



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 June 2015

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the key messages, initiatives and proposals from the High-Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly to mark the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and to highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda held on 29 May 2015 at United Nations Headquarters, New York

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam K. Kutesa

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

High-Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly to mark the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and to highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

**United Nations Headquarters, New York
29 May 2015**

President's Summary

The President of the General Assembly, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, held the High-Level Event to mark the 20th Anniversary of the WPAY on 29 May 2015. The following is a summary of the key messages from the Event.

Opening Segment

H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura in his capacity as Acting President of the General Assembly, speaking on behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Sam Kutesa, noted that the 20th Anniversary was a timely opportunity to take stock of the progress of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). He said that while a lot of progress had been achieved, much more remained to be done to improve the situation of young people worldwide. He noted that as of 2014, 127 countries had national youth policies, but youth unemployment and access to education – particularly for girls – remain considerable challenges.

He added that initiatives, such as the First Global Forum on Youth Policies and the #YouthNow digital campaign, serve as meaningful platforms for engagement on youth issues. He emphasized that young people have been actively involved in deliberations on the future development agenda and encouraged leaders to find further ways to enhance the participation of young people in the implementation of the new development agenda.

The UN Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon said that 2015 is a historic year, as Member States prepare to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He called on Member States to enhance their efforts to implement the WPAY under the post-2015 development agenda and to include young people as part of their delegations to the Summit in September 2015. He called upon Member States, youth organizations and UN system agencies to work together with Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, his Envoy on Youth who has established partnership networks with millions of young people across the world.

In his remarks, Mr. Alhendawi, noted that the WPAY provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth worldwide, as well as a blueprint for effective youth policies.

He observed that in spite of the important gains in its implementation and an increase in the number of countries with national youth policies, much remains to be done to realize WPAY's full implementation and to ensure youth development.

He pointed out that it is critical to involve young people in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and actions affecting their lives.

He stressed the importance of political will, youth friendly legislation and policies, as well as the need for dedicated resources to ensure the implementation of the WPAY and the SDGs.

The Keynote speaker, Ms. Vivian Onano, lauded young people today for greater involvement in calling for action on important issues such as access to education, gender inequality, youth unemployment, peace and security, climate change and global pandemics such as Ebola. She stressed that issues such as human trafficking, sexual violence, genital mutilation, sex slavery, access to health services, and economic empowerment of women should be effectively addressed to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. She noted the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the work of UN Women in advancing gender equality. She underscored the urgent need to tackle the youth unemployment crisis, including through supporting youth entrepreneurship and skills development. Ms. Onano called on Member States to include a youth delegate as part of their delegations to the United Nations.

Morning and Afternoon Plenary:

1. Many Member States noted that considerable progress had been achieved over the last 20 years since the adoption of the WPAY, but key challenges to youth development remain, especially youth unemployment, access to quality education, HIV and AIDS, poverty, conflict and violence, and gender inequality.
2. Member States noted that young people are a strategic wealth and demographic dividend for their countries, but that social exclusion and lack of opportunities greatly hindered youth development. Member States should ensure strong policy and programme responses to realize young people's full potential and contribution to sustainable development.
3. Member States also reiterated the importance of continued and accelerated implementation of the WPAY. It was also stressed that the priority areas of the WPAY are closely interlinked and that the implementation of the WPAY involves participation of youth at all levels.
4. Delegations highlighted the importance of the development of evidence-based policies and use of indicators and monitoring frameworks to assess progress in the field of youth.
5. It was noted that most Member States have existing national youth policies and/or action plans for youth, while others were developing or renewing them.
6. Member States underscored the importance of ensuring that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to youth policies and action plans so as to ensure effective implementation and youth development. It was also noted that eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development will require a strengthened global partnership for development, including commitment from developed countries to fulfill their overseas development assistance (ODA) targets.
7. Youth agendas or charters and action plans have been developed and implemented in a number of regions including the African Union's African Youth Charter and Plan of Action, CARICOM Youth Agenda, Arab Policy for Young People of the Arab Council for Ministers of Youth and Sport and the Francophonie Youth Strategy 2016-2022.

8. A number of Member States informed that they had newly established Ministries of Youth and Ministries of Skills Development and Youth Entrepreneurship, while others highlighted the strengthening of youth commissions and ministries. Member States also reported on their support to the development and sustainability of national youth councils and structures.
9. Member States noted that the continuing youth unemployment crisis was an issue of concern, necessitating enhanced response and attention. It was noted according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), over 74 million young people are unemployed, with the global youth unemployment rate currently standing at 13 per cent, up from 11.7 per cent in 1995. It is therefore critical to increase investment in youth employment initiatives, education and training, skills development, and entrepreneurship.
10. A number of countries informed that they have developed targeted actions or strategies to combat youth unemployment, including promoting youth entrepreneurship, and improving access to credit and financial literacy. It was also stressed that focusing on the needs of the youth in rural areas, through improving agricultural employment policies and programmes would play a crucial role in tackling unemployment.
11. Youth volunteer programmes have been established by a number of Member States and regional groups to encourage the development of youth leadership skills to enhance youth employability and engagement.
12. Several Member States identified health care and access to health services and information as a priority, with particular focus on HIV and AIDS. HIV/AIDS continues to be the main cause of death among adolescents in Africa. The education and empowerment of young people is important in reducing this. The Ebola epidemic was noted by several countries as having posed a real threat to the lives of young people in effected countries, while the resilience and commitment of youth to overcoming the epidemic was commended.
13. Member States highlighted the need for greater investments into health, sustainable livelihoods and education, including sexual and reproductive health and human rights in order to reduce forced, early and child marriage, early pregnancy and serious detrimental health conditions for young women.
14. Many Member States referred to the initiatives taken to promote the active involvement of girls and young women in education and employment. The need to ensure policies and efforts to improve the situation of girls and young women, promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence was also highlighted.
15. Several Member States noted the negative effects of armed conflict on young people, including its impact on their development. They condemned the recruitment and use of youth in armed groups, terrorism, and violent extremism and highlighted the importance of ensuring the full re-integration of such youth back into society. Gender-based and sexual violence and drugs as well as other criminal activities were also noted as serious challenges that impact the development of youth globally.

16. Member States noted the great value of further strengthening collaboration of UN entities with Governments in the development and implementation of youth policies. It was also suggested that UN-inter-agency collaboration on youth development at the regional and national levels should be strengthened.
17. There was a call for urgent action to take measures to address the root causes of the recent high levels of migration of African youth, particularly through illegal trafficking. The need to resolve conflict and creating conducive environments that provide economic and employment opportunities in countries of origin was stressed.
18. Leisure time activities, including sports and cultural activities, were stressed as important for youth development as was the positive role of families.

Panel Discussions

The afternoon panel discussions were entitled, respectively: “*Stocktaking of the Past 20 Years since the Adoption of WPAY*” and the “*Role of WPAY looking ahead*”.

Speakers reflected on youth priorities in relation to the adoption and implementation of WPAY over the past two decades, highlighting the progress achieved, good practices, lessons learned as well as gaps and challenges. Panelists offered thoughts on the process ahead and potential entry points for ensuring that youth priorities are safeguarded and strengthened in the post-2015 development agenda.

Progress achieved since WPAY

Speakers highlighted progress since the adoption of WPAY, including the creation of ministries of youth affairs in many countries, the development of national youth policies and projects, and greater involvement of civil society, the private sector, and the UN system in promoting and implementing WPAY.

Panelists emphasized the importance of developing youth capacity through education and promoting youth involvement at all levels of decision-making. NGOs in Africa, in particular, were commended for uniting students across Africa and making notable progress in capacity-building programmes and initiatives centred on themes of good governance and community empowerment. Specific good examples cited included Adopt a Child Programme, farming campaigns, Food for Life Project and IT Training, among others.

Challenges since adoption of WPAY

Speakers highlighted some of the remaining challenges in the implementation of WPAY including, inter alia, resource constraints, lack of communication, misrepresentation of young people, governance, continuity of youth involvement, immigration policies and lack of access to quality education. It was stated that these challenges further accentuate the need for an integrated worldwide youth policy.

It was noted that Governments would benefit from increased use of data and insights from the research community and a greater understanding of linkages between policy areas.

Promising programmes and initiatives cited included the EU's funding of and cooperation with research groups, and the UN's First Global Forum on Youth Policies.

The way forward

It was noted that much progress is still needed for the implementation of WPAY, particularly in the areas of hunger, poverty, leisure, armed conflict and full participation of youth, among others. Specifically, it was stressed that youth should remain a target of public policy in efforts to address hunger and poverty, which are major global challenges. In certain countries, other challenges, such as violence perpetrated by and against youth, may be addressed by greater access to education and food, as well as the empowerment of youth through access to information technology.

It was suggested that additional efforts are needed to involve youth participation in drafting an action plan in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Speakers reiterated the importance of UN support for grassroots engagement in the planning and implementation of the SDGs. They also highlighted the need to consider the issues within different national and regional contexts and establish greater awareness of the SDGs among young people, particularly through existing mechanisms and platforms of UN engagement, such as the Major Group on Children and Youth and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations.

Public-private partnerships can play an important role in empowerment of young people, through increasing opportunities for youth unemployment, and greater investment in education.

Closing Segment:

H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura, Acting President of the General Assembly reiterated the importance of the 20th Anniversary as an occasion to reflect upon the successes of WPAY. He noted the main challenges that persist with regard to empowering young people including lack of access to quality education and skills development, unemployment, gender inequality, violence and conflict, and limited participation in political and socio-economic spheres. He reiterated the call for full and effective implementation of WPAY through renewed, collective commitment by Member States and all stakeholders and the need for robust and effective youth policies. He further noted the importance of education, skills development, entrepreneurship, and access to affordable credit for youth. He called upon all governments and stakeholders to ensure that national development plans and policies take into account the needs and interests of young people.
