain unemployed or under-employed for sustained periods of time. For those who do find employment, they often face low remuneration, poor working conditions, and lack of job security. Some ex-combatants

choose to sell their fighting skills and become mobile mercenaries, crossing borders to fight in other regional conflicts. Mismatch between skills training and the needs of the labour market often resulted in ex-combatants not being able to use the skills acquired in vocational skills programmes.

69. Given the challenges facing youth in post-conflict situations, Mr. Chigunta discussed the possible options and opportunities for job creation, focusing first on the potential for growth in rural areas. He stated that agriculture provided great potential for job creation, including high-value crop production, agro-business, dairy, livestock production, and poultry rearing. Agriculture still remained the lifeblood of the continent, yet it was characterised by low productivity, rudimentary farming techniques and dense land occupation. Youth could, through the formation of cooperatives, not only generate social capital, but become actively involved in the day-to-day management of their agro-businesses. Another sector with potential youth employment opportunities was in the field of renewable energy. Rural electrification programmes and the creation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) were identified as key sectors for youth involvement.

70. Mr. Chigunta noted that there are many employment creation opportunities in urban areas for youth entrepreneurship. Programmes to promote youth entrepreneurial activities include the Youth Employment Network (YEN), Youth Employment Summit (YES) and the introduction of Entrepreneurial Skills Development Programmes.

71. Mr. Chigunta remarked that the attitudes of young people towards self-employment, particularly in the informal sector, varied from country to country. However, many youth, including ex-combatants, have a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. That does not mean they have the necessary skills to run successful entrepreneurial initiatives, as many lack the necessary business skills to establish their own businesses, but it was an area in which they could be supported more robustly.

72. Mr. Chigunta asked the participants to consider ways of empowering youth in order to assist them in establishing viable and sustainable enterprises. Areas of assistance should address issues such as lack of access to capital and work space. Public works projects in both rural and urban areas could provide short- to medium-term employment opportunities for youth, and there are many untapped opportunities in this area.

73. Finally, Mr. Chigunta made a number of key recommendations, including tailoring the skills training of ex-combatants to the needs of the labour market as well as the needs and aspirations of youth; encouraging regional and global institutions to participate in job creation; developing systematic institutional approaches to the development of livelihood and entrepreneurship; promoting enterprising life skills; micro credit and loan schemes aimed specifically at youth; providing business development assistance for youth entrepreneurs, and supporting rural development initiatives.

#### ***Community-based rehabilitation, rebuilding and reconstruction of society***

74. In his paper on ‘The community-based rehabilitation, rebuilding and reconstruction of

Society”, Mr. Melsome Nelson-Richards, Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology and Programme Coordinator, Underdevelopment and Poverty Programme, State University of New York College at Oswego, New York, stated that Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) can be used as a form of reintegration of ex-combatant youth. CBR is an inclusive strategy which provides an opportunity for ex-combatants and non-combatants to work together on collective activities, share experiences and form bonds which can ease tensions between the two groups, as well as facilitate the social reintegration of ex-combatants who may be returning from conflict zones with both physical and psychological scars. CBR can also provide short-term employment opportunities for youth in post-conflict environments.

75. Mr. Nelson-Richards noted that community public works schemes provided good opportunities for youth to find short-term employment and to contribute towards the rebuilding of their communities and thus ease tensions with community members. CBR efforts must foster a culture of trust, responsibility and accountability between returning ex-combatants and their communities.

76. In highlighting the reasons why youth may become involved in conflict, Mr. Nelson-Richards pointed to poverty as the key structural cause. He also stated that CBR could be used as an effective mechanism for poverty reduction and observed that inadequate reintegration strategies and the lack of basic services impeded reconstruction and development. If ex-combatant youth were not properly reintegrated nor provided with education, health care and housing, the stability needed to secure and maintain employment would remain elusive.

77. Mr. Nelson-Richards remarked that instability, poverty and limited employment prospects left young people vulnerable to recruitment by criminal gangs and militia once again, as they searched for a means of livelihood, social relevance and political influence. Effective community based rehabilitation must be implemented in tandem with national developmental plans, including the provision of schools, hospitals and shelter. Through the eradication of poverty, African states can reduce the involvement of youth in crime and conflict.

78. Finally, Mr. Nelson-Richards stressed that CBR requires the active involvement of key actors in society, namely, the civil society, the public and private sector. The public and private sectors must endeavour to create opportunities for newly reintegrated youths who may be eager to contribute towards the reconstruction efforts, acquire new skills and secure livelihood opportunities.

### ***United Nations system activities relating to youth***

79. In addition to the overview paper and the three expert papers that were presented during the Expert Group Meeting, presentations on issues and activities relating to youth were made by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

## *UNFPA*

80. Koffi Kouame, UNFPA Regional Adviser, Dakar, presented 'UNFPA Initiatives with Young People in Emergency and Post-Conflict Settings in Africa'. He noted that UNFPA provides instruction in basic literacy, reproductive health education focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention, family planning, sexual and gender-based violence, medical care and peer education and emphasized that UNFPA programmes are coordinated with UNHCR in order to provide information about reducing the risk of HIV/AIDS through condom use and provision of male and female condoms.

81. Mr. Kouame also remarked that UNFPA partners with various United Nations bodies as well as other international and national organisations provide support to the development of comprehensive sub-regional strategies on HIV/AIDS prevention, targeting vulnerable and high risk groups such as youth, and young women in particular. UNFPA was also a contributor to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) and currently carries out DDR related activities in Africa. He added that the activities of UNFPA in West Africa include provision of reproductive healthcare to women and young girls and information on HIV/AIDS prevention and providing training for ex-combatants. In collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA collaborated to bring the issue of young people in emergency and transitional situations to the forefront of humanitarian emergency planning.

## *DPKO*

82. Edward Thomas, Child Protection Adviser, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), presented 'Lessons Learned from DPKO's Experience'. Discussing the position of youth in Sudan, he stated that youth formed a large political constituency but had very little political education; furthermore, he noted that the government did not view youth as a legitimate political constituency.

83. Mr. Thomas emphasised that the lack of access to education and employment and lack of provision of basic services is the reason many youth regarded joining the Army or the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) as an increasingly attractive option in socio-economic and political terms, since it offered a route to employment and a chance to express political grievances. In his opinion, there is a need for greater understanding of youth networks and how youth were organised in order to facilitate the involvement of youth in political processes.

84. Moshe Dayan Karbo Abayifaa, Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation (RRR) Programme Officer, United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), presented 'Lessons Learned from Ex-Combatant Reintegration in Liberia'. He explored ex-combatant reintegration in Liberia and the DDR programme implemented by UNMIL and described various challenges faced by the United Nations in implementing the DDR programme.

85. Mr. Abayifaa noted that the number of ex-combatants to be demobilized in Liberia was underestimated. Furthermore, the demobilisation objective of breaking command and control

structures was not achieved and the bulk of funding for the entire DDR programme was exhausted during the DD phase. This funding shortfall had negative effects on the reintegration stages of the DDR programme and that timing of reintegration packages was unsatisfactory. By the end of the DD phase only three reintegration projects were readily available for ex-combatants and were limited to urban areas in Monrovia. This was largely due to lack of funds, poor institutional capacity for training and education; and limited governmental ownership of the programme.

86. Finally, Mr. Abayifaa remarked that the lack of placement strategies for ex-combatants following skills training in Liberia meant that many ex-combatants could not utilise the skills they had learned or find suitable employment opportunities. Government employment strategies should be linked to the reintegration programme and focus on long-term sustainable employment rather than short-term labour intensive jobs and public works schemes. There is a need to shift from reward-based reintegration programmes to community-based recovery activities.

### *UNICEF*

87. Ms. Ruksana Patel, a Research Consultant with the Transitions and Adolescent Development Participation Unit of UNICEF, gave a presentation on UNICEF's work with young people in post-crisis transitional countries. She stated that negative perceptions of youth as a source of threat and fear exacerbated by their actual involvement in conflict, has contributed to their marginalisation at socio-economic and political levels. Furthermore, she added that young peoples' capacity for positive contribution to recovery efforts tended to be overlooked by international and national actors.

88. Ms. Patel also outlined a joint collaborative project between the Post-Conflict Transition Unit and the Adolescent Development and Participation Unit at UNICEF in which a survey had been designed for young people in post-conflict societies in order to understand the specific needs of youth as perceived by the youth themselves. Through this effort UNICEF hoped to develop a programming guidance strategy aimed specifically at young people in post-crisis contexts. She stated that the strategy would focus on building effective collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders, promoting strong inter-agency programming responses to young people in post-crisis contexts and ultimately, advocating for the rights and concerns of youth. She added that UNICEF's work was underpinned by a human rights-based approach which highlighted young peoples' rights within broader cultural, economic and political contexts in order to address the root causes of violence.

89. Ms. Patel discussed the concept of 'meaningful participation', one of the seven key principles underpinning UNICEF's work in post-crisis contexts. She highlighted the great benefit, both to youth themselves and the wider community, of involving youth in the design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of reconstruction policies. She also noted that political participation tended to be overlooked during transition periods. This could lead to disillusionment and disengagement from civil society and political participation, as well as psychological problems, especially amongst youth who may have played a key role in revolutionary social movements.

90. Finally, Ms. Patel emphasised the need to encourage constructive political engagement of youth in decision-making processes which impacted their lives. She noted that transition periods provided a critical opportunity in which to do this, since power structures were open to restructuring. Safe and constructive means for youth to express their concerns were needed to enable policy-makers to formulate more effective programming responses to the needs of youth.

#### **IV. Roundtable discussions**

91. The presentation of papers and United Nations system activities on youth were followed by roundtable discussions with a focus on youth as partners in peace and development, post-conflict reintegration of youth, job creation for youth, as well as rehabilitation and rebuilding in the post-conflict phase.

##### ***Participation of youth as partners in peace and development***

92. In the discussion of participation of youth as partners in peace and development, many youth leaders focused on the need for action and the practical implementation of concrete strategies to improve the participation of youth in political decision-making and to increase socio-economic opportunities.

93. A key problem identified by youth participants was the lack of access to financial resources such as loans or microfinance schemes with which to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives. The criteria and application process for such limited schemes were identified as bureaucratic and cumbersome, and lacking in proper support structures for applicants.

94. Another crucial area they identified which prevented youth from gaining meaningful employment was the paucity, and poor quality of, education in many post-conflict countries, which resulted in many youth not being able to compete in the labour market due to lack of skills and/or formal education. Youth participants stressed the need to re-orient the education system in order to reflect the contemporary needs of the labour market.

95. The re-orientation of the education system was identified as a particular problem for girls, many of whom finished school at age 12. It was emphasized that what was needed for youth was a peaceful and enabling environment which allowed them to achieve their potential. This point was reinforced by experts who noted that conflict and underdevelopment were shifting the boundaries of youth and delaying their attainment of the responsibility and financial independence necessary to become adults.

96. There was consensus that an educational curriculum needed to be developed that was sensitive to the needs of youth and the needs of the economy. Furthermore, there was a need to promote a more positive image of African youth, both within Africa and globally. In this regard, the media and Africans in the diaspora could play a key role.

97. The participants stressed the need to promote and prepare younger people for leadership roles in different sectors within the continent. The onus was on African governments, African regional organisations, African civil society and their international counterparts to work with youth to develop responsive and innovative policy approaches that harnessed and strengthened the capacities and capabilities of Africa's youth as peace and development agents on the continent.

98. There was also consensus that youth marginalisation in social, economic and political processes – both formal and informal - must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Exclusion of the vast majority of Africa's population from shaping the future of their societies would further postpone prospects for the durable and sustainable peace and development Africa has so desperately searched for and so urgently needs.

### ***Reintegration of youth into society in the aftermath of war***

99. In the discussion of reintegration of youth into society in the aftermath of war, there was considerable focus on the plight of girls and young women in post-conflict situations, and concern for young women who returned from combat having suffered traumatic sexual abuse and who may have contracted HIV/AIDS. It was agreed that female combatants should ideally be addressed on an individual basis in order to adequately tackle issues such as whether they should be separated from their 'bush husbands'. There was also a consensus that young women should be prioritised in skills training programmes. A further point raised in the discussion was that economic reintegration needed to be sustained in the long-term and therefore reintegration needed to occur in tandem with social and economic development in communities.

100. Additionally, it was suggested that economic reintegration schemes for youth should not focus solely on assisting ex-combatants but also other war-affected youth, as this would enhance community cohesion. Ms. Honwana summed up the roundtable discussion by emphasising the need for DDR programmes to address the structural causes of conflict rather than merely the symptoms. Moreover, DDR programmes must be culturally sensitive and developed to complement local community beliefs and healing processes.

### ***Creation of job opportunities and income-generating activities***

101. In the discussion of the creation of job opportunities and income-generating activities for youth, the roundtable discussion focused on the mainstreaming of youth issues within government structures. Many youth participants felt that youth issues were not being mainstreamed effectively in post-conflict societies and suggested that 'youth' be a cross-cutting issue with a presence in all relevant government ministries. Several participants also called for the establishment of youth ministries.

102. Secondly, the discussion centred on the disquieting phenomenon of rising economic growth rates juxtaposed against increasing poverty in post-conflict countries, especially amongst youth. This, it was said, was the result of inequitable distribution of the gains of economic growth. One youth representative stressed the importance of public works projects

in providing short- to medium-term employment for youth in post-conflict societies. These would serve the dual purpose of providing job opportunities for youth and contributing to the infrastructural and economic re-development of war-torn countries.

103. Linked to the provision of job opportunities for youth was the recognition that private enterprise could play a key role in providing economic opportunities for youth through employing and training local workers rather than using foreign expatriates or technologically intensive practices at the expense of labour intensive practices. This was supported by a United Nations representative who stated that the need for private sector involvement in job creation needed to be promoted.

### ***Community-based rehabilitation, rebuilding and reconstruction of society***

104. In the discussion of community-based rehabilitation, rebuilding and reconstruction of society, the roundtable discussion addressed a wide variety of issues and recommendations. It was emphasized that CBR should be structured in such a way that ex-combatants and non-combatants within communities can work together in order to forge bonds between these two groups and aid the social reintegration of ex-combatants.

105. In regard to necessary actions at the local level it was discussed that local communities should work closely with youth in post-conflict contexts in the design and implementation of initiatives that provide facilities such as health centres, schools and recreational facilities. Furthermore, local authorities should seek to involve youth in CBR activities which provide some financial rewards while encouraging interaction with older members of society. There should also be regular discussion fora at the local level where youth and elders can meet, discuss and deliberate issues and challenges.

106. In regard to policies at the national level, it was discussed that national administrations should incorporate CBR activities for post-conflict youth into national development plans. It was also mentioned that in order to reduce youth unemployment, national governments should adopt legislation which stipulates that preference for jobs is awarded to ex-combatant youth in particular and youth in general.

107. It was also advocated that there should be political will and attendant budgetary allocations for a youth parliament, designed and run by youth in which youth issues are discussed, resolutions are made and sent to the National Assembly, and where youth have the power to identify potential projects for youth development.

108. Some participants proposed that national governments should promote and encourage labour-intensive public works projects in order to provide short- to medium-term employment for youths in post-conflict environments. It was also mentioned that international donor agencies should support the development of youth parliaments and of youth focused CBR programmes.

## V. Youth Dialogue Session and Working Groups

109. The roundtable discussions were followed by the Youth Dialogue Session which was designed to enable youth to take the lead at the Expert Group Meeting in raising their issues, concerns and challenges. The dialogue session identified the following key issues:

### *Youth employment*

- Skills training and labour market mismatch
- Limited capacity and infrastructure
- Lack of coordination of employment strategies
- Tensions between policy and practical implementation
- Lack of private sector engagement
- Lack of coordination between educational curricula and employment opportunities
- Limited institutional support in both economic and socio-political terms for entrepreneurs
- Lack of long-term employment opportunities and the need for sustainable employment

### *Community rehabilitation, integration and DDR*

- Tensions arising between ex-combatants and community members
- Infrastructural support for reintegration
- Gender issues and the special needs of young women and other marginalised groups, such as the disabled
- Lack of national and community ownership of DDR programmes
- Limited evaluation of DDR programmes which might identify best practices
- Lack of contextual specificity in DDR programming
- Links between short-term and long-term support
- Disconnect between the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration aspects of DDR programming
- Funding shortfalls in DDR programmes
- Rewards-based community-based reintegration strategies
- Dealing with Internally Displaced Persons situations

### *Youth and policy engagement*

- Inclusiveness of youth in policy making processes at local, national and international levels
- Creation and implementation of National Youth Policies which are youth driven
- Proportional representation of youth and in particular of young women and girls
- The need for youth focal points within all governmental ministries and international institutions
- Access and outreach programmes and dissemination of policy information in an accessible way
- Countering negative community perceptions of youth
- Youth participation in design and implementation of policies which affect their lives
- Linking National Youth Policies with National Planning and Budgetary Frameworks

- Addressing rural/urban divides

#### *Youth and the media*

- Portraying positive profile of youth through the media and countering negative stereotypes of youth
- Education through entertainment and the promotion of role models through the media
- Promotion of youth issues through specific youth focused media
- Access to the media in urban/rural areas
- Policy advocacy and influence through the use of media
- Issues of censorship in the media

#### *Youth participation*

- Ageism and the exclusion of youth from social structures
- How to strengthen youth networks
- How to ensure access to information so that youth can participate meaningfully within societal structures
- The need to strengthen a political and policy engagement culture amongst youth

110. Following the Youth Dialogue Session, participants divided into two Youth Working Groups to start preparing the draft recommendations of the meeting. The working groups focused on social integration, DDR, securing access to basic services for youth in post-conflict situations, employment creation and economic opportunities for youth in post-conflict situations.

111. At the end of the working group sessions, the rapporteurs of the groups presented a brief analysis of problems facing youth as partners in peace and development in post-conflict countries and draft recommendations for discussion in the plenary on the last day of the Expert Group Meeting.

## **VI. Discussion and adoption of recommendations**

112. Based on the draft analysis and recommendations submitted by the rapporteurs of the Youth Working Groups on the last day of the meeting, the plenary discussed and adopted the following brief analysis of youth problems in Africa and a comprehensive set of action-oriented recommendations for national stakeholders, civil society and the international community.

#### ***Analysis of problems facing youth***

113. Although they make up over half of Africa's population and represent the majority of the continent's potential workforce, Africa's youth face enormous challenges that limit their effectiveness as partners for peace and development in Africa. Many of Africa's youths are marginalised from the social, economic and political processes that shape their lives, livelihoods and futures, and often lack access to basic services and facilities such as education, health care and opportunities for personal development. In post-conflict countries,

the situation is compounded by the fact that governmental and non-governmental institutions, social structures and other infrastructure needed for productive social and economic enterprise have been destroyed.

114. Africa's youth, especially those with limited educational and economic opportunities, are more readily mobilized and manipulated for political purposes which may also involve participation in violence and conflict. Without effective remedial policy intervention, this destructive cycle as well as the allure of crime and violence intensifies. Many youth who represent Africa's future in social, political and economic terms become locked in an inescapable trap. The paradox is that Africa's present and future prospects depend mostly on its youth and the opportunities that are availed to them to play a positive role in countering the continent's development challenges. The outcomes of this Expert Group Meeting, and a plethora of independent reports by various organisations, indicate that the continent's youth have great potential to become the driving force for peace, security and development in Africa.

115. The potential of the youth could be effectively harnessed by creating an enabling local and international policy environment for addressing the needs and concerns of youth and providing holistic and sustained support to enable the actualisation of their economic, political and social aspirations.

116. If Africa's youth are to become partners for peace and development in post-conflict reconstruction, as well as key actors in the broader 'African renaissance' agenda embarked upon by the African Union (AU) and its NEPAD programme, there is an urgent need to develop clear strategies and policies aimed at promoting the participation of young in furthering this agenda. Such strategies must include setting the youth issue at the top of the local, national and international policy agenda, augmented by adequate resourcing of youth-centred policy initiatives; identifying youth actors, networks and leaders, and working with them as key stakeholders in Africa's development; developing applicable, sustainable and effective policy options through meaningful policy dialogue and partnership with youth; and building governmental and non-governmental institutional capacity and structures for effective implementation of youth development programmes and initiatives.

***Recommendations for national stakeholders, civil society and the international community***

- (i) Governments and International Organizations should articulate a strong political agenda that places youth as central partners in peace and development in post-conflict settings and make this a part of the national planning framework. In this regard, the stakeholders should:
- Ensure political commitment to make youth issues a priority;
  - Formulate/strengthen national youth policies that are youth specific and youth driven;
  - Mainstream youth issues in various national policies and link youth policies to the national planning framework. In particular, youth should be the focus, as well as intrinsically involved in the process, when planning national poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP);

- Consider, where appropriate, proportional representation of youth, including female youth;
  - Establish youth desks in relevant government ministries and international organizations, including United Nations agencies;
  - Support mass media campaigns that promote positive role models for youth;
  - Raise public awareness of issues that are critical concerns for youth through outreach and dissemination of policy, information and relevant documents in an easily accessible form.
- (ii) Governments and civil society should identify and help strengthen youth networks and associations in both rural and urban settings, and in particular:
- Consolidate information/data on existing youth networks and associations ;
  - Assess the needs and capacities of youth networks and associations in order to better support them;
  - Empower and strengthen existing youth networks and associations through capacity building activities; support youth networks in forging links with other national, regional and continental networks and organizations ;
  - Facilitate partnerships between urban and rural youth organizations;
  - Strengthen the national umbrella body of youth organizations, such as national youth councils, and facilitate their effective partnership with various ministries responsible for issues related to youth.
- (iii) Governments and civil society should ensure that national, rural and urban youth networks and associations are given a voice in the public decision-making processes that affect their lives through creating effective partnerships with local and national governments, and in particular:
- Facilitate the dialogue between community leaders and youth;
  - Facilitate the dialogue between local governments and youth;
  - Establish youth focal points/desks in each structure at various governing levels.
- (iv) Governments and civil society should ensure that civic education is a part of school curricula, so that young people understand their rights and responsibilities within their communities and society as a whole, and in particular:
- Develop school curricula for civic and peace education;

- Review current curricula, and include civic and peace education as a part of school curricula.
- (vi) Governments, International Organizations and civil society should ensure that all parties in conflict (ex-combatants, female ex-combatants, non-combatants, child soldiers, Internally Displaced Persons, returnees/former refugees and other marginalized groups) are included in DDR programmes from their inception and strike a balance between rewards-based approaches and alternative community-based approaches to disarmament and demobilization and provide safe environments for youth.
- (vii) Governments, International Organizations and civil society should facilitate the establishment of effective mechanisms to address the needs of vulnerable groups (i.e. women, children, disabled, and unaccompanied minors) and address the particular needs of vulnerable groups prior to implementation of disarmament and demobilization programmes to ensure that young women/girls are included.
- (viii) Governments, International Organizations and the civil society should ensure that DDR programmes are holistic and involve the participation of various stakeholders (military, Government, international communities, NGOs, youth organizations, local communities) so that local ownership of the process is developed.
- (ix) Governments, International Organizations and civil society should ensure that DDR programmes are closely linked with, or integrated within broader and longer-term strategies for poverty reduction and development in post-conflict countries.
- (x) Governments and International Organizations should facilitate the development of sustainable reintegration programmes, while taking into account local cultural and social aspects, and ensure that such programmes involve the participation of local communities in the formulation, implementation and evaluation stages. In doing this, it will be particularly important to:
- Broaden the definition of vulnerable youths and not limit it to youth associated with fighting/armed forces;
  - Devise different strategies for various categories of young people to be (re)integrated (i.e. children born in captivity, a girl-mother/child mother, wife of ex-combatants, disabled former combatants, etc.);
  - Ensure that the integration approach is holistic and does not specifically target ex-combatants, as targeting not only creates stigma among those targeted, but often produces resentment among other war-affected populations who are the majority;
  - Ensure that ex-combatants and non-combatants do not view themselves as being in competition with each other by developing programmes where these two groups are encouraged to work together and form bonds;

- Give higher priority to the psychological dimension of reintegration.

(xi) Governments and International Organizations should continue to recognize that reintegration is a complex process that requires economic and social recovery at the local level which should be funded on a long-term and sustainable basis. In this regard, it will be particularly important to:

- Deepen the understanding of successful reintegration and develop both qualitative and quantitative indicators for evaluation purposes;
- Address the importance of infrastructure support as a critical element for reintegration and enable access to basic social services, including education, health care facilities, housing and recreational services;
- Build effective partnerships between local and national governments and international communities to jointly mobilize funds necessary for improving access to basic services;
- Consider innovative approaches, such as labour-intensive infrastructure projects, administrative decentralization, local community/individual-run health clinics and, low cost housing schemes jointly developed by the private and public sectors.

(xii) Governments and civil society should adopt integrated learning strategies for various categories of young people and in this regard:

- Integrate ‘non-traditional’ programming into the ‘mainstream’ education systems, inclusive of training focused on: ICT, governance, leadership, goal setting, peace building, and other ‘life’ skills (such as peace education and HIV/AIDS awareness);
- Integrate on-the-job-training into vocational education;
- Link education and skills training to the realities of the job market in order to avoid mismatch between skills training and labour demand;
- Devise programming that includes a longer-term focus and support mechanisms, including long-term funding.

(xiii) Governments and civil society should undertake needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and in this regard:

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, including: an examination of existing structures, training facilities and educational institutions; an overview of the labour market, with a focus on matching skills training to jobs available; and a determination of the needs of both the community and the youth beneficiaries;
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity, as M&E can play an important role in assessing the impact of programmes and redirecting their focus as needed.

(xiv) Governments should create job opportunities for the various categories of young people in society and in this regard:

- Link youth policy measures directly to national planning frameworks (i.e. the inclusion of youth issues within PRSP);
- Shift macro-economic policy to encourage growth with equitable distribution;
- Provide an enabling environment conducive to public-private dialogue and partnership
- Establish a fund and/or effective funding mechanisms to provide resources (both financial and technical) for youth;
- Create opportunities to allow youth to have greater access to jobs, including internships, mentorship programmes and other alternative job-placement strategies, including youth trade fairs, and enterprise groups.

(xv) Governments and civil society should promote Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) development and in this regard:

- Develop and operationalise a comprehensive SME policy, aimed at establishing an economic environment conducive to long-term SME success and growth;
- Provide support to youth enterprise development, including training and business education, increased access to funding, increased market access and advisory and mentorship services;
- Develop an effective export strategy combined with a restrictive import policy;
- Develop support mechanisms to give incentives and encourage growth within the informal sector.

## Annex I

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## Annex II

### Programme of work

#### EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON YOUTH IN AFRICA: PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH AS PARTNERS IN PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN POST-CONFLICT COUNTRIES

Windhoek, Namibia  
14 – 16 November 2006

Tuesday, 14 November 2006

- 8:00 – 8.45      Arrival and Registration
- 8.45 – 9.30      Opening Session:
- Opening remarks by OSAA USG, Mr. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila
  - UN Resident Coordinator in Namibia, Mr. Simon Nhongo
  - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation & Economic Affairs, Liberia, Hon. Conmany B. Wesseh
  - Minister of Youth, National Service, Sports & Culture, Namibia, Hon. John Mutorwa
- 9.30 – 10.00      Keynote address by Prime Minister of Namibia, Hon. Nahas Angula
- 10.00 – 10.15      • Introduction by Moderator, *Ms. Cheryl Larsen*
- Session 1      Chair: USG Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, UN Special Adviser on Africa
- 10.15 – 11.30      Presentation of Overview Paper
- Presenter: *Dapo Oyewole*
- Round Table Discussion
- 11:30 – 11:45      Tea/coffee break
- Session 2      Chair: Mr. Joseph Koroma, Head of UNIDO Operations in Sierra Leone
- 11:45 – 1.00      Creation of job/work opportunities and income generating activities for youth
- Presenter: *Mr. Francis Chigunta*
- Round Table Discussion
- 1.00 – 2.30      Lunch

- Session 3 Chair: Ms. Cheryl Larsen, Chief of Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit, OSAA
- 2: 30 – 4:00 Integration of youth, in particular the reintegration of ex-combatants into societies  
Presenter: *Ms. Alcinda Honwana*  
Round Table Discussion
- 4.00 – 4.15 Tea/coffee break
- 4.15 – 5.15 Practical application on key issues  
  
Presenters: *Mr. Koffi Kouame, UNFPA Regional Adviser, Dakar,*  
*Mr. Joseph Koroma, Head of UNIDO Operations in Sierra Leone*  
*Mr. Moshe Dayan Karbo Abayifaa, RRR Program Officer, UNMIL, Liberia*  
*Mr. Edward Thomas, Child Protection Adviser, UNMIS, Sudan*
- 5.15 – 5.30 Close of Session

Wednesday, 15 November 2006

- 9:00 – 9:15 Introduction

Session 4 Chair: Hon. Conmany B. Wesseh, Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs for International Cooperation & Economic Integration, Liberia

- 9:15 – 11:00 Community-based rehabilitation and rebuilding with a focus on Securing Access to Basic Services.  
Presenter: *Mr. Melsome Nelson-Richards*

Transitional issues and Youth  
Presenter: *Ms. Ruksana Patel (UNICEF)*

Round Table Discussion

- 11.00 – 11:15 Tea/coffee break

Session 5

- 11:15 – 12:30 Youth Dialogue Facilitator: Mr. ‘Dapo Oyewole
- 12:30 – 2:00 Lunch break
- 2.00 – 5.00 Working Group discussions on thematic issues (2 Groups)

- 5.00 – 5.30 Presentations of the Working Groups by Rapporteurs
- 6.00 – 7.00 Cocktail reception

Thursday, 16 November 2006

- 9.00 – 9:15 Introduction

Session 6 Working Groups: Preparation of final Recommendations

- 9:15 – 10:30 Youth Panel: Youth perspectives  
(including cross-cutting issues such as youth & HIV/AIDS & the role of media)

- 10.30 – 10.45 Tea/coffee break

- 10.45 – 12.00 Working Group Session: Presentation of recommendations  
Facilitated by youth leaders

Presentation of the Working Groups

Discussion and adoption of recommendations

- 12:00 Conclusions and Close of Meeting

## **Annex III**

### **Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms**

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CAPDU	Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Unit (of OSAA)
CAPPS	The Centre for African Policy and Peace Strategy
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
DD	Disarmament and Demobilisation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
DPKO	The Department for Peacekeeping Operations
DSPD	Division for Social Policy and Development
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSAA	United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy

RRR	Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme
SIDDR	The Stockholm Initiative for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
YEN	Youth Employment Summit
YES	Youth Employment Summit Campaign