To: Youth representatives to the 2003 YEN High Level Panel meeting  
From: Steve Miller  
Date: 22 December 2003  
Subject: Presentation on the role of youth and youth organizations

Thank you very much for all the good work that I know many of you are carrying out in furthering our mutual objectives—more and decent work for young people. We have heard that some of you have taken the lead in organizing groups nationally while others have participated in video conferences and other meetings between the Youth Employment Network and Governments and partner agencies. These have included September’s World Bank Youth, Development and Peace Conference, in Paris, involvement at the 58th Session of the UN General Assembly and in the lobbying and drafting work on the Draft UN General Assembly Resolution on Youth (see as an attachment), and participation in a recent meeting such as the ILO/ICFTU/ETUC Trade Unions seminar in Belgrade and the Big 7/UNICEF workshop in Geneva on ‘youth participation’ (see Annex I. And II, for YEN presentations from these last two meetings). You will also have been following our activities through the Newsletter and our website, both of which are open for your use. We continue to look forward to submissions and updates of your activities which we can highlight there.

Focal points of YEN partner agencies held a joint Secretariat meeting in New York to discuss a workplan and governance structure to guide future activities in our second, more operational phase. Follow up video conferences have been held at the Director level to establish a Steering Committee for senior management and to agree on a framework of activities. In both, the subject of youth participation and that of wider and better-defined partnerships was central. I would like to let you know some of those results, especially as they recognize the importance of the issues you raised in the youth platform put forward at the conclusion of the YEN’s High-Level Panel meeting in July 2003.

A major aspect of the partnership development component of the workplan will be youth participation and empowerment. Discussions were based on your youth platform and rest on four guiding pillars, and include a YEN Youth Summit as one of the visible outcomes: participation and empowerment, capacity building, database development, advocacy.

Your idea of developing a youth organization database was discussed. This general pool would draw on a number of existing databases, including any you may wish to supply, to help in making transparent and appropriate choices for participation in a YEN Youth Consultative Group. The selection criteria will be decided in consultation with you, who were present at the YEN High Level Panel meeting this summer, representing youth. We hope that this will answer your call for a structured youth consultative group and allow us to move forward on determining its membership, role, status and frequency of meetings. The workplan also envisages a partnership coordinator, at least 50 percent of whose time will be devoted to youth coordination activities and who will be available for you as a first interlocutor.

Of course, some of these factors will be influenced by available resources and can therefore also potentially be modified or indeed expanded as more resources become available.

What is clear is that we must move forward given the immediate needs at the international, regional and national level, in particular as regards the reviews and National Action Plans on Youth Employment. Action on this issue has been further strengthened by the draft UN General Assembly Resolution on Youth which encourages the preparation and submission of national reviews and action plans on youth employment by September 2004. Clearly, you are in a strong position to mobilize your Networks to inform and assist Governments in the elaboration of these action plans.

Let me close by wishing you all the best for the New Year. I would also like to invite your comments as we move forward towards a database and youth consultative group. As you must have been aware, your contributions at the High Level Panel meeting were much appreciated. Your continued
collaboration is just as appreciated by the YEN Secretariat and we are at your disposal to share ideas, comments and critiques. Please be in touch.

Annex 1. The Youth Employment Network and youth participation,

Presentation made at the UNICEF / "Big 7" workshop on the participation of young people in decision-making, November 2003, Geneva.

Good evening

Many thanks for giving me this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Secretary-General’s Youth Employment Network (YEN). Rather than give a technical presentation on youth employment or on policy procedures of the Network, I want to share some thinking on how the YEN is engaging with young people which will hopefully give you food for thought during your deliberations over the next three days.

Any international multilateral initiative aimed at tackling the issue of youth employment should, you would have thought, include its beneficiaries, young women and men, at the very centre of its activities.

Unfortunately such logic has not prevailed in many historic youth employment policy initiatives. Often they have expressed a commitment to engage youth groups as equal partners in the policy making process but all too often these promises have in reality meant little more than 'consultation' and the resulting policy has been a perceived notion of 'what is best' for young people. Such policy-making has led to the implementation of policy that has consistently failed to address the underlying concerns of young people and the causes of youth unemployment and subsequently the problem has continued unchecked.

The Youth Employment Network, a partnership between the UN, the Bank and ILO, seeks to change this. Recognising the frustrations of youth with past policy failures we fully agree that young peoples voices should be heard, that their issues be addressed and that their roles be recognized. Rather than being viewed as a target group for which employment must be found, they should be engaged as partners in devising solutions to a common problem.

Therefore, the expected inflow of young people into the labour market, rather than being viewed as a problem, should be recognized as presenting an enormous opportunity and potential for economic and social development.

Well, that is our stance, now how are we practically going about meeting this commitment.

Firstly there has been a commitment at the highest levels in the core partners institutions of the YEN to the central role of young people in the initiative:

Kofi Annan when addressing the young people present at a meeting of the YEN’s here in Geneva in July he told us that "normally when we need to know about something we go to the experts, whether it’s an accountant, or a lawyer, or a doctor. But we tend to forget that when we want to know about youth and what they feel and what they want, that we should talk to them. You are the experts. We were once there, but we are no longer there. . ."

Also at that meeting the ILO Director-General Juan Somavia stated, “the youth around this table are a tremendous resource. Young people are not just leaders for tomorrow, they are partners for today. Engage them. Listen. Build together. Let’s get beyond lip service”
And most recently at the September meeting of our the World Bank in Paris, which Pierre Gardier just described, President Mr. Wolfensohn publicly committed to deepen the institutions engagement with youth across all areas of its work including youth employment.

Secondly, we are moving beyond these public commitments to formalise the role of young people in the policy recommendations of the YEN.

Our July meeting marked the launch of a second, more operational phase of the Youth Employment Network. This new phase will focus on country level activities where the YEN core partners in partnership with youth organisations, workers and employer groups and other civil society bodies will assist governments whom have committed to developing National Action Plans on Youth Employment by September 2004 as called for in the December 2002 UN General Assembly Resolution on Promoting Youth Employment and further strengthened by the November 2003 Draft GA Resolution on Youth.

In relation to this second phase of the YEN a set of five recommendations were agreed at this meeting and formally transmitted to the UN General Assembly by the Kofi Annan in his August 2003 Report on Promoting Youth Employment.

One of these steps specifically relates to youth, inviting them to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans on Youth Employment and to continue advising the YEN in relation to appropriate and effective youth employment programmes.

How exactly are young people participating in this National Action Plan process? I want to give examples from two of the YEN’s Lead Countries, Brazil and Indonesia. A Lead Country, of whom there are 9, denotes a nation that has stepped forward to champion the development of National Action Plans, in partnership with the YEN.

In Brazil, at a special seminar on youth employment in Salvador in September 2003 the Government of Brazil announced both its commitment to volunteer as a Lead Country of the Youth Employment Network and also publicly launched its national youth employment programme *Primeiro Emprego* (First Employment).

60 youth participants from across the country attended this event, to discuss employment challenges facing young people today in Brazil. They ranged from the unemployed, to job-seekers, to entrepreneurs.

The *Primeiro Emprego* in consultation with the ILO and World Bank offices have followed up on this commitment to youth through proposed the creation of a National Pact for Youth Employment in 2004, to be led by youth leaders from a variety of youth movements and organisations with the support of the Brazilian Government, the private sector, workers organisations, civil society and donors. The Pact is to promote a series of local, state and national conferences, which will culminate with a civil-society engagement at all levels of the *Primeiro Emprego* Program, from policy conception to the program evaluation. Aims of these of these conferences range from the strengthening of pre-existing Regional Youth Centers as mechanisms for the implementation of youth employment programmes, to promoting youth issues and employment opportunities in the agendas of candidates from all parties in the 2004 mayoral election.

In Indonesia, following its commitment to become a Lead Country of the YEN last year, a national co-ordinating body, the I-YEN or Indonesia YEN was set up with the specific aim of developing the countries National Action Plan. Youth organisations have been specifically included in the structure of the I-YEN and helped co-ordinate a series of national consultations with youth which provided opportunities for young women and men to express their views on employment including their hopes, aspirations and frustrations, the findings of which have feed directly into the drafting of the Indonesian
National Action Plan, the first draft of which is expected later this month (February 2004). Youth have also been actively involved in the I-YEN at in project level. One such project is a World Bank / UNDP / Ministry of Education life-skills program for in-school and out-of-school youth, focusing especially those who are poor or otherwise marginalized.

**And what of the broader advisory role youth organisations are playing at the policy level?**

At our meeting in July we expanded a small number of existing youth advisors into a 13 member Youth Advisory Group.

The Youth panellists were full and active participants for the duration of the meeting. They joined the High-Level Panel (Eminent persons and professionals in the field of youth employment policy such as Hernando de Soto and Ruth Cardosa), Government delegations and senior staff from the ILO, UN and World Bank. They offered testimonials on youth employment issues, peer reviewed policy documents and discussed the role of youth in the design and implementation of National Action Plans.

Following the event a number members of this youth grouping stated that the meeting represented a 'real breakthrough in UN-youth relations' and that to their knowledge 'it was the first time that any UN initiative had given youth representatives such a significant level of both symbolic and substantive parity with the other meeting attendees, in particular, the members of the High Level Panel'.

At the end of the two-day meeting the youth participants presented a proposal on their own involvement in the broader Network's activities and on how they proposed to organize themselves into a sustainable advisory group. Their suggestions ranged from the need for reliable indicators and a youth panel vis-à-vis the High-Level Panel to a data-base of national youth organizations working on National Action Plans and a coordinating mechanism between the YEN and its youth constituents.

A formal response to this platform was issued in December 2003 by the YEN Secretariat and the YEN core partners, in consultation with youth are now developing a strategy and work programme for more sustained involvement of young people in the YEN in 2004. A first step will be working with youth organisations to create a YEN Youth Consultative Group (YCG) both as a sounding board for the High-Level Panels own recommendations, but also to act a catalyst and resource for national youth organisations looking to become involved in the development, implementation and review of National Action Plans.

**The YEN has also been active in its outreach and advocacy work with young people and youth groups. I offer just a selection of activities:**

- On our website, and in our publications we have it given space to the activities of youth organisations working on youth employment issues and also to the work of committed and dynamic individuals.

- We have reached out to major youth organisations such as the Big 7, whom we are hosted by today and whom themselves sent a letter of support for the YEN earlier this year, the Regional Youth Platforms and issue or constituency specific organisations such as the student organisations, Youth wings of Trade Unions, or those representing rural youth by providing them with information on the YEN and how they can be involved with our work.

One of these opportunities to broaden and strengthen our youth constituency was the World Bank’s September meeting in Paris which brought together more than 100 representatives of youth organizations from 70 countries. Furthermore, our close relationship with the UN Youth Unit is also helping us build a network of committed and able youth constituents at the country level to support the development, implementation and evaluation of National Action Plans on youth employment.
I think that we are starting to see real dividends as a result of this advocacy and engagement with young people. Governments committed to the National Action Plans process are asking us which appropriate youth organisations to partner with – Brazil is such an example – and the YEN is being invited to talk at a range of youth led events on the role of young people in tackling the challenge of youth employment:

In Belgrade, for example, a couple weeks ago, I discussed with Trade Unions from the SEE region, and specifically their youth wings, what role they could play in the National Action Plan process, in December we have been asked to talk about youth employment in the context of globalisation at the World Youth Forum, in Brussels and at the upcoming World Summit for Information Society (WSIS) we will be on a panel discussing the opportunities and threats ICT’s bring to the employment prospects of young people.

**Finally given that UNICEF as well as the Big 7 extended this invite to the YEN, and as we also have the Bank here, I wanted to stress the inter-sectoral, inter-agency dimensions of our work.**

Youth employment is both an integral part of the Millennium Declaration and a key contribution to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, including those related to poverty reduction.

This was recognised by the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in March 2003 where the Committee confirmed its strong support of the YEN and noted that the YEN provided the United Nations system with 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 Committee underscored the necessity of an integrated, system-wide approach that would address a range of related issues within the purview of the system, including young people and armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, the root causes of terrorism and gender equality.

With an inter-agency meeting convened at the World Banks youth meeting in Paris and now cooperation at this meeting I believe we are starting to build a more integrated and holistic UN wide response to youth issues.

Thank you very much. I will now circulate some documentation on the YEN for your interest and I look forward to the outcome document from this meeting which will, I am sure, help us improve the way we partner with young people as we move forward.

**Annex II. The Youth Employment Network (YEN) and the role of Social Dialogue**

*Presentation made at the ILO run Trade Union sub-regional seminar on youth employment. November 2003: Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro*

Good afternoon,

Yesterday, you asked if there were any conventions, resolutions or initiatives which the ILO could implement to assist countries of South East Europe tackle youth employment.

I would like to talk about such an existing initiative, the Secretary-General’s Youth Employment Network (YEN), which with the support of trade unions, employers, youth groups and other civil society organisations, can play a central role in developing successful youth employment policy solutions at the country level.
I want to briefly discuss the origins of this initiative before moving on to talk about the importance of Social Dialogue to the YEN, highlight progress so far on this issue and then finally give some concrete examples of how Trade Unions, and specifically their youth branches, can be more involved in the YEN.

**Background to the Youth Employment Network**

The YEN was created under the impetus of the Millennium Declaration where Heads of State and Government resolved to ‘develop and implement strategies that give people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work’. This commitment was subsequently integrated into the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The Network is a partnership under the personal leadership of the heads of the UN, the World Bank and the ILO that aims to tackle the issue of youth employment at the global, national and local levels. The mandate for this global alliance has been strengthened by the December 2002 UN General Assembly resolution on Promoting in Youth Employment which encourages countries to prepare National Action Plans on Youth Employment. This resolution, which was co-sponsored by 106 nations and was universally adopted, calls for the assistance of the ILO, UN and the Bank and for the specific involvement of young people in the National Action Plan process.

The YEN includes a High-Level Panel of experts that advise the heads of the three Agencies and advocate for youth employment both internationally and through their respective networks.

This High-Level Panel produced a set of recommendations in 2001 advising priority areas of intervention. These areas, Employability, Equal Opportunities, Employment Creation and Entrepreneurship are the same as those that form the core of the European Employment Strategy except the Panels recommendations specifically focus on youth.

Working Groups were set up on these four areas to provide guidelines and practical examples to help countries in the preparation of National Action Plans.

The High-Level Panel met again this summer where they proposed a series of 5 steps to be taken by the YEN during 2003-2005. These ranged from the endorsement of the findings of the Working Groups’s to the need to establish Social Dialogue for youth employment. These 5 steps where integrated into a report of the UN Secretary-General and transmitted to the UN General Assembly last month.

The Network involves a number of partners and collaborating agencies including the ILO’s ‘social partners’, NGO’s and youth groups.

Nine countries around the world have stepped up to champion the development of National Action Plans and showcase successful youth employment practices from which others can learn, one is Hungary.

**The importance of Social Dialogue for youth employment**

Social Dialogue is an essential vehicle for moving forward on the youth employment issues at the national level. The process of social dialogue has proven to be the best form of negotiation between workers, employers and governments to deliver mutually favourable solutions on critical labour and employment issues. It is only through discussion, debate and ultimately consensus amongst workers, employers and governments that the concept of ‘decent work’ will be embedded into employment policy and we will have job creation programmes which benefit employees, businesses and the economy as a whole.
Social dialogue is even more important when it comes to creating equitable employment solutions for young women and men because they, particularly the former, are the most vulnerable to exploitation; often working long hours, for low wages, with little prospect for advancement and without social protection, often in the informal economy.

**YEN progress so far on integrating social dialogue into its activities**

In June of this year the YEN received a letter of support addressed to the ILO’s Director-General, Mr. Juan Somavia from the ILO’s ‘social partners’ expressing the importance of social dialogue in the YEN process and offering to help countries which request assistance, through social dialogue, in developing National Action Plans on youth employment. Mr Somavia has recently responded positively to this letter, remarking that social dialogue offers a clear route to progress on youth employment at the country level.

At the YEN’s High-Level Panel meeting in July tripartite delegations from Ireland and Senegal including youth representatives of worker and employer organisations gave insights into the role of social dialogue in developing youth employment policies in their respective countries.

Also at that meeting the High Level Panel through one of its 5 steps invited the social partners to participate in the design and implementation of National Action Plans, especially through mobilising their youth structures to co-ordinate youth inputs in the National Action Plans and to ensure the concept of Decent Work is integrated into proposals.

In Brazil, which became a Lead Country of the YEN in September this year, worker representatives attended the launch of the country’s ‘de facto’ National Action Plan, ‘Primeiro Emprego’ or ‘First Jobs’ programme and have been invited to be involved in the development of the initiative going forward.

At the upcoming ILO African Regional Meeting in December there will be a ‘special session’ on social dialogue for youth employment. This will discuss youth employment in Africa in the context of the ILO’s Global Employment Agenda and focus on the specific role of social dialogue in developing innovative employment policy solutions at the national level.

**How can Trade Unions, and specifically their youth branches, can be more involved in the YEN?**

Firstly, you can advocate the YEN and the National Action Plan process amongst your unions, alert them to the UN documentation that calls for the involvement of Trade Union’s, and employers groups in this process. With this information in hand we ask you to motivate your unions to lobby governments to start moving on their commitments – remember every UN member state endorsed the UN General Assembly Resolution on Promoting Youth Employment. We encourage you to reach out to youth groups and employers organisations in this endeavour, as you will have more impact as a collective voice.

Secondly, you can work with multilateral institutions such as the ILO, and national governments to raise awareness of union issues with existing youth employment policies and projects. For example Unions can:

- Input into the development of youth entrepreneurship awareness programmes in schools so that they promote social development and workers rights as well as creating a culture of entrepreneurship.
- Work with training institutions to develop vocational training curricula that actually meet local employment needs.
- Input into the development of apprenticeship schemes where young trainees are given training which improves their employment prospects and does not exploit them.
- Work with career guidance services to take into account the social dimensions of employment and put in place specific opportunities for vulnerable groups among young people.
Finally, concerns have been raised at this seminar, regarding the difficulties of getting youth issues onto the agenda with your unions. Concerns were also raised about declining Trade Union representation, an aging membership and the subsequent need to re-energise the union movement by making it more useful to young people.

In response I want to deliver you a positive message. This message is that I believe your time is now and your issue is here in front of us – Youth employment.

I see this as being your issue because of a unique convergence of expertise. You as trade unionists are the experts which we turn to when it comes to labour and employment issues and as young women and men you should be the people we turn to when we want to know about youth issues.

Kofi Annan acknowledged this at the YEN’s meeting in July when he said ‘normally when we want to know about something we go to the experts, whether it be an accountant, a lawyer or a doctor but we tend to forget that when we want to know about youth and what they feel, what they want, that we should talk to them. You are the experts. We were once there but we are no longer there.’

Your expertise on youth employment is therefore your key to both raising awareness of youth concerns with your own union structures, hopefully allowing you to increase your influence and impact, but also enable you to engage a new generation of workers.

The YEN is providing space for countries to create employment opportunities. The YEN is working with the social partners to ensure that these jobs are created within a framework of equity and social justice.

As such we hope to have a new cadre of young workers entering the job market in the next decade with a raised awareness of labour issues. These workers are your allies for the future, from which new recruits could come and help re-energise the union movement.

This is your issue, so run with it, use our name, our brand and Kofi Annan’s leadership.