

29 May 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Commemoration of 20th Anniversary of World
Programme of Action for Youth**

Delivered by H.E. Alavaro José De Mendonça E Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal on behalf of President Kutesa

**Honourable Ministers
Excellencies,
Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General
Mr Ahmad Alhendawi, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
Distinguished delegates and participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency, Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly. I also extend my appreciation to the Office of the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy for their partnership in organizing this event.

I welcome the Honourable Ministers and other dignitaries from capitals joining us here today. Your participation in this event demonstrates the great importance you attach to the youth.

The 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) provides a timely opportunity for young people, Member States and civil society to take stock of progress in the implementation of the World Programme of Action.

Indeed, important strides have been made in addressing youth development since the adoption of the World Programme of Action.

Around the world, governments are becoming increasingly aware of the need for legal and policy frameworks that adequately respond to young peoples' needs, aspirations and demands. I am heartened to note that as of 2014, 127 countries had a national youth policy.

Nevertheless, although much has been done to improve the situation of young people over the last two decades, youth continue to be disproportionately affected by many global challenges.

Youth unemployment continues to be a formidable issue worldwide, with young people three times more likely to be jobless than adults.

Further, despite access to primary education having increased exponentially, many young people still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills to enable them find and keep a job.

It is also troubling that despite important advances, the issue of access to education remains a particularly difficult obstacle for young girls.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

Increasingly, we are witnessing young people around the world taking more vocal and proactive approaches to finding solutions for the challenges they face.

Initiatives such as the First Global Forum on Youth Policies, which took place last October in Azerbaijan, served as a valuable forum for the open exchange of ideas on youth issues, and played a role in enhancing and elevating the debate and knowledge about youth policies.

The #YouthNow digital campaign, organized by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, has also served as a meaningful platform for engaging web users on youth issues. Since its launch only four months ago, the site has already registered close to 500 million impressions.

These examples, as well as many others, demonstrate that young people around the world are ready and willing to be actively involved in shaping their future.

As the international community works to formulate an inclusive and transformative post-2015 development agenda, we should seek to harness the innovative spirit of young people in identifying creative solutions to our development challenges.

I am encouraged to note that young people, including many of you here today, have already been actively involved in the deliberations on the future development agenda. I thank you for your contributions and urge your continued engagement.

For our part, leaders should strive to find further ways to capitalize on the integral role young people can play, not only in the agenda's design, but also its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With over 1.2 billion young people globally, youth account for a significant proportion of the world's population. From employment to education, from participation to gender equality; much work remains to be done to ensure that this vital segment of our population is provided every opportunity to flourish.

For this reason, today's commemoration carries great importance for us all.

Let us use this gathering as an opportunity for reflection on how far we have come since 1995; and how far we must still go to fully empower young people to thrive and prosper in the future.

I thank you for your attention.