



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

ECOSOC Forum on Youth 2014

“#Youth2015: Realizing the future they want”

New York

2 June 2014

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Excellencies,
Secretary General,
President of the ECOSOC,
Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth,
Ms. Brittany Trilford,
Mr. Nik Hartley,
Distinguished Guests,
Youth Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure to participate in this ECOSOC Youth Forum. As President of the General Assembly, some of my best and brightest experiences have been when I have sat down and engaged with young people, and it is easy to see why. When I look around this room, I feel the energy, enthusiasm and spirit you bring to the United Nations.

You – the young of this world – make up a large and diverse portion of our population. Globally, approximately one in every five people on this planet is aged between 15 and 24. You are activists, artists, entrepreneurs, inventors, innovators, idealists and agents of change. You are the guardians of our future, but you have never failed to remind us that you also wish to be very much a part of the present by participating in decision-making processes aimed at defining the future.

You, the young, are letting your voices be heard in political and social movements across the globe. Many of you have become experts at social media like Twitter and Facebook, crowdsourcing, text messaging and mobile technology. Not only are these tools helping you connect better with peers, but you are using them to demand your governments listen to you and provide you with the future you deserve. For this, I commend you and I remind you to stay engaged. We need you more than ever.

For the global community, the great number of youth around the world presents both opportunities and challenges. Young people can be drivers of positive change and contribute to

the socio-economic development of their societies, if they are provided with a favorable environment to do so. But many young people face challenges in finding jobs; accessing quality education and affordable and appropriate health care; and participating in policy-making processes.

If your specific needs and challenges are not adequately addressed, we run the real risk of excluding a large number of young people from the very developmental processes that are intended to benefit them. This in turn would not only jeopardize their own situation, but also imperil the peace and sustainability of societies. Realizing sustainable development means realizing the potential of our young.

When the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in 2000, many of you were not yet of an age to appreciate the impact they would have on the world. But as you came of age, you now understand fully their importance. Now, with the preparations for a successor arrangement for the MDGs beginning to gather steam, you have made abundantly clear that you are ready to make important contributions and you wish to have your voices heard and your contributions taken into full consideration. In this context, the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2014 gives you, young people, a venue for participation at the global level as well as an opportunity to have a say in the issues that will ultimately affect you.

Already over 1.5 million young people across the world have expressed their priorities for the post-2015 development agenda by participating in the MyWorld survey. Based on these priorities, the crowdsourcing initiative launched earlier this year has provided a platform to gather further inputs and build on these focus areas.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and all partners who have worked so hard over the last five months to capture your voices for the new agenda. And I congratulate the youth around the world on their impressive levels of participation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the beginning of my tenure as the President of the General Assembly, I took youth-related issues very seriously. In March 2014, my office organized a High-level Event on “The Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society to the Post-2015 Development Agenda”.

The High-level Event, which included young persons as both panelists and discussants, addressed a number of cross-cutting rights-based issues relevant to the young such as access to quality education, skills and training; health; decent work; social protection; and financial and economic inclusion.

At that High-level event many participants called for a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal on youth, with explicit targets and indicators. There were also numerous calls for integration of a youth perspective into all the goals that will ultimately be adopted. Additionally, we heard calls for the development of a global strategic plan to eradicate youth unemployment.

Key messages from the event were shared with UN Member States and will serve as input to the synthesis report the Secretary-General is putting together to help guide Member States in their deliberations.

Many of the concerns and issues raised in that event are also reflected in the Global Call on Youth in the Post-2015 agenda, which was endorsed by more than 1,000 youth organizations from 140 countries ahead of this ECOSOC Forum, and is a testament to the clear ideas youth have about what they need and deserve.

Let me also draw your attention to another important, and also fun and entertaining, event to take place this Friday, June 6. At the President’s annual concert – *Setting the Stage – 2015 and Beyond* – voices from around the world will come together and spread the news that we expect 2015 to be a transformative year. We want to inspire even more people to join the conversation by taking the MyWorld survey and becoming active in this global movement. So please share the news about the concert, tell your friends and networks, and follow us on #beyond2015. Raise your voices even louder and make your impact even stronger.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a father of two boys, I know well the feelings of pride, hope and possibility that the young inspire. Just as I have for my own children, I have both great hope and admiration for all of you. May you continue to speak loudly and boldly and work toward ensuring that that every young person has access to education and healthcare, the ability to find meaningful and quality employment, and the chance for a life of dignity and promise.

Your participation in and contributions to the Forum are a hopeful step in that direction.

Thank you.
