

REGIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE
Bangkok, 28-30 March 2006

STATEMENT
by
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Mr Kitti Samanthai, Director General, Office for the Promotion, Protection and
Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
Royal Thai Government,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Regional Meeting on
Developmental Challenges for Young People, and to UNESCAP, the United Nations
regional headquarters in Asia and the Pacific. We are especially grateful to Mr Kitti
Samanthai, Director General, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security,
Government of Thailand, for having kindly delivered his warm welcoming remarks on
behalf of the Government. We are pleased to learn of the encouraging developments in
Thailand in promoting youth development. I would like to express our deep appreciation to
the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, especially the United
Nations Programme on Youth, our counterpart in the United Nations family, for
coordinating the preparation of the World Youth Report and for this collaborative effort
jointly with UNESCAP.

With the adoption in 2005 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/2 on
policies and programmes involving youth, governments around the world have reaffirmed
the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and
decided to add five additional priority areas for the implementation of the Programme of
Action. These are: (i) the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men; (ii) the
use of and access to information and communication technologies; (iii) the dramatic increase
in the incidence of HIV infection among young people and the impact of the epidemic on
their lives; (iv) the active involvement of young people in armed conflict, both as victims and
as perpetrators; and (v) the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in
an ageing society. The World Summit that met in September 2005 also made the goals of

full and productive employment and decent work for young people a central objective of relevant national and international policies as well as national development strategies, including poverty reduction. The urgency of understanding and supporting the development needs of young people and providing them with opportunities to make full use of their potentials is self-evident.

We are pleased to learn that the 2007 World Youth Report will shift its focus to presenting regional perspectives on youth-related issues and, in the case of the Asian and Pacific region, discuss four thematic pillars, namely globalization, urbanization, education and ICT. This regional approach will help provide in-depth understanding and knowledge of developmental challenges for young people in each of the regions while allowing for comparative analysis. The knowledge gained from this understanding will again help all concerned to seize the opportunities being offered by the development process, globalization and other sweeping global changes while minimizing their negative impacts.

Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Asian region was home to 57.5 per cent of the world's total population and 57.7 per cent of the world's youth population in 2000. Young people aged 15 to 24 years made up 17.8 percent of the total population of Asia which stood at 3.6 billion then. By 2005, the percentage of young people rose to 18.2 of Asia's total population of 3.9 billion. This percentage is projected to decline to 14.8 per cent by the year 2020. There is a high concentration of poverty in the region with nearly 700 million people living under \$1 a day. 37 percent of the 88 million formally unemployed young people live in this part of the world. While it is critical to make full use of the current demographic dividend brought about by large young populations and a vast labour force these offer, it is equally important to scale up investment in young people and address issues of poverty, employment, education, health, and participation. Globalization and urbanization have made their impact clearly felt in Asia in the past decades with rapid economic growth and economic crises, migration of young people in search of better lives, and changing social and family kinships. Recent studies on the family institution in Asia reveal that with globalization, the migration of young people to urban centres, the participation of women in the active labour force and delayed marriage and child bearing, the family support system which has been an instrumental influence on young people, though still resilient, has been weakened. For a region as vast as Asia, which is made up of countries with significant differences in

population size, geographical area, national income and level of development as well as cultural diversity, it is a formidable task to analyze the variations, the challenges facing young people and governments, the impacts of economic, social and political changes on youth, as well as the nature of such impacts. Yet, these changes, I believe, deserve in-depth study.

Youth-related issues, including developmental challenges for youth, is a priority area for UNESCAP. Youth employment was one of the three discussion themes in a panel during the Committee on Emerging Social Issues of UNESCAP that met in November 2005. UNESCAP has undertaken activities to provide support to national efforts in strengthening national policies on youth, and to address gender-related dimensions of youth development and the health needs of young people. The 2006 Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific, the flagship publication of UNESCAP, also addresses youth unemployment and its economic and social implications in the region, among other issues, in the context of developmental challenges for Asia and the Pacific.

Distinguished representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I believe that your deliberations on the situation of youth in the region along the four thematic pillars will provide valuable insights into the state of this important population group and their developmental challenges and what can be done to maximize their contribution to society.

I wish you every success. Thank you for your kind attention.