In My Seminar,

As I announced on 7th June at the International Labour Conference, the UK has volunteered to be a Youth Employment Network (YEN) lead country, and I am now writing to officially confirm this.

In the UK we recognise that youth employment is a global issue and therefore can be more effectively tackled within an international framework such as the YEN. My recent visit to the International Labour Conference was very informative and I was very pleased to be able to address the issue of youth employment, both during the plenary discussions and at the YEN side event.

There is increasing international momentum to address poverty, and youth employment is an important part of this. During our Presidencies of both the G8 and the EU we hope to maintain the impetus created by the Millennium Development Declaration and the Commission for Africa in tackling these challenges.

Through the YEN we look forward to working with the ILO and other countries, to hear others’ experiences and to share our own. We are committed to moving beyond sharing best practice to improving performance on youth employment in our own country and globally.

JAMES PLASKITT MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
Dear Mr. Plaskitt,

Thank you for your letter of 21 June 2005 in which you confirmed your Government’s decision to volunteer the United Kingdom as one of the Lead Countries in the Youth Employment Network (YEN).

By volunteering to be a lead country, the United Kingdom has reaffirmed its Government’s commitment to youth employment at the highest level and has agreed to share experiences within the wider Network and to take political leadership on youth employment within the international community and within the broader development agenda. You have already taken important steps in this direction putting in place appropriate education, skills and training policies, by recognizing the need to ensure that regulation does not deter the creation of jobs, and by encouraging the development of entrepreneurship.

Our joint collaboration is needed to meet the aspirations of young men and women everywhere, and to improve their economic and social circumstances. We are convinced that youth employment is essential to the international development and collective security agendas embodied in the Millennium Declaration. We are ready to build on our ongoing dialogue to explore how best to support your leadership in the YEN and to build a broad-based movement for youth employment. We now look forward to discussing ways to facilitate peer partnerships between Lead Countries and establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating youth employment policies.

Mr. James Plaskitt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
LONDON
We would be grateful for the designation of a focal point within your Government to lead the process. We shall request the Youth Employment Network Secretariat to make contact in order jointly to explore how best to move forward.

In closing, may I thank you once again for taking this important initiative. The United Kingdom’s leadership, as the first EU country within the Youth Employment Network, is essential to catalyse similar initiatives on the part of other Heads of State and Government in the EU and elsewhere in order to address the huge challenge of youth employment effectively.

Yours sincerely,

Juan Somavia
Dear Mr Somavia,

Thank you for your letter of the 20 October 2005 responding to my Government’s decision to volunteer the United Kingdom as one of the Lead countries of the Youth Employment Network.

The UK recognises that youth employment is a global issue, affecting countries at many different levels of development. There is much to be gained from the exchange of experiences, both success and failures, in helping to generate ideas and improve performance on youth employment.

We must also look beyond the sharing of best practice to improving performance on youth employment globally. The ILO is well placed to promote youth employment as a priority for action and to play a central role in the development of youth employment policies.

As you know, the UK currently holds the EU and G8 presidencies, a key focus of which has been Africa’s development. We are very keen to see the YEN expanded to include more African countries, and we are willing to work with the YEN to form peer partnerships with other Lead countries in the network, especially African countries. We also recognise the key role that business can play in tackling youth unemployment, through initiatives such as Business Action for Africa.

The Joint International Unit of the Department for Work and Pensions will be responsible for taking this work forward with the YEN. Marie Niven and Anna Guthrie will be the primary points of contact within this unit, and I know that they have been in regular contact with YEN secretariat.
The UK is committed to addressing youth unemployment both domestically and internationally, and we look forward to working with others within the network.

JAMES PLASKITT MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE