Secretary-General’s Youth Employment Network
Issues Note

1. In the Millennium Declaration, Heads of State and Government resolved to “develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.”¹ In his report to the Millennium Summit entitled “We the Peoples: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”, the Secretary-General first proposed his initiative to establish the Youth Employment Network: “Together with the heads of the World Bank and the International Labour Organization, I am convening a high-level policy network on youth employment drawing on the most creative leaders in private industry, civil society and economic policy to explore imaginative approaches to this difficult challenge. I will ask this policy network to propose a set of recommendations that I can convey to world leaders within a year.”²

2. During its 57th session the General Assembly adopted a resolution on Promoting Youth Employment (A/RES/57/165) which: “Encourages Member States to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment and to involve youth organizations and young people in this process, taking into account, inter alia, the commitments made by Member States in this regard, in particular those included in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;³ and “Invites, within the context of the Youth Employment Network, the International Labour Organization, in collaboration with the Secretariat, the World Bank, and other relevant specialized agencies, to assist and support, upon request, the efforts of Governments in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans, and to undertake a global analysis and evaluation of progress made in this regard.”

Progress to date

3. A High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network was established in early 2001 and its twelve-members⁴ met for the first time in July 2001 at ILO Headquarters in Geneva under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, and together with the Director-General of the ILO and the President of the World Bank. At this meeting, the Secretary-General emphasized the need for both immediate action and long-term commitment to achieving the millennium goal on youth employment, and invited the panel to continue working with him in an advisory capacity on an ongoing basis. Finally, he requested the ILO to take the lead in organizing the future work of the Youth Employment Network and to assume the responsibility for hosting a permanent Secretariat.

¹ A/RES/55/2, para. 20.
³ Resolution 50/81, annex.
⁴ Saifuddin Abdullah, César Alierta, Ruth C. L. Cardoso, Hernando de Soto, Geeta Rao Gupta, Bill Jordan, Allan Larsson, Rick Little, Maria Livanos Cattaui, Magatte Wade, Ralph Willis and Rosanna Wong.
4. At this first meeting, the High-level panel prepared a set of recommendations which the Secretary-General transmitted to the President of the General Assembly. These recommendations were discussed in the overall framework of the follow-up to the Millennium Summit. The High-level Panel addressed four key recommendations to the heads of the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization:

   (a) invite the youth of the world to build a strong alliance: to get young people recognized as an asset for economic and social development; to create an understanding that young people are a diverse group with various needs based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, geographical location and the economic development of the countries in which they live; to advocate more inclusive employment policies to fully utilize the potential of all young people;

   (b) invite all heads of State and Government to mobilize national and local actors to review, rethink and reorient past policies and implement new policies to fulfil the commitment to decent work for young people, made at the Millennium Summit;

   (c) develop a new partnership between their organizations and national Governments in catalysing action for youth employment, where strategies are developed at a global level, while policies and action plans are developed at a national level. Civil society, the business community, employers, trade unions and youth organizations should also be invited to contribute to policy-making and implementation at both global and national levels; and

   (d) invite heads of State and Government to translate the four global priorities for a decent work strategy for young people—employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment creation—into national action plans with targets for the creation of jobs and for the reduction of unemployment, and to take personal responsibility for presenting those plans to the United Nations by September 2002 on the basis of the political commitment made at the Millennium Assembly.

5. The High-level Panel also recommended that governments be invited to volunteer to take the lead in preparing their national action plans and in showing the way to others. Thus far, six countries have come forward to champion the preparation of youth employment action plans as called for in the High-Level Panel’s policy recommendations and more countries have turned to the ILO asking for assistance on youth employment in the framework of the Secretary-General’s Network. Follow up missions have been undertaken or are planned in these and a number of other countries, often resulting in concrete measures to both develop projects and to include youth employment in the country’s policy framework.

6. The four global priority areas the High-level Panel identified in its recommendations can be characterised as follows: Employability—invest in education and vocational training for young people, and improve the impact of those investments; Equal opportunities—give young women the same opportunities as young men; Entrepreneurship—make it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more and better jobs for young women and men; Employment creation—place employment creation at the centre of macroeconomic policy. The high-level panel has set up four Working Groups, two of which have met, to address each of these global priority areas in order to further elaborate on its recommendations and to provide guidelines for countries in preparing their action plans.

7. A permanent Secretariat for the Youth Employment Network has been set up at ILO Headquarters, and a full-time Secretary has been named, as of September 2002. This follows a transitional period during which the Secretariat was based in the UN and ILO New York Office. The Government of Sweden has provided US$ 1.1 million for start-up costs associated with this Secretariat.
8. The UN Secretariat, the ILO and the World Bank are active partners in this Secretary-General’s initiative, and support to UN Member States and to the activities of the High-Level Panel are being coordinated and resources pooled. The ILO and the United Nations have held both regional workshops and a major regional meeting on youth employment, and further such meetings are planned. The ILO has set up a Task Team on Youth Employment, coordinated by the Employment Strategy Department to bring out the youth employment dimensions of its ongoing work.

9. Preparations are underway for the next meeting of the High-Level Panel, scheduled for July 2003 at ILO Headquarters. At this meeting, the High-level Panel plans to present a consolidated report on the work of its Working Groups on the four global priority areas, and to update its original recommendations which were transmitted to the General Assembly.

Conclusions

10. Youth employment is both an integral part of the Millennium Declaration and a key contribution to meeting other Millennium Goals, including those relating to poverty reduction. The Youth Employment Network provides the United Nations an opportunity to influence the international development agenda and policy debate with a positive message in support of the aspirations of the world’s young people. The political and intersectoral dimensions of youth employment call for an integrated approach bringing to bear a host of issues being addressed within the UN system including young people and armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, the root causes of terrorism and gender equality, just to name a few.

11. In light of the above, the purpose of a discussion of the Secretary-General’s Youth Employment Network within the context of the HLCP is to:

(a) solicit guidance from HLCP members on the relevance and potential contribution of the Secretary-General’s Youth Employment Network to their respective mandates and programmes,

(b) invite the support from HLCP members towards the implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/57/165 on Promoting Youth Employment, specifically regarding the paragraph which invites, within the context of the Youth Employment Network, the International Labour Organization, in collaboration with the Secretariat, the World Bank, and other relevant specialized agencies, to assist and support, upon request, the efforts of Governments in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans, and to undertake a global analysis and evaluation of progress made in this regard; and solicit inputs for the Secretary-General’s report to the 58th Session of the General Assembly on implementation of this Resolution,

(c) explore the opportunities to introduce youth employment into country review, assessment and programming processes, including CCA-UNDAF and the PRSPs, and develop modalities for increasing country-level capacity in this regard, and

(d) for HLCP members to identify suitable, flexible arrangements for cooperation within the context of the Youth Employment Network.

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8 For example, the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment (Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002) and the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Integration of Youth Employment into public investment policies and the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Ouagadougou, 3-5 December 2002.
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cote d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Zambia
Promoting Youth Employment

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the resolve of heads of State and Government, as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration,\textsuperscript{9} to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work,

Recalling and reaffirming the commitments related to youth employment made at the major United Nations conferences and summits since 1990 and their follow-up processes,

Recalling its resolution 54/120 of 17 December 1999, in which it took note with appreciation of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1998,\textsuperscript{10} which included important commitments regarding youth employment,

Recalling also its resolution 56/117 of 19 December 2001, in which, inter alia, it welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to create a Youth Employment Network and invited him to continue with initiatives in that regard,

Recognizing that young people are an asset for sustainable economic growth and social development and expressing deep concern over the magnitude of youth unemployment and underemployment throughout the world and its profound implications for the future of our societies,

Recognizing also that Governments have a primary responsibility to educate young people and to create an enabling environment to promote youth employment,

1. Takes note of the work of the High–level Panel of the Secretary–General’s Youth Employment Network and its policy recommendations;\textsuperscript{11}

2. Encourages Member States to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment and to involve youth organizations and young people in this process, taking into account, inter alia, the commitments made by Member States in this regard, in particular those included in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;\textsuperscript{12}

3. Invites, within the context of the Youth Employment Network, the International Labour Organization, in collaboration with the Secretariat, the World Bank, and other relevant specialized agencies, to assist and support, upon request, the efforts of Governments in the elaboration of national reviews and action plans, and to undertake a global analysis and evaluation of progress made in this regard;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution, including on the progress achieved by the Youth Employment Network.

\textsuperscript{9} See resolution 55/2.

\textsuperscript{10} See WCMRY/1998/28, chap. 1, resolution 1.

\textsuperscript{11} See A/56/422.

\textsuperscript{12} Resolution 50/81, annex.