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General Assembly
64th session

**Item 61b: Social Development, including
questions relating to the world social situation
and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the
family**

Swiss Statement

presented by
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New York, 5 October 2009

Mr. President,

Youth is defined as an autonomous social group in the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. It is important that young people are recognised as a distinct social group with their own distinct needs. Our generation accounts for around 17% of the global population. As we speak, over 1.2 billion young people across the world are taking their first tentative steps towards building an independent life and carving out a place for themselves in our society. An unlimited source of hope, creativity and innovative ideas, we bring with us a tremendous potential for finding future solutions to global problems. Sidelining young people will only jeopardise our collective future.

The debates during the February 2009 session of the Commission for Social Development demonstrated once again that social inclusion is the key not only to a stable, safe and peaceful society, but also to economic and social development. Social inclusion is an imperative of Swiss public policy. In Switzerland, the principles that govern the social inclusion of young people are enshrined in the Federal Constitution. The Swiss National Youth Council, however, believes that Switzerland also needs a framework law on child and youth policy in order to facilitate and coordinate the social inclusion of young people at national level.

The economic and financial crisis threatens to undo the progress that many parts of the world have made in relation to social development since the Copenhagen World Summit in 1995. One of the major repercussions of such crises is the social exclusion of already vulnerable groups like young people, a point which was emphatically underlined in the report by the Secretary General. If we are to mitigate the impact of the current crisis, we must develop and mobilise instruments that promote social inclusion. Switzerland focuses its efforts on two priority areas:

1. Access to education and job creation: to achieve better social inclusion outcomes, both economic and employment policy must tackle the root cause of exclusion. They must create the necessary conditions to remedy the dearth of adequate employment opportunities and, at the same time, promote retraining and improvement of skills among the working population. The package of measures unveiled by the Swiss government in response to the current economic crisis seeks to address, and even

reverse, the trend of rising youth unemployment. These measures include encouraging companies to continue to employ their apprentices after their vocational training is finished, as well as incentives for employers to offer more apprenticeships. The government also helps young people who are out of work by funding further training programmes.

2. The report of the Secretary General rightly stresses the importance of social security systems. The comprehensive social security systems in place in Switzerland and other OECD member states are a major factor behind the level of social inclusion as well as general economic and social development that can be observed in our countries. In times of economic and financial turmoil, the importance of these systems becomes critical, even though there is a risk that the systems will experience funding difficulties due to this very turmoil. The major challenge is therefore to provide a sufficiently tight social safety net without rocking the very foundations on which social security is built. The international community has given little thought to the enormous potential that a social security system presents for developing and least developed countries. We need to join forces to set global social security standards as soon as is feasibly possible so as to ensure social security and coverage that are for all and are adapted to countries' specific needs and means. Switzerland would like to congratulate the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for their outstanding commitment and efforts in this regard.

Mr. President,

It is vital that the instruments of social inclusion - access to education, employment opportunities and the existence of a social security system – do not discriminate against any young person. The report of the Secretary General singles out young people from a migrant background as being at particular risk of social exclusion. Given that such young people are an important and integral part of Swiss society, and in the interests of improving our understanding of their situation, my delegation proposes that the focus of the 2011 World Youth Report should be on migration.

During its 48th session in February 2010, the Commission for Social Development will draft policy proposals on social integration. Switzerland considers this work of vital

importance and hopes it too can make a valuable contribution to the development of clear, practical and specific recommendations.

Thank you.