



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9 March 2015

Excellency,

I am pleased to inform you that I will convene a High-Level Event of the General Assembly, on 29 May 2015 to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The high-level event will provide an opportunity for Member States and stakeholders to exchange views, in an interactive and participatory manner on the progress achieved over the last 20 years, and on the priorities of the youth in the post-2015 development agenda. A copy of the Concept Note is attached and a provisional programme will be availed in due course.

My office will liaise and coordinate with the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy in preparations for the high-level event.

I have the honour to invite Member States to participate at the highest possible level.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', written in a cursive style.

Sam K. Kutesa

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

Concept Note

The high level event of the President of the General Assembly marking the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth to highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Background

In 1995, Member States of the United Nations adopted the “World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond” (WPAY). In 2005, the United Nations General Assembly marked the 10th anniversary of WPAY, which included a review by Governments of the achievements in the implementation of this landmark document since 1995.

Important progress has been made in promoting youth development since the adoption of WPAY. The document provides the United Nations a crucial policy framework which offers practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth around the world and constitutes the global blueprint for effective national youth policies. The fifteen priority areas¹ identified in the WPAY are closely interdependent and required for the full and effective development of young people.

Successive resolutions and initiatives have further energized the youth development agenda and reaffirmed this commitment to youth by encouraging policies and programmes involving youth, as well as promoting youth participation in social and economic development with 127 countries having adopted a national youth policy as of October 2014, up from 99 in January 2013.

Member States have recognized the importance of this link, including in the 2015 Commission for Social Development Resolution on Programmes and Policies involving Youth in which the Commission “calls upon Member States to give due consideration to youth issues in all appropriate aspects of the post-2015 development agenda”. This statement further underlines the importance of closely consulting with and actively involving youth and youth organizations in the implementation of the upcoming post-2015 development agenda.

A comprehensive communications strategy which was launched in February of 2015 will draw momentum to the Special Session and will include multi-media, digital engagement and traditional media visibility. As part of this

¹ The 15 priority areas include: education; employment; hunger and poverty; health; environment; substance abuse; youth in conflict with the law; leisure-time activities; girls and young women; full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision making; globalization; information and communications technology; HIV/AIDS; armed conflict; and intergenerational issues.

strategy the #YouthNow Campaign, hosted on the website of the President of the General Assembly (<http://www.un.org/pga/youth/>) marks the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth leading up to a Special Session of the General Assembly.

Objective

The main objective of the Special Session of the General Assembly is to mark the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action on Youth (WPAY) and offer an important opportunity for Member States and other relevant stakeholders to take stock of progress made in its implementation, identify the gaps and challenges ahead while discussing the best way forward for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of this ground-breaking agreement.

The special session will also:

- 1) Seek to encourage Member States and other relevant stakeholders, including youth-led organizations to implement the WPAY by developing forward-looking programmes and policies grounded in its priority areas.
- 2) Pay special attention to the need to strengthen monitoring of the implementation of WPAY, including through the collection, analysis and dissemination of, reliable, comparable and relevant data on a continuous basis.
- 3) Contribute to the deliberations on the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda both by examining the potential of youth to contribute to its design, and by focusing on areas relevant to youth development that can be advanced by the post-2015 development agenda, as underscored in the World Programme of Action for Youth.
- 4) Inform the discussions of the High Level Event of the PGA that will focus on the Demographic Dividend and Youth Employment to be held on 1 June 2015. It will build on the momentum created by the previous events organized by UN partners and other relevant stakeholders, including the First Global Forum on Youth Policies, the 2015 ECOSOC Youth Forum as well as national and regional level events.

Format

The Special Session of the General Assembly will be held on 29th May, 2015 in the General Assembly Hall. It will be a one-day event consisting of an opening

Plenary and morning session, two interactive panel discussions and a closing session.

(The detailed programme of events will be availed in due course).

The theme of the first Panel will focus on stocktaking for the past 20 years since the adoption of WPAY.

Some questions to guide the panel discussion are as follows:

1. Acknowledging the continued relevance of the WPAY, what efforts can be made to enhance its role as a viable instrument for further mainstreaming youth issues in the Post-2015 agenda?
2. What is the role of youth and youth-led organizations in WPAY implementation and youth policy development, monitoring and evaluation?
3. What are some examples of successful implementation of the WPAY to date?

The theme of the second panel will focus on the Role of WPAY looking ahead.

Some questions to guide the panel discussion are as follows:

1. To what extent have the priority areas of the WPAY been incorporated into the new post-2015 development agenda?
2. What avenues of cooperation are available between policy-makers and youth-led organizations at both local and international levels in the implementation these policies?
3. How effective are the channels of communication on youth related issues?
4. What partnerships have been crucial and are necessary for the continued effective implementation of the WPAY moving into the Post-2015 agenda?

The Closing session will consist of a brief summary of the day's discussion and closing remarks.

Participation

Member States will be invited to participate at the level of highest official responsible for youth. In addition, Member States are encouraged to consider including youth delegates in their delegations as appropriate. The event will

also include representatives of UN entities, civil society, including youth-led and youth-focused organizations as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Outcome

The outcome will be a President's summary, which will be circulated to all Member States and other relevant stakeholders.

**High Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly
Marking the 20th Anniversary of the
World Programme of Action for Youth
to Highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

29 May 2015
General Assembly Hall
United Nations Headquarters
New York

Provisional Programme

9:00-10:00 a.m.: Opening segment

- Youth Performance (9:00-9:10am)
- Acting President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations
- Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
- UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi
- Keynote Address by Vivian Onano, Education Spokesperson for Moremi Africa

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.: Plenary

- Statements by Member States (3 minutes each)

3:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.: Panel 1 “Stocktaking of the past 20 years since the adoption of WPAY”

Guiding questions:

- *Acknowledging the continued relevance of the WPAY, what efforts can be made to enhance its role as a viable instrument for further mainstreaming youth issues in the Post-2015 agenda?*
- *What is the role of youth and youth-led organizations in WPAY implementation and youth policy development, monitoring and evaluation?*
- *What are some examples of successful implementation of the WPAY to date?*

Chair: H.E. Lourdes O. Yparraguirre, Permanent Representative of Philippines to the United Nations

Moderator: Andreas Karsten, co-founder of youthpolicy.org

Panelists:

- H.E. Al-Zain S. Al-Sabah, Under-Secretary, Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, State of Kuwait
- H.E. Agnes Musunga, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Zambia
- Åshild Marie Vige, Norwegian Children and Youth Council, Norway
- Patrick Ochiba, International Movement of Catholic Students - Pax Romana Pan-African Coordinator, Kenya
- Professor Andy Furlong, University of Glasgow

4:00 pm -5:00 pm: Panel 2 “Role of WPAY looking ahead”

Guiding questions:

- *To what extent have the priority areas of the WPAY been incorporated into the new post-2015 development agenda?*
- *What avenues of cooperation are available between policy-makers and youth-led organizations at both local and international levels in the implementation these policies?*
- *How effective are the channels of communication on youth related issues?*
- *What partnerships have been crucial and are necessary for the continued effective implementation of the WPAY moving into the Post-2015 agenda?*

Chair: H.E. Lourdes O. Yparraguirre, Permanent Representative of Philippines to the United Nations

Moderator: Jessica Abo, Journalist

Panelists :

- H.E. Gabriel Medina, National Youth Secretary, Brazil
- H.E. Aida Hadzialic, Minister for Upper Secondary School and Adult Education and Training, Sweden
- Dejan Bojanic, European Youth Forum Board Member, Serbia
- Marina Fidelis D'Costa, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, India

5:00 pm- 5:50 pm: Plenary

Chaired by Acting PGA

- Statements by Member States and other stakeholders

5:50 pm- 6:00 pm: Closing segment

- Acting President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

24 June 2015

Excellency,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a Summary of the key messages, initiatives and proposals from the High-Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly to mark the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and to highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda held on 29 May 2015 at United Nations Headquarters, New York

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam K. Kutesa', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sam K. Kutesa

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

High-Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly to mark the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) and to highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

**United Nations Headquarters, New York
29 May 2015**

President's Summary

The President of the General Assembly, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, held the High-Level Event to mark the 20th Anniversary of the WPAY on 29 May 2015. The following is a summary of the key messages from the Event.

Opening Segment

H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura in his capacity as Acting President of the General Assembly, speaking on behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Sam Kutesa, noted that the 20th Anniversary was a timely opportunity to take stock of the progress of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). He said that while a lot of progress had been achieved, much more remained to be done to improve the situation of young people worldwide. He noted that as of 2014, 127 countries had national youth policies, but youth unemployment and access to education – particularly for girls – remain considerable challenges.

He added that initiatives, such as the First Global Forum on Youth Policies and the #YouthNow digital campaign, serve as meaningful platforms for engagement on youth issues. He emphasized that young people have been actively involved in deliberations on the future development agenda and encouraged leaders to find further ways to enhance the participation of young people in the implementation of the new development agenda.

The UN Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon said that 2015 is a historic year, as Member States prepare to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He called on Member States to enhance their efforts to implement the WPAY under the post-2015 development agenda and to include young people as part of their delegations to the Summit in September 2015. He called upon Member States, youth organizations and UN system agencies to work together with Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, his Envoy on Youth who has established partnership networks with millions of young people across the world.

In his remarks, Mr. Alhendawi, noted that the WPAY provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth worldwide, as well as a blueprint for effective youth policies.

He observed that in spite of the important gains in its implementation and an increase in the number of countries with national youth policies, much remains to be done to realize WPAY's full implementation and to ensure youth development.

He pointed out that it is critical to involve young people in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and actions affecting their lives.

He stressed the importance of political will, youth friendly legislation and policies, as well as the need for dedicated resources to ensure the implementation of the WPAY and the SDGs.

The Keynote speaker, Ms. Vivian Onano, lauded young people today for greater involvement in calling for action on important issues such as access to education, gender inequality, youth unemployment, peace and security, climate change and global pandemics such as Ebola. She stressed that issues such as human trafficking, sexual violence, genital mutilation, sex slavery, access to health services, and economic empowerment of women should be effectively addressed to achieve gender equality and sustainable development. She noted the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the work of UN Women in advancing gender equality. She underscored the urgent need to tackle the youth unemployment crisis, including through supporting youth entrepreneurship and skills development. Ms. Onano called on Member States to include a youth delegate as part of their delegations to the United Nations.

Morning and Afternoon Plenary:

1. Many Member States noted that considerable progress had been achieved over the last 20 years since the adoption of the WPAY, but key challenges to youth development remain, especially youth unemployment, access to quality education, HIV and AIDS, poverty, conflict and violence, and gender inequality.
2. Member States noted that young people are a strategic wealth and demographic dividend for their countries, but that social exclusion and lack of opportunities greatly hindered youth development. Member States should ensure strong policy and programme responses to realize young people's full potential and contribution to sustainable development.
3. Member States also reiterated the importance of continued and accelerated implementation of the WPAY. It was also stressed that the priority areas of the WPAY are closely interlinked and that the implementation of the WPAY involves participation of youth at all levels.
4. Delegations highlighted the importance of the development of evidence-based policies and use of indicators and monitoring frameworks to assess progress in the field of youth.
5. It was noted that most Member States have existing national youth policies and/or action plans for youth, while others were developing or renewing them.
6. Member States underscored the importance of ensuring that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to youth policies and action plans so as to ensure effective implementation and youth development. It was also noted that eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development will require a strengthened global partnership for development, including commitment from developed countries to fulfill their overseas development assistance (ODA) targets.
7. Youth agendas or charters and action plans have been developed and implemented in a number of regions including the African Union's African Youth Charter and Plan of Action, CARICOM Youth Agenda, Arab Policy for Young People of the Arab Council for Ministers of Youth and Sport and the Francophonie Youth Strategy 2016-2022.

8. A number of Member States informed that they had newly established Ministries of Youth and Ministries of Skills Development and Youth Entrepreneurship, while others highlighted the strengthening of youth commissions and ministries. Member States also reported on their support to the development and sustainability of national youth councils and structures.
9. Member States noted that the continuing youth unemployment crisis was an issue of concern, necessitating enhanced response and attention. It was noted according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), over 74 million young people are unemployed, with the global youth unemployment rate currently standing at 13 per cent, up from 11.7 per cent in 1995. It is therefore critical to increase investment in youth employment initiatives, education and training, skills development, and entrepreneurship.
10. A number of countries informed that they have developed targeted actions or strategies to combat youth unemployment, including promoting youth entrepreneurship, and improving access to credit and financial literacy. It was also stressed that focusing on the needs of the youth in rural areas, through improving agricultural employment policies and programmes would play a crucial role in tackling unemployment.
11. Youth volunteer programmes have been established by a number of Member States and regional groups to encourage the development of youth leadership skills to enhance youth employability and engagement.
12. Several Member States identified health care and access to health services and information as a priority, with particular focus on HIV and AIDS. HIV/AIDS continues to be the main cause of death among adolescents in Africa. The education and empowerment of young people is important in reducing this. The Ebola epidemic was noted by several countries as having posed a real threat to the lives of young people in effected countries, while the resilience and commitment of youth to overcoming the epidemic was commended.
13. Member States highlighted the need for greater investments into health, sustainable livelihoods and education, including sexual and reproductive health and human rights in order to reduce forced, early and child marriage, early pregnancy and serious detrimental health conditions for young women.
14. Many Member States referred to the initiatives taken to promote the active involvement of girls and young women in education and employment. The need to ensure policies and efforts to improve the situation of girls and young women, promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence was also highlighted.
15. Several Member States noted the negative effects of armed conflict on young people, including its impact on their development. They condemned the recruitment and use of youth in armed groups, terrorism, and violent extremism and highlighted the importance of ensuring the full re-integration of such youth back into society. Gender-based and sexual violence and drugs as well as other criminal activities were also noted as serious challenges that impact the development of youth globally.

16. Member States noted the great value of further strengthening collaboration of UN entities with Governments in the development and implementation of youth policies. It was also suggested that UN-inter-agency collaboration on youth development at the regional and national levels should be strengthened.
17. There was a call for urgent action to take measures to address the root causes of the recent high levels of migration of African youth, particularly through illegal trafficking. The need to resolve conflict and creating conducive environments that provide economic and employment opportunities in countries of origin was stressed.
18. Leisure time activities, including sports and cultural activities, were stressed as important for youth development as was the positive role of families.

Panel Discussions

The afternoon panel discussions were entitled, respectively: “*Stocktaking of the Past 20 Years since the Adoption of WPAY*” and the “*Role of WPAY looking ahead*”.

Speakers reflected on youth priorities in relation to the adoption and implementation of WPAY over the past two decades, highlighting the progress achieved, good practices, lessons learned as well as gaps and challenges. Panelists offered thoughts on the process ahead and potential entry points for ensuring that youth priorities are safeguarded and strengthened in the post-2015 development agenda.

Progress achieved since WPAY

Speakers highlighted progress since the adoption of WPAY, including the creation of ministries of youth affairs in many countries, the development of national youth policies and projects, and greater involvement of civil society, the private sector, and the UN system in promoting and implementing WPAY.

Panelists emphasized the importance of developing youth capacity through education and promoting youth involvement at all levels of decision-making. NGOs in Africa, in particular, were commended for uniting students across Africa and making notable progress in capacity-building programmes and initiatives centred on themes of good governance and community empowerment. Specific good examples cited included Adopt a Child Programme, farming campaigns, Food for Life Project and IT Training, among others.

Challenges since adoption of WPAY

Speakers highlighted some of the remaining challenges in the implementation of WPAY including, inter alia, resource constraints, lack of communication, misrepresentation of young people, governance, continuity of youth involvement, immigration policies and lack of access to quality education. It was stated that these challenges further accentuate the need for an integrated worldwide youth policy.

It was noted that Governments would benefit from increased use of data and insights from the research community and a greater understanding of linkages between policy areas.

Promising programmes and initiatives cited included the EU's funding of and cooperation with research groups, and the UN's First Global Forum on Youth Policies.

The way forward

It was noted that much progress is still needed for the implementation of WPAY, particularly in the areas of hunger, poverty, leisure, armed conflict and full participation of youth, among others. Specifically, it was stressed that youth should remain a target of public policy in efforts to address hunger and poverty, which are major global challenges. In certain countries, other challenges, such as violence perpetrated by and against youth, may be addressed by greater access to education and food, as well as the empowerment of youth through access to information technology.

It was suggested that additional efforts are needed to involve youth participation in drafting an action plan in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Speakers reiterated the importance of UN support for grassroots engagement in the planning and implementation of the SDGs. They also highlighted the need to consider the issues within different national and regional contexts and establish greater awareness of the SDGs among young people, particularly through existing mechanisms and platforms of UN engagement, such as the Major Group on Children and Youth and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations.

Public-private partnerships can play an important role in empowerment of young people, through increasing opportunities for youth unemployment, and greater investment in education.

Closing Segment:

H.E. Mr. Alvaro José de Mendonça e Moura, Acting President of the General Assembly reiterated the importance of the 20th Anniversary as an occasion to reflect upon the successes of WPAY. He noted the main challenges that persist with regard to empowering young people including lack of access to quality education and skills development, unemployment, gender inequality, violence and conflict, and limited participation in political and socio-economic spheres. He reiterated the call for full and effective implementation of WPAY through renewed, collective commitment by Member States and all stakeholders and the need for robust and effective youth policies. He further noted the importance of education, skills development, entrepreneurship, and access to affordable credit for youth. He called upon all governments and stakeholders to ensure that national development plans and policies take into account the needs and interests of young people.

29 May 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Commemoration of 20th Anniversary of World
Programme of Action for Youth**

Delivered by H.E. Alvaro José De Mendonça E Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal on behalf of President Kutesa

**Honourable Ministers
Excellencies,
Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General
Mr Ahmad Alhendawi, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
Distinguished delegates and participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency, Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly. I also extend my appreciation to the Office of the Secretary-General's Youth Envoy for their partnership in organizing this event.

I welcome the Honourable Ministers and other dignitaries from capitals joining us here today. Your participation in this event demonstrates the great importance you attach to the youth.

The 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) provides a timely opportunity for young people, Member States and civil society to take stock of progress in the implementation of the World Programme of Action.

Indeed, important strides have been made in addressing youth development since the adoption of the World Programme of Action.

Around the world, governments are becoming increasingly aware of the need for legal and policy frameworks that adequately respond to young peoples' needs, aspirations and demands. I am heartened to note that as of 2014, 127 countries had a national youth policy.

Nevertheless, although much has been done to improve the situation of young people over the last two decades, youth continue to be disproportionately affected by many global challenges.

Youth unemployment continues to be a formidable issue worldwide, with young people three times more likely to be jobless than adults.

Further, despite access to primary education having increased exponentially, many young people still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills to enable them find and keep a job.

It is also troubling that despite important advances, the issue of access to education remains a particularly difficult obstacle for young girls.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

Increasingly, we are witnessing young people around the world taking more vocal and proactive approaches to finding solutions for the challenges they face.

Initiatives such as the First Global Forum on Youth Policies, which took place last October in Azerbaijan, served as a valuable forum for the open exchange of ideas on youth issues, and played a role in enhancing and elevating the debate and knowledge about youth policies.

The #YouthNow digital campaign, organized by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, has also served as a meaningful platform for engaging web users on youth issues. Since its launch only four months ago, the site has already registered close to 500 million impressions.

These examples, as well as many others, demonstrate that young people around the world are ready and willing to be actively involved in shaping their future.

As the international community works to formulate an inclusive and transformative post-2015 development agenda, we should seek to harness the innovative spirit of young people in identifying creative solutions to our development challenges.

I am encouraged to note that young people, including many of you here today, have already been actively involved in the deliberations on the future development agenda. I thank you for your contributions and urge your continued engagement.

For our part, leaders should strive to find further ways to capitalize on the integral role young people can play, not only in the agenda's design, but also its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With over 1.2 billion young people globally, youth account for a significant proportion of the world's population. From employment to education, from participation to gender equality; much work remains to be done to ensure that this vital segment of our population is provided every opportunity to flourish.

For this reason, today's commemoration carries great importance for us all.

Let us use this gathering as an opportunity for reflection on how far we have come since 1995; and how far we must still go to fully empower young people to thrive and prosper in the future.

I thank you for your attention.



**Statement
Ahmad Alhendawi
Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
United Nations**

**Opening Session
High Level Event of the General Assembly
to mark the 20th Anniversary of the
World Programme of Action for Youth**

29 May 2015

**Your Excellency, Acting President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Alvaro Jose de Mendonca e Moura**

**Your Excellency, United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban
Ki-moon**

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen, Colleagues and friends,

Here in this Assembly, almost twenty years ago, Member States adopted a landmark document to improve the situation of youth around the world.

The World Programme of Action for Youth is a milestone in articulating a vision for youth development and directing both the

national and international community's response to youth needs.

Not only does the Program of Action provide a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of youth, it also constitutes the first global blueprint for effective national youth policies.

To this day, this document remains one of the most important internationally agreed frameworks to the better future young people deserve.

Over the past 20 years, we have witnessed notable progress in youth development agenda and a dramatic increase in the number of countries with a national youth policy, laws and national programs on youth.

While important progress to empower and enable youth globally has been made-- let's make no mistake, there are daunting challenges facing this largest generation of young people.

Many young people continue to experience limited access to quality education, health services and meaningful political participation.

More than 500+ million young persons live on less than 2 dollars per day.

Globally, 1 in 8 youth are unemployed...

126 million youth cannot read or write...

63 million adolescents of lower secondary school age are currently out of school...

An estimated 600 million young people are living in conflict zones and fragile states...

And every minute a young woman is newly infected with HIV...

We meet here today, 20 years later, **to review AND renew** our collective commitment to this Program of Action.

Today's youth are more connected and tuned in to the world than any generation before.

They are growing up fast, in a world that is changing even faster. But the good news here that young people see the challenges before them in fresh ways and are responding with enthusiasm, imagination and innovation.

I personally have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel to all regions of the world and meet with young people and youth organizations.

Regardless of where I go, no matter which region, the concerns and aspirations of young people for their future and the future of their communities are remarkably similar.

For me... youth development is the young people I met with in Mathara, a slum area near Nairobi Kenya, who were working to humanize the plight of youth in the slums and showcase their stories.

Youth resilience is the young people I met in Somalia, who against all odds were organizing Somali youth to build a brighter future for a country riddled with decades of conflict.

Youth courage is the young people I met in the Dominican Republic working to prevent teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

Youth progress is the young parliamentarians from all over the world that I met with in Geneva, who were charting new political ground in a political sphere that lacks youth access and representation.

Youth inspiration is the young people I met with in Gaza who realized that the path to peace is paved with reconciliation, forgiveness and compassion.

So if we wonder what the World Programme of Action for Youth is all about – it's about taking all these stories from the margins to a central stage.

With the right investments, young people everywhere can reach their full potential as individuals, leaders and agents of progress.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Almost 5 years ago, back in 2011, I had the opportunity to meet with the Secretary-General for the first time when he visited Egypt right after the Egyptian revolution and met with young leaders back then. The Secretary-General message was, it's time to listen to young people.

That message is what the world needs today. And we are starting at home; the UN wants to listen to you.

Over the past few months leading up to this event, young people around the world participated in digital campaign #YouthNow. The campaign gave a platform for youth to engage on critical conversations with the United Nations and other stakeholders.

To date, the campaign has reached 770 million impressions with active engagement from all over the world.

Youth are proving once again that they have the power and the tools to be equal partners in development. They do not want to be talked AT—they want to be engaged in a meaningful way.

Today we need to join forces to advocate for quality education to all youth.

And it's imperative that governments and the private sector respond to the youth unemployment crisis, by prioritizing job creation and supporting young entrepreneurs, those who decided to become job innovators, not only job seekers.

Urgent efforts must to be made to protect, promote and fulfill the human rights of young people and we must fight discrimination against all youth groups.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In September this year, a window of opportunity will open for a new promise for development and prosperity. Heads of States will meet in this very room to agree on a new sustainable development goals that will steer global development efforts for 15 years to come.

It's upon all of us to take ownership of this new development agenda.

That's why it is critical to involve young people in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and actions affecting their lives.

And the math here is simple: When we are talking about the next generation of development priorities, we are talking about the next generation of individuals.

So as we gather to assess the progress of WPAY and renew our commitment to its full and accelerated implementation, allow me to propose some concrete suggestions and lessons learned from the past 20 years of the program of action:

1. First) The Political will--- It is essential to ensure the existence of the political will to make YOUTH a national state priority.
2. Second) Legislation and policies: We need youth friendly legislation and policies that are protective of youth rights and conducive to youth development, from legislation related to employment and facilitating small enterprises, to political participation and voting.
3. Third) We need economic will and resources--- Youth policies and programs need financing and it's time to introduce a youth budgeting similar to the gender budgeting at the national level. And let's remember that youth policy without a budget is not a policy, its merely a mental exercise
4. Fourth) Youth need meaningful mechanisms to engage--- Public participation is more than just voting. It's not a quota or a box to tick. Youth need access to political processes that are meaningful and lead to real impact. Autonomous, inclusive youth participation structures should be established and empowered.
5. Fifth) We need better knowledge about youth--- This requires investing in tools and research that help us better understand youth and track progress on key areas of youth development.

6. Last but not least) Accountability--- Youth want to feel their voices matter. They want mechanisms that ensure the accountability towards them and their priorities.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Program of Action outlined clearly the investments and actions needed to enable youth to realize their full potential and act on it for a better future for all.

#YouthNow is not just a slogan – it's a call for urgency and a call for investing in youth now. Youth are speaking NOW but expecting us to deliver yesterday. Let's not fail them.

I thank you very much.

29 May 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the Commemoration of 20th Anniversary of World
Programme of Action for Youth**

*Delivered by H.E. Alvaro José De Mendonça E Moura, Permanent Representative of Portugal on behalf of
President Kutesa*

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, as we close this commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Today has provided an opportunity to consider the many successes we have enjoyed over the last two decades in our efforts to address issues facing young people globally and in our individual countries.

We have shared experiences and reflected on the main challenges that persist with regard to young people, including lack of access to quality education, unemployment, gender inequality, violence and conflict, and limited participation in political and socioeconomic spheres.

It was also noted that some young persons are lured into illegal activities including violent conflict due to lack of opportunities for gainful employment.

Many delegations called for the full and effective implementation of the World Programme of Action through renewed, collective commitments by all stakeholders.

Participants highlighted the need for robust and effective policies for youth, as well as the importance of including young people in decision-making at all levels.

The importance of education in empowering young people and enabling them to reach their full potential was underscored. Many speakers expressed concern about the millions of young people that are not in school, while others stressed the need for safe educational environments following shocking attacks targeting schools around the world.

Many speakers emphasized the need for skills development, promotion of entrepreneurship and facilitating access to affordable credit as crucial for youth to engage in income generating activities.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

Given the important contribution and influential roles that young people continue to play worldwide, many speakers stressed that the time has come to give the youth “a seat at the table” with regard to our future development aspirations.

Today, we have heard strong support from Member States, civil society and young people themselves for taking concrete steps to improve the situation of young people worldwide.

It was emphasized that the youth will play an important role towards the achievement of sustainable development. As we formulate an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda, today’s proceedings have added impetus towards ensuring that the needs of young people are prioritized.

It is incumbent upon governments and all stakeholders worldwide, as we mark 20 years since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth, to ensure national development plans and policies take into account the needs and interest of the young.

I would like, once again, to thank all of you for your valuable contributions and proposals. A President’s Summary of today’s event will be made available to stakeholders in due course.

I thank you for your attention.