



ZUENOULA : Over to the young people

Actions aimed at securing the future of the youth are worthy of praise, but attention should also be given to their existing needs, representatives of the Ivorian youth said in a declaration approved at a Youth Forum organized by UNOCI in Zuénoula, a town located in the zone of confidence.

Participants in the forum, held in the camp of the First Battalion of Bangladeshi peacekeepers, came from various regions of the country. Some were affiliated to political parties, others represented NGOs or community groups.

Young people from the zone under the control of the Forces Nouvelles (FN) did not attend because it was felt that traveling by road from the FN zone was too risky for them.

In his opening address, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr Pierre Schori, noted that, if they avoided political declarations, the youths could

perhaps find “a common language because there are very concrete things that affect you, such as education, jobs and security”. Mr Schori added: “I frankly think it is a minority who, more or less, are holding the country hostage.

On behalf of the UN offices and agencies in Côte d'Ivoire, the UN Development Programme outlined various actions taken to promote social cohesion, reconciliation and reconstruction in the country.

The workshops that followed the brief plenary focused on: socio-economic integration, training and catering for young people outside the formal-education setting.

In a joint declaration, the participants stressed the need to give adequate consideration to the will of the youths and the realities on the ground. They recommended that education should take the complexities of the various environments into account, and that young people should be trained to assume their responsibilities. Education should be accessible to all and it should be free of any political influences, they added.

The youths also stressed that while it was true that they were the future, they were also the present and socio-political programmes should cater for their needs. Young people, on the other hand, had to become aware of their force and avoid any form of exploitation, they noted.

Youth organisations should network with a view to defending their collective interests above and beyond any differences of opinion between them, participants in the forum stressed. They also agreed to continue reflecting on the issues discussed and to participate in joint actions to ensure a united, prosperous and peaceful Côte d'Ivoire.



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