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**Social development, including questions relating
to the world social situation and to youth, disabled
persons and the family**

Global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to resolution 58/133, by which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session a global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment.

Section II of the report provides an overview of the challenges relating to youth employment and puts this issue in the context of the Millennium Declaration, including the interlinked international agenda on development and collective security. Section III provides an analysis and evaluation of 39 national action plans, or progress reports, on youth employment. This section analyses both the policy and programmatic orientations of these action plans, as well as the process by which they were developed. Section IV draws a series of conclusions from this analysis and Section V concludes with a series of recommendations regarding the role of the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN) as a mechanism for an enhanced peer exchange, support and review mechanism for catalysing action on youth employment at the national and global levels.

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I. Background

1. This report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolutions 57/165 on Promoting youth employment and 58/133 on Policies and programmes involving youth which encourage Member States to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment and which invite the International Labour Organization, within the overall framework of the Youth Employment Network (YEN), to prepare a global analysis and evaluation of progress made in this regard. Further, the General Assembly in its resolution 58/133 specifies that these national action plans on youth employment either be integrated into their national action plans on employment or issued as separate documents, and it requests the Secretary-General to submit this global analysis and evaluation to its 60th session within the framework of its ten-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Guidelines for the preparation of the reports on national reviews and action plans were provided to Member States in the form of a guidance note contained in Annex I to the Report of the Secretary-General on Promoting youth employment (A/58/229).

2. Because of length constraints, the present report summarizes the findings of a larger report to be published by the ILO on the global analysis of national action on youth employment.¹ This present report should also be read in conjunction with the World Youth Report 2005,² and the Report of the Secretary General to the Commission for Social Development on the “Review of Further Implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the 24th Special Session of the General Assembly.”³

II. Youth Employment: Overview of challenges

3. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that around 88 million young women and men are unemployed throughout the world and many more young people are working long hours for low pay, struggling to survive in the informal economy.⁴ This places the youth share of the total 186 million unemployed persons globally at 47 per cent, a particularly troublesome figure given that youth make up only 25 per cent of the working-age population. Adding to these figures, the ILO reports an increase in intermittent (temporary, part-time, casual) work and insecure arrangements for young people in both industrialized and developing economies.

4. In addition to the challenges of unemployment and underemployment, young people are confronted by further obstacles which make them especially vulnerable to social, economic, physical and psychological influences.⁵ Many young people never complete secondary school, about two thirds of school dropouts are young girls, and less than one fourth of girls attend secondary school in many developing countries. Furthermore, the majority of people newly infected with HIV/AIDS are youth with a higher infection rate among young women than young men. Other factors, in combination with young people’s age, which make them especially vulnerable are disability, ethnic and social background or geographic location.

5. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the challenge of youth employment has been increasingly recognized by the international community. The Economic Commission for Africa, for example, made specific recommendations with regard to youth employment, highlighting the role of the Youth Employment Network in addressing this challenge. In particular, the Commission recommended that \$30 million be allocated to help 25 sub-Saharan African countries prepare and begin implementation of National Action Plans on youth

employment and to assist in leveraging additional resources recommended for the African Enterprise Challenge fund and the infrastructure development fund towards the implementation of these national plans.

6. Youth employment also offers the most obvious bridge between the development and security agenda embodied in the Millennium Declaration. A poor economic and social environment can foster conditions in which youth are recruited or forced into armed conflicts not only within their own borders, but also in neighbouring countries. Youth are often the prime victims of such conflicts. Civil wars and social conflicts can also negatively impact economic growth, investments and the secure development of entire regions. Employment growth is a key to reducing tensions behind many security issues today, as well as other social challenges such as irregular migration, trafficking, gender inequality and poverty.

7. Following its mission to West Africa in July 2003, the Security Council reported that “In every country visited, the mission heard about the problem of unemployment, particularly among young people, and how this was a perennial source of instability in West Africa.” The mission expressed the hope that the Office of the Special Representative for West Africa would undertake a major collaborative effort with its partners to devise a practical and concerted regional approach to this pressing problem.⁶ In the Statement of its President of 25 February 2005, the Security Council reaffirmed the urgency of finding lasting solutions to the problem of youth unemployment in West Africa in order to prevent the recruitment of such youth by illegal armed groups.

8. There is not one cause for youth unemployment and underemployment, nor is there one single approach or strategy for addressing the challenge. However, the partners of the Youth Employment Network⁷ recognize that the responses should be integrated and comprehensive, addressing both supply and demand.

9. Whatever policy solutions are prescribed in a given context, young people need to be engaged as active partners in the design and implementation of policies that affect them. Rather than being a target group for which employment must be found, they should be considered partners in developing solutions. Hence, youth are not the problem but part of the solution.⁸ Young people urge governments to address their concerns by ensuring that their voices are heard and their ideas integrated into policies that affect them. Young people are asking to be recognized not only as potential political and business leaders, workers and consumers of tomorrow, but especially as partners of today.

10. Recognising these facts and challenges, youth employment has been made an integral part of the Millennium Declaration, both as an important target in its own right in the Millennium Development Goals and a key contribution to meeting other Millennium Goals.⁹ Little progress on implementing the Millennium Declaration will be achieved unless youth are provided with the resources, self-esteem and dignity which decent work can provide.

11. The expected inflow of 1.19 billion young people who will be entering the working age population over the next decade¹⁰ represents valuable human capital which, when properly nurtured, managed and invested in, can provide a springboard for economic and social development. The international community, by focusing its efforts on this “Millennium Generation” has an unparalleled opportunity to achieve sustainable impact on all the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015.

III. Analyses of Action Plans

A. Introduction

12. As of 30 June 2005, a total of 39 Member States¹¹ had responded to the Secretary-General's Note Verbale of November 2004 requesting Member States to submit their plan or progress report, showing progress made in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans on youth employment. The global analysis and evaluation is based on these submissions.

13. Many other Member States have prepared or are in the process of preparing National Action Plans (NAP) on Youth Employment, or other policy or strategic documents on employment or on youth which address youth employment. This is, for example, the case of those countries which have stepped forward as lead countries to the Youth Employment Network, but have not as yet submitted action plans or progress reports to the UN Secretariat.¹² Furthermore, all twenty-five European Union Member States have prepared national employment reports in the framework of the European Employment Strategy. Ten of these governments have submitted their reports in response to the above-mentioned resolutions of the General Assembly.

14. The global analysis examines the submissions from Member States against the guidelines provided in the Secretary General's report on Promoting Youth Employment (A/58/229, Annex I). Specifically, an attempt was made to determine whether: (a) past policies and programmes on youth employment are reviewed and analyzed as a basis for moving forward; (b) existing reports or policies on youth employment such as Poverty Reduction Strategies, National Youth Policies, National Employment Policies, and reports on relevant ILO Conventions¹³ are drawn upon to ensure that the plan is integrated into national policy making processes and funding mechanisms; (c) the preparation of the plan has involved young people, different government ministries and departments, employers, workers, and civil society; (d) mechanisms, baseline indicators and statistical data have been put in place for monitoring progress and evaluating the National Action Plan and baseline indicators or statistical data are provided to monitor progress, and (e) assistance has been sought from the YEN Core Partner institutions (i.e., the International Labour Office, the World Bank or the United Nations Secretariat), or from other outside institutions, in the drafting process.

15. The analysis seeks to identify whether the National Action Plans or progress report adopts an integrated approach linking the supply and demand sides of youth employment policy. It examines if the four global priorities of employability, entrepreneurship, employment creation and equal opportunities have been adopted as a framework for analysis and action within the plan. Other areas given consideration in evaluation criteria used in this report are the importance attached to information and communication technologies, links between child labour and youth employment and the importance of youth employment in conflict prevention and resolution.

B. Policy and programmatic orientations of the National Action Plans

(i) Integrated approach

16. The High-Level Panel on Youth Employment has recommended that countries adopt an integrated approach for employment policy development. Most submissions in fact focused on the supply side, namely on the question of preparing young people for the labour market through basic education, vocational training and entrepreneurship development. Nevertheless other

Member States addressed the need to also create new job possibilities both through job creation schemes and transforming undeclared work. Those countries which highlighted an integrated approach to youth employment focused on building a competitive private sector, encouraging foreign and local investment, promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing employability of the workforce and equal opportunities, while seeking to reduce the rate of long term unemployment. Youth employment policies are not just restricted to active labour market policies but extend to social, educational, tax, enterprise and regional policies. Many responses focused on promoting better matching between job opportunities and the available workforce including through promoting gender equality and combating discrimination.

(ii) Employability

Education

17. Primary education is considered a pre-requisite for successful entry into the labour market, and the importance of primary education for youth employment figured prominently in many replies received. Areas receiving particular attention included the need to grant equal access to primary education, both for girls and boys, and for rural and urban regions, and for the poor as well as for those who can afford to pay the costs of this education. Many countries are seeking to reduce the number of early school leavers. Equal opportunities for everyone are provided through the right of access to a minimum level of basic skills and in some cases also the right to secondary education. Some countries are addressing cultural barriers and making it more acceptable for young girls to attend school and complete their education.

18. Indonesia's approach to universal basic education is through making it affordable to the poor and improving its quality. While Syria has enacted a non-discriminatory law on compulsory education obliging municipalities to offer education to all, other countries are attempting to address the issue of school dropouts. In Portugal and Germany, programmes provide education, training courses and consultative services between parents and students focusing on youth at risk and with learning difficulties. These interventions are aimed at preventing disadvantaged students from leaving school and joining the unemployment ranks. In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sport has teamed up with German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to provide non-formal education with elements of pre-vocational training to rural youth in a programme designed to address school dropouts.

19. Serbia and Montenegro noted that the unemployment rate is higher among youth with high levels of education. This apparent anomaly exists in many countries where high levels of informal sector employment occupy the majority of the less educated workforce. This presents an inauspicious situation for youth who may become disenchanted with education, as few highly skilled opportunities exist. Japan and Lithuania have recently set up comprehensive job placement and career counselling offices to support graduates at all levels of their job search. From their school-to-work transition survey, Indonesia's youth reported their primary reason for abandoning school was that they did not see the purpose of continuing education in the face of low quality and inappropriateness of skills acquired. Therefore education is often seen, contrary to the conventional view, as lacking relevance to finding a job. The need for financial support also makes many young people to seek employment prior to completing basic educational training. The socio-economic environment can hence force children to leave school early and make them vulnerable to trafficking and to child labour.

Vocational training

20. Vocational training is an integral part of all of the replies submitted. Many countries have increased funding for vocational training and introduced courses to link vocational training with self-employment or entrepreneurial skills. Another prevalent means of improving employment opportunities for youth is through internships and apprenticeships, which provide tangible work experience required by employers. Monaco and Singapore work with educational institutions to provide these opportunities. Some programmes establish formal training agreements with employers while others subsidize enterprises which hire youth. In some countries, employers voluntarily provide work opportunities experience to young people as they see youth making a unique contribution to the workplace with their enthusiasm, energy, commitment, innovation and a willingness to embrace change. Many countries encourage and foster partnerships between employers, workers and also educational institutions.

21. Although career choice tends to be individual, governments recognize that they must provide support for youth to realize their career ambitions. Nearly all of the plans included measures to improve the preparation of graduates for the labour market. In most countries, schools are principally responsible for student career counselling and guiding students into higher education or professions. Reports mention measures to improve employment services such as job fairs, job centres, information dissemination and improving the job-seeking skills of candidates.

22. Breaking down stereotypes of unpopular careers is important across many job categories, and some countries found that they need to encourage youth to take on the existing jobs which are available, even if they are out of favour.

(iii) Entrepreneurship

23. Some countries report efforts to create the right economic environment for development of small and medium enterprises with a principal focus on making it easy to do business. Some have adopted a 'making work pay' approach favouring across the board social security and taxation reforms. Reducing 'red tape' and unnecessary regulatory burdens can go a long way to attract investment, support entrepreneurs and stimulate new businesses. Some countries have also made access to finance much easier, which can help encourage innovation and creation of new businesses. Subsidies and tax incentives are also offered to businesses creating jobs for youth, including for youth with disabilities.

24. Promoting entrepreneurial activity is recognized in many National Action Plans as an important means of employment creation. Policy makers are trying to make self-employment and business development a preferred option for youth by building an enterprise culture, creating the right environment and providing access to the tools necessary to create and maintain a business. The first step is to change cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship in schools by promoting it as a career choice. In the United Kingdom, students aged 14-16 in secondary schools across the country will receive at least five days of enterprise education. Furthermore, a business-led campaign, Make Your Mark, will help promote the spirit of enterprise to young people. Improving the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training in vocational schools and developing a media campaign to promote youth entrepreneurship are some of the support mechanisms reported.

25. Business start-ups are a key factor for the dynamism of any economy and many countries are implementing measures to support youth in this area by making it easier to start and run their

own business. Some countries are strengthening micro finance institutions and providing incentives for youth borrowers who target specific themes. Pakistan, Senegal and Syria promote banks and funds for small enterprise development and support young entrepreneurs in rural areas. Mexico and Colombia report on supporting young men and women in formulating project proposals and business plans as well as through financing their start-ups.

26. Microfinance also plays a critical role in empowering women, delivering new-found respect, independence, community participation and household income. Therefore, some countries have established funds earmarked for women. In addition to money, Saudi Arabia is providing access to property for women to start up a business. Burkina Faso has designated funds for youth to establish small and medium enterprises, to formalize business ventures in the informal economy and to support innovation by young women. In Algeria, young people have access to financial services without a credit history in order to invest into self-employment activities. The United Kingdom has established a framework for women entrepreneurs which highlights four key areas for action: improving business support services; access to finance; caring and childcare; and transition from benefits to self-employment. It reports an increase in female owned start-ups.

27. Indonesia is fostering linkages between large and small enterprises, believing that large companies have knowledge, expertise, resources and networks and can provide an effective channel for SMEs and start-ups to access necessary support.

(iv) Equal opportunities

28. National reports and action plans addressed equal opportunities both with respect to gender and from the standpoint of vulnerable groups. Countries reported that diversification of opportunities for women can be achieved by breaking down occupational gender stereotyping and by providing equal access to training for both young women and young men.

29. Many of the submitted documents, in addition to presenting equal opportunities from a gender perspective, also gave special attention to ethnic minorities, youth with disabilities, migrants or young people growing up in unfavourable environments. For example Germany provides pre-vocational training measures for young people with disabilities, youth from low-income families and those with a weak educational background. In Thailand the Ministry of Labour holds career days for juveniles living in detention centres, while Bulgaria has special programmes targeted at providing professional guidance and advice to youth raised in institutions to help them prepare to make the transition to the world of work in the outside world.

30. Indonesia, is addressing gender stereotypes in curricula and gender segregation in education. In addition, it is going to conduct rigorous awareness raising campaigns to change the perception of traditional gender roles and the division of responsibilities between women and men. Finland is currently amending the Act on Equality Between Women and Men. The new Act, to enter into effect in 2005, will reinforce the duty to promote equality and to eliminate discrimination. The Russian Federation targets young women who are socially vulnerable and might face difficulties in the labour market such as single mothers, women with disabilities, and women released from penal institutions. The United Kingdom highlights a recent report that presented a correlation between under-representation of women and skills shortages. It concluded that a gender segregated labour force not only promotes inequality in pay and opportunities, but also denies employers access to the key skills needed to improve productivity. A national strategy is being developed to ensure a consistent approach to tackling occupational

segregation. It will be informed by research into reasons why young men and women are not training in areas of skills shortages.

31. Hungary reports on its suburban “Sand Lot” school which recruits disadvantaged young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who have no skills, have dropped out of school and are hanging out aimlessly. The project helps participants return to school by offering customized training matching their abilities and desires. The programme locates the drifting young people with the help of social workers in local areas. Norway addresses dropouts with its “youth guarantee” that ensures that all young people are in school, hold a job, or are in a labour market programme.

32. Brazil’s national “first job” program, launched in 2003, aims to combat poverty and social exclusion through combining employment and income policies with a public and private investment policy. It targets youth with little schooling, from vulnerable groups and from low-income families and those subject to discrimination. Croatia has implemented a programme, targeting youth from a range of educational levels, to ease the transition from school to the workplace by providing short-term subsidies for employers hiring young people. Nicaragua supports youth from poor rural areas both in self-employment and agricultural cooperatives with technical and managerial skills, access to credit and new technology. The Dominican Republic has a specific plan to place disabled youth in the labour market by working with prospective employers, by helping workers with disabilities to overcome obstacles to obtain and sustain employment and by disseminating public information about the situation of workers with disabilities.

(v) Employment Creation

33. A number of governments reported on policy measures and investment strategies to stimulate job creation. Key areas include labour-intensive infrastructure development, fiscal and other incentives for business development and encouraging development of economic sectors with employment potential, such as agriculture, the service sector and information and communication technologies. Other countries, such as the Netherlands, have launched public education campaigns to counteract the perception that unemployed youth are not productive or have nothing to offer.

34. Tanzania and Pakistan reported on schemes involving youth groups in labour-intensive activities such as farm to market roads, irrigation, garbage collection and drainage. The objective of these programmes is to reduce poverty and improve living conditions while at the same time creating employment opportunities. Tanzania’s programmes seek to limit the increasing number of school dropouts migrating from the rural to urban areas seeking employment. The government promotes labour intensive infrastructure development for organized youth groups undertaking agricultural activities in green belts around urban centres to absorb unemployed youth. In an attempt to promote farming in order to address hunger and poverty, the Government also provides information to increase productivity and competitiveness and offers tax relief on agricultural tools and machinery. The Government also has policies to help youth acquire land. It has allocated special property areas designated for youth infrastructure development and enacted laws to protect youth from discrimination in leasing land.

35. Syria has established a national committee to specifically develop and implement activities aimed at generating employment and reducing poverty. By creating opportunities in production and service-oriented sectors, it seeks to provide goods and services that generate employment and hence also can help alleviate poverty.

36. The Republic of Korea is focusing its efforts on highly educated yet unemployed college graduates while recognizing that a sustainable impact on youth employment must be based on an economic recovery centred on job creation. However, the Government is concerned that if young people are left unemployed until the economy recovers, they might lose their employability, limiting their future labour market prospects as well as the hindering national competitiveness. The Government aims to break away from the conventional view that employment accompanies growth and is reviewing economic and labour policies from the perspective of job creation. In addition, it is working to establish a business friendly environment by stabilizing the labour market, improving the corporate investment and management environment through cooperative labour management relationships and subsidizing those SMEs which create new jobs.

37. Azerbaijan identified three major strategies for job creation: active labour market programmes such as public works and wage subsidies, exploiting oil sector revenues to finance employment-intensive public works and promoting a conducive environment for SME development.

38. Algeria notes that aggressive “pre-employment” programmes help young people make the transition from school to the workplace by enabling them to acquire valuable experience in a professional environment to make them more attractive candidates in attaining permanent employment.

39. Brazil reports on its programme to create jobs through financial subsidies. For each new job created there is a financial incentive of R\$1,500.00 (Real). This will be closely monitored to guarantee decent working conditions for newly hired young people. Companies who are willing to participate in the programme without receiving incentives by being good corporate citizens are publicly recognized by the Ministry of Labour and Employment by means of the hallmark “Partner Company in the First Job Program”.

40. Other countries report that they are seeking to exploit new opportunities in emerging sectors, to promote those industries making a specific contribution to development and to stimulate economic diversification. The Republic of Slovenia recognizes that a coordinated response among all government agencies is necessary to facilitate the creation of new jobs. In Oman, an economic diversification policy is emphasizing sectors such as tourism, recognizing its direct and indirect employment creation impact. The Government recognizes that growth can be more or less employment intensive and is looking to achieve a better balance between employment growth and productivity growth considering the economic and social constraints facing the country.

41. Indonesia also seeks to exploit opportunities in emerging sectors such as tourism, mass media, health and education, environmental conservation, the service sector and information and communication technologies (ICT). Regarding the latter, Indonesia furthermore recognizes that ICTs are a key driver for growth and jobs in other sectors since they can help most enterprises improve productivity and remain competitive. Another sector receiving support involves agro industries which can strengthen urban-rural linkages critical for job creation, poverty reduction and combating hunger. Indonesia also seeks to mainstream youth employment issues into local economic development initiatives.

42. The most technically sound policies for youth employment are likely to fail unless they are based on a clear understanding of young people’s aspiration, frustrations and expectations vis-à-vis the labour market. A major concern for youth is to find not just any job, but jobs that are sustainable, provide an opportunity for advancement and have good working conditions. Most submissions did not address the issues of quality and sustainability, but some did report on

working conditions. Mexico, for example, points out its concern for young workers' rights and seeks to develop actions to eliminate the exploitation of youth, improve working conditions and ensure proper remuneration of work. Brazil notes that employers must recognize workers rights deriving from collective agreements of the categories to which they belong, and must also guarantee the conditions under which the young person continues in, or returns to school, and Indonesia is seeking to provide improved protection for women workers overseas. The Slovak Republic emphasizes the creation of jobs for disadvantaged groups.

C. The process of formulating and developing national action plans on youth employment

43. The Guidelines for the preparation of national action plans on youth employment¹⁴ emphasize the need to first carry out a critical review of past national policies. However, very few responses indicated that such a review had been undertaken. Likewise, little information was provided on previous policies and strategies relevant to youth employment, such as poverty reduction strategies, national youth policies, national employment policies or reports on relevant ILO Conventions. Only one country reported that it is reviewing its past employment policies, specific youth plans and poverty reduction strategies to develop a strategic approach to addressing youth employment.

44. Many submissions did include statistics outlining the current employment situation for youth. However, only a couple of countries indicated that they have a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place with baseline indicators or statistical data to monitor progress

45. The Guidelines furthermore emphasize the importance of the National Action Plans being undertaken through a consultative process involving different departments of government, youth organizations and young people, as well as representatives of employers, workers, private sector and civil society organizations. Indonesia, Kenya, Jordan, Brazil, Tanzania, Syria, Mexico, Argentina, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Poland are amongst those countries reporting on various consultative mechanisms for National Action Plan or youth employment policy development. Involvement of employers' organizations is rather frequent as is governmental ministries other than the ones directly working on youth or labour. Those who reported engaging other stakeholders note the added value to policies and implementation. Whereas some countries recognize consultation as part of their process to develop a strategy, the majority of the submissions provide few specifics about this consultative process.

46. Youth involvement appears to have been weak and is mentioned in only a few submissions. A few countries report engaging youth in policy making while others noted they encourage youth groups and organizations. Some provide financial or technical support to youth movements, and others encourage cooperation between youth organizations and governments on local and national levels to protect youth interests and needs. Overall, few countries mentioned budgetary allocations to support implementation of their national action plans.

47. Some countries seek to build bridges between government, educational institutions and the business community as they see the benefit of business involvement in identifying future labour needs and educating and of training youth to meet those demands. Business, including foreign owned companies, can often provide expertise on technology, industry standards and skills. In this regard, the Republic of Korea ensures that industry and universities work together to meet future skills demand. Universities that establish new departments to meet industrial needs through a contract with companies are eligible for governmental financial support for

facilities and research costs. In addition, a system has been established to evaluate whether college curricula meet industrial demands.

48. The Republic of Korea has furthermore forged a tripartite social pact on job creation. The Government strives to create a better investment environment for business, devises measures to improve income levels of low- income families and enhance the social safety net. Such policies are intended to encourage employers to expand investment for youth employment and to use human resources more effectively. Workers agree to cooperate in improving productivity and in stabilizing incomes.

49. Some countries also noted the involvement of additional actors such as the YEN core partners (ILO, UN and World Bank), other international organizations, donors and civil society. The most popular form of collaboration is within the government, as many submissions note their engagement of other agencies in special committees, roundtable discussions, task teams or workshops.

50. The relevant UN General Assembly resolutions on youth employment¹⁵ invite governments to draw upon the expertise of the ILO, UN and World Bank in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of action plans. Amongst the limited number of countries which reported seeking assistance from these YEN core partner institutions are Azerbaijan, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Nicaragua and Uganda. Uganda also reported on its partnerships with the German development cooperation agency GTZ.¹⁶

IV. Conclusions

51. Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, the urgency of the commitment to give young people everywhere access to decent and productive work has only increased. Unemployment and underemployment of young people is not only a social concern, but it also has economic and increasingly political dimensions.

52. In those countries which have social protection such as unemployment insurance or welfare protection, youth unemployment represents an enormous drain on national and local budgets, while at the same time representing a terrible waste of the capabilities and potential contribution to social development of the best educated generation of young people ever. In those countries without institutional social protection, the burden of youth unemployment is felt in other ways. It is felt by families who have foregone income and invested in the education of their daughters and sons, only to find themselves continuing to provide income support to their grown children, who are increasingly frustrated and bitter to find themselves “unemployable.” It is felt by those from low-income families where young people cannot afford the “luxury” of open unemployment, and therefore are struggling to survive in low-income, dead-end and often dangerous jobs in the informal economy. And the burden of youth unemployment is borne by all those living in communities and societies where youth unemployment is the root cause of destructive and self-destructive behaviour, ranging from neighbourhood gangs to local militias where unemployed young people are desperately seeking not only income, but also recognition and a sense of belonging.

53. Given the social, economic and political costs of youth unemployment and underemployment, inaction is not an option.

54. The 39 national reports and action plans on youth employment provide the clear message that countries are actively seeking answers, while at the same time doing much and learning in

the process. The experiences reported on are both rich and diverse. A number of broad conclusions can be drawn from these reports.

55. The first is that there is no magic bullet, no one single policy that “works,” and which can be exported to other countries as a “good practice.” Rather policies and actions to address youth employment require a coherent and integrated approach, which on the one hand, prepares young people for the labour market, while at the same time, preparing the labour market for young people. When the High-Level Panel on Youth Employment proposed a coherent and integrated approach to youth employment, based on the four global priorities of employability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunities and employment creation, it recognized the importance of linking supply and demand-based perspectives.

56. A second conclusion is that reported youth employment policies have focused largely on the supply side. Many countries have indeed reported on initiatives to make general education more employment oriented. Others have pointed towards the importance of helping young people to create their own employment opportunities through self-employment and entrepreneurship development. Major investments are made in upgrading and continually re-evaluating vocational training programmes, focused not just on traditional occupations, but also in developing those skills which are essential to a world where young people must expect to change jobs and careers often during their lifetime. Another key element for preparing young people for the world of work is to provide them with work experience. A combination of both training and on-the-job experience underpins the German dual track training system which has helped keep the youth unemployment rate close to the rate for the population as a whole, a system which has been replicated in different forms according to national circumstances by many other countries.

57. A third conclusion is that all these efforts to better prepare young people for the world of work are likely to fail unless accompanied by policies which actually create new and additional employment opportunities for young people coming onto the labour market. While many countries speak of a “mismatch” between skills and the kinds of labour market opportunities available, the overall problem of youth employment is related to the inability of most economic policies to create employment opportunities of the quality which responds to the expectations, and indeed, the aspirations of young people. Rather than asking the new generation to lower its expectations, policy makers should be working to foster employment-intensive economic growth from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

58. Therefore policies to foster employability and entrepreneurship must necessarily be accompanied by measures to stimulate demand and create additional jobs. More broadly speaking, employment creation should become a central goal—not a by-product—of government policies for investment and economic growth. One specific area on which a number of governments have reported favourably is increasing the employment impact of infrastructure investment policies, including through labour-intensive public works. While these programmes need not be specifically targeted towards young people alone, they, the new entrants to the labour market, will usually be the prime beneficiaries.

59. Fourthly, youth employment should not be approached from a target group angle or simply as a sub-set of the labour market. If policy makers focus their energies first on creating sound employment outcomes for young people, these results can be expected to have sustainable impact on the youth cohort throughout their life cycle, and to have positive spill over effects on other age groups. Rather than adopting policies which favour youth to the detriment of other age groups, policies in favour of youth employment should be promoted with a view to improving

the situation of all age groups within the labour market (for example, employment for young people is essential for the viability and sustainability of retirement funds and unemployment insurance).

60. Fifthly, a consultative process is required for national action plans to have broad-based ownership which in turn is required for the measures to reach their intended impact. Consultation with and participation of representative youth organizations in the preparation of most national action plans has been either weak or inadequately reported. The most technically sound policies are bound to fail if they are not developed and implemented through dialogue with the young people who are their intended beneficiaries. Likewise, involvement of representative employer and worker organizations has been on the whole inadequate.

61. Sixthly, most countries not only have a lot to learn from each other, but are also thirsty for this information and knowledge. The added value of the Youth Employment Network is that it provides a mechanism for sharing knowledge and experience between its partners, strengthened by the fundamental principle that everyone, irrespective of the country's level of development, has something to learn, and everyone has something to share.

62. A seventh conclusion is that meeting the Millennium commitment on youth employment requires concerted and coordinated action not only at the local and national levels, but also internationally. Whereas Member States must begin their efforts at home and in their local communities, success in achieving decent and productive work for young people is dependent on a number of elements which extend beyond national borders and which are governed by international practices, policies and agreements in areas such as foreign direct investment, international trade, migration and financial flows.

63. Eighth, developing strategies and programmes for youth employment provides a powerful tool for building political consensus and policy coherence, both at the level of international institutions such as between the World Bank and the ILO, but also at the level of different national governmental departments (such as labour, finance, education, foreign affairs, trade and industry, for example), youth organizations, employers' and workers' representatives and civil society organizations. In view of the broad agreement on the importance of youth employment from different political and interest group perspectives, joint action on youth employment can build trust and confidence for reaching agreements in more controversial areas of economic and social policy, and even on resolving political disputes. Accordingly, it is noteworthy that the Youth Employment Network has become a forum for building coherence and consensus around economic and social policies and for dialogue between young people and policy makers.

64. Finally, and with respect to building political consensus, youth employment provides a bridge between security, peace building and development and the proposal of the High-level Panel on youth employment for a major new policy and action-oriented initiative on the links between youth employment and collective security merits serious consideration and support.

V. Recommendations

65. The Youth Employment Network provides an important vehicle for realising the commitment of the Millennium Declaration to provide “decent and productive work for young people.” It derives its strength and solidarity from the leadership of its partner entities, including the growing group of YEN lead countries who have voluntarily stepped forward to take leadership on this issue, and have committed themselves to ensure policy

coherence for the promotion of youth employment. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Encourage those countries which have prepared national reviews and action plans on youth employment to move forward to the implementation stage, and through a process of learning by doing, to continue improving the analytical foundations and impact of their actions. Other countries which have not yet prepared national action plans should be encouraged to do so. All countries which have not yet submitted their national reviews and action plans, or progress reports, to the Youth Employment Network focal point within the UN Secretariat are encouraged to do so as soon as possible;

(b) Also encourage Governments to develop their national action plans through collaboration between government, representative youth organizations, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society, and to promote partnerships between public authorities, the private sector, educational institutions and civil society. Governments should also be encouraged to integrate their action plans into their broader development and poverty reduction strategy documents, and to prioritise therein the necessary resources for implementation of these plans.

(c) Encourage government to devise new policy-oriented indicators to monitor and evaluate progress on implementing their National Action Plans. Recognizing that the unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds does not provide an adequate basis for monitoring progress at the national, regional and global levels on achieving the Millennium target of decent and productive work for young people, recommends that the Youth Employment Network coordinate the work of its core partners to establish an improved indicator which takes into account not only those in open unemployment, but also those young people who are in education, who are underemployed, who are working in the informal economy and who may have dropped out of the labour market altogether.

(d) Further encourage Member States to consider youth employment as integral to their overall strategies for development and collective security, and within this context to give renewed attention, within the Millennium Declaration, to the commitment on "decent and productive work for young people". This commitment should be seen as an underpinning of and key to achieving the other MDGs, including poverty reduction, the achievement of equal opportunities and the fight against HIV/AIDS. Over the next ten years, efforts should focus on giving young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old access to decent and productive employment opportunities, and by accompanying and nurturing this generation over the next decade, provide our global community with its one best chance for attaining all of the Millennium Development goals by the year 2015.

(e) Renew and strengthen the invitation already made in previous General Assembly resolutions¹⁵ on the Youth Employment Network, under the leadership of the International Labour Organization and in close partnership with the UN Secretariat, the World Bank and other relevant specialized agencies, to assist and support, upon request, the efforts of Governments in the elaboration and implementation of national reviews and action plans.

(f) Strengthen YEN's Youth Consultative Group so that, in addition to its overall advisory role, its constituent youth organizations can play a more active role at the country level to support development and implementation of national action plans.

(g) Invite new countries and partner organizations to join the Youth Employment Network and encourage the lead countries to strengthen the work of the YEN as a peer exchange, support and review mechanism. In support of the further development of this

mechanism, invite the International Labour Organization, within the framework of the YEN and in close cooperation with the World Bank and the United Nations, to undertake an annual update of this global analysis and evaluation of progress made in the development and implementation of national reviews and action plans on youth employment.

(h) Having taken note of the financial contributions made for both the core resource requirements of the YEN Secretariat and for the country-level work of its partner organizations, encourage Member States to provide additional financial resources to strengthen and expand the work of the YEN at the national, regional and international levels.

Annex I

Countries that submitted National Action Plans or Progress Reports (as of 30 June 2005)

1. Algeria
2. Argentina
3. Azerbaijan
4. Brazil
5. Bulgaria
6. Burkina Faso
7. Colombia
8. Croatia
9. Dominican Republic
10. Finland
11. Germany
12. Hungary
13. Indonesia
14. Japan
15. Jordan
16. Kenya
17. Lithuania
18. Mexico
19. Monaco
20. Netherlands
21. Nicaragua
22. Norway
23. Oman
24. Pakistan
25. Poland
26. Portugal
27. Republic of Korea
28. Russian Federation
29. Saudi Arabia
30. Senegal
31. Serbia & Montenegro
32. Singapore
33. Slovakia
34. Slovenia
35. Syria
36. Tanzania
37. Thailand
38. Uganda
39. United Kingdom

Annex II

Criteria for a Global Analysis and Evaluation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment

A. The Process in developing the National Action Plan

1. Does the Action Plan utilize the framework laid out by the Guidelines on Preparation of National Reviews and Action Plans provided in the UN Secretary General's report on Promoting Youth Employment (A/58/229, Annex 1)?
2. Before preparing the National Action Plan has the government provided a review of past policies and programmes on youth employment?
3. As suggested in the Guidelines, has the Government drawn on existing reports or policy statements on youth employment (e.g., Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers, reports on relevant ILO on Convention 122, national youth policies or national employment policies)?
4. Has the preparation of the plan been a participatory process?
 - Involving young people?
 - Involving different government ministries and departments?
 - Involving social partners?
 - Involving civil society?
5. What is the nature and depth of this participatory process?
6. What mechanisms are put in place for monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan? What baseline indicators or statistical data is provided to monitor progress?
7. Have the parties developing this action plan sought assistance from the YEN Core Partner institutions (i.e., ILO, World Bank or UN) in this process, or from other outside institutions?

B. Substance and priorities of the National Action Plan

8. Does the NAP adopt an integrated approach linking the supply and demand sides of youth employment policy?
9. What are the salient issues raised in the following categories (the YEN's four global priorities)?
 - Employability — education; vocational training; work experience; career guidance and job counseling; school to work transition; other issues
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Equal opportunities
 - Employment creation — Linking youth employment to macro-economic policy; policies to stimulate demand and to create additional jobs for new labour market entrants; linking youth employment to overall employment policies including inter-generational aspects; investment policies
 - Importance of information and communication technologies
 - Links between child labour and youth employment
 - Impact of youth employment to conflict prevention and resolution

Notes

¹ Document to be published.

² A/60/61.

³ E/CN.5/2005/6

⁴ ILO: Global employment trends for youth, Geneva, ILO, 2004

⁵ Youth Employment Summit Secretariat: Youth unemployment: The current scenario (May 2002), from: www.youthemploymentsummit.org/gkr/res/issuestatement.pdf

⁶ See S/2003/688

⁷ The Youth Employment Network (YEN) is an initiative of the Secretary-General launched to implement the Millennium Declaration's commitment to provide young people everywhere with access to decent and productive work. It is composed of fifteen lead countries, the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Panel on youth employment, a Youth Consultative Group, and a growing network of partner organizations both within the United Nations System and in civil society, and is coordinated under the joint commitment and leadership of the Secretary-General, the Director-General of the International Labour Office and the President of the World Bank. The ILO is lead agency for the Network and hosts its permanent Secretariat.

⁸ UN, General Assembly, Fifty-sixth session, Agenda item 29, Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, A/56/422, New York, 2001.

⁹ Investing in youth by promoting youth employment is an investment in meeting the MDGs since it can directly contribute to: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. Achieve universal primary education; 3. Promote gender equality and empower women and; 8. Develop a global partnership for development. By improving the economic and social situation of people, it can indirectly contribute to: 4. Reduce child mortality; 5. Improve maternal health and; 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

¹⁰ ILO estimates, based on the cumulative number of young people entering the 15-24 year old age cohort over the next ten years.

¹¹ For the list of Member States that have submitted a national review and action plan, or a progress report towards such a plan see Annex I.

¹² As of the writing of this report, those countries which have volunteered to be YEN lead countries, are: Azerbaijan, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Syria, Uganda and the United Kingdom. Only seven of these fifteen lead countries have as yet submitted national action plans or progress reports.

¹³ For example, the ILO conventions and recommendations of relevance for youth employment include the Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

¹⁴ See A/58/229, Annex I.

¹⁵ A/57/165 and A/58/133

¹⁶ Whereas few countries reported on receiving support from the YEN core partner institutions, the YEN Secretariat is in contact with a number of lead countries, including Azerbaijan, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Syria and Uganda to support the development and implementation of their action plans.