



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7 September 2017

Excellency,

I am pleased to enclose herewith the summary of the High-Level Luncheon Event on "*Investing in adolescents and youth to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity to realize the demographic dividend and achieve the 2030 Agenda*" held on 17 July 2017. The High-Level luncheon was jointly convened by myself and the former President of ECOSOC H.E. Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations.

The summary contains the main conclusions from views shared by the Member States and other participants during the lunch. It is my hope that these conclusions will motivate further action on our efforts to realize the demographic dividend and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson', written in a cursive style.

Peter Thomson

All Permanent Representatives
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

Summary

Joint PGA and President of ECOSOC High Level Luncheon Event

on

“Investing in adolescents and youth to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity to realize the demographic dividend and achieve the 2030 Agenda”

United Nations Delegates Dining Room

17 July 2017

The High Level Luncheon Event jointly convened by the President of the General Assembly H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson and the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) H.E. Mr. Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe, with the support of UNFPA and co-sponsored by DESA, ITU, and ILO was held on 17 July 2017. This event focused on the theme **“Investing in adolescents and youth to eradicate poverty and promote prosperity to realize the demographic dividend and achieve the 2030 Agenda,”** and benefitted from a highly interactive discussion.

Member States, UN agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, young people, academia and other stakeholders participated in this luncheon, which included more than forty Ministers, Head of Delegations and Permanent Representatives.

Opening remarks were made by the PGA, President of ECOSOC, and the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake. Following the moderated interactive discussion, the Acting Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem summarized the key messages of the discussion.

Both the PGA and the President of ECOSOC stressed that meaningful investments in today’s youth is the most effective long-term investment that governments can make to allow their countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda and realize a future that is safe, secure and prosperous for all citizens. The SG’s Youth Envoy pledged to involve young people more in development processes, including in the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Participants highlighted that the world’s 1.8 billion young people are humanity’s greatest hope, however approximately 500 million young people continue to live in poverty, facing the challenge of unemployment, underemployment or vulnerable employment. It was agreed that one of the greatest opportunities for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of prosperity lies in taking advantage of the shifting demographics, especially in developing countries in Africa and South Asia. Harnessing the tremendous resource and realizing the social and economic benefits of younger and bigger working age population than dependent population has the potential of a demographic dividend that requires countries to undertake urgent investments to empower, educate and employ young people. It was further underscored that harnessing the demographic dividend is not additional to the pursuit of Agenda 2030, but rather a strategic way to advance implementation of this agenda and the SDGs.

Participants highlighted several actions needed to be taken, including:

1. Improved education system

It was stated that there is an urgent need for a vast improvement in the quality of schooling, including higher education and vocational training available to young people, especially girls, to ensure that each emerging generation has the skills to drive the modernization of work.

Education should be job-oriented and have a life cycle approach, so that young people are capable of being absorbed in the job market, which is changing fast because of advances in the information technology and the nature of economies everywhere.

2. Creation of job opportunities for the young

It was also stated that the enhancement of skills among young people should be complemented by efforts to generate more jobs so that the young people could benefit from full employment. This requires the involvement of both public action and private investment as well as the creation of a climate for investment, including through encouraging innovation. Governments must encourage and invest in entrepreneurial efforts and facilitate the private sector in the building of businesses for decent jobs.

3. Realization of universal health care, including universal and unrestricted access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and services

Investment in healthcare, especially sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people, in particular women and girls, was highlighted as a key priority in efforts to harness a demographic dividend. The fulfillment of reproductive rights, and the chance to choose the number and timing of children is absolutely essential to enabling all people – men and women – to define their lives and bring their unique contributions to bear on their communities and countries.

4. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Participants emphasized the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and the ending of harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriages. This diminishes the opportunities of girls with respect to their pursuit of education and productive employment, rendering them dependent on others and susceptible to violence and abuse. States were encouraged to introduce and implement as appropriate, laws against child and forced marriage.

5. Partnerships

There is an urgent need to build partnerships among governments, the private sector, civil society and the UN System for investing in youth, as well as the active involvement of youth in programmes and policies for harnessing the demographic dividend. All stakeholders must be involved, including religious and community leaders.