



INTERNATIONAL  
**YEAR OF  
YOUTH**  
AUGUST 2010-2011  
OUR YEAR OUR VOICE

## *Dialogue and Mutual Understanding*

### PRESS RELEASE

## International Year of Youth to be launched today

### — Focus of the Year is dialogue and mutual understanding —

*New York, 12 August 2010:* The International Year of Youth is being launched today in the General Assembly Hall with an eclectic event of speeches, musical performances, videos and poetry. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will be on hand with welcoming words to kick off the Year, which runs from 12 August 2010 to 11 August 2011 under the theme Dialogue and Mutual Understanding.

The Year aims to promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and solidarity across generations, cultures, religions and civilizations.

In a message issued on the occasion, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that “in a world in which different peoples and traditions are coming into closer, more frequent contact than ever before, it is crucial that young people learn how to listen intently, empathize with others, acknowledge divergent opinions, and be able to resolve conflicts.” He called for strengthening efforts “to include young people in policies, programmes and decision-making processes that benefit their futures and ours.” In addition to the Secretary-General, today’s special event will be addressed by the Minister of Youth, Sport and Physical Education of Tunisia, Samir Laabidi and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Benin to the United Nations, Jean-François Régis Zinsou.

Sha Zukang, of UN Economic and Social Affairs, will present background information on the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development and UN Population Fund Executive Director Thoraya Obaid will deliver a joint statement of the Heads of UN entities demonstrating the support of the UN system behind the issues of youth development. Director of the International Labour Organization Office in New York, Jane Stewart, will launch the *Global Employment Trends for Youth*.

Youth representative Maya Saoud and American actress, singer and dancer Monique Coleman will also speak. Chris Bashinelli, Executive Director of Bridge the Gap TV will moderate the event.

Also showcased will be a musical performance by The Bonde, a slideshow of winning photographs from the youth photography competition “Shoot Nations”, a progressive poetry performance, a dance performance by “Move for Autism” and videos on youth-related issues. A related exhibit entitled “Visual Voices: youth perspectives on global issues” will be available for public viewing in the UN visitor’s lobby from 2 August to 10 September.

### Challenges and opportunities

There are more than 1.2 billion young people aged between 15 and 24 years in the world, accounting for about 18 per cent of the world population. The International Year of Youth presents an opportunity to highlight the contributions that youth are making to society, and to advance their full and effective participation.





Developing countries are home to 87 per cent of youth who face challenges of limited access to resources, healthcare, education, training, employment and economic opportunities.

As the world confronts many, often overlapping, crises, including financial and other socio-economic challenges, investing in and partnering with youth is key to finding sustainable solutions.

By adopting resolution 64/134 proclaiming the Year, UN Member States confirmed the importance the international community places on integrating youth-related issues into global, regional and national development agendas. To guide its efforts during the Year, the UN is focusing on three overarching objectives: (1) Increasing commitment and investment in youth; (2) Increasing youth participation and partnerships and (3) Increasing intercultural understanding among youth.

## United Nations and Youth

In 1985, the UN celebrated the first International Year of Youth. On its tenth anniversary, the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, setting a policy framework and guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people.

Today, the World Programme of Action for Youth plays a prominent role in youth development. It focuses on strengthening national capacities in the field of youth and on increasing the quality and quantity of participation opportunities available to them.

The United Nations Programme on Youth serves as the UN focal point on youth. It undertakes a range of activities to promote youth development, including increasing the effectiveness of the Organization's work in youth development by strengthening collaboration and exchange among UN entities through the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

YOUth and youth-focused organizations are encouraged to initiate and participate in activities celebrating the Year by subscribing to the monthly e-newsletter of the UN, Youth Flash at [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth), downloading advocacy materials from the official website at [social.un.org/youthyear](http://social.un.org/youthyear) and by joining the monthly consultation on [facebook.com/UNyouthyear](https://facebook.com/UNyouthyear).

**For more information on the International Year of Youth**, visit <http://social.un.org/youthyear/>. For substantive matters, please contact either Co-chair of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, Ms. Nicola Shepherd at +1 917 367 9282, email: [shepherdn@un.org](mailto:shepherdn@un.org) or Ms. Golda El-Khoury at +33 1 45 68 45 47, email: [g.elkhoury@unesco.org](mailto:g.elkhoury@unesco.org).

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