



**Report of the Expert Group Meeting
Youth, Development, and Rights
13-14 November 2013**

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1. Background to the Meeting

The Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN organized an Expert Group Meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York under the theme ‘Youth, development, and rights’. The meeting convened a group of experts and representatives of youth organisations, academia, Member States, UN entities, and intergovernmental organizations to focus on the barriers, and how to overcome the barriers, facing young people in exercising their full set of rights to participation in civic, political and economic life.

Specifically, the Meeting examined issues related to ‘Civic and Political Participation’ on day one, and ‘Economic Participation’ on day two. Particular attention was given to areas of concern identified by young people and youth organizations as received via consultations with young people for the preparation of the System-wide Action Plan on

Youth, the 2011 and 2013 World Youth Reports, as well as in meetings and events during the International Year of Youth and thereafter.

The meeting agenda and list of experts is provided in the annex.

2. Objective of the meeting

As the MDG timeframe draws to a close, discussions are already well underway on the development of a post 2015 development agenda. Young people have been at the forefront of these discussions, drawing attention to the importance of youth participation in both their deliberations and substantive outcomes. This expert group meeting was first in a series of meeting that explored the linkages between rights and development agenda in the run up to the post 2015 development landscape. In particular, the themes of civic and political participation and economic participation of youth were explored in the meeting. These themes are areas of strategic importance which need to be addressed in order to build an inclusive and sustainable society for all, including young people.

3. Introduction and Opening

Ms. Daniela Bas, Director of Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) opened the meeting and gave welcoming remarks. Ms. Bas highlighted that the work of DSPD on youth issues is based on the World Programme of Action on Youth, which was adopted by United Nations General Assembly in 1995.

Speaking on the limited opportunities for participation before young people, Ms Bas noted that while this is the largest group of youth the world has ever known, only a small number of parliamentarians are young. For example, in a third of countries globally, eligibility to run for national parliament begins at 25 years of age or older. Less than 2 per cent of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and about 12 per cent are in their 30s. The average age of parliamentarians globally is 53. Young people are demanding active participation in decision-making. Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan is one such young person in politics.

Ms. Nicola Shepherd, the United Nations Focal Point on Youth also welcomed participants to the meeting. There was a strong demand for discussion on this topic by young people themselves, in response to which DSPD organized this Expert Group

Meeting. The outcomes from this meeting will inform several other initiatives undertaken by DSPD, and ultimately these discussions will inform deliberations in the run up to post-2015 development agenda.

4. Political Participation and Civic Engagement – An Overview of Key Issues Facing Youth

The percentage of young people participating in electoral processes remains low at all levels. In the majority of countries globally, young people remain disenfranchised until the age of 18, but even when legally eligible to vote, low voting figures persist. Demonstrations across the world in recent years, often led by young people, in demanding political reform and democratic governance, negate the response that young people are not interested in politics and therefore have no interest in participating electorally. Rather, young people often claim their lack of electoral participation is because the political system is inaccessible to youth in terms of relevance, structure and language.

Against this backdrop, this session explored questions such as: why are young people not coming out to vote?; What barriers exist to their active participation?; Do ‘youth parliaments’ detract from the real issue of ensuring young people are involved in mainstream politics?; What can be done to political engagement more relevant and attractive to young people?

Mr. Jorge Cardona opened the session by putting forward two questions: Are young people (ages 15-24) in a situation of structural vulnerability in the exercise of their rights of Political Participation and Civic Engagement, derived either from their personal characteristics or from social, economic and / or political structures, which require the adoption of specific measures to avoid their discrimination and to ensure equality in the exercise of their rights? Second, do the characteristics of this group of people and their status in society not allow us to identify any particular problems in the exercise of these rights?

Mr. Cardona challenged the view that young people are not interested in political participation. Political participation goes beyond the exercise of the right to vote and stand for elections. There are new forms of participation in political and civic processes which are opening up, and young people are initiating these ways of engaging through information and communication technologies and social media. Young people are prominent actors in new forms of political involvement, leading to specific demands through social movements spearheaded by them.

Mr. Cardona presented a small unofficial survey conducted among his students. The student responses indicated several forms of prejudice that persist about young people such as that young people are violent, anti-establishment. Mr. Cardona's students felt silenced in these processes which they felt were too adult-directed and did not include youth voices. On the other hand, the informal survey revealed that young people increasingly relate to each other through social networks, create virtual organizations, and engage in causes to bring about a gradual improvement in their situation.

In closing, Mr. Cardona reiterated that young people must be empowered to exercise their rights. He proposed two avenues for the way forward:

- Measures should be taken to remove existent barriers to the full political participation and social commitment of the young (including the possibility of positive discrimination)
- A profound study, geographically and culturally representative on the obstacles faced by young people in the exercise of their rights

Mr. Leonardo Castilho was the next presenter. He observed that there is a need to recognize youth as rights holders, and give them rights to full political participation. Human rights of young people must be examined from a life-cycle approach rather than an age-specific approach. He proposed two ideas which must inform all efforts on youth development:

- Youth are rights holders with no discrimination and indivisibility of rights
- Youth rights are recognized and guaranteed by treaties, and mechanisms such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant of Human Rights, and other treaties like Ibero-American Convention on the rights of youth

Political participation of the young is often constrained by age of voting and age for running for office. Qualifying age to run for an office is often higher than the minimum age for voting in many countries. In this way, age can be a factor in access to decision-making for young people. In Brazil, young people vote at age 16 and onwards, and they participate in the political process. Political participation is connected to education. Young people need to be taught in school about political processes and participation.

The presentation drew reference from the expert meetings on the human rights of youth organized by OHCHR, and from UNDP publications on youth political participation. Mr. Castilho elaborated on the challenges and barriers for youth rights, which were articulated in the outcome document of the EGM of the OHCHR. In conclusion, Mr. Castilho observed youth must be recognized as rights holders, and given full rights to political participation.

5. Political Participation

The electoral system is inaccessible in terms of youth representation in political office. Even when young people have reached the age of majority allowing them to exercise the right to vote, they often face restrictions in being able to run for political office at all levels. In many parts of the world the age of eligibility for office runs anywhere from age 22-28 years on average, being higher in some places, in some cases to age 36.3 The disparity between the age of being allowed to vote versus the age you can be voted for can lead to a feeling of frustration and an opinion that formal political processes do not consider young people to be relevant.

This session explored questions such as: are current political structures at odds with encouraging young people's participation— how can we foster a more inclusive structure for young people's participation? Does the legal framework, such as age restriction, need to change? Where the age to run for office has been lowered – has the number of young people holding political office positions increased? Mr. Leonardo Castilho was the moderator for this session.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan's presentation drew from her experiences as a young politician. Ms. Sitsabaiesan spoke of her decision to run for office and her experiences while navigating the campaign trail. Young people are often dismissed easily in politics, because they are considered too young to be a parliamentarian or hold political office. Media does not treat young politicians equally and perpetuates the notion that young people are not ready for serious engagement in the political sphere. In her case, being a young woman of colour from an immigrant community made navigating the campaign trail challenging, but all the more rewarding.

Ms. Åshilde Marie Vige focussed on the barriers to political participation, particularly diversity, and the resultant discrimination faced by many youth when attempting to engage in the political system. Key populations, such as youth, women and various minority populations, represent a resource that will be absolutely critical in achieving development goals. If we want development in society, we cannot fail in addressing the needs and possibilities of such important groups of society.

Young people are key players in the political process who have unique perspectives and expertise. They reach out to other young people and galvanize their engagement in political and civic life. The following barriers to political participation of youth were identified:

- Lack of legal rights, in some parts of the world, youth is hindered from the political processes.

- Lack of experience and knowledge, for example at the UN, youth delegates need to have knowledge in the substantive issues, but also about the process.
- Paternalist attitude towards the young. Often the recommendations from young people are discussed separately without consulting them and taking them on board.
- Lack of recognition of young people's skills.
- Youth and stakeholders in the same process. For example Google is being led by young people, however many governments don't recognize the leadership potential of young people.

Real participation must be meaningful, relevant, representative and sustainable. Solutions to foster real participation include a universal agreement on the term “real participation”, changing laws and improving rights, and recognising rights, recognizing the implications of article 12 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and similar conventions and the provision of economic support mechanisms.

Mr. Alejandro Morlachetti discussed migration. Young people are increasingly migrating in search of survival, security and improved standards of living. Young migrants have great potential to contribute to the populations they join, and migration presents positive opportunities for young persons, as well as for countries of destination. Policies must be in place to ensure that young migrants are able to adjust and contribute to new environments and to realize their full potential. Therefore, it is important to promote the civic and political participation of migrants in the host country.

Participation in the political decision-making process and civic participation in migrant community organizations promotes integration. The granting of political rights is a democratic means of expression and at the same time gives responsibilities to voters. Documented migrants who have resided regularly for a specific period of time in the country may have access to the right to vote at the municipal and local elections. Most of the time participation in national elections is granted after citizenship is granted. But that may take several years.

The enjoyment of civil and political rights is inextricable linked to the enjoyment of social, economic and cultural rights. Access to education and civic and language education is essential to engaging young migrants in civic and political activities. Providing resources for migrants to learn the language of the country of destination is a major part of this.

A comprehensive account of the instruments supporting the political and civic rights of migrants and specifically for young migrants was provided. In general, migration laws worldwide tend to lack a youth perspective, though some countries are making progress in responding to the specific needs of migrant youth. The situation is particularly precarious for those young migrants who are undocumented.

There should be initiatives to support and empower young migrants, as well as migrant and youth-led organizations, to carry out such activities. These initiatives should

recognize the importance of empowered participation of undocumented youth in civic and political life as would-be ‘citizens’, in practice if not on paper. Regularization of migrant status is a key tool to promote integration in host societies facilitating political and civic participation of undocumented youth.

In the discussion that followed, good examples of institutionalizing youth participation were provided. The Norwegian Youth Delegate Programme and Children and Youth Council of Norway were singled out as programmes that promote participation. At the United Nations, Norway has one of the oldest youth delegate programmes. Norwegian youth delegate speaks in the Third Committee, and also engages in other deliberations every September during the United Nations General Assembly deliberations.

Several questions were put to experts on topics such as economic participation, grassroots activism, fund-raising for young politicians, and efforts to bolster youth participation in civic and political life. Grassroots activism is an avenue by which young people can make their voices heard at the highest levels of decision-making. Young people at the grassroots can influence government decision-making, especially if young voters come out in large numbers and vote in favor of the governments that are responsive to their needs. In addition, grassroots activism can extend networks, building constituencies between diverse interest groups, and make allies that can sway government decision-making.

Experts stressed that political and civic participation of young people is inextricable linked to economic participation. Political participation of young people is often determined by their financial circumstances. When young people face economic hardships, economic sustenance becomes a center of all their efforts. Fulfilling family obligations and responsibilities takes up their time and energy, thus limiting opportunities for engagement in civic and political life. In many instances, participation in youth led structures requires young people to take up volunteer positions. Young people in financially precarious circumstances are not able to avail of such opportunities.

High costs of mounting an electoral campaign and the fundraising that follows is another reason that deters young politicians from running electoral campaigns. Campaign finance reforms should be implemented in countries where the cost of running a political campaign is prohibitively high and keeps young people out of active politics. It was pointed out that in the case of Canada, funding for political campaigning comes from personal donations only, and not from private corporations, which makes the path of a young aspiring politician easier.

Experts emphasized that the participation of young people in politics does not always benefit young people as a whole. In many cases young politicians are affiliated with certain political parties that might work against the larger interests of young people. In this context, peer engagement can help youth enhance the outcomes of their political participation and provide them with opportunities for promoting the development of their youth communities.

In closing, it was suggested that the report of the OHCHR is a good document to consult while designing programmes that enhance youth participation. Appointment of a Special Rapporteur on youth is another mechanism to enhance youth participation. For migrant youth, an array of structural change is needed to improve their political and civic participation.

6. Civic Engagement

Youth-led organizations often fill the gap where young people cannot yet officially vote or run for office. Youth-led organizations provide an important platform for young people to discuss and advocate for issues of concern to them, whether at the local, national or international level. Whether political or thematic based, youth platforms foster an environment for young people to develop skills and qualities better equipping them with life and employment skills. Many politicians have gotten their ‘start’ through participation in their parties’ youth structure.

This session discussed questions such as: how can youth-led structures be better supported to sustain their operations and to become credible stakeholders in applying for funding and grants?; What changes are needed to regulatory frameworks so as to allow the development of sustainable youth-led structures?; What options exist for youth structures to utilise ‘parent’ organizations to gain funding and what impact does this have on their independence and claim to be truly ‘youth-led’? Ms. Åshilde Marie Vige served as the moderator for this session.

Ms. Ivana Savic presented on youth led structures. Youth led structures are defined as a social structure, both formal and informal, that civically engage youth in identifying common interest, mobilizing their peers and action to work collectively in order to alter power relationships, address human rights and justice issues and create meaningful institutional/community/societal change. These organizations are led by young people, with three separate levels of action in the individual, community and societal spheres. These structures are traditionally led by youth, but there is increasingly intergenerational collaboration with senior colleagues offering support and mentorship.

However, while the trend indicates a rise in the number of youth structures, these structures are also hampered by lack of financial resources, and are not seen as permanent or sustainable in the long-term. These challenges hit at the viability of youth organizations. In closing the following key recommendations were identified:

1. Advance legal and policy framework which can support youth structures
2. Institute national-level youth budgeting. Youth budgeting can help create and sustain youth structures

3. Support capacity building and capacity development of youth structures
4. Foster partnerships with different stakeholders that can offer support to youth structures

The next presenter, Ms. Andrea Landry touched upon barriers that inhibit indigenous youth from fully participating in political and economic life. Indigenous youth are politically engaged but politicians don't recognize their engagement because indigenous youth don't use the parliamentary systems for their participation. Instead, indigenous youth are fighting for the recognition of their perspectives and their specific forms of engagement.

In Canada alone, 90% of indigenous youth would rather vote in Band Council elections over municipal elections. Band Council elections involve voting for Chief and Councils of a First Nations reservation. The reasoning behind this is that most indigenous youth in North America feel that the federal government systems in Canada are colonially constructed, and include a grim history that has left indigenous youth feeling excluded.

Yet, through historical analysis and highly inclusive processes of indigenous youth, a broader understanding of the importance of being politically engaged is being built. This primarily has to do with the Indigenous social movements occurring in Canada, whereas indigenous youth are leading the way in attempting to create political change in a variety of forms. These forms include education, inclusion, leadership, and mentorship. An in-depth analysis of statistical information, best practices, and recognizing the colonial history of North America will be looked at to bring forward the realities of Indigenous youth in North America

Mr. Pablo Angulo presented his views on civil society organizations as instruments to overcome barriers to engaging political institutions. When traditional pathways to political participation fail, civil society organizations are spaces for participation. They are organizations of the 'third' sector and when young people are disenchanted by political processes, civil society provides a platform for their engagement. Civil society organizations, in this manner, supply public goods when the demand for these goods is heterogeneous according to economist Burton Weisbrod.

Civic engagement is closely connected to the idea of social capital. Political scientist Robert Putnam's believes that social capital is defined as trust, norms, and networks that increase efficiency through coordinated actions. Greater social capital can substantially increase civic engagement. For example, World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), which is a global network of United Nations Associations (UNAs) worldwide, is an example of engendering social capital.

The way forward to foster political and civic engagement is to create long-term strategic plans and institutional solidity to counteract the high exit rates in youth organizations. Mentorship opportunities or "parenting" / "brothering" / "sistering" by other organizations must be provided to youth organizations. Incentives for participation of youth should be encouraged. Governments and businesses can support this process by actively funding civil society organizations so that these organizations

can set aside some core funding without having to consistently face the pressure of fund-raising from a diverse set of sources.

Social media has been a game-changer in fostering political and civic participation of young people. Social media allows unfettered self-expression, easy mobilization and overcomes barriers of participation across borders by enabling remote participation. It promotes a culture of greater transparency and activism. For WFUNA, social media is critical in reaching a diverse constituency of young people across the world. Organizations must invest in a social media strategy and dedicate resources to developing social media departments.

Best practices by youth led organizations to foster participation was identified which included Voto Joven from Venezuela, Diario Del Votante from Argentina, WFUNA and UNAs.

In the discussions that followed, several themes emerged such as social media, political parties, financial and administrative governance of youth organizations. Experts agreed that social media has revolutionized the world of political participation for young people as evidenced by the Arab Spring of 2011. Increasingly, internet activism is being used for influencing the political agenda by young people. Social media is bringing voices from across the world and it is being represented and it is a new form of engagement for people. The question is how to integrate the voices raised in social media in decision-making. How are we going to reply to these voices? Who is going to reply to these voices? There needs to be response in form of strong decision-making that addresses the questions raised over social media, otherwise the momentum generated by internet activism will fade.

The next question posed to the experts was related to making political parties more attractive to young people. Youth political party organizations are reflective of youth voices; however, often they serve more as mouthpieces for their parent political parties. Experts noted that often the youth wings work in tandem with their parent organizations. Greater research is needed to examine how many young politicians and parliamentarians are getting their voices heard. On one hand, young people are engaged and participating and are interested in participating in large numbers. On the other hand, political parties at times are not fully transparent, or democratic. In such circumstances, youth engagement results in disenchantment.

On the topic of governance and financing of youth organizations, many youth organizations are set up by governments, private sector, and the United Nations system with a specific goal and a pre-set agenda. The challenge is to ensure youth organizations are representative groups that allow young people to contribute their fresh ideas, which may counter conventional wisdom. Bolstering the internal capacity of youth organizations will enable them to serve as entities that truly represent youth voices. Funding of youth organizations is a persistent challenge. Youth organizations need core funds that will enable them to remain independent and pursue their organizational goals decisively. Philanthropic organizations can support youth organizations by providing them financial backing.

7. Economic Participation – An Overview of Key Issues Facing Youth

Natalia Popova gave opening remarks on Day 2. The global job crisis has significantly narrowed employment opportunities for young people. Many young people are giving up on employment altogether. For others, the labour market is characterized by part-time and temporary employment. There is an economic and social cost to this rising youth discouragement and it is undermining the economic growth potential of countries.

Informal employment arrangements are pervasive and transition to decent work is slow and difficult. Skills mismatch of youth is a persistent and growing trend. There is growing skills obsolescence from long-term unemployment. Many young workers are overqualified for the work that they are hired to perform. Society is rapidly losing the benefit that skilled workers have brought to the economy if this cohort of young workers had been appropriately employed.

Developing regions face major challenges. Youth unemployment and current effects relevant in three regions: Middle East, North Africa, and developing economies in Europe. As a result of the difficult economic climate, there is a growing distrust in social, economic and political systems, and improving labour market outcomes will require country specific approaches. There are no “one size fits all” solutions.

Beth Porter underscored that the financial inclusion of young people is a contributor to economic growth and resource mobilization, and a critical enabler to achieving MDGs and other development goals. Financial inclusion builds resilience by helping young people deal with the crisis. In the current global economic environment, with skyrocketing rates of youth unemployment, expanding youth access to financial resources can help young people, and provide protection from extreme vulnerability.

Greater access to a broad range of financial services is vital for securing the future of young people. Financial institutions should tailor services to the young clients. One way to achieve this is to get rid of minimum age restrictions, grant flexibility in identification, and to provide young people with a financial education. Another big constraint is persistent stereotypes about young people because of which banking institutions deny young people services. There is a strong business case to be made in that 740 million youth do not have bank accounts, or are unbanked, and expanding services to the unbanked will result in enhanced business outcomes for banks.

The topic of financing for entrepreneurship for young people was discussed. It was stressed that there was a continuum of what young people need and it had to start with savings. Building assets is empowering. Experts recommended that youth focused

marketing activities and distribution channels must be created and enhanced. Financial service providers need to go where youth could be: school, churches, places where youth congregate to reach out to them. Key policy implications include minimum age restriction, flexibility identification required requirements national curriculum on financial literacy to promote broader financial capability mainly among youth.

8. Recognition

With high levels of youth unemployment globally, young people are facing a harsh climate in regards to securing decent jobs. Competition for jobs is made all the more difficult by the fact that many people claim there is a significant mismatch between education received and the skills needed for today's labour market. Many young people develop skills and expertise relevant to the labour market in a non-formal or informal context. Despite this, there is still an onus by employers to only hire young people with formal degree-level certification. The situation is particularly true of young migrants, where even formal education received in their country of origin may not be recognised in their country of destination, making the employment maze even more complicated.

This session explored questions such as: How can young people be better equipped to meet the needs of today's labour market? What role do skills learned in non-formal settings play in preparing a young person for the labour market and how can these skills be marketed? How can qualification and skill recognition be improved across borders? The moderator for this session was....

Mr. Jean-Pierre Kallanian discussed recognition of non-formal learning (NFL) for disadvantaged youth. Non-formal learning was defined as learning which is embedded in planned activities (semi-structured) not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. Outcomes may be validated and can lead to certification. On the other hand, according to the International Labor Organization, disadvantaged refers not just to economic factors, such as income poverty, or lack of experience in and poor understanding of the formal job market, but also social factors such as gender, racial, ethnic or migrant background, and geographical isolation with poor access to quality education and job opportunities.

The following factors were identified as challenges in the recognition of non-formal learning of disadvantaged youth: accessibility and awareness, impermanent placement, discrimination and privacy, proof and documentation, self advocacy and inclusion, responsibility.

Disadvantaged youth are resilient, resourceful, and creative. Much of who they are and what they know comes from informal and non-formal learning. Recognizing non-formal learning for disadvantaged youth acknowledges their experiences/existence, boosts their self-confidence and gives their life new meaning. It validates transferable competencies and skills needed in the labor market and leads to a decrease in under-education and unemployment. A few examples of non-formal learning centers were highlighted. A non-formal learning center for girls in Austria (www.mafalda.at) that is working to increase motivation and learning skills of girls and LernBox Goals which provides social skills building and practical skills in reading, writing, math to disadvantaged youth.

Schools, non-governmental organizations, government agencies need to provide information, non-formal learning opportunities, assistance with transportation to disadvantaged youth. They should conduct outreach in communities to locate and identify disadvantaged youth and reach out to them with these programmes. To counteract impermanent placement, states must minimize out of home placement for youth in conflict with the law or in state care and create programmes that allow for the continuation of community resources. In terms of discrimination and privacy, for adjudicated youth, adhere to Protection of Privacy of "The Beijing Rules", Section 8 (Negative labeling, protect ID, and seal or expunge juvenile records). Moreover, open relationships with stakeholders must be fostered for greater transparency.

Proof and documentation is another barrier for disadvantaged youth which denies them opportunities for non-formal learning. Those working with disadvantaged youth need to gather information on all non-formal learning occurring outside the stewardship of schools and social services. In the absence of documentation (immigration or trafficking), oral, written, or physical proof must be accepted as verification.

To increase marketability and success, disadvantaged youth themselves need to be coached on how to communicate the transferability of non-formal learning to a school or job. Non-formal learning opportunities should also include non-disadvantaged youth to promote social inclusion. Furthermore, disadvantaged youth need additional support, not just financial: social and mental and physical health. To keep these efforts visible and sustainable, federal and international oversight is required. Moreover, interventions and financial resources at all levels must be shared and coordinated for developing the most effective interventions.

Recommendations for national or international level are as follows:

1. Accepted definition of non-formal learning and disadvantaged youth
2. Creation of guidelines to recognize and document non-formal learning across member states for disadvantaged youth
3. Centralized non-formal learning for disadvantaged youth regulation and funding from federal government or international organizations

Recommendations for regional and local levels:

1. Coordination of obtaining recognized non-formal opportunities for disadvantaged youth by all stakeholders (business associations, schools, NGOs, government agencies)

2. System of verification for non-formal learning for disadvantaged youth by a centralized non-formal learning governing body
3. Provision of case management services

Ms. Natalia Popova reiterated that skills forecasting is needed to better design jobs for young people. This can be done at the national, international and sectoral levels and can provide information on where the labour market is going and what skills are needed for the future. In recent years, the trend has been a polarization of labour market and school needs. There is a tendency of higher demand for higher skills workers because the economy is becoming technology intense.

To protect the rights of youth migrants, who are migrating abroad in larger numbers, recognition of qualifications is needed. However, recognition of skills and mismatch and strategies to balance issues of informal training must not be limited to vulnerable groups such as migrants, but include all young people.

Ms. Andrea Bateman discussed qualification recognition. Qualification assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies. It is a component of quality management and is focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled.' The elements of quality assurance process include accreditation of qualifications, registration of providers, monitoring of provider processes and outcomes, control, supervision or monitoring of assessment, issuance of certificates and graduation procedures, system wide evaluations of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), including evaluations by external agencies, provision of public information on the performance of providers.

The key aim of a regional quality assurance framework is to develop mutual understanding amongst member countries. They act as an instrument to promote and monitor the improvement of education and training systems, as a reference instrument, a self assessment instrument. Some TVET regional quality assurance frameworks are European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET, Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards: Quality Assurance Standards, East Asia Summit VET Quality Assurance Framework.

Qualifications framework is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes. National frameworks should recognize that non-formal learning is fundamental for youth living in areas where there is no access to education.

The specific purposes of National Qualifications Frameworks are as follows:

- Make national qualifications systems easier to understand
- Clarify and strengthen the links between qualifications within systems
- Support lifelong learning by aiding access, participation and progression

- Aid recognition (credit transfer, recognition of prior learning, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning)
- Strengthen the link and improve the communication between education and training and the labour market
- Create a platform for cooperation and dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders
- Provide a reference point for quality assurance.

Regional common reference qualifications frameworks can:

- Deepen integration and harmonization
- Create a common identity
- Facilitate: transparency of multiple complex systems, mobility of workers and students, recognition and credit transfer
- Support economic imperatives such as removal of barriers to trade

Regional qualifications frameworks vary in purpose, design and functionality (and level of implementation); generally are a common reference framework or ‘meta’ framework; are a means of enabling one framework of qualifications to relate to others and subsequently for one qualification to relate to others that are normally located in another framework, and have very different functions to that of NQFs and aim to add value to the NQFs.

Voluntary code of practice, agreed levels and descriptors, agreed range of functions, quality assurance arrangements, referencing process (how country compares its qualification framework to a major framework), collaborative management, and monitoring arrangements are some elements of Regional qualifications frameworks. Regional Qualification Frameworks can deepen integration and harmonization, create a common identity, support economic imperatives such as removal of barriers to trade, facilitate transparency of multiple complex systems, mobility of workers and students, recognition and credit transfer.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework was discussed as an example. ASEAN is a robust regional group of countries that has been active in building mutual economic and social cooperation. The ASEAN region is typical of other global regions in the patterns of NQF development across countries. Some countries have established comprehensive NQFs, while others have well established sectoral frameworks, and others are yet to develop or are in the process of developing qualifications frameworks.

The framework is still in the final stages of confirmation, and will be finalized in early 2014.

In the discussion that followed, experts reiterated that skills anticipation and skills forecasting are needed. This can be done at the national, international and sectoral levels and can provide information on where the labour market is going and what skills are needed for the future. Experts also noted that how communities and governments recognize non-formal learning depends on the national qualifications framework that a country has already in place. Many existing frameworks push the informal and non-formal component as policy makers should recognize the skills of all people.

There is a problem of high unemployment existing alongside unfilled vacancies. It is an issue of the quality of education and how education and training are responding to labour market needs. It can be difficult to get employers to communicate their needs in terms of skills and then see this reflected quickly in the education system.

One solution is to create a modular training system where young people can take short-term courses to build their skill sets and better equip themselves for the labor market. Better career guidance should also be offered to help youth choose areas of work more relevant to the needs of the labour market. This will help to avoid skills mismatch. For migrants the problem of de-skilling and skills waste is widespread. There should be more channels for regular migration and multi-lateral agreement to guarantee proper skill matching.

9. In the Workforce

Once in the formal labour force, young people often face more unfavourable terms and conditions than their older counterparts. With dauntingly high youth unemployment figures in many places of the world, employers have the advantage of being able to offer young workers contracts which offer little in the way of career security and benefits, knowing that young people with few other prospects are not in a position to bargain. As a result, many young people end up in precarious work situations, with short-term contracts, and little to no pension benefits or health insurance. This hinders a young person's ability to be able to plan for the future and become financially secure.

This session explored the following questions: with a changing professional/career trajectory, how can young people ensure stability and security in their jobs? What can young people do to better advocate for their employment rights when starting out in the working world? The moderator for this session was Ms. Andrea Landry.

Ms. Amy Huziak discussed contracts and entitlements and observed that even for those youth who have found work face many challenges. The situation of young workers has many challenges and their working conditions do not mean ILO's decent work definition. There are also challenges for those who have found work: less favourable conditions and terms, lower pay, less stability. There is a growing informal employment sector; this is unmonitored and unregulated by labour law.

The specific challenges vis-a-vis benefits and entitlements include:

- only 5% of the working women enjoy the pension
- access to health benefits including dental and drug benefits are very limited
- retirement plans are not available for many young workers
- workplace pension plans are reducing in the national level ones
- employment insurance is not available

Quality employment by educating youth about labour unions and employment related legislation must be guaranteed. There are barriers to labour market participation such as lack of education, anti-union legislation, how workers identify and invest in current workplace, reflection of values. To address these barriers:

- We need peer to peer education on unions and unions need to create space for the young people to participate in the unions.
- We should invest in sense of solidarity.
- We should elect a progressive government.
- We need to strengthen partnerships between students and labour markets and make room for young workers to define their place in work force.

Mr. Rory O'Sullivan observed that internships are a pathway to increase the skills of young workers. Internships are a decentralized way in which students gain work experience. There has been an increase in internships because young people need to supplement what they learn in school with real-world experience. Internships can be a good first-step for a successful career, but on the other hand, unpaid internships are a challenging proposition for many youth.

During these hard economic times, with rising rates of youth unemployment, young people are looking for opportunities to increase their skills and gain valuable experience in the labour market. This has led to a significant increase in the number of unpaid internships. However, many young people are in a weak bargaining position because of economic hardships. In addition, in some cases, internships might not contribute to increasing skills of young people. Another concern is that there are enough protection mechanisms to safeguard the interest of interns. Technically, interns are not employees of the company.

If the number of internships is limited, then only the privileged young people can get access to them. One solution is to create "organic" labels for internships and employers who offer internships which are of value to young people and award employers who contribute and increase the intern's skills.

Mr. Daniel Adugna Muluneh discussed entrepreneurship and ways to foster an enabling environment for young entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is often seen as one of the pathways out of unemployment. Entrepreneurship is often a result of generating innovative ideas to improve social outcomes. Young people are often entrepreneurial by nature and offer sustainable solutions to the longstanding problems of their communities. In this way, monetary incentives are not the motivation for fostering entrepreneurship, but instead, the starting point is being innovative and generating solutions to localized problems. Youth entrepreneurs must be empowered by increased information, expanded access to finances and viable government policies that promote and support their entrepreneurial ventures.

Availability of information that nurtures entrepreneurship is vital. Community information centers, internet hotspots and other small scale infrastructure might help youth to get proper information. Translation of key materials into local language could be immensely helpful. The best example is the e-commerce revolution in India.

Education and skills development of young entrepreneurs can take a variety of forms. In fact, formal education alone in a fast-paced dynamic work environment is not sufficient for entrepreneurship. Continuous learning and skills development after completing formal education is the key to becoming a successful entrepreneur.

Government policies matter. Policies that encourage young people, including women and disadvantaged to become entrepreneurs are mandatory. Moreover, young people need to be encouraged to go after opportunities themselves, and society should foster an environment which encourages youth to see things in novel ways and try new approaches. Movement of young people, internships and other kind of interactions can empower people to think strategically to solve local problems.

Access to finances for youth needs to be expanded. Youth do not have proper access to finances. It is still one of the biggest hindrances for young to start businesses. Financial service providers still have many prejudices about youth. Banks most often do not lend to young people. Micro-financers give small amounts and ask for quick return. Thus financial education is a key to creating learning centers for financial education that fosters entrepreneurship.

Mr. Jeremy Liddle believes entrepreneurial thinking will change the world. Entrepreneurial thinking is characterized by fast decision-making, passion, hard work, constant learning and dynamism. Youth unemployment is a huge problem, the root of many, if not all youth issues. Creating entrepreneurial ecosystems will lift societies out of poverty.

Policies that encourage, and enable entrepreneurship are required. Mr. Liddle presented an action plan that is framed around a six pillar ecosystem:

- seeds – ideas for business,
- base of soil - innovations & technology,
- water - access to finances,
- sun - education & support,
- leaves - government & tax& regulation,

- wind - trade & globalization

A lot of the world's aid will be guided by the post 2015 development goals agenda. The world's aid architecture is going to lean on those. All UN member states agree that youth unemployment is the most critical and should be set to be diminished as post-2015 goal. In order to address youth employment all UN member states commit to domestic policies, bilateral & multilateral agreements, and immediate action to support the 6 pillars of youth entrepreneurship.

In the discussion that followed experts touched upon internships and the post post-2015 agenda. Internships are an opening to the workforce, but they need to be somehow improved. It was suggested that governments should regulate internships to ensure the terms are fair to young interns. It was also suggested that reframing the discussion from internships to vocation training is a way to ensure young people gain useful training from these short stints in the labour market. Unpaid vocational training rather than internship would be a better option for the kind of skills it would provide young workers.

In post 2015 development context, youth employment issues will be linked with broader issues of health, education, intergenerational dialogue, all of which collectively promote the employability of the youth. These linkages need to be leveraged to advance the agenda of youth employment. In this context, experts suggested that the private sector should be a part of discussions on economic participation of youth.

10. Recommendations

The meeting concluded with a set of recommendations put forward by experts for consideration by various stakeholders such as member states, civil society organizations, private sector, and the United Nations System in order to advance youth participation in political, civic and economic life. The recommendations were formulated with particular attention to the situation of girls and young women, indigenous youth and migrant youth.

Recommendations - Political Participation

- 1) Formulate a universal definition of real and meaningful youth participation.
- 2) Develop a human rights based approach/framework to migration policies including youth migration policies, recognizing the human element of migration.

- 3) Adapt policies and laws so as to extend the protection of rights, as per those granted to children under age 18, to young people above the age of 18 years.
- 4) Undertake measures at the national level to lower the age of eligibility to vote, supported by accompanying measures to increase youth political participation such as providing spaces for youth participation, and developing civic and political education curricula.
- 5) Ensure the full and effective implementation of systemic changes that make running for public office a possibility and reality, by--together with civil society stakeholders-- encouraging and supporting political participation of young people especially women.
- 6) Regard the right to participation of young people at all levels as a basic and integral principle in fulfilling the other rights of young people in both national and international policies and legislation.
- 7) Develop youth specific affirmative action measures to ensure that young people are better targeted in policies and legislation.
- 8) Ensure adequate resource allocation to youth participatory processes and ensure young people have platforms for participation, including through the development of youth based budgeting in national policies and youth friendly public administration.
- 9) Promote intergenerational mentoring in political processes.

Civic Engagement

- 10) Advance their current legal and policy frameworks related to young people and where no such frameworks exist, initiate such frameworks. In doing so, they should ensure that youth related policies are mainstreamed into all sectors.
- 11) Ensure efforts are made to undertake youth based budgeting to better understand resource allocation to youth related issues and actions.
- 12) Develop educational tools in the area of civic engagement with the full and effective participation of indigenous youth, which defines with the colonial history and the impact of the colonial history on indigenous peoples. Such educational tools should be incorporated into state public school curriculum.
- 13) Ensure the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in particular articles 4 and 18.
- 14) Liaise with civil society organizations to support existing youth participation frameworks and to develop and provide adequate spaces and platforms for youth participation in its internal processes through democratic mechanisms.

- 15) Encourage governments, philanthropic organizations and businesses to support sustainable and flexible core funding to youth organizations/groups.
- 16) Support funders to develop flexible eligibility criteria for grants and funds so as to ensure more successful applications from diverse youth organizations/groups.
- 17) Support the capacity building and development of youth structures, both through financial and other resources.

Economic Participation – Recognition

- 18) Advance strategies to validate the skills and knowledge of youth regardless of where they have been achieved.
- 19) Ensure equal access to education and training, both formal and non formal, and taking into account physical and financial barriers.
- 20) Harmonize formal and non formal education, using non formal education as a complement to formal education.
- 21) Advance strategies to facilitate recognition of qualifications achieved across borders, to facilitate youth learner and labour mobility. And promote the development of occupational standards at the national level reflecting domestic and international labour market needs.
- 22) Promote skills forecasting and analysis for improved skill matching.
- 23) Collaborate with all stakeholders, in particular youth, in the further development of qualification frameworks
- 24) Recognize the importance of non formal and informal learning in the education and training system.
- 25) Support the development of informal and non formal education which is sensitive to the needs of society.
- 26) Implement the recommendations made during the Expert Group Meeting on indigenous youth.
- 27) Facilitate contacts to NGOs and youth led organizations to provide funding for youth programmes.
- 28) Increase access to information and engagement of youth led organizations, on non-formal learning.

Economic Participation – In the workforce

- 29) Enshrine youth employment as a key priority in the post 2015 development agenda
- 30) Commit to domestic policies, bilateral & multilateral agreements, and immediate action to support the 6 pillars of entrepreneurship ecosystems;
 - Innovation & Technology
 - Access to investment and finance
 - Education & coordinated support
 - Tax incentives
 - Entrepreneurship culture
 - Trade
- 31) Promote young people's increased participation in labour movements
- 32) Uphold freedom of association and ensure legislation that allows for the operation of trade unions.
- 33) Promote and foster peer to peer education on trade unions and social justice
- 34) Foster space for young leaders to define their own participation in the labour movement and unions.
- 35) Ensure the development of policies which protect the rights of unpaid interns, such as protection from harassment in the workplace.
- 36) Create an 'organic' label for internships which provides certification to employers who offer internships which are of value to young people.
- 37) Clarify standards related to internships, where in existence, and where lacking, develop appropriate standards to safeguard the rights of interns.
- 38) Encourage schools to connect students to quality paid internships in their field of study, particularly young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 39) Promote a common understanding of what entrepreneurship is and implies.
- 40) Introduce policies and practices which foster an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship, and particularly young women, such as facilitating access to financial services and credit and financial literacy education.
- 41) Promote the development of community centres which provide information on financial services and entrepreneurship for young people, including the availability of internet hotspots and information available in local and traditional languages.

- 42) Prepare a briefing to Member States on youth employment in the Post 2015 development agenda – in the OWG.
- 43) Ensure compliance with international labour standards.

Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Day One	Political and Civic Participation
10:00-10:15	Introduction and opening Ms. Daniela Bas Director DSPD/DESA
10:15-11:00	Political Participation and Civic Engagement – an overview of key issues facing youth. Mr. Jorge Cardona Committee on the Rights of the Child Commission of Experts of the Ibero-American Convention on the rights of youth Mr. Leonardo Castilho Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-13:00	<u>Political participation</u> <i>Moderated by</i> <i>Leonardo Castilho</i> Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan MP Canada <i>Running for office</i> Ms. Ashild Marie Vige Norwegian Children and Youth Council <i>Diversity and Discrimination</i> Mr. Alejandro Morlachetti Commission of Experts of the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth <i>Barriers to the civic participation of migrant youth</i>

13:00- 14:30	Lunch
14:30 –16:00 <i>Moderated by: Ashild Marie Vige</i>	<p><u>Civic Engagement</u> Youth led organizations</p> <p>Ms. Ivana Savic CSD Rio+20 Major Group for Children and Youth <i>Youth Structures</i></p> <p>Ms. Andrea Landry National Association of Friendship Centre <i>Barriers to civic participation of Indigenous Youth</i></p> <p>Mr. Pablo Angulo World Federation of United Nations Associations <i>Civil society organizations as instruments to overcome barriers to engaging political institutions</i></p>
16:00-17:00	Recap of day one synthesis of key recommendations
17:00	Close of day

Day two	Economic Participation
10:00-10:15	Opening
10:15-11:00	<p>Economic Participation – an overview of key issues facing youth.</p> <p>Natalia Popova ILO</p> <p>Ms. Beth Porter UNCDF</p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee Break
11:30-13:00 <i>Moderated by</i>	<p><u>Recognition</u></p> <p>Mr. Jean-Pierre Kallanian EPIConsulting <i>Economic participation and skills recognition</i></p>

	<p><i>of disadvantaged youth</i></p> <p>Natalia Popova ILO <i>Challenges and barriers to skills recognition</i></p> <p>Ms. Andrea Bateman Principal Consultant - ASEAN Secretariat on the development of the ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework <i>Qualifications recognition</i></p>
13:00- 14:30	Lunch
14:30 –16:30	<p><u>In the workforce</u></p> <p><i>Moderated by: Andrea Bateman</i></p> <p>Ms. Amy Huziak Canadian Labour Congress <i>Contracts and entitlements</i></p> <p>Mr. Rory O’Sullivan Young Invincibles <i>Internships</i></p> <p>Mr. Daniel Adugna African Union Commission <i>Creating an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship</i></p> <p>Mr. Jeremy Liddle G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance <i>Youth Entrepreneurship</i></p>
16:30-17:00	<p>Recap of day one synthesis of key recommendations</p>
17:30	Close of day

Annex 2: List of Experts

Experts	Affiliation
1. Daniel Adugna	African Union Commission
2. Pablo Angulo	World Federation of United Nations Associations
3. Andrea Bateman	Principal Consultant - ASEAN Secretariat on the development of the ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework
4. Jorge Cardona	Committee on the Rights of the Child Commission of Experts of the Ibero-American Convention on the rights of youth
5. Leonardo SC Castilho	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
6. Amy Huziak	Canadian Labour Congress
7. Jean-Pierre Kallanian	EPIConsulting
8. Andrea Landry	National Association of Friendship Centre
9. Jeremy Liddle	G20 Young Entrepreneurs Alliance
10. Alejandro Morlachetti	Commission of Experts of the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth

11. Rory O’Sullivan	Young Invincibles
12. Natalia Popova	International Labor Organization
13. Beth Porter	United Nations Capital Development Fund
14. Ivana Savić	CSD Rio+20 Major Group for Children and Youth
15. Rathika Sitsabaiesan	Minister of Parliament, Government of Canada
16. Åshild Marie Vige	Norwegian Children and Youth Council