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President Lula da Silva of Brazil Joins United Nations Effort to Mobilize Youth to Tackle Poverty and Violence

Belo Horizonte, Brazil — Youth from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean will be converging on the city of Belo Horizonte on May 12-15, 2005 for the first regional summit aimed at mobilizing young people to initiate efforts to overcome poverty and violence to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Latin America and Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit is jointly organized by the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace on behalf of the UN system, the Government of Brazil, the Global Peace Initiative of Women, the city of Belo Horizonte, and the Citizenship Institute.

Participants in the Summit will include some of the most outstanding young people of the region. They were chosen by the United Nations agencies for their achievements, leadership potential, and strong commitment to social change. The young delegates will be joined by United Nations experts on the thematic areas of the Millennium Development Goals, who will facilitate the discussions and provide guidance and support.

As many as 1,000 youth are expected to participate in the opening ceremony of the Summit, where **President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil** will address the delegates, calling on them to work as partners with governments to meet the challenges confronting the region. President Lula de Silva has said that young people are “our brightest lights, showing us the way forward.”

The Latin America and Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit is part of a global United Nations effort to engage with young leaders. Speaking about the importance of youth initiatives, **UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan** asserted: “No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline.”

World leaders have endorsed the Millennium Development Goals for 2015, calling for: eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, primary education for all children, gender equality and empowerment of women, reduced child deaths, improved maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, environmental sustainability and forging a global partnership for development. Participants will have the opportunity to tap into sports, a pillar of their societies with wide appeal among young people, as a tool for mobilizing support for the Millennium Development Goals. The International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 (IYSPE 2005) offers a framework for such initiatives.

“The Latin American and Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit will help bring young people into the global network of committed and talented young professionals that we are establishing through a series of summits. Our goal is to provide the opportunities and the platform so they can become strong forces for change in the effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals,” said **Dr. Djibril Diallo, Chair of the United Nations youth leadership series and Director of the UN New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.**

The Summit is the third in a series of regional youth leadership gatherings that will culminate in a Global Youth Leadership Summit at the United Nations in New York. Prior meetings included the Pan - African Youth leadership Summit in Dakar, Senegal in June, 2004 and the Pan - Asian Youth Leadership Summit in Hiroshima, Japan in September, 2004.

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