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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 65/312. It provides an overview of national experiences, lessons learned and good practices on how to address problems affecting youth and puts forward a set of recommendations from Member States, United Nations entities and youth-led and youth-focused organizations, focusing on how to: (a) more effectively address the challenges hindering the development and participation of youth; (b) improve the United Nations youth-related programmes and structure, including their coherence; and (c) monitor progress.



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I. Introduction

1. On 26 July 2011, the General Assembly adopted the Outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, through its resolution 65/312.

2. In paragraph 26 of that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report, with due regard to existing reporting obligations, to the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-first session, on national experiences, lessons learned and good practices on how to address problems affecting youth, which report should also evaluate the achievements and shortcomings of ongoing United Nations programmes related to youth and put forward concrete recommendations on how to more effectively address the challenges hindering the development and participation of youth, including through volunteer activities; how to improve the United Nations programmes and structures related to youth, including their coherence; how to better foster dialogue and mutual understanding among youth worldwide; and how to assess progress in these fields, and should be prepared in consultation with Member States, as well as the relevant specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and regional commissions, taking into account the work done by the United Nations system; and also requested the Secretariat to consult, as appropriate, with youth-led and youth-focused organizations to ensure that various youth inputs would be duly shared with the Commission for Social Development during its deliberations.

3. Further to the request for a report, the Secretariat designed a set of three questionnaires to obtain inputs from Member States, United Nations entities and youth organizations, respectively. Responses to the questionnaires were received from 21 Member States,¹ 23 entities of the United Nations system,² and 25 youth

¹ Argentina, Austria, Colombia, Cuba, Finland, Germany, Japan, Malta, Morocco, New Zealand, Niger, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, United States of America.

² Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), MDG Achievement Fund, United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), World Bank, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

organizations.³ Outreach to youth organizations included contact with: youth organizations that registered for the High-level Meeting on Youth; the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations; youth delegates; youth networks of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development; and outreach by means of Facebook and Twitter.

4. Section II of the report highlights national priorities in youth development, accomplishments and good practices, as well as challenges and lessons learned in addressing problems that affect youth. Section III presents an evaluation of United Nations programmes related to youth by Member States and a self-evaluation by United Nations entities. Section IV sets out the recommendations of Member States, United Nations entities and youth organizations on how to more effectively address the challenges hindering the development and participation of youth, including through volunteer activities; how to improve the United Nations programmes and structure related to youth, including their coherence; how to better foster dialogue and mutual understanding among youth worldwide; and how to assess progress in those fields.

II. National experiences, challenges and lessons learned and achievements and good practices in addressing problems affecting young people

A. National priorities in youth development

5. Member States emphasized that youth development is a national priority not only to improve the situation of youth, but also to benefit society at large. Many Member States considered youth development as a priority area in their national agendas and have developed — or are in the process of developing — a targeted policy framework for young people. Colombia, Cuba, Finland, Japan, Malta, New Zealand, the Niger, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Senegal and Switzerland reported that they had a national policy on youth. Four Member States, namely Austria, Morocco, Spain and Sri Lanka, are in the process of developing a national youth policy. Germany has a child and youth welfare services policy and is planning a specific youth policy.

6. Thirteen of the Member States responding reported having a national representative and/or consultative body for youth such as a youth council (Argentina, Austria, Colombia, Finland, Germany, Malta, Niger, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka and Switzerland).

³ African Leadership Community Link Advancement Programme; African Youth Movement; Alnubarak Welfare Society; Association pour le développement de la société civile angolaise; Aube nouvelle pour la femme et le développement; Caritas Lebanon; Caritas Macau; Dutch National Youth Council; Equidad de Género: Ciudadanía, Trabajo y Familia; Espacio de Vinculación; European Youth Forum; Femme environnement et assainissement; First Lady's Save Our Youth Campaign of Nigeria; Forum Nazionale dei Giovani; International Planned Parenthood Federation; International Union of Socialist Youth; Japan Society of Humanistic Anthropology Association; Peace Child International; Réseau national de la jeunesse en population et développement; Restless Development; Space Generation Advisory Council; United Nations Youth Association Nigeria; War Child; Young Africa Youth Vision Association.

7. Other national-level forms of youth representation include the Communist Youth Union of Cuba, which monitors youth policies and represents Cuba in youth matters, and the Aotearoa Youth Voices, a network of over 4,000 young people coordinated by the Ministry of Youth Development of New Zealand. Members of the network may provide input into decision-making and take part in workshops and training on youth participation.

8. Priority areas within youth development most frequently highlighted by Member States include employment, participation, education and health. Several Member States also emphasized youth protection (Germany, Morocco, Niger and Switzerland) and rights (Argentina, Colombia, Peru and Republic of Moldova) as priorities. Some Member States stressed as priorities, information and communications technology and safe use of the Internet (Finland, Peru, Senegal and Switzerland), research and study on youth (Morocco and Syrian Arab Republic) and marginalized or excluded youth (Cuba, Finland and Germany). In addition, HIV and AIDS (Senegal), substance abuse (Senegal), migration (Niger), gender (Finland), housing (Finland) and rural youth (Colombia) were each cited as a priority by Member States.

B. National achievements and good practices in youth development

9. In recent years, Member States have adopted various strategies to improve the situation of youth. Progress has reportedly been achieved in youth engagement through support to volunteerism and in the political inclusion and participation of youth through the establishment of youth congresses and parliaments. Programmes and networks have further been created to connect young people and youth organizations to key stakeholders. In addition, many national policies and strategies related to youth have been initiated, adopted or revised — some with the participation of young people themselves — and some national bodies on youth have been established.

10. With employment and education among the main priorities of Member States, many initiatives have been implemented to create jobs and training opportunities, such as establishing or expanding employment centres and training programmes, temporary paid work placement schemes and career counselling services. Some countries have also invested in research on — and monitoring of — the youth labour market. With regard to education, strategies were implemented to increase school enrolment and completion among youth, including through various assistance programmes. Moreover, some countries undertook efforts to gather the views of youth on their educational experiences and to promote young people's participation in their own education.

11. Achievements were reported on the protection of youth rights through national acts and orders. Programmes and action plans have also focused on youth protection from youth violence, sexual violence and exploitation, and the media. Although few Member States reported on health and well-being, progress has been achieved with regard to HIV prevention and testing, reduced drug use, and awareness of reproductive issues.

1. Participation and engagement

12. Member States identified many accomplishments on youth volunteerism by promoting and institutionalizing volunteerism and support to national and regional voluntary youth organizations (Malta, Syrian Arab Republic and United States).

13. Several Member States noted the success of youth parliaments or congresses (New Zealand, Peru, Portugal and Sri Lanka) in bringing youth and youth organizations together to share experiences and contribute to political and development processes. Moreover, Austria reduced the national voting age to 16 in order to promote greater political participation.

14. Germany developed federal programmes and networks for youth that promote diversity, tolerance and democracy, and Austria established the “federal network of open youth work” (2,000 youth clubs and centres) and the federal network of youth information centres to facilitate cooperation and to serve on the non-governmental organization advisory board of the Youth Ministry. Argentina noted that a large number of young people had participated in the Citizen Formation initiative, which provides classes in thematic areas such as participatory democracy and sexual rights.

15. Sri Lanka is providing senior school students and school leavers with leadership and skills development training, which it plans to make available to all new university entrants.

16. Morocco emphasized its extensive infrastructure for young people, such as youth clubs and sports centres in rural and urban areas, including specifically for girls, and highlighted its Grand Prize for Youth initiative, which promotes and discovers young talent across five disciplines: theatre, music, visual arts, innovation and entrepreneurship.

17. Some Member States, such as Sri Lanka, have involved youth in the formulation of relevant national policies, including through a youth parliament structure.

2. National youth-related policies and strategies

18. Member States reported the preparation, adoption or revision of national acts, policies or strategies on youth (Austria, Colombia, Cuba, Finland, Malta, Morocco and Switzerland) as well as the establishment of a national ministry or agency on youth (Malta and Senegal). Colombia reported progressive approaches to youth policy, while the Republic of Moldova elaborated its youth research policy.

19. Governments highlighted a range of programmes and projects developed or funded in youth-oriented education, employment, justice, social integration and culture (Cuba, Morocco, New Zealand and Senegal). Senegal has implemented the Youth Promotion Project in social protection, which provides support centres for teenagers.

3. Employment and training

20. Member States highlighted important activities on employment and training. Senegal created the National Agency for Youth Employment and the Office for Youth Employment, while its National Fund on Youth Development provides support to young agricultural entrepreneurs and creates seasonal agricultural jobs. Both Portugal and Senegal have invested in research in and monitoring of the youth labour market. Sri Lanka established an internationally recognized National

Vocational Qualification Framework for its technical and vocational education and training sector and established a university of vocational technology.

21. Many Government programmes were developed to expand and enhance employment and training outcomes, ranging from programmes that employ young graduates in the public sector (Syrian Arab Republic) to those which provide career counselling (Austria) and capacity-building support (Peru). Portugal launched initiatives to provide professional traineeships, temporary paid work placements and support in the transition from school to work through job offers, apprenticeships, training and other measures that support employability lasting up to six months. The Niger established the Renaissance programme that aims to create 50,000 jobs per year for youth within five years.

22. In Germany, a successful system of vocational training, training support services of employment agencies and job centres and collaboration with leading commercial federations in a training pact reduced youth unemployment by half between 2005 and 2011. For young people who are disadvantaged and have limited opportunities in the transition from school to work, practical support services — social, educational and skills-based — are provided under the Strengthening Youth initiative.

4. Education

23. In the area of education, Member States highlighted achievements in increasing school enrolment and completion among youth (Argentina, Portugal and Spain). Some Member States also cited their provision of scholarships, loans and work-study aid (Peru and United States).

24. In order to raise educational standards, the Government of Spain doubled its education spending since the 1990s, while a Government programme in Portugal is establishing 12 years of schooling as the minimum qualification level for adults and youth.

25. Several countries shared achievements that involved the engagement of youth in education. In Colombia, the Government conducted interviews with young people to learn about and respond to their educational needs and views. Austria made available career counselling to young people beginning at an early age. National educational projects and competitions have been organized by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, such as Olympics for youth in mathematics and in information technology.

5. Protection and security

26. Several Member States have adopted national acts or orders on the protection of children and youth, including those who are at risk (Germany, Portugal and Switzerland). In addition, programmes and action plans have been put into place on youth protection from youth violence (Switzerland), and from sexual violence and exploitation (Germany).

27. Argentina reported that it had reduced the rate of deaths among youths resulting from violence and aggression.

6. Health and well-being

28. In the area of youth health and well-being, advancements were reported in providing voluntary and anonymous testing for young people for HIV (Senegal) and in reducing the incidence of HIV among youth (Portugal), and in raising awareness among youth about reproductive health (Senegal) and sexuality (Portugal) through the provision of information. Portugal reduced the use of cannabis and ecstasy among young people and the rate of deaths resulting from drug overdoses.

29. Colombia is implementing a joint initiative for rural youth in remote areas and conflict zones to encourage sport as a means of developing skills, enhancing well-being and avoiding violence. The initiative promotes participation, peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution, and gender equity.

C. National challenges and lessons learned in youth development

30. Member States emphasized youth unemployment, gaps in decent work and inadequate access to educational opportunities as significant challenges. Member States also highlighted the need to develop educational systems that respond to labour market needs. Ensuring youth access to health care and health-related information was further emphasized by several Member States, some of which were particularly concerned about harmful behaviours, such as the abuse of alcohol and other substances, obesity and reproductive health. Member States also cited violence and bullying as important challenges.

31. To enable national policies to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of young people, Member States are undertaking research on youth issues, collecting disaggregated data and setting up national databases on youth. Challenges persist in ensuring the participation of young people, including in decision-making and political processes, in particular among marginalized groups, such as young women, youth in rural areas and young people who are not enrolled in education, employment or training. Furthermore, Member States noted challenges associated with migration, most notably the need for more effective tools for the social integration of young migrants.

32. Member States emphasized that many of their challenges are interrelated, and that efforts to overcome them required interventions in a range of areas.

1. Employment

33. A majority of Member States, including Austria, Finland, Morocco, New Zealand, the Niger, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Spain and Switzerland have a range of youth employment challenges, specifically citing high rates of youth unemployment. As many Member States stressed, the issue is linked to challenges in providing access to education that responds to labour market needs and access to information and professional training, and in ensuring participation and the integration of young people in their societies. The importance of decent work and decent working conditions was highlighted by Portugal. Gender disparities also persist, as noted by Austria, with regard to wages. Colombia highlighted its challenge of advancing rural development and the need to provide rural youth with entrepreneurial skills and opportunities. New Zealand stressed concern over the

number of inactive young people who were not enrolled in education, training or employment.

2. Education

34. Challenges related to ensuring the strengthening of educational systems and access to educational opportunities, including in special needs education, and the provision of education that is responsive to labour market needs, were stressed by Austria, Colombia, Finland, Morocco, New Zealand, the Niger, Peru, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland and the Syrian Arab Republic. Many Member States pointed to the need to revise current education curricula and increase training efforts in order to better prepare young people for employment, with Malta and Switzerland stressing the challenge of better engaging and collaborating with both the public and private sectors.

3. Health

35. Ensuring young people's access to health services and health-related information are challenges reported by many Member States, including Colombia, Finland, Morocco, the Niger, Portugal, Senegal and the United States. The provision of equal access to health services, especially among youth who are not enrolled in formal education, was further cited as a challenge by Finland, which reported that health disparities based on socioeconomic strata were evident among young people in that country. Young people's access to health insurance was stressed as a challenge by the United States, although the recent enactment of the Affordable Care Act has substantially reduced the number of uninsured youth.

36. Finland and the United States highlighted the problem of obesity among young people. In the United States, where childhood obesity has tripled over the past three decades, nearly one in three children is overweight or obese. Finland, Senegal and Switzerland noted challenges related to substance abuse among youth, with Finland pointing to excessive use of alcohol, increased use of cannabis among secondary-level students, and excessive smoking among students in vocational training. That country further stressed that the number of mental health service users among adolescents and teenagers had tripled between 1990 and 2007. In addition, Colombia and Senegal reported that reproductive health was a major challenge. In particular, Senegal is working to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

4. Inclusive and responsive policies and participation

37. Germany emphasized the importance of ensuring young people's commitment to tolerance, diversity and democracy, noting that its programmes aimed at combating right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Germany highlighted that its Federal Ministry for Youth had initiated a political dialogue, into which young people were integrated at every stage, as part of efforts to formulate an independent youth policy.

38. Increasing young people's access to participation in economic and social issues at all levels of society, including in decision-making processes, remains a challenge for Finland, Morocco, Peru, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Spain and Switzerland. Member States emphasized the need to ensure the participation of

marginalized groups, including young women, youth in rural areas, indigenous youth and youth with disabilities.

39. Spain and Switzerland stressed the challenge of engaging young people in political matters, citing a worrying trend of declining youth participation in elections. Switzerland further pointed to low levels of interest among youth in public affairs, observing that young people often feel excluded from — and unable to contribute to or influence — decision-making processes. In this regard, Switzerland highlighted its Federation of Youth Parliaments, which represents the interests of more than 40 local-level youth parliaments at the national level. Peru reported as a challenge the provision of capacity-building for young people, including for youth organizations and similar structures.

5. Migration

40. Youth migration presents dual challenges for Member States. As pointed out by Austria, Finland, the Republic of Moldova and Switzerland, the need to develop more effective tools to integrate young migrants is crucial in ensuring their successful transition into adulthood and their positive contribution to society. On the other hand, Member States, such as the Niger, grapple with youth emigration and its risks to long-term development.

6. Violence and bullying

41. Violence and bullying among young people was highlighted by Finland, Switzerland and the United States. Finland and Switzerland stressed the challenge of reducing levels of violence among young people, which, they noted, was linked with such factors as high unemployment, inadequate access to education and substance abuse.

42. The United States noted that seven federal Government agencies were working to develop strategies to support and promote efforts to prevent school bullying, and cited key initiatives, including the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit and Safe and Supportive School state grants.

43. Germany highlighted its efforts to develop an overarching strategy to ensure online protection of children and youth and to eliminate the online dissemination of abusive and exploitative images.

III. Evaluation of United Nations programmes related to youth

A. Member States' assessment of the role played by the United Nations in addressing national youth development challenges

44. Overall, Member States positively assessed the role of the United Nations in responding to youth development challenges. Many reported that United Nations policy instruments provided a useful framework for building national strategies to promote youth development. Member States, particularly developing countries, value the assistance provided by the United Nations to national Governments in the implementation of youth-related programmes and other initiatives, such as youth partnerships. Member States highlighted the role of the United Nations in engaging

youth in its work through programmes and events, as well as in sustaining a forum for global dialogue and knowledge-sharing.

1. Provision of policy instruments for youth development

45. Member States reported that United Nations policy instruments, such as the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, have provided a framework for the development of national policies, action plans and principles on youth development, as well as support for their implementation (Austria, Finland, Germany, Malta, Morocco, New Zealand, Portugal, Senegal and Sri Lanka).

2. Support to the implementation of youth initiatives

46. The role of the United Nations in supporting the implementation of youth programmes, initiatives and research by Governments was highlighted by Colombia, Morocco, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ILO, the International Organization for Migration, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF are viewed as effective in addressing youth development in their particular areas of expertise, including by developing national action plans on youth employment, supporting efforts to combat HIV and AIDS and substance abuse, promoting education and reproductive health, building national capacity, providing opportunities for participation and volunteerism and for cooperation with youth, and empowering young women. Colombia, Peru and Sri Lanka further noted that the United Nations had enabled youth programmes to become more sustainable and representative of youth from marginalized groups.

3. Facilitation of discussion and youth participation

47. The United Nations is perceived by Member States as an important forum for discussion and the sharing of good practices and recommendations on situations and challenges of young people. It has enabled youth participation in its work, such as through the United Nations youth delegates programme and in the 2011 High-level Meeting on Youth (Argentina, Austria, Japan, Republic of Moldova and Sri Lanka).

B. Achievements of ongoing programmes on youth developed by entities of the United Nations system

1. Support for the development of national and local youth policies and national plans of action

48. Many United Nations entities, including ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA, the MDG Achievement Fund, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNV and UN-Women, have developed programmes that aim to institutionalize mechanisms for youth development and to raise awareness about its importance at the national and local levels in Member States. Examples of countries and/or territories that have successfully formulated or implemented targeted youth policies include Bahrain, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Liberia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, Sri Lanka, the

Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

2. Participatory forums and workshops to empower young people

49. Several participatory forums and workshops for young people have been organized by United Nations entities, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, IFAD, ITU, UNESCO, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“Climate Change Convention”) secretariat, and UN-Women. Focusing on areas such as information and communications technologies, intergenerational issues, climate change, cultural dialogue, agriculture, girls and young women and young people’s participation in the development agenda and in decision-making, the forums have contributed to awareness-raising, skills development and partnership-building and have provided young people with opportunities to participate and engage in the decision-making processes of the work of the United Nations. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized a number of participatory forums for the *United Nations World Youth Report* and the International Day of Youth 2012, including online consultation platforms, Google+ Hangouts, live tweeting and outreach by means of social media.

3. Strengthened partnerships and collaboration

50. Numerous partnerships and collaborative efforts have been developed throughout the United Nations system (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECA, ESCAP, FAO, IFAD, ITU, MDG Achievement Fund, United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNV, UN-Women and UNWTO), including with youth organizations and the private sector, between and among United Nations entities and with Governments. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development has expanded its membership and breadth of joint activities, most notably since the observance of the International Year of Youth and the 2011 High-level Meeting on Youth. In particular it has been working on the preparation of the Secretary-General’s System-Wide Action Plan on Youth and the preparation of the present report. In March 2012, the Network decided that its thematic sub-working groups could include as members civil society organizations, in particular youth-led organizations.

4. Programmes and initiatives to enhance youth development

51. Programmes and initiatives that target or reach youth have been undertaken by many United Nations entities. Among others, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, IFAD, ITU, the MDG Achievement Fund, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNRWA, UN-Women and the World Bank, have focused programmes on various areas, including information and communications technology; health, including sexual and reproductive health; HIV and AIDS; violence prevention; employment, training and economic empowerment; peace and conflict; education; volunteerism; participation; gender; intercultural dialogue; migration; sports; poverty; intergenerational issues; leadership training; indigenous issues; and agricultural and rural development. These have contributed to skills-development and capacity-building, empowerment, increased access to social services, employment opportunities, partnership-building and greater awareness of the issues that youth face.

52. Some programmes have also provided youth with financial support, including the United Nations Capital Development Fund, UN-Habitat, UN-Women and the World Bank. UN-Habitat highlighted its Youth Fund, which has provided funding to approximately 160 youth groups, in turn creating approximately 190 new jobs.

5. Communication initiatives for engagement with young people

53. A variety of youth-focused communication initiatives have been developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ITU, UNV, UN-Women and UNWTO. The initiatives have provided young people with new opportunities for skills- and capacity-development, networking, knowledge management and volunteerism and for engagement in dialogue, both among young people and with United Nations entities.

6. Awareness-raising campaigns

54. Several awareness-raising campaigns have been developed throughout the United Nations system, as highlighted by the MDG Achievement Fund, UNV and UN-Women. These have focused mainly on raising awareness about the various challenges that young people face and on empowering youth to participate — and take on a greater role — in development initiatives.

7. Youth-focused reports

55. Reports on youth development have been produced and disseminated around the world by many United Nations entities in their respective areas of expertise. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs publishes, on a biennial basis, the *United Nations World Youth Report*, which focuses on the situation of youth in the world. The 2011 *World Youth Report* was prepared primarily from an online consultation with youth. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, the Climate Change Convention secretariat, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNV and UN-Women indicated that such reports aim to give young people a voice, raise awareness about youth issues, build capacity and skills among youth and other stakeholders, promote youth participation in decision-making processes, share good practices and highlight the positive contributions of young people to development.

8. Research for more targeted programmes

56. As underscored by the MDG Achievement Fund and UN-Women, research that builds knowledge about youth enables programmes to be better designed. Several research initiatives on youth have either been undertaken, or are in the process of implementation, throughout the United Nations system, including those that focus on girls and young women, information and communications technology, migration and employment. UNFPA highlighted its efforts to conduct studies and research on the identification of young people's needs, including through the disaggregation of data on youth by rural and urban areas, gender, HIV status and educational status.

C. Challenges to and shortcomings of the work on youth development within the United Nations system

57. Many United Nations entities considered that the main challenges to the work of the United Nations in youth development were inadequate financial and human

resources, hence, the limited scale and impact of existing projects. Entities further underlined a need to enhance efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders as well as for greater research and data on youth development in addition to the limited impact of existing projects.

1. Inadequate resources

58. Inadequate resources, in particular those dedicated to youth-specific programmes and initiatives, is among the most important challenges in maintaining and developing existing work on youth within the United Nations system. This was reported by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECA, ESCWA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UN-Women and UNWTO. A lack of funding to maintain and scale up existing work was highlighted by ECA, ESCWA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, while the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECA, ESCWA, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNWTO also cited a lack of human resources. UNFPA further stressed that the one- to two-year limit of existing funding cycles hindered the development of a long-term and sustainable approach to programmes targeting youth.

2. Need for enhanced efforts to strengthen multi-stakeholder coordination and cooperation

59. A need to enhance ongoing efforts to strengthen cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, including United Nations entities, Member States, youth organizations, the private sector and others working on youth development, particularly at the national level, was cited by ECA, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and UNWTO. UNV noted that such cooperation was important for the long-term sustainability of programmes for youth. Moreover, UNICEF stressed that a lack of cooperation and coordination increased the risk of projects operating in isolation from one another, resulting in short-term interventions that had limited impact.

60. With regard to efforts to increase cooperation and coordination, ESCAP pointed to the absence of designated national youth machinery. In the context of the financial sector, the United Nations Capital Development Fund highlighted the difficulty of establishing partnerships with youth organizations, especially in rural areas. UN-Women stressed the challenges of staying abreast of young people's changing needs, and the long-term planning of programmes and funds in contexts of rapidly changing political or social situations. UN-Women further cited the difficulty of engaging young people, particularly in areas where there were limited opportunities for youth to organize.

61. ECA highlighted its initiative to establish a Commission-wide youth task force aimed at increasing cooperation within and among divisions, as well as mainstreaming youth-related knowledge and policies throughout the organization.

3. Limited impact of existing projects

62. With the majority of its projects developed as pilot schemes, UNIDO highlighted the limitations of their impact and reach. Such limitations in scale and reach, particularly to the most marginalized and at-risk youth, were also stressed by UNFPA, which further noted a frequent mismatch between the needs of young people and programme aims. UNICEF conveyed the importance of youth-related work being developed in a proactive as opposed to a reactive manner. The challenge

of ensuring project sustainability as a result of high staff turnover was also emphasized by UNFPA and UN-Habitat.

4. Insufficient research and data collection

63. The need for enhanced research and data collection, as well as data disaggregation in order to better understand the diversity of youth needs was noted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNWTO. It was further noted that research and data collection, and analysis would also benefit from more refined definitions of certain youth-related issues, such as youth participation, and from linkages with development goals.

D. Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda

64. The Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda identifies "Working with and for women and young people" as a priority and called upon the United Nations to deepen and scale up the youth focus of existing programmes on employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship and protection of rights, and education, including on sexual and reproductive health. These priority areas are aligned with the World Programme of Action for Youth and were determined by an analysis of the current situation of youth worldwide. This will be achieved by (a) the appointment of a Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Youth; (b) the development of a system-wide action plan on youth; and (c) the creation of a United Nations youth volunteers programme under the umbrella of UNV.

65. These initiatives are in the process of implementation. The Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development has been asked to draft a system-wide action plan on youth, which will be presented to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination in spring 2013. Work is also under way on the appointment of a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Youth and the development of a United Nations youth volunteers programme under UNV.

IV. Recommendations

66. Member States, United Nations entities and youth organizations put forth recommendations on how to: (a) more effectively address the challenges hindering the development and participation of youth; (b) improve the United Nations youth-related programmes and structure, including their coherence; and (c) monitor progress. The following recommendations have been amalgamated from the recommendations of the contributors to the report and are not verbatim.

A. Recommendations on how to more effectively address the challenges hindering the development and participation of youth

Implement and build upon existing frameworks and achievements

- Build upon the framework provided in the World Programme of Action for Youth and by the momentum generated during the United Nations International Year of Youth (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCWA)

- Implement the Outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth (Switzerland)
- Implement the resolution entitled “The youth employment crisis: A call for action”, adopted at the 101st International Labour Conference, in 2012 (ILO)

Build and support the capacity and skills of young people, youth-focused and youth-led organizations

- Improve access to and the quality of education and information services for young people
- Improve access to and the quality of education (Cuba, Portugal, Poland and Sri Lanka) and emphasize the role of education in enabling young people to develop cross-cultural skills (Aube nouvelle, European Youth Forum, Japan Society of Humanistic Anthropology Association, United Nations Youth Association Nigeria and Youth Vision Association)
- Support peer education based on non-formal learning, youth exchanges and volunteerism, and reduce the visa barriers for volunteers (Poland)
- Establish networks between United Nations regional information centres and national and international youth information networks to facilitate the access of young people to information about youth issues and support dialogue between youth organizations and national institutions on youth development challenges (Portugal)
- Empower and build up adolescent girls’ capabilities and skills, with an emphasis on keeping girls in school (International Planned Parenthood Federation), which delays age at marriage and sexual debut, providing protection from early pregnancy and sexually transmitted/HIV infection and improving maternal and child health outcomes (UNFPA)

Enhance volunteer opportunities and its recognition

- Encourage youth volunteer opportunities, including international volunteer opportunities, as a means of building personal, social and cultural skills (Austria, Germany, Sri Lanka, Almubarak Welfare Society, Caritas Lebanon and Restless Development)
- Establish a system to recognize and validate young people’s areas of competence through volunteer activities (First Lady’s Save Our Youth Campaign of Nigeria) and to recognize the importance and relevance of voluntary activities (Space Generation Advisory Council)
- Ensure that youth volunteer exchange programmes from developed to developing countries allow for the provision of feedback and recommendations on how volunteers could engage in advocacy in their home countries on issues about which they gained knowledge (War Child)

Improve access to health services and policy measures

- Improve access for all young people to high-quality and affordable health services, including sexual and reproductive health services (UNFPA, International Planned Parenthood Federation)

- Promote adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health as a development priority and as a human right, with appropriate budgets and with the full participation of youth (UNFPA)
- Health policies, health service delivery systems and financing should ensure access to comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information, commodities and services for both married and unmarried youth, including the prevention of HIV (UNFPA) — as well as its destigmatization and decriminalization (International Planned Parenthood Federation). All services should reach the most marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and hard-to-reach populations, in particular adolescent girls (UNFPA)

Improve entrepreneurial opportunities for youth

- Provide rural youth with entrepreneurial skills and opportunities, which would require new and different approaches according to local needs (Colombia)

Support capacity-building for youth structures

- Support capacity- and knowledge-building for youth, in particular youth at risk and those from marginalized groups, through greater investment in formal and non-formal education and skills development — such as volunteerism, internships and apprenticeship programmes — in order to strengthen the constructive engagement and participation of young people in their societies and their ability to manage risk and to facilitate their transition into adulthood (UNESCO, Climate Change Convention secretariat, UNFPA, UNV and UN-Women)
- Support capacity- and knowledge-building for youth-led and youth-focused organizations, particularly through technical assistance and institution-building (Poland, several United Nations entities) and through financial assistance (Poland, United Nations Youth Association Nigeria, Equidad de Género and Peace Child International)
- Support the development of representative and inclusive national youth bodies and review existing structures to ensure the participation in processes of youth from all social groups (UNESCO)
- Organize and sponsor subregional and regional events to address specific problems affecting young people (African Leadership Community Link Advancement Programme) and provide support to initiatives that aim to build global youth movements (International Planned Parenthood Federation)

Develop measures to strengthen partnerships with young people and their participation, including in decision-making processes

- Promote strong connections between young people and their social environments, including with families, institutions of learning, communities, workplaces and peers, to protect and foster youth development (New Zealand)
- Engage young people, in particular the most marginalized, directly in: decision-making processes, including at the local level (Colombia, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Sri Lanka and Switzerland); the

development of national development strategies (Argentina); and in all stages of programme and policy planning and implementation (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECA, ESCAP, ITU, UNESCO, Climate Change Convention secretariat, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV and UN-Women)

- Develop and support youth participation processes (Morocco) such as youth councils and youth parliaments (UN-Women), and partnerships with Governments and local stakeholders and among United Nations entities (ITU, UNESCO, Climate Change Convention secretariat, UNV and UN-Women)
- Provide training for professionals working with and for youth to ensure that young people can participate effectively in decision-making processes (Finland and New Zealand)
- Ensure the engagement of young people from different cultural, religious, ethnic and social backgrounds, including young people with disabilities and indigenous youth, in interactive forums with the aim of enabling discussion and working together around common issues and ideals (Argentina, Austria, Colombia, Germany, Morocco, Niger, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, United States and Department of Economic and Social Affairs)
- Establish partnerships with the private sector, civil society and academic institutions in order to develop networking platforms and interactive forums for youth (United States)
- Promote awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives among policymakers and other decision-makers at all levels, including in the private sector and in academia and the media. Such efforts should focus on the benefits of engaging youth in issues that affect them, and on how policymakers and national youth bodies can jointly engage young people in youth development issues and in the implementation of relevant policies and programmes (ESCAP, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNV)
- Recognize and promote the use of communications and media platforms, including social media, as a means of enhancing and facilitating youth participation in fostering dialogue and mutual understanding (FAO, UNICEF, UNV and UN-Women, Espacio de Vinculación and Restless Development) as well as a means of reaching youth in rural areas (Espacio de Vinculación)
- The United Nations should leverage the expertise of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations in developing strategies and mechanisms (International Union of Socialist Youth)

Develop appropriate national strategies, policies and action plans on youth that account for the diverse needs of young people

- Develop, or where they exist, revise national strategies, policies and action plans on youth that account for young people's diverse backgrounds and needs, and ensure adequate technical and financial resources for the implementation of such measures and of youth policies generally (Colombia, New Zealand, Senegal, Switzerland and Sri Lanka)

- Integrate youth employment priorities into national development frameworks and employment policy and develop time-bound national action plans on youth employment (ILO)
- Promote cross-sectoral cooperation to ensure a holistic approach to youth development and participation (Finland and New Zealand) as well as the mainstreaming of youth issues into national plans, policies and budgets (UNFPA and World Bank)
- Address underlying factors that influence youth development outcomes, in particular those relating to the availability of social services, such as education and health care (UNFPA and World Bank)
- Increase efforts to mainstream and strengthen youth civil society organizations through mainstreaming civic engagement practices — such as youth participation in decision-making, youth-led social entrepreneurship and youth volunteerism — within and across sectoral policies and programmes affecting youth (UNESCO, UNICEF and UNV)

Improve and disseminate research and data on youth issues

- Develop and regularly implement inclusive national monitoring and reporting systems, so as to review progress in youth development and to evaluate existing programmes (Austria, Malta, Niger, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Senegal and Sri Lanka), specifically the World Programme of Action for Youth (Portugal and Switzerland), through such actions as the development of a set of youth development indicators as is being currently carried out by the United Nations (Switzerland)
- Ensure the development and implementation of youth-specific quantitative and qualitative indicators that take into consideration youth from marginalized groups, including young women, indigenous youth, youth in rural areas and young migrants (Austria, Colombia and Switzerland); such indicators should also be developed so as to measure the outcomes and impact of youth participation and leadership (Equidad de Género and International Planned Parenthood Federation)
- Collect, analyse and disseminate data and information on youth labour market trends, including on the school-to-work transition, and conduct research on emerging issues in youth employment (ILO)
- Ensure the direct engagement of young people in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data (New Zealand) and in the process of developing youth development indicators and objectives through youth-led research and regular consultations with youth, which includes their evaluation of programmes and their own experiences (ESCAP, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNV, UN-Women and Restless Development)
- Enhance efforts to undertake research on young people, especially with regard to youth participation and policies and their impact (Colombia, Poland and Republic of Moldova), and how they contribute to progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and national peace and development agendas (UNV)

B. Recommendations on how to improve the United Nations youth-related programmes and structures, including their coherence

Develop a coordinated approach to youth through improved collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system

- Develop a coordinated approach to youth issues through strengthened collaboration and coordination among United Nations entities and programmes, with the aim of improving United Nations programmes and structures related to youth (Colombia, Finland, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, United States, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, ITU, MDG Achievement Fund, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNV, UN-Women, World Bank, Espacio de Vinculación, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Peace Child International)
- Assign the Focal Point on Youth within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs a clearer and broader mandate to coordinate youth issues within the United Nations system (Germany, Portugal, Sri Lanka, United States and UNV)
- Strengthen the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development as a platform for the coordination of strategies and programmes that target young people to enable a common approach to youth issues (Germany and Sri Lanka) and raise awareness of its work among Member States and youth stakeholders (ILO and UNESCO)
- Establish Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development working groups on youth at the country level (ILO and UN-Women)
- Mainstream youth issues across the United Nations system so that programmes and entities adopt a cross-cutting approach to addressing the various challenges that affect all young people (Colombia, Portugal, ILO, UNFPA and UN-Women)
- Utilize the World Programme of Action for Youth so as to guide the youth-related work of the entire United Nations system (Aube nouvelle and European Youth Forum)

Enhance collaboration and coordination with Member States, including at the national and local levels, and with regional organizations, the private sector and youth organizations

- Improve partnerships with youth organizations and other stakeholders in order to better target and enhance the effectiveness of United Nations system programmes on youth (Germany, Portugal, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECA, ESCAP, ITU, MDG Achievement Fund, UNESCO, UNODC, UNV and UN-Women)
- Provide Member States with advisory services on the development of national action plans on youth (Germany)
- United Nations youth programmes should include support to relevant national authorities in their development phase (Republic of Moldova), including the development of a system for sharing good practices and increasing

collaboration between experts and decision-makers in the field of youth policy (Peru and Poland), such as the European Union Open Method of Cooperation

- The United Nations should assign youth ambassadors to assess youth development needs across the world (Caritas Macau), and the expansion of youth delegate programmes by Member States with the aim of strengthening meaningful youth participation in the deliberations of the General Assembly and the Commission (International Planned Parenthood Federation)
- Member States should aim at greater transparency in programmes, structures, budgets and the selection of youth representatives (Restless Development and War Child)
- Increase the number of professional opportunities, scholarships and internships available to youth in the United Nations system in order to familiarize young people with the organization and to help them in linking their relevant work with United Nations initiatives (Espacio de Vinculación and Réseau national de la jeunesse)

Expand resources and capacity-building for United Nations youth-related work

- Promote the planning of exercises, reviews and joint reporting at all levels, and a mechanism for the sharing of experiences and lessons learned from United Nations-led regional and international programmes on youth (UN-Women)
- Develop more structured and detailed United Nations strategies and programmes related to youth, based on time-bound goals, actions, outputs and outcomes and effective evaluation (Malta and ILO)
- Increase and develop greater capacity- and knowledge-building within the United Nations, especially with regard to effective working mechanisms (ESCAP, UNESCO, UNICEF and UN-Women) and strengthen expertise and awareness in the area of youth development among staff, including senior management, through training and outreach (UNESCO and UNICEF)
- Establish a fund for United Nations programmes at the national level that target adolescence and youth (Senegal)
- Strengthen and better equip the United Nations Focal Point on Youth within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs with financial and other resources to improve its work with Member States and youth-led organizations (Sri Lanka), and with other United Nations youth structures (Portugal)

C. Recommendations on how to assess progress in these areas

Develop and strengthen youth research and monitoring and evaluation systems in collaboration with relevant stakeholders

- Prepare periodic studies and research on issues facing young people, including through the use of national databases and indicators (Switzerland and Syrian Arab Republic) and through such efforts by the United Nations to develop a set of indicators for evaluating the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (Switzerland)

- Strengthen collaboration among Governments, United Nations entities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, including at the regional, national and local levels, in order to improve efficiency, consistency, knowledge-sharing and cost saving in monitoring efforts (Argentina, Germany and Switzerland)
- Increase and improve targeted research on youth and the development of indicators in order to assess progress in youth development and to enable more effective programmes with enhanced impact on the lives of young people (ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, ITU, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Women and UNV); this should include indicators at the national and regional levels (ESCWA)
- Ensure that data and research are widely accessible (Austria, Syrian Arab Republic and FAO) and encourage relevant partners in the field of youth development to share information and lessons learned (Climate Change Convention secretariat)
- Develop and ensure quality monitoring and evaluation frameworks on the impact of youth-specific programmes so as to ensure the accountability and transparency and to share lessons learned in their implementation (ILO, World Bank, Almubarak Welfare Society International)
- Invest in quality research so as to inform both health policy and programmes (International Planned Parenthood Federation) and raise awareness about youth health and well-being, in particular around mental health issues such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Association pour le développement de la société civile angolaise and Caritas Lebanon).
