



UNITED NATIONS EUROPEAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Vienna, Austria, 19-21 June 2006

Mobilizing the Next Generation of European Leaders to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and promote Peace

“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.”

-- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan

The United Nations is committed to reaching out to the next generation, and in 2004 began to enlist the energy and commitment of young leaders in the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to promote peace. All countries are taking steps to fulfill the promises 191 governments made at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 to cut extreme poverty by half, achieve universal primary education, empower women and girls, reduce maternal and infant mortality, reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and ensure environmental sustainability -- all by 2015. Engaging youth in these efforts is essential, and can foster a new sense of global responsibility and a vision for action at the local, national, regional and international levels.

In several resolutions, the United Nations General Assembly has recognized the importance of youth participation and their potential contribution to development. In the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the General Assembly endorsed “the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making.”

Reflecting this priority, the United Nations and its partners have organized regional youth leadership summits in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean during the past two years. The youth of Europe have a key role in completing the circle of this global network.

In this spirit, Austria is hosting the European Youth Leadership Summit on 19 - 21 June 2006, during its Presidency of the European Union. This event, which enjoys the full support of the United Nations Secretary-General, will bring together two youth leaders,

one young man and one young woman between the ages of 18 and 30, from the countries of the European Union and two accession countries, Bulgaria and Romania.

The regional summits will culminate in the first ever United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit in New York at the end of October 2006, which will bring together young leaders from all 191 Member States of the United Nations.

The youth leadership summits are organized by the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace and its partners on behalf of the United Nations system. A main focus of the summits is exploring how sport and culture, with their strong appeal to young people, can accelerate progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals and help build a more peaceful world.

INSPIRING ACTION AND BUILDING A NETWORK

In June 2004, the first Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit, held in Dakar, Senegal, brought together more than 100 young leaders, representing nearly every African country. The delegates embraced the opportunity to work with the United Nations as MDG advocates and formed a strong network with five sub-regions to exchange ideas and encourage collaboration. In their final declaration, the delegates committed to taking action in their local communities. They also called for national dialogues with their governments to ensure that the perspectives of young people are taken into account in efforts to achieve the Goals. Two delegates subsequently presented their Plan of Action to the African Union Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2004. Following the Summit, a number of delegates have launched MDG initiatives, some involving sport, and one was elected to parliament.

The Pan-Asian Youth Leadership Summit was held in September 2004 in Hiroshima, Japan, drawing delegates from 30 Asian and Pacific countries. A highlight was a walk for peace to the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park, a global symbol of rebirth after the horrors of war. The final declaration emphasized the need to achieve MDGs and urged the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Pacific Island Forum States, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to “give us a chance to present our vision for 2015.” After the summit, some delegates organized meetings on the MDGs in their home countries and launched local MDG-related community projects. One is a joint initiative with delegates from Africa.

The Latin American and Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit was held in May 2005 with support from the UNDP Brazil Office and the UN country team, the federal government of Brazil, the city of Belo Horizonte and the Citizenship Institute, a non-governmental organization. Field visits took delegates to see projects around the city which specifically addressed the MDGs, and they participated in workshops and a panel on sport and culture to achieve the MDGs. The Summit adopted a declaration that includes sport and culture as “rights and means of empowerment of individuals,” and the

delegates followed up by forming a Latin American and Caribbean regional youth network.

King Mohammed VI of Morocco hosted the second Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit in August 2005. The regional chairs from the Asian and Latin American and Caribbean regions participated and shared their experiences, which strengthened the bonds of the emerging global network of young leaders. Both sports and peace building were central themes, and the summit included an exhibition of MDG-related projects, with 10 delegates receiving awards from the Government for their projects.

Through these four regional meetings a global network of youth leaders has emerged. They want their voices to be heard and are effective in grassroots outreach and advocacy with their governments, civil society, academia, private sector and the media. There are three on-line forums, and delegates have created their own communication channels, which will be expanded to include European youth leaders. A key message of this series of the regional summits is that delegates from every region have contributions to make, and each region offers unique expertise, understanding and cultural traditions. The European Summit will seek to bring the youth of Europe closer to their peers in other regions by not only creating awareness, but also through direct dialogue and action projects.

AUSTRIA'S INITIATIVE FOR EUROPEAN YOUTH

The Government of Austria has taken the initiative to host the United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit growing out of a conviction that sport can play a vital role in achieving the MDGs and that young people have a strong attraction to sport. Austrian Secretary of State for Sport H.E. Karl Schweitzer, speaking at the United Nations in New York at the ceremony for the presentation of the Report on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 to the Secretary-General, stated:

During Austria's Presidency of the European Union, I will address and encourage Ministers of Sport within the European Union to support sport for development and peace across Europe. It is important to create and enhance political awareness that sport is a powerful tool to build capacity in education, health, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace keeping.

Sport is an ideal "school for life" and actively educates young people about the importance of key values, such as honesty, fair play, respect for oneself and others, and adherence to the rules.

At the meeting of European Sports Directors in March 2006, H.E. Mr. Schweitzer underlined the importance of sport as a tool to reach the MDGs and invited his counterparts to encourage their national governments to explicitly incorporate sport and development in their national policies. He requested that the European Commission

compile information on sport and development projects and policies, and also facilitate an exchange of best practices across the European Union.

KEY ISSUES FACING YOUTH IN EUROPE

European countries have taken steps to fulfill their UN Millennium Summit promise to attain the MDGs by 2015. Youth, who represent nearly one-fifth of the region's population, have a vital role to play in this endeavor, given their dynamism, imagination, idealism and role as the conscience of society. The challenge for Europe and its youth is to ensure that countries throughout the region achieve Goals 1 through 7, which deal with specific human development challenges, as well as Goal 8: develop a global partnership for development. As a developed region, Europe has a vital role in creating a global partnership for development to accelerate the worldwide achievement of the MDGs.

The United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit aims to:

- Inspire European youth leaders to take an active role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, using sport, peace and culture as entry points;
- Encourage European youth to focus on Goal 8 by developing global partnerships for development.
- Reflect on key issues in Europe pertaining to youth, such as education, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and social integration, and ways that these can be addressed through sport and culture.
- Introduce and integrate the European youth leaders into the Global Youth Leaders Network that has emerged from other regional youth leadership meetings;
- Provide access to knowledge, networks and skills to enable young leaders to meet the challenges confronting their countries and communities relating to efforts to attain the MDGs and promote peace.
- Encourage young leaders to develop their own projects and advocacy campaigns, in cooperation with the United Nations system, governments, NGOs, the private sector, and the media, in support of the MDGs and peace, drawing on the compelling power of sport and culture among their peers.

Delegates are being chosen on the basis of their commitment to address global issues and the MDGs, using sport and culture for peace building and development; leadership potential; experience with action-oriented projects; networking skills for mobilizing people and resources; record of advocacy work and as agents of change; and commitment to be part of the Global Network of Youth Leaders.

The Summit agenda will include plenary sessions with specialists and delegates, combined with five clusters for small group discussions. The delegates will conclude the Summit by adopting the Vienna Declaration, which will present their vision for mobilizing the new generation in Europe in support of the MDGs and working in cooperation with their peers worldwide to a spirit of mutual respect and peace. The declaration will be brought to the Global Summit in New York.

SPORT, CULTURE AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Sport and culture are universal languages with a strong attraction for young people. They are able to bridge social, cultural and religious divides. They teach life skills to young people, helping them become better citizens. Sport holds enormous promise as a tool to help overcome poverty, illiteracy, and disease and for promoting understanding and respect for others and building peace. For this reason, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education and is expanding the use of sport as a tool to help achieve the MDGs. Sport contributes to progress towards the Goals by improving lives and opening new opportunities; it teaches self-confidence, teamwork, and respect for one's opponent and the rules. Sport also serves as a catalyst for economic growth and cost-effective ways to improve health and education.

Young people can play a central role in expanding the use of sport as a way to help empower people, foster economic opportunities, and encourage dialogue and understanding to reduce social tensions. Culture, especially music and all forms of artistic expression, also attract youth worldwide and can cross social boundaries to bring people together.

Previous regional summits have inspired delegates to get more involved in projects that use sport and culture as instruments for peace and development. The two delegates from Cameroon both participated in MDG awareness activities at a soccer World Cup qualifying match to promote the MDGs and educate the public. Youth delegates from Niger brought together 40 young people from 15 French-speaking countries for an International Meeting of Francophone Youth in conjunction with the 5th Jeux de la Francophonie (the 5th Francophone Games) in December 2005 in Niamey. Together they agreed to follow up with initiatives that use sport to promote education, and as a communications tool to reach out to young people on social issues.

Motivating youth through sports and culture to advance the MDGs provides opportunities to improve skills and to create new partnerships. Young people have a central role to play in ensuring that the potential of sport is recognized, and the European Summit will provide a platform for delegates to exchange views on how they can expand the use of sport to promote peace and development in their own communities.

“Sport, with its joys and triumphs, its pains and defeats, its emotions and challenges, is an unrivalled medium for the promotion of education, health, development and peace. I am convinced that sport helps us demonstrate, in our pursuit of the betterment of humanity, that there is more that unites us than divides us.”

-- Adolf Ogi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace

THE POWER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Information and communication technologies are transforming our world and opening new vistas for global cooperation and action to advance progress towards the MDGs. Young people are on the cutting edge of this new technology, and many are skilled in harnessing them in their own activities. An important issue for the European Summit, however, is the digital divide: youth in other regions are also eagerly taking advantage of new technologies, but some lack access or have far more limited access than their peers in developed countries. Even within Europe, there are disparities among communities in their ability to take advantage of new technologies. These issues have profound implications for education, employment and progress in other sectors towards the MDGs, and will be addressed by young leaders at the Summit in Vienna.

As the technology partner for the Youth Summit series, Sun Microsystems is helping young leaders understand the implications of new technologies and ways through which they can use their power to advance their work and link up with their peers worldwide.

THE MDGs AND EUROPEAN YOUTH LEADERS

The MDGs are a blueprint for a better world, and it is essential that the leaders of tomorrow, young women and young men, become fully engaged in the campaign to achieve the Goals by 2015. They are a vision for a world where millions of children are not condemned to early death from preventable diseases each year or to lives of grinding poverty, where every child completes primary school, where women and girls can reach their full potential, where all women have access to basic maternity care, where the deadly toll of HIV/AIDS and other major diseases is stemmed, and where development is environmentally sustainable.

These Goals can be attained if the political will and the resources needed are mobilized -- and if young leaders step forward to play their part.

Many of the countries of Europe have achieved the first seven Goals or are on track to do so. Yet even these countries face challenges in some sectors, and some have adjusted the Goals to fit their levels of development and social conditions. Countries in Europe continue to face challenges of unemployment; economic and social disparities; social tensions related to discrimination, lack of inclusion, and religious differences; obstacles to the equality of women and girls; the threat of HIV/AIDS, particularly among at-risk groups; and environmental degradation. Young people are often the most affected by these problems and need to be fully engaged in seeking solutions.

Some European countries have further to go to reach the Goals, and are coping with more extensive poverty, increasing rates of HIV/AIDS infections among some groups, and serious environmental problems. Once again, young people have the biggest stake in addressing these challenges.

On Goal 8, there is great scope for new initiatives Europe. It is estimated that \$50 to \$70 billion in annual investment are required globally to achieve the MDGs. Even counting with a dramatic increase of the overall development assistance by the industrialized countries the requirements are high to meet the needs. Most European countries have not reached the agreed on target of 0.7 per cent of GDP for development assistance. That is why the focus is put on partnership development, and youth can play an important role in creating development partnerships in Europe and worldwide.

Resources need to be focused on ground-level investments required to achieve the Goals in developing countries. Today only a quarter of bilateral official development assistance and less than half of multilateral aid supports such direct investments. The rest is focused on food aid, debt relief, technical cooperation, and other aid not directly related to the Millennium Development Goals. Development assistance can be more effective if pooled and harmonized by donor agencies, with a much greater emphasis on budget support wherever possible. The most important requirement is human capital and creative approaches, and that is why youth leadership is crucial.

Trade barriers are another key development issue facing Europe. Developing countries continue to face tariffs for their products, despite commitments by the developed world to free trade principles. This is a major impediment to progress towards the MDGs and a major concern in efforts to forge a global partnership for development. Youth in Europe are increasingly making their voices heard on this issue.

It is well proven that investing in youth will provide a long-lasting and effective return towards meeting the MDGs through building social capacity for development up to 2015 and beyond. Governments and their partners working towards achieving the MDGs need to be more aware of the immense power of youth action; likewise, youth organizations need to make their voices heard in the international community, as well as on a national level.

Nearly one in five of the world's six billion people are between the ages of 15 and 24, of whom more than 80 per cent live in less developed countries, and this is the largest group ever to enter adulthood. This makes the involvement of the next generation indispensable for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Youth organizations can contribute significantly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by harnessing the immense lobbying power of their generation and through building youth partnerships within Europe and with other regions. The recent report by an ad hoc working group for youth and the MDGs organized by the Youth Caucus of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (www.mdgyouthpaper.org/mdgyouthpaper.pdf) offers many suggestions for youth involvement, and several key points are noted below.

Raising awareness about the MDGs among young people is an important step towards creating a powerful voice that advocates for the sustainable development. To accomplish this, efforts can be made to reach out to young people in schools, organizations, and local

communities. Sport provides a valuable tool for such advocacy activities. Another step is to convince governments and educators to integrate sustainable development into university curricula.

Young people should have input on policies relating to the MDGs, and governments can be encouraged to create mechanisms that enable youth to have a voice in shaping development agendas. Young people also need more access to funding opportunities that will enable them to carry out MDG-related projects or become entrepreneurs, opening new economic opportunities. Building intergenerational partnerships through mentor programs can enable young people to learn from the experience of the older generation.

In addition, young people can be engaged in monitoring the progress towards achieving the MDGs. Integrated exchange programmes can offer on-the-ground experience and has great potential for partnerships, since inspiration growing out of personal engagement is irreplaceable. Along these lines, voluntary work holds great potential for creating international youth partnerships.

ORGANIZING THE SUMMIT

The United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace is cooperating with the Government of Austria and other partners in organizing the Summit on behalf of the United Nations system. Under the guidance of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Adolf Ogi, the main objectives of the Office are to advance and coordinate activities of the United Nations system related to sport. Its mandate is:

- To better integrate sport into the development agenda;
- To incorporate sport as a useful tool in programmes for development and peace;
- To include sport-based initiatives in the country programmes of UN agencies where appropriate, and accordingly to locally assessed needs;
- To attract greater attention and resources from governments and the United Nations system to Sport for Development and Peace programmes;
- To organize communications-based activities that use sport, focusing on well-targeted advocacy and social mobilization, particularly at national and local levels.

The Office helped generate worldwide support for activities commemorating the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, including recognition of the importance of sport by more than 170 world leaders at the United Nations 2005 World Summit. The Summit outcome document states: “We underline that that sports can foster peace and development and can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding, and we encourage discussions in the General Assembly for proposals leading to a Sport and Development Plan of Action.”

Forging cooperation across the United Nations system, the Office helped create an inter-agency Working Group on Sport for Development and Peace to discuss coordination and cooperation to maximize the impact of sports activities. The Business Plan for the Working Group is a comprehensive agenda for sports initiatives by the United Nations system and its partners in support of the MDGs and peace building, including the United Nations Youth Summit series and other activities focusing on youth.

The Office works closely with the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, formed in 2005 through initiative of the Ambassadors of Switzerland and Tunisia to the United Nations in New York. The open-ended group of ambassadors aims to encourage governments to support sport-related activities, including those for youth, at the United Nations, in their national policies, and at the international level.

The Group of Friends drafted General Assembly Resolution 60/9, unanimously adopted on 3 November 2005, which requests the Secretary-General to develop an Action Plan to expand and strengthen sports for development and peace activities and sport partnerships. The resolution reflects the commitment of the world community to mainstream sport as part of the global development agenda. The Office is preparing the Action Plan, working in cooperation with the Group of Friends.

The United Nations Youth Leadership Summit series is an important dimension of the Office's outreach to civil society on behalf of the United Nations system and is organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, and the governments of several countries hosting regional summits, including Austria, Brazil, Morocco, and Senegal. The main NGO partner is the Global Peace Initiative of Women, an international network of women leaders who come together to stimulate peace building and reconciliation efforts in areas of conflict and recovering from conflict.

THE NEED TO ACT NOW

The coming months offer the opportunity of a breakthrough towards conquering extreme poverty. Achieving the Goals is the most pressing social imperative of our time. With decisive leadership and a clear focus on implementation, extreme poverty can be halved within a decade. At issue is whether countries will follow through on commitments. The right choices must be made at all levels, and a new decade of bold cooperation launched. The stakes could not be higher, with tens of millions of lives at stake, and youth hold the key to that future. Their commitment can make the difference, and only with the involvement of young people on every continent can the achievement of the MDGs become a reality.

Last year, leaders from nearly all 191 United Nations member states participating in the United Nations World Summit 2005 agreed to adopt and implement ambitious national development strategies based on the Millennium Development Goals by 2006. If a national strategy outlines the maximum effort that a developing country can make towards the Goals, then donor countries should fill the funding gap of support required.

This is particularly important for the poorest countries that have very few resources available.

The World Summit also agreed to launch Quick Impact Initiatives, which can have enormous benefits on millions of lives in the poorest countries. Countries can, for example, fight malaria through mass distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and artemisinin-based combination therapy, campaign against hunger by focusing on school meals using locally produced food, and help abolish fees for basic healthcare and primary education, backed by increased development assistance to make up for the revenue shortfall. Success will require developed and developing countries to work closely together to mobilize the resources and implement activities. Youth can play a vital role in such initiatives, enlisting the power of sport and culture to raise awareness and mobilize support.

Developed countries, including the European Union, also need to adopt national strategies for the Goals. Youth have an important stake in these strategies, both in aspects that focus on domestic priorities and those responding to the call of the eighth Millennium Development Goal to create a global partnership for development. Nowhere is the test of this Goal more meaningful than at the level of supporting developing countries' national strategies to achieve their own targets and aspirations for the MDGs. It is incumbent upon the developed world to support them, and for the younger generation represented at the United Nations European Youth Leadership Summit to take a stand to see that commitments to achieve the MDGs are met.