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Young Leaders to Tackle Development Challenges at United Nations Summit in New York

Young leaders from around the world will gather at an unprecedented summit in New York late in October to commit themselves to initiatives to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

The three-day United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit will bring together outstanding young community activists at United Nations Headquarters from 29 to 31 October. The young leaders will examine their roles in helping their countries and regions reach goals such as reducing extreme poverty, enabling all children to complete primary school and stemming the spread of malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, with sport and culture as entry points. Each of the 192 UN member states will be represented by two delegates -- a young woman and a young man -- and it will be the first time that many countries fulfil their pledges to include young people and their views in their UN representation.

The youth delegates will open their summit in the General Assembly chamber with an address from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the newly elected General Assembly president Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain.

The Secretary-General has invited the six heads of state and government who previously hosted regional youth summits to participate in an Intergenerational Dialogue with young leaders. The six are President Heinz Fischer of Austria, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan, King Mohammed VI of Morocco and President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal.

"Young delegates will focus on ways of using their youthful energy and their technological skills to tackle major socio-economic challenges," said Djibril Diallo, Director of the UN's New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP). "These young community leaders have the biggest stake in making progress towards the MDGs because attaining the goals will help create a better world for their generation and those following. They will employ the ideas, networks and initiatives from their summit brainstorming to help launch a new decade of bold cooperation," he said.

Organized by UNOSDP on behalf of the UN system, the Summit is supported by some of the most successful businesspeople worldwide including Mr. Mohan Lal Mittal of the Gita-Mohan Mittal Foundation/Vishwa Prawasi Bhartiya Leaders Forum, Mr. Hiroshi Matsumoto of the Inner Trip Reyukai

International (ITRI) Foundation and Mr. John Gage of Sun Microsystems, who will also take part. The Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) is the NGO partner for the youth summit series.

The opening will be followed by a panel of UN agency heads, as well as a Youth United Against Malaria Concert with celebrated singer Youssou N'Dour of Senegal, in collaboration with the Roll Back Malaria Partnership led by Dr. Awa Marie Coll-Seck, its Executive Director, and with the support of the World Culture Open (WCO). The delegates will break into groups on Monday to discuss such issues as job creation, information sharing and project management, and wind up the event on Tuesday with adoption of a Summit Declaration. A key outcome will be youth-directed community and national projects for the MDGs, with support from UNOSDP, the United Nations system, and Summit sponsors and partners.

UNOSDP, under the guidance of Mr. Adolf Ogi, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, works closely with the ambassador-level Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace and an inter-agency Working Group on Sport for Development and Peace to strengthen collaboration on sport-related activities, including outreach to youth and the youth summit series.

Delegates and non-delegates will also network informally in the "Young Leaders Global Village" at UN headquarters. The Global Village, an interactive, community-focused space, will bring together youth delegates, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the public to take part in discussing issues connected with the role of youth in accelerating the successful achievement of the MDGs. It will link young people worldwide through web casts and other internet services supported by Sun Microsystems, including online forums and digital storytelling organized by the Global Education & Learning Community (GELC).

The October summit is the culmination of several regional summits focusing on the UN General Assembly's pledge in September 2000 to raise the living standards of the poor worldwide by 2015. The undertakings in the Assembly's Millennium Declaration were summarized in the MDGs, and the summits helped young leaders of the best educated generation ever define their own responsibilities to accelerate progress towards achieving the goals.

A team of student journalists, coordinated by the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) and its partners in the Unity coalition representing Hispanic, Asian-America and Native American journalists, will add to the national and international news coverage of the official and unofficial segments through both online and paper publications.

Other partners for the summit include Eurosport, the Maybach Foundation, and the International Labour Organization and its Universitas partnership programme.

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