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Youth at the United Nations

This year, the World Programme of Action for Youth, THE blueprint for policy and programmes on youth development of the United Nations, will be ten years old. In October, the General Assembly will devote two plenary meetings to review its implementation. Young people are asked to participate in this review. This article gives an introduction to the agenda of the United Nations on youth development. Secondly, it provides an introduction to the structure of the UN; who are the actors involved in youth policies? Thirdly, it describes ways for youth to participate in the decision-making processes at the United Nations. Finally, it provides a summary of the global situation of youth, described in the World Youth Report 2005.

1 – United Nations agenda on youth development

The United Nations defines youth – or young people – as persons between 15 and 24 years of age. Young people currently comprise 18 per cent (1,153 million) of the world population. In addition to the youth cohort, 30 per cent of the total global population consists of children below 15. If these two groups were taken together, those below 24 years of age comprise almost half of the world's population. While the growth in the combined share of these two groups has slowed over the past ten years, in absolute numbers, there are more young people than ever before. Of all youth worldwide, 85 per cent live in developing countries.

In 1985, the United Nations proclaimed International Youth Year, which laid the foundation for social and political thinking on youth matters. Ten years later, the General Assembly adopted a global youth policy drafted as the **World Programme of Action for**

Youth to the year 2000 and beyond (WPAY).

This Programme of Action seeks to make governments more responsive to the aspirations of youth for a better world, as well as to the demands of youth to be part of the solution rather than being thought of as part of the problem.

The WPAY describes ten priority areas for youth development: poverty, education, employment, health, environment, drugs, juvenile delinquency, leisure, gender and participation in decision-making. Governments have committed themselves to implement policies and programmes in each of these ten areas. As the world changes, the issues young people deal with change as well.

In 2003, five emerging topics were added to this agenda by the United Nations Secretariat, including globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, youth in armed conflict and intergenerational relations. In October 2005, the General Assembly will review the progress achieved in the implementation of all fifteen priority areas during two plenary meetings. Member States will also consider officially adopting the five emerging topics.

In September 2005, the General Assembly will also review the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2000 during the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government adopted a new all-encompassing framework for development laid down in the Millennium Declaration. The MDGs can be interpreted as a new set of internationally agreed targets aimed at young people. Most of the MDGs are directly related either to children and the youth of the next generation

¹ The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations. The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Fred Doulton and Julie Larsen to this paper.

or to issues of great concern to young people, such as maternal health and HIV/AIDS.

The General Assembly has not been the only United Nations body to adopt resolutions on youth rights and responsibilities. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the governing councils of various United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Health Organization (WHO), adopted a diverse range of international instruments and resolutions on youth related topics.

2 – Structure of the United Nations

The **General Assembly** is the main deliberative organ of the United Nations. It is composed of representatives of all 191 Member States, each of which has one vote. General Assembly resolutions and declarations are non-binding documents, which means that they carry no formal legal obligations to Member States. Only conventions, and only when they are ratified by Member States, are legally binding instruments. Besides the **Convention of the Rights of the Child**, which was adopted in 1989 and is focused on children from 0-18 years old, there is no convention directly targeting youth.

The General Assembly has one regular session each year, between September and December. At the beginning of each regular session, the Assembly holds a general debate, often addressed by heads of State and Government, in which Member States express their views on the most pressing international issues. Most questions are then discussed in its six functional committees. The **Third Committee** discusses social, humanitarian and cultural issues, including youth. Youth resolutions are negotiated in this Committee before they are adopted by the plenary of the Assembly.

Another body of the United Nations to discuss youth issues is the **Commission for Social Development**, a functional commission of the United Nations **Economic and Social Council** (ECOSOC). This Commission meets once a year in February. Often the discussions in the Commission for Social Development are preparatory for the debate in the Third Committee of the General Assembly. Specific issues of importance

to young people are also discussed in other functional commissions of ECOSOC, including the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

The **United Nations Secretariat** carries out the diverse day-to-day work of the Organization. It services the principle organs of the United Nations, which are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the International Court of Justice, and it administers the programmes and policies laid down by them. At its head is the **Secretary-General** who is appointed for five years.

The **Programme on Youth**, in the Division for Social Policy and Development, of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is the focal point within the Secretariat on matters relating to youth issues. Among other activities, the Programme on Youth promotes global standards on youth; issues biennial reports to the United Nations General Assembly on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (see the summary of the World Youth Report 2005 below); produces an electronic newsletter called 'UN Youth Flash'; undertakes research; strengthens youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels; promotes national youth policies; organizes consultative meetings with youth organizations; and coordinates United Nations inter-agency meetings on youth.

The **United Nations family of organizations** is made up of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations programmes and funds – such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – and the specialized agencies – such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank group. The programmes, funds and agencies each have their own area of expertise and are autonomously run, they have their own governing bodies and budgets, and set their own standards and guidelines. One advantage they have is their presence in developing countries. Most of the programmes, funds and agencies have offices in the countries they work in. To read more about their policies and programmes for youth, you can visit the websites displayed at the end of the article.

3 – Youth participation at the United Nations

The most direct form of youth participation at the United Nations has been through the inclusion of **youth representatives** in a country's official delegation to the General Assembly. Although the General Assembly has recommended since 1981 that Member States include a youth representative in their delegations, only a few – mainly European – countries have done so. Ideally youth representatives are democratically elected and represent the youth in their country. The contribution and role of the youth delegate varies, depending on the preparation of the delegate and the support by his or her diplomatic mission to the United Nations. Most deliver an official statement on behalf of the youth in their country. Only a few youth are allowed to actively negotiate on behalf of their country on the text of resolutions. The Programme on Youth promotes the concept of youth delegates with both Governments and youth organizations.

While the General Assembly is not open to participation of non governmental organizations, the meetings of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions are. Youth organizations in **consultative status with the Economic and Social Council** are able to make oral statements and submit written statements on items on the agenda of ECOSOC meetings. While many youth organizations have consultative status, only a few organizations make use of their right to deliver statements.

The General Assembly has been debating the role and participation of NGOs in its meetings. No agreement has been reached yet, but one can identify a tendency towards the inclusion of NGOs. One example is the **review of the World Programme of Action for Youth** in October this year. During the two plenary meetings, youth NGOs are not able to participate, but they are able to attend.

The day before the plenary meetings, an informal interactive round-table discussion will be organized on the theme "Young people: making commitments matter", which will be open to the participation of non-governmental youth organizations. A summary of this round-table will be presented by a youth representative from a Member State to the General Assembly at the beginning of the plenary meetings the next day. Further, the

General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide an overview of the input gathered from youth organizations as a supplement to the World Youth Report 2005. This report will be provided to the plenary meetings. In preparation for this supplementary report, the Secretariat organized two consultative meetings with youth organizations and encourages young people around the world to review the achievements made in their countries in the implementation of WPAY and to report back on their findings.

Besides in the General Assembly, youth participation is increasingly incorporated as a reference point in all programmes and agencies, from UNICEF to the World Bank. Via websites, interactive forums, panels, global meetings and, as youth delegates in official meetings, young people are involved in the formulation, implementation and review of youth development policy.

4 – World Youth Report 2005: The Global Situation of Young People

Every two years, the United Nations Secretariat drafts a World Youth Report. This report provides an overview of the social and economic situation of young people in the priority areas identified by the General Assembly. The World Youth Report 2005 includes a review of what has been achieved since 1995 when the World Programme of Action was adopted. In order to demonstrate the interlinkages, the fifteen priority areas for youth development have been grouped into three clusters.

The first cluster is youth in a global economy, including issues such as hunger and poverty, education, employment and globalization. The second cluster is youth in civil society, related to concerns of environment, leisure, participation, information and communication technology and intergenerational relations, and the third cluster is youth at risk, encompassing the priority areas of health, drug abuse, delinquency, conflict and HIV/AIDS. The main findings of the World Youth Report 2005 are described below. To read the full report and its recommendations, you can visit the website of the Programme on Youth at www.un.org/youth.

Youth in a Global Economy

Sustainable economic development depends upon the participation of young people in education and

employment. Achieving the goals of quality education and decent work for all young people has become increasingly determined by global market forces. The challenge for policy makers is to support youth with programmes and policies that empower them to partake in the benefits of globalization and the spread of information and communication technologies, while protecting them from negative consequences of the globalized economy.

It is estimated that currently almost 209 million young people, or 18 per cent of all youth, live on less than US\$1 a day, and 515 million young people, or nearly 45 per cent, live on less than US\$2 a day. South Asia has the largest number of youth living below these **poverty** lines, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. These two regions are also home to the largest concentrations of undernourished young people. Most poverty in developing countries is concentrated in rural areas, especially among small farmers and landless families. Much urban poverty in its turn is the consequence of rural deprivation and economic decline, which creates distress migration to the cities. Due to a lack of data, it is unclear if the poverty situation of young people worldwide has improved or deteriorated in the last ten years. There is increased recognition that investing in youth can be beneficial to poverty alleviation efforts. Youth are increasingly consulted in drafting poverty reduction strategy papers, and they are also increasingly identified as a major group affected by poverty.

Education has always been regarded as the way out of poverty. Since 1995, the number of children completing primary school has continued to increase, and four out of five young people in the eligible age group are now in secondary school. Also tertiary enrolment has increased; it is estimated that globally, some 100 million youth are currently enrolled in university-level education. Looking at these statistics, one can argue that the current generation of youth is the best-educated ever.

Despite the progress achieved, 113 million primary school-age children were not in school in 2000. These children will become the next generation of illiterate youth, replacing the current group of an estimated 130 million. In rural areas, young people have less access to education, the quality of education is poorer and adult illiteracy is higher. The gap between male and female literacy rates in Asia and Africa appears to be

widening. The greatest gender inequalities exist in the region of Western Asia and North Africa, where educationally deprived girls outnumber boys by almost 3 to 1. In the East Asia and Pacific region, gender equality in access to education has almost been achieved, whereas in Latin America and the Caribbean, there appears to be a slight bias against boys.

Apart from making education available to all, emphasis should be focused on enhancing the quality of education. Abolition of school fees has stimulated school enrolment but can have negative implications for the quality of education. Experience in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa proves that without additional funding for qualified teachers and material resources, schools are not able to accommodate the larger numbers of students who have increasingly enrolled. Globalization and the technological revolution, complicated by growing global inequalities, require new responses to the educational needs of youth.

Despite the fact that youth are receiving more education, youth **unemployment** in the world has increased to record levels. Youth unemployment, at a total of 88 million, is highest in the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. High unemployment rates are partly due to a failure in many countries to closely link the educational system to the needs of the labour market, but are also a result of the large numbers of youth now reaching working age. In the absence of opportunities in the formal labour market, young people are also turning to so-called 'forced entrepreneurship' and self-employment in the informal sector, working in often hazardous conditions for low pay and with few prospects for the future.

A combination of these factors can cause young people to become disillusioned and alienated. There has been increasing concern among policy makers that the frustration that accompanies long-term unemployment among groups of young urban men feeds political and ideological unrest and violence. In order to address the problem of youth employment, the United Nations Secretary-General launched, in 2001, the Youth Employment Network, in which the Secretariat works jointly with the World Bank and the ILO.

There is increased pressure on young people to compete in a globalizing labour market. Youth are most flexible and perhaps best able to adapt to and make

use of new opportunities offered by **globalization**. Yet many youth, mainly in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and the former Soviet Union, have not benefited. These countries have seen a declining economic growth rate, loss of jobs, low incomes, and poor education and health provision. The income gap is widening not only between, but also within, countries. Globalization has substantially changed the job market, to which young people, as newcomers, are most vulnerable. Companies move to areas where labour and production costs are cheapest. New technologies have replaced manual labour, mainly affecting low skilled jobs.

Many people decide to migrate to urban areas or abroad. On the basis of available immigration data, it is estimated that some 15 per cent, or 26 million, are youth. Every day thousands of young people illegally try to pursue a life of fortune in a rich country, often motivated by unrealistic information and high expectations. A parallel industry of illicit travel agents, job brokers and middlemen has arisen, which directs the trafficking of these migrants. The past two decades have seen a dramatic increase in the trafficking of girls and young women, who are often lured into prostitution. Young women and girls who are impoverished, uneducated or from indigenous, ethnic minority, rural or refugee groups are most vulnerable to being trafficked.

Youth in Civil Society

Youth are an integral part of civil society. Participation in civil society activities assures that youth are engaged in shaping their future. Young people need to be involved in decision making processes that help to shape their own socio-economic environment. In the past ten years, there have been two distinct developments that have changed the way in which young people's socialization and participation takes place. First, the role of youth in society is being influenced by a new, to a large extent media-driven, global youth culture, that is brought about by rapid growth of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Second, the ageing of societies has profound consequences for relations between generations.

Young people around the world have a special concern and responsibility for the environment and a sustainable future. They increasingly question the negative

consequences of globalization, such as unequal distribution of wealth and environmental degradation. Messages in the media and the education system are most crucial to activate young people's involvement; however, there is a need to increase their involvement in decision-making processes.

The past decade has seen growing recognition of the importance of **youth participation** in decision-making. Participation strengthens young people's commitment to and understanding of human rights and democracy and leads to better outcomes of policies and programmes. New efforts to include youth in decision-making must recognize the changing patterns and structures occurring in youth movements. While in the past youth were represented mainly through membership-based youth organizations, today there is a broad arena of youth structures that tend to be based on networks of collaboration and common interests. One way to reverse the decline in traditional participation and civic engagement by youth is through Internet-based activities. Through cross-boundary websites, tele- and video-conferencing, chat boards and webcams, ICTs are creating new forms of "cyber-participation" that provide young people with creative, open, non-committing and non-hierarchical channels of participation.

The proliferation of **information and communication technologies** presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of the social development and inclusion of youth. There is an increased emphasis on using information and communication technologies in the context of global youth priorities, such as access to education, employment and poverty eradication. Yet questions remain as to whether information and communication technologies can empower young people and improve their livelihoods or whether they are deepening the already existing inequalities and divisions in the world. The important concerns of a global digital divide apply as much to youth as to any other age group.

Another effect of the increase in media streams is an increase in global consumerism. Through television, music videos and movies, Western-produced content is increasingly dominating entertainment around the world. Young people tend to adopt and interpret global products in terms of their own local cultures and experiences, thereby creating new hybrid cultural forms whose meanings vary with local and national circumstances. Many youth in developing countries, as well

as marginalized youth in the industrialized world, are unable to fulfill their increased expectations of material wellbeing. This may result in alienation and frustration and, potentially, in crime and social strife.

The last decade has seen a growing recognition of the vital contribution that **leisure time** can make for young people in terms of promoting social inclusion, access to opportunities and overall development. Young people's leisure time and volunteering relate directly to many of the issues affecting them, such as education and employment. They are increasingly seeking and finding new ways to spend their free time, both out of necessity and interest. In many industrialized countries, cuts in government subsidies for leisure activities, sport, music and art instruction have endangered many valuable extracurricular activities in and out of schools. The loss of these opportunities is leading to greater numbers of "latch-key" children, who either return home to empty apartments or houses or roam the streets.

The ageing of societies has profound consequences for **relations between generations**. The share of youth in the world's total population is gradually shrinking, and youth development will increasingly be viewed for the potential benefits it can bring to other generations. Before the middle of this century, older persons and youth will comprise a roughly equal share of the world's population. The proportion of those aged 60 years and over is expected to double, rising from 10 to 21 per cent between 2000 and 2050. The proportion of those under 14 years of age will decline by a third, from 30 to 20 per cent. The youth population will decrease from 18 to 14 per cent of the total population. This ageing of society is already apparent in developed countries. The process is occurring at a much faster rate in developing countries; however, and in many cases, the necessary infrastructure and policies will not be in place to deal with the consequent developments.

Youth at Risk

Most young people manage well the transition from protected childhood to independent adulthood. With support of family, school and peers, the majority of youth eventually find a meaningful place in society as young adults. A minority of young people divert from this path; some become engaged in risky behaviour

that can damage their social position and their health status.

Health may be defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Youth are a relatively healthy segment of the population and – except for their reproductive health – their health has generally been given little attention. When they do suffer poor health, it is often a result of the effects of accidents, injuries caused by armed conflict, violence, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Further, in developing countries, extreme poverty and malnutrition make some youth vulnerable to disease. HIV/AIDS is the most prevalent cause of mortality of youth, followed by violence and injuries.

Globally, young people reach adolescence at earlier ages and marry later. Sexual relations also appear to start at an increasingly early age. Although early pregnancy has declined in many countries, it is still a large concern. One woman in three in developing countries gives birth before age 20, and 55 per cent of all women under 20 do so in West Africa.

Ten million young people currently live with **HIV/AIDS**, mostly in Africa and Asia. The spread of the virus has had a devastating impact on young people's sexual and reproductive health. Young people are particularly vulnerable to contract the virus. There are 10 million young people currently living with HIV/AIDS. Of this number, 6.2 million live in sub-Saharan Africa and 2.2 million in Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, young women are two to three times more likely to be HIV positive than men. Young people who are empowered to make informed choices have greater potential and more opportunity to drastically reduce the number of new infections.

Most alcohol, tobacco and illicit **drug use** starts during adolescence. Of all illicit substances listed in the international drug control treaties, cannabis is by far the most widely and most frequently used, especially among young people. There has been an unprecedented emergence of the use of synthetic drugs worldwide, mostly used in recreational settings. Partial restrictions on marketing of alcohol and tobacco have not yet prevented higher use in developing countries; demand of illicit substances among youth in developing coun-

tries has increased to levels typically found in industrialized countries.

Young people are the most criminally active segment of the population although eventually most young people will desist from criminal and deviant activities. Countries with economies in transition have witnessed a dramatic rise in **delinquency** rates; since 1995 juvenile crime levels in many of these countries have increased by more than 30 per cent. Delinquency is largely a group phenomenon: the majority of all juvenile offences are committed by members of some form of delinquent group. Juvenile delinquency is often highly correlated with alcohol and drug abuse, but is also attributed to hunger, poverty, malnutrition and unemployment. Young delinquents often suffer from social and economic exclusion. Urban crime rates tend to be higher than rural, which may be attributed to differences in social control and social cohesion. The family, as a primary institution of socialization of youth, plays an important role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency and youth crime.

In most countries, **girls and young women** suffer from discrimination and stereotyping which limit their full participation in society. There has been greater awareness of gender issues among governments. However, equal access to higher education and labour markets continues to be a concern in some countries, negative stereotypes of women have continued to persist, both in old and in new media, and violence continues to be perpetrated against girls and young women worldwide. Physical and sexual abuse affect millions of girls and women, yet are considered to be seriously under-reported. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to (sexual) violence in conflict situations.

The past decade has seen an unprecedented increase in the involvement of young people, both as victims and as perpetrators, in **armed conflict**. Today, there are an estimated 300,000 child and youth combatants actively involved in armed conflicts. When social structures break down in the face of war and instability, young adults frequently lose social and family guidance and may engage in risky behaviour. Despite the international legal framework to protect minors and prevent their engagement in conflict situations, there has not been an improvement on the ground. Further, youth are not protected by this legal framework, even though many youth were children during the period of

conflict. Due to this 'grey legal area' the vulnerability of youth becomes a vicious cycle during conflict, the peace process and after the war is over. Trauma and lack of social support and services may seriously effect young people and cause lasting harm to their physical and mental health.

With any questions, please contact the Programme on Youth at youth@un.org

Useful Websites

(Only websites referred to in this article or with a direct link to youth programmes or policies are mentioned.)

- **General Assembly:** <http://www.un.org/ga>
- **Economic and Social Council:** <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/>
- **Secretariat:**
 - **Programme on Youth, DESA:** <http://www.un.org/youth>
 - **Department for Public Information, CyberSchoolBus:** <http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/>
 - **Millennium Campaign,** <http://www.millenniumcampaign.org>
 - MDG Youth page: <http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs/index.asp>
 - **Office on Drugs and Crime, Global Youth Network:** <http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/index.html>
- **Specialized agencies:**
 - **FAO – Rural Youth Programme:** <http://www.fao.org/ruralityouth/>
 - **ILO – Youth Employment Network:** <http://www.ilo.org/yen>
 - **UNESCO:**
 - Youth Coordination Unit : <http://www.unesco.org/youth/index.htm>
 - INFOYOUTH Network: International information and data exchange network on youth: <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/infoyouth/index.html>
 - **World Bank Group:**
 - Youthink: <http://youthink.worldbank.org/>
 - Resources on Children and Youth: <http://>

- www.worldbank.org/childrenandyouth
- Youth to Youth Community, young professional at the World Bank: <http://www.y2ycommunity.org>
- The World Bank and civil society: <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/forngos.htm>
- **World Health Organization** – <http://www.who.int/topics/youth/en/>
- **International Telecommunication Unit**
 - World Summit on the Information Society: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

■ Programmes and funds:

- **UN Environment Programme**, Tunza: <http://www.unep.org/tunza/>
- **UNFPA**, Adolescents and Youth: <http://www.unfpa.org/adolescents/index.htm>
- Global Youth Partners <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/gyp/index.htm>
- **HABITAT** – Partners for youth section: http://www.unhabitat.org/ngo/partners_youth.asp
- **UNICEF**:
 - Voices of Youth: <http://www.unicef.org/voy/>
 - Adolescence: <http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/index.html>
- **United Nations Volunteers** – <http://www.unv.org/>
- **UNHCR** – Children page: <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=PROTECT&id=3b8373992>

■ Other United Nations entities:

- **United Nations University** – <http://www.unu.edu/>

Les jeunes et les Nations Unies

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Le Programme d'action mondial pour la jeunesse des Nations Unies

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L'Assemblée générale est le principal organe délibérant des Nations Unies. Elle est formée de représentants des 191 Etats membres, chacun avec droit de vote. Les résolutions et les déclarations de l'Assemblée générale sont des textes non contraignants, autrement dit qui n'entraînent pas d'obligations juridiques pour les Etats membres. Seules les conventions, et uniquement lorsqu'elles sont ratifiées par les Etats membres, sont des instruments ayant force de loi. A part la Convention relative aux droits de l'enfant, adoptée en 1989 et axée sur les enfants de 0 à 18 ans, il n'existe pas de texte ciblant directement les jeunes.

Cette année, le Programme d'action mondial pour la jeunesse, LA référence pour la politique et les programmes sur le développement de la jeunesse des Nations Unies, fêtera son dixième anniversaire. En octobre, l'Assemblée générale consacrera deux séances plénières à l'examen des progrès réalisés dans sa mise en œuvre ; signalons que les jeunes sont invités à se joindre à ce travail d'évaluation. Cet article présente le programme des Nations Unies en faveur de la jeunesse. Dans un deuxième temps, il décrit la structure des Nations Unies : qui sont les acteurs impliqués dans le développement des politiques de jeunesse ? Troisièmement, il expose des façons pour les jeunes de participer aux processus déci-

sionnels onusiens. Enfin, il résume la situation des jeunes, telle que la décrit le Rapport mondial de la jeunesse 2005.

Les Nations Unies ont proclamé 1985 « Année internationale de la Jeunesse », posant ainsi les fondations d'une réflexion politique et sociale sur les questions de jeunesse. Dix ans plus tard, l'Assemblée générale a adopté le Programme d'action mondial pour la jeunesse à l'horizon 2000 et au-delà (PAMJ). Ce programme tente de rendre les gouvernements plus comptables des aspirations des jeunes en faveur d'un monde meilleur, de même que de leur volonté de faire partie de la solution plutôt que d'être perçus comme le problème.

En septembre 2005, l'Assemblée générale entreprendra aussi d'évaluer les progrès accomplis dans la réalisation des Objectifs du millénaire pour le développement (OMD). En 2000, durant le Sommet du millénaire des Nations Unies, les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement ont adopté un nouveau cadre global de développement, exposé dans la Déclaration du millénaire. Les OMD sont une série d'objectifs convenus à l'échelle internationale, concernant soit directement les enfants et les jeunes de la prochaine génération, soit des sujets de préoccupation majeurs pour les jeunes, comme la santé des mères et le VIH/sida.

Jugend bei den Vereinten Nationen

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Die Generalversammlung ist das wichtigste Organ der Vereinten Nationen. Sie besteht aus Vertretern aller 191 Mitgliedsländer, die jeweils eine Stimme haben. Resolutionen und Erklärungen der Generalversammlung sind nicht bindende Schriftstücke, d.h. mit ihnen sind für die Mitgliedstaaten keine offiziellen rechtlichen Verpflichtungen verbunden. Nur Übereinkommen sind rechtsverbindliche Instrumente und nur, wenn sie von den Mitgliedstaaten ratifiziert werden. Neben dem Übereinkommen über die Rechte des Kindes, das 1989 verabschiedet wurde und sich auf Kinder im Alter von 0 bis 18 Jahren konzentriert, gibt es kein Übereinkommen, das sich direkt mit der Jugend gefasst.

In diesem Jahr wird das Weltaktionsprogramm für Jugend, die Blaupause für die Jugendentwicklungspolitik und -programme der Vereinten Nationen, 10 Jahre alt. Im Oktober wird die Generalversammlung in zwei Plenarsitzungen seine Umsetzung überprüfen. Jugendliche werden gebeten, sich an dieser Überprüfung zu beteiligen. Dieser Artikel enthält eine Einführung in das Jugendentwicklungsprogramm der Vereinten Nationen. Zweitens bietet er eine Einführung in die Struktur der Vereinten Nationen; zu den an der Jugendpolitik beteiligten Akteuren. Drittens beschreibt er Möglichkeiten für Jugendliche, sich an den Entscheidungsprozessen der Vereinten Nationen zu beteiligen. Abschließend enthält er eine Zusammenfassung der weltweiten Lage der Jugend, wie sie im Weltjugendbericht 2005 beschrieben ist.

1985 erklärten die Vereinten Nationen das Internationale Jahr der Jugend, das die Grundlagen für soziale und politische Überlegungen in Jugendfragen schaffte. 10 Jahre danach verabschiedete die Generalversammlung eine weltweite Jugendpolitik, die als Weltaktionsprogramm für die Jugend bis zum Jahre 2000 und darüber hinaus [World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond (WPAY)] formuliert wurde. Dieses Aktionsprogramm will Regierungen dazu veranlassen, stärker auf die Hoffnungen der Jugend für eine bessere Welt sowie auf die Forderungen der Jugend, Teil der Lösung zu sein und nicht als Teil des Problems betrachtet zu werden, einzugehen.

Im September 2005 wird die Generalversammlung auch die Fortschritte bei der Erreichung der Entwicklungsziele für das neue Millennium [Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)] überprüfen. Beim Millennium-Gipfel im Jahre 2000 verabschiedeten die Staats- und Regierungschefs einen neuen umfassenden Entwicklungsrahmen, der in der Millennium-Deklaration niedergelegt wurde. Die MDGs können als neuer Katalog international vereinbarter Ziele für die Jugend betrachtet werden. Die meisten MDGs beziehen sich entweder direkt auf Kinder und die Jugend der nächsten Generation oder auf Fragestellungen von großer Bedeutung für junge Menschen wie den Gesundheitsschutz von Müttern und HIV/AIDS.