

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ENVOY ON YOUTH

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**XXIV Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government
Ibero-American Youth Meeting
INNOVATION FOR THE INCLUSION OF YOUTH
5 December 2014**

Mr. Jose Manuel Romero Coello, Director of the Mexican Institute of Youth,

Mr. Alejo Ramirez, Secretary-General, the Ibero-American Youth Organization,

Excellencies, colleagues, friends, it gives me great honour and pleasure to join you today.

At the outset, I wish to commend the Ibero-American Secretary-General, my friend Alejo Ramirez, Senior Jose Manuel Romero and the Mexican Institute of Youth and the State Government of Vera Cruz, for convening this important event in the context of the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Governments, and I wish to express my sincere thanks for so graciously hosting us here.

The generosity of Mexico is greatly appreciated, particularly during this difficult time in your country. I would like to express my deep concern over the case of missing students in Iguala and express my solidarity with the people of Mexico, and the students' families as they carry this tremendous pain at this time.

I take note of the actions taken by the authorities to find the 43 students and regret that despite the measures undertaken; no results have been reached so far. Likewise, we are concerned about the finding of clandestine graves around the city of Iguala with remains yet to be identified.

I also welcome the recent measures announced by his Excellency the President of Mexico.

Let me stress again that protecting young people from violence, trafficking and crimes should be done by promoting positive youth development and the enforcement of the law. This is essential to provide the necessary foundation to unleash the power of this generation of young people.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express my thanks to Director General José Manuel Romero Coello for his leadership and hard work.

The Ibero-American Youth Organization (OIJ) is now a global leader in supporting the youth development agenda and youth rights throughout the Spanish speaking as well as much of the Portuguese speaking world.

OIJ and its national affiliates have made important strides to support youth development and policies and, over the past years, we have been able to bring the partnership between the United Nations and OIJ to a new strategic level.

I am here today to keep building over this much needed momentum to bring youth issues to the highest level.

In 2010 there were around 600 million persons in Ibero-America; of these, 157 million were between the ages of 15 and 29, representing 26% of the total population.

Recent youth demonstrations in Latin America and large youth movements show that there are still key issues of inequality, related to gender, ethnicity and income that prevent young people from fully enjoying their rights.

A review of the 2015 MyWorld survey shows that majority of Ibero-American youth are primarily concerned with unemployment and education as well as protections from violence and crimes. They are not only frustrated with the lack of good employment opportunities, but they also question the quality of education they receive: whether or not it is relevant to find jobs, how their knowledge and skills will serve them in the long-term, and the extent to which decision-makers are committed to needed investment in the potentials of young people.

The priorities and concerns voiced by young people in these countries mirror those of young people all over the world.

It is not acceptable that nearly seventy million adolescents worldwide remain out of school. It is not acceptable that half of the world's poor and around 40% of the unemployed are young people. Now is our time to act.

To respond to these challenges and advance the youth agenda, the UN system developed a system-wide action plan on youth; and we are opening more venues and offering more programmes to invest in youth and encourage youth participation. Our message is clear; that is nothing for youth should be done without youth themselves.

The UN System-Wide Action Plan on Youth emphasizes the importance of expanding choices and enhancing human freedoms to ensure that youth live a long and healthy life, have access to an education and decent standard of living, and have opportunities to participate in the life of their communities and to be included in the decision-making processes on issues affecting their lives.

The UN has been working together with Ibero-American community for the last ten years. Particularly with the Ibero-American Youth Organization. The trajectory of

that partnership has been based in the commitment to promote and protect the rights of young people in the Ibero-American community and beyond.

The Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Young People has been the cornerstone of the endeavours to promote dialogue with key political actors and young parliamentarians in order to promote young people's rights.

Based on a common understanding on the importance of discussing the need for policymakers to consider the set of policies that are necessary to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, OIJ and various UN agencies, I name UNFPA as an example, have advocated together for an increase in investments in policies and programmes that favour youth, in all stages within the general transition to adulthood.

In this region, the UN Interagency Group on Youth has also worked closely with OIJ in the process of drafting the Agenda for Development and Social Investment in Youth. In 2013, UNFPA supported the elaboration of this Agenda and UNDP and ECLAC joined in launching it under the framework of the First Regional Conference on Population and Development held in Montevideo, which I had personally attended.

ECLAC, ILO and UNFPA also supported the development of the Second Ibero-American Youth Investment Report, released in Burgos, Spain recently. These agencies are also supporting the development of the second Ibero-American youth survey.

The Quito Forum that took place earlier this year and which was co-convened by my Office, was an important joint effort between UN, OIJ and young people to ensure that regional youth issues be duly reflected in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

These joint efforts and partnerships are critical to me and to all of us at the United Nations, in particular as member states will continue to debate over the next few months the setting of the next development agenda beyond the year 2015.

It is with that in mind, that my Office has been partnering very closely with youth organizations, intergovernmental organizations, including the Ibero-American Youth Organization and civil society, and developed the Global Youth Call: Prioritizing Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which presents a consensus on priorities and targets to ensure the next development agenda duly addresses the needs and rights of young people.

During the 2014 ECOSOC Youth Forum, of which OIJ was a main contributor, the Global Youth Call received resounding support from many UN Member States. This milestone could not have been achieved without the support of our partners, including OIJ, and I will continue to count on this partnership to ensure we jointly move the youth agenda forward.

As you may know, yesterday was an important day in the lead up to the finalization of the new development agenda, as the United Nations Secretary-General,

Ban Ki-moon, informally presented an advance unedited version of his synthesis report on the Post-2015 Agenda. The report provides a rallying call to governments to aim high with the new global development goals. It makes it clear that business as usual is not an option, and puts emphasis on the importance of equitable and sustainable development. The Secretary-General made clear in the report that young people are key to the success of the Post-2015 Agenda, and I quote

“Today, more than ever, the realities of 1.8 billion youth and adolescents represent a dynamic, informed, and globally connected engine for change. Integrating their needs, rights to choice and their voices in the new agenda, will be a key factor for success.” –End of quote.

The report will be officially released in all six UN languages in the next few weeks and forms a critical contribution to the UN Member States for their negotiations leading up to the September 2015 summit.

As you open the discussions in the coming days, I would like to remind you that 2015 is a critical year, not only in setting the new development agenda, but also for the commemoration of the 20-year anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

In light of the ongoing relevance of this guiding framework, my Office recently co-convened together with UNDP, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the First Global Forum on Youth Policies (FGFYP), which was hosted by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan.

The Forum, the first of its kind, brought together some 700 participants from over 165 countries and was the largest gathering of Ministers of Youth since the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1998.

The forum discussions resulted in the Baku Commitment to Youth Policies which highlights the principles to guide formulation, implementation and evaluation of youth policy in the 21 century, and calls for greater youth involvement in youth policy monitoring and evaluation.

While the Baku Forum brought important recognition of the importance of youth policies and the continuing relevance of the World Programme of Action for Youth, it is only a first in a series of events that will mark the 20th anniversary commemoration of this important framework.

The forthcoming ECOSOC Youth Forum will pay special attention to the World Programme of Action for Youth and link it to the discussions on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Later in the year, we expect the General Assembly to hold a Special High-level Meeting in commemoration of the World Programme of Action for Youth during which I hope many member states and key stakeholders will express their renewed commitment to this critical guiding framework.

As you can see, we have another busy year ahead of us. We have been entrusted by young people to carry their priorities in all these processes, and to safeguard their rights when the policies of the future are being discussed today. Let us continue working together to ensure that young people live in the world they want, and the world that they certainly deserve.

In closing, allow me to once again thank all of you for your commitment and leadership. Thank you for your attention and I look forward to our further interactions in the course of the day.