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HIGH-LEVEL PANEL TACKLES YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CRISIS WITH NEW PLAN OF ACTION BRINGS YOUTH INTO PLAY

GENEVA (ILO News) – In an effort to stimulate the creation of some one billion new jobs for youth over the next decade, youth leaders, senior officials of the International Labour Office (ILO), the UN, the World Bank and other organizations met here to launch a new initiative designed to convert “policy work to action at the country level”.

“Our challenge now is to move from the excellent policy work that has been done to a new phase of action at the country level”, said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who joined ILO Director-General Juan Somavia and other experts during a two-day session of a “High Level Panel on Youth Employment” held here on 30 June-1 July.

“In the next decade, more than one billion young people will enter the working age population”, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said. “We have seen, all too often, the tragedy of youthful lives mis-spent in crime, drug abuse, civil conflict and even terrorism.”

The High-level Panel was convened in the wake of the 2000 Millennium Summit to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work”, promoting employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment creation for the global population between the ages of 15 and 26, the UN definition of youth. The most recent meeting of the Panel sought to chart a so-called “road map” for national action plans on youth employment.

The road map proposes five steps to be taken by a Youth Employment Network (YEN), including endorsing the Panel’s 2003 recommendations, translating strategy into National Action Plans (NAPs), mobilizing financial resources for youth employment, building bridges between school and work and inviting youth organizations to play an active role in the design and implementation of national action plans.

The Secretary-General welcomed the active role of youth organizations in the discussion, noting that young people provided unique expertise and approaches to the matters being discussed. In response, youth representatives pledged to contribute an “enhanced collaborative voice” to the discussions and proposed the appointment of a youth co-ordinator to work with the YEN secretariat.

Geeta Rao Gupta, President of the International Centre for Research on Women and chair of the meeting, said that the Panel had agreed help countries develop and implement plans to increase youth employment.

The panel said it welcomed ILO leadership in helping YEN recruit other governments and develop criteria for prospective partners. Participants also stressed the need for the collection and dissemination of information on good practise and reliable data on youth employment.

Youth Employment is an “indispensable task”, said Juan Somavia, affirming his commitment to the cause. “Youth employment is a gigantic idea, but we have an instrument to implement it, and the main instrument is believing in it.”