

Statement to the 46th Commission for Social Development
Youth NGO representatives
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Thank you, Chair.

It is a great honour to be addressing the Commission for Social Development on behalf of youth NGO representatives present here.

We are heartened by the emphasis on youth unemployment and other youth issues raised in the statements of member states. We feel that there is broad acknowledgment of these issues, but do not see these remarks reflected in the resolution. In fact, the draft resolution of this commission, as it now stands, refers to youth explicitly in only two paragraphs and fails to address many of the challenges that youth face.

According to ILO data, of the 186 million people that are unemployed, an astonishing 47%, or 88 million of them, are youth between the ages of 15 and 24.
[1]

We know that armed conflict, poverty, social exclusion and the forces of globalization have marginalized youth. When combined with the lack of productive work, these factors can lead to youth involvement in armed groups and social unrest. We also know that governments are concerned over the financial capital that is required to re-integrate youth into the formal economy. However, expenditures on youth employment must be seen as an investment in human and social capital, rather than as a cost. Such investment provides a means of realizing the potential of youth, enabling them to be active participants in their families and in their communities.

Honourable Chair,

In light of these issues, we have the four following recommendations, many of which reaffirm the General Assembly Resolution from the 62nd session on "Youth in the Global Economy": (A/62/126), which we believe provides the grounds for continued action:

1) Bridge the gap between education, training, and the labour market, using a sustainable & integrated approach

The draft resolution of this commission reaffirms that policies should "promote access to education" and "mainstream youth employment into national development strategies and policies." We applaud this statement, as well as the efforts of numerous government initiatives as outlined in member state speeches, to provide youth job training and work opportunities. However, interventions are often ad hoc, and limited in scope and time. Training and education alone are not sufficient to help youth access work opportunities.

Member states must promote policies that will better bridge the job market & education system, including programs to facilitate transition to work, with a combination of skills development, apprenticeships, and job placement.

Such efforts should be facilitated by partnerships between public, private and civil society sectors, and include youth and youth-led organizations.

In this regard, we recommend the institutionalization of vocationally relevant education, including the integration of vocational training in secondary/tertiary education.

2) Establish mechanisms to ensure that young people are active agents in decision-making processes, making particular effort to include those who are most marginalized.

Many actors attempt to consider the effect of their decisions on youth, but often lack input, particularly from those who are poorest and most excluded. Employment policies and programs, rather than simply targeting the most employable youth, should ensure the sustained participation of the most marginalized youth in the design and implementation of policies, and should support them in ways that are tailored to their specific needs. Training and education alone are not sufficient to help them access work opportunities.

3) Create an environment that supports youth entrepreneurship.

As highlighted by the draft resolution, there is a need for the creation of an enabling environment that supports the flourishing of youth entrepreneurship. This can be fostered by promoting formal and non-formal education on entrepreneurship for young people, facilitating their participation in cooperatives and other forms of social, economic or financial enterprises. Importantly, the lack of access to capital for entrepreneurial projects have played a contributing factor to the poor labour market participation of youth, which underscores the need to increase young entrepreneurs' access to microfinancing and capital to overcome liquidity constraints.

4) Need for the further implementation and strengthening of review mechanisms.

We ask that you formally reaffirm the commitment made by the General Assembly to the goals outlined in “Youth in the Global Economy” (A/62/61/Add.1.) As this report outlines, the proposed goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy must include the topic areas of globalization; poverty and hunger; education; and employment. The report outlines a clear timeline for goal achievement, for example, by 2015, develop and implement national employment policies and legislation that include components addressing the needs of specific vulnerable groups of young people.

This timeline must be adhered to and emphasized. As the report states, in order to achieve these ambitious goals "business as usual" will not suffice. We must translate commitment into action.

Undeniably, young people are key resources in the local and global community. To avoid the frustration and apathy that can grow out of desperation, youth all over the world must be able to find a productive channel to put their energies to use. It is crucial to provide them with possibilities to fulfill their inherent potential.

Thank you.