



Thematic panel 1: Strengthening international cooperation regarding youth and enhancing dialogue, mutual understanding and active youth participation as indispensable elements of efforts towards achieving social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty.

This panel will enable a discussion on international cooperation needed to address common youth challenges beyond national borders, and share opportunities for strengthening economic, social and cultural relations to extend prosperity, stability and well-being for youth.

The round table will also address dialogue between and with youth, and explore successes, challenges and lessons learned from existing channels for dialogue and mutual understanding. It will identify key priorities for increased investments and concrete partnerships to promote the ideals of peace, inclusiveness and development locally and globally.

The panel will also highlight mechanisms for enhancing young people's active participation and the importance of further developing participatory processes at local, national and international levels in efforts towards achieving social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty.

OVERVIEW

Young people aged 15-24 currently number 1.8 billion; with some 87 per cent living in developing countries where development constraints pose the additional challenges of limited access to resources, education, training, employment, and broader economic development opportunities. Youth do not constitute a homogeneous group, as their socio-economic, demographic, and geographical situations vary both within and between regions. Nevertheless, global solutions are called for as more youth issues exceed national borders, including facing poverty, unemployment, under-representation in decision-making, economic and social inequalities, and insufficient access to resources, health, education and information and communication technology.

Young people and youth-led organizations and networks have been mobilizing, at country and regional levels and are taking the lead to address challenges and create opportunities for a better future, and to bring these perspectives to the attention of the international community's development agenda. The activism of young people in shaping their societies points to the centrality of young people as agents of development, social inclusion, tolerance and peace.

Effective and democratic mechanisms for dialogue, information exchange and mutual understanding among young people and with their national governments and other relevant decision makers, are essential for creating and enhancing partnerships that can more effectively address challenges young people face today. Indeed, the absence of such channels and opportunities for youth participation and civic engagement can lead to a feeling of frustration, that when combined with economic and social exclusion, may result in social instability and civil unrest as evidenced by recent events.

The aspiration of young people to participate in the processes that shape their lives, their societies and their future is legitimate. It is now more urgent than ever to focus on measures to strengthen national capacities to engage young people and youth-led organizations and channel their activism and dynamism in efforts to effectively participate in the development of local, national, regional and international development strategies and policies towards achieving social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty.

Strengthened mechanisms are needed for government institutions, development partners and the private sector to increase coherence and present a coordinated response towards the rights and needs of young people, including in humanitarian situations.

KEY ISSUES

International Cooperation

- » International cooperation is crucial for promoting the rights and needs of young people within developmental priorities and for addressing the emerging challenges that hinder youth development.
- » International efforts targeting youth are often piecemeal, uncoordinated and inadequate, and therefore limited in their scale and potential impact. Full integration of youth development issues into the international development agenda is needed by the international community.
- » International cooperation is key for promoting conditions conducive to coherent and coordinated response of governments and development partners in efforts to reach internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and to implementation the World Programme of Action on Youth.
- » The strengthening of international cooperation regarding young people, including the availability of financial resources, access to information and technology, capacity building of national institutions and young people, enhancing dialogue, mutual understanding and strengthening mechanisms for youth participation are crucial elements of efforts towards achieving the eradication of poverty, full employment and social integration.
- » Recognizing the expanding roles and responsibilities of civil society, particularly youth-led organizations, and the private sector, there is a need for strengthening international cooperation and partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.
- » The international community and civil society as well as the private sector should invest in mechanisms for dialogue and consultation with young people at the national, regional and global levels and strengthen international cooperation in order to support Member States in their efforts to achieve progress in youth development efforts.
- » Promoting greater coordination and providing financial and technical support to the work of youth-led organizations will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their activities at the regional and national levels.

Youth Migration and International Cooperation

- » The lack in economic development contributes to the decision of young people to migrate. Unemployment, low wages and poor working conditions motivate young men and women to migrate towards countries with better opportunities. Whether it is economic need, poverty, lack of employment and educational opportunities, conflict, poor governance or environmental degradation that contributes to the increasing involvement of youth in the migratory process, they seem to remain absent from the international migration agenda.
- » International cooperation and dialogue, and a comprehensive and balanced approach on migration, are necessary to take advantage of the opportunities that international migration generates and to address migration's negative consequences.
- » Strengthening cooperation at the global, regional and bi-lateral levels is an essential component of any strategy to enhance the contribution of international migration and migrants to development; inter alia facilitating a more effective management of the recruitment and admission of migrant workers, fostering improvements in their working conditions, promoting and protecting the human rights of all migrants, especially young people, and avoiding approaches that might aggravate their vulnerability.
- » Global and regional forums on migration play an important role in fostering cooperation, sharing good practices and promoting constructive dialogue and cooperation among countries, relevant international agencies as well as with civil society. More formal mechanisms to advance the debate on international migration should be established.
- » With skills shortages affecting different regions of the world, it is expected that the demand for skilled workers from developing countries is likely to increase, which raises concerns as these countries face serious shortages of those skills.
- » Young people have the right to be protected from all forms of violence related to international migration, including gender based violence, trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, as well as the involvement and manipulation of young people in transnational organized criminal activities such as drug related crimes.

Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

- » Young people around the world are nurturing and promoting the ideals of peace, freedom, justice, tolerance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In many parts of the world, young people are also leading efforts to achieve progress and development, to better address their related issues, particularly as

regards to ensuring meaningful youth participation, full employment and decent work for all youth, thereby achieving social integration.

» Promoting and providing gender sensitive life skills based human rights education and learning for young people, taking particular account of marginalized adolescent girls and young women, is crucial to the promotion of development, dialogue and mutual understanding, tolerance and friendship among youth of all nations

» Strengthening mechanisms for involving young people and youth-led organizations in decision-making processes, and creating effective channels of cooperation, dialogue and information exchange among young people, including rural and urban youth, their national governments and other relevant decision makers, are indispensable elements of efforts towards achieving social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty.

» Youth organizations are important forums for developing skills necessary for effective participation in society, promoting tolerance and increased cooperation and exchanges between youth organizations. Investments must be made in strengthening the capacities of youth-led organizations including through financial and technical support.

» Information and communication technology plays an important role in assisting young women and men to communicate easily and freely with other youth from all over the world thereby promoting social integration, dialogue and mutual understanding. There are more internet, mobile and radio users than ever before and efforts should be directed at promoting increased communication with and amongst young people.

Full and Effective Participation

» The capacity for progress of societies is based, among other elements, on their capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in the building and designing of the present and the future. Young women and men bring unique perspectives to addressing development issues through their intellectual contribution, as well as their ability to mobilize support.

» Tackling social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty in an effective manner calls for increased participation of youth and youth-led organizations in the development of local, national, regional and international development strategies and policies.

» Full and effective participation of young people and youth-led organizations in relevant decision-making processes through appropriate channels is key to, inter alia, achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and to implementing the outcomes of global conferences and summits, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth.

» Young people can make better use of the opportunity to participate in decision-making by their improved access to information and by strong mechanisms through which they could participate in governance and hold stakeholders accountable.

» Opportunities should be strengthened for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, promoting their social, political, developmental and environmental participation, removing obstacles that affect their full contribution to society and respecting, inter alia, freedom of association

Social Integration, Employment and Decent Work, and Poverty Eradication

» The need to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and ensure full and effective participation of youth in decision-making processes will not be beneficial without also addressing development constraints and challenges faced by youth due to social exclusion, unemployment and underemployment as well as poverty.

» Youth living in vulnerable situations, such as in disadvantaged urban areas as well as in remote areas, youth affected by and living with HIV, youth with disabilities, refugee and migrant youth, and youth affected by conflict, are at higher risk of falling into and experiencing poverty.

» Education plays a fundamental role in creating an inclusive society and reducing inequity and inequality, as well as for achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development

» There is a need to increase efforts in improving the quality of education and in promoting universal access to education, particularly for young women, to ensure that youth can acquire the knowledge, capacities skills and ethical values needed for dialogue and mutual understanding and for participation in social, economic and political development

» Since the beginning of the financial and economic crisis in 2008, the average youth unemployment rate has increased by 7 percentage points; the largest two-year increase on record. The youth unemployment rate is now three times higher than the adult rate.

» Unemployment rates, however, reflect only the tip of the iceberg. Young people are prone to work longer hours under informal, intermittent and insecure work arrangements characterized by low productivity and earnings and reduced social protection.

» There is continued discrimination against young women in employment; being confronted with a double burden: working age and gender factor. Young women

suffer from insufficient access to equal opportunities in employment and education.

» There is a need to remove barriers to bridging the digital divide, including through transfer of technology and international cooperation, so as equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed for employment and decent work.

» Social exclusion of youth is usually linked to marginalization based on socio-economic backgrounds, gender, migrant status, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious beliefs. Recent food, energy and financial crises have increased social vulnerabilities of youth and highlighted the key role of social integration in advancing sustainable and inclusive development.

» Access to equal rights, full employment, quality education and opportunities for participation is central to social inclusion and cohesion of youth, which is in turn key to the sustainability, stability and prosperity of societies.

» Cooperation between governments, civil society and policy makers offers hope for eliminating physical and social barriers and improving the situation that marginalized youth find themselves in.

» The media should be encouraged to promote youth understanding and awareness of all aspects of social integration, including tolerance and non-violent behavior. Youth tend to be misrepresented in media, if not absent altogether, whereby young people are often stereotyped as being trouble makers who have little value to society and are a threat to community safety and stability. This is amplified in the case of young people who are marginalized and therefore have been failed or underserved by systems and society, and whose access to opportunity and appropriate supports is limited. The media is encouraged to report positively on young people, celebrating their achievements and goals, as well as their creative perspectives, intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support for inclusive societies for all.

WAY FORWARD

» Enhance measures to strengthen international cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society, with a view to responding to youth aspirations.

» Increase commitment and investment in youth through increasing recognition of youth development as a smart investment by the public and private sectors, advocating for the recognition of young people's contributions to national and community development and to achieving the MDGs, promoting understanding of inequalities amongst youth and how to effectively address the needs of the most disadvantaged, and through fostering research and knowledge building on youth to better inform youth policies and programmes.

- » Strengthen trust and build real partnerships at the international, regional and national levels through Government, NGO, media, academia and private sector initiatives to foster mutual respect, tolerance and understanding among and with young people.
- » Mobilize, engage and increase youth participation and partnerships through institutionalizing mechanisms for youth participation in decision-making processes, supporting youth-led organizations and initiatives to enhance their contribution to society, and through strengthening networks and partnerships among Governments, youth-led organizations, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, the media and the United Nations system, to enhance commitment and support for holistic youth development.
- » Connect, build bridges and increase intercultural understanding among youth through promoting youth interactions, networks and partnerships across cultures, and through empowering and supporting youth as agents of social inclusion and peace
- » Addressing the global challenge of youth unemployment by developing and implementing strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work, and, in this context, consider undertaking efforts towards the development of a global strategy on youth employment with a focus on youth unemployment
- » Key elements for better inclusion of young people in efforts towards social integration, poverty eradication and full employment
 - A collective and better understanding of what youth participation involves, and how it can be implemented for all youth ages;
 - Creation of structures and mechanisms to advance youth participation in decision-making processes that affect young people, such as establishing youth advisory groups, youth networks for positive civic engagement, etc;
 - Strengthen support and provide financial contributions to youth structures at international, regional and national levels;
 - Include youth in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, instruments and strategies;
 - The inclusion of youth in a post 2015 international development agenda, paying particular attention to education, inclusion and employment;
 - Enhanced regional cooperation on youth issues through development of regional youth policies.