

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 August 2007

International Youth Day is an annual opportunity to recognize the world's 1.2 billion young people, to celebrate their achievements, and to push for their participation in all areas of society.

This year's commemoration – Be Seen, Be Heard: Youth Participation for Development – focuses on the enormous contributions young women and men everywhere can and do make towards national uplift. They are valuable and committed partners in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the overarching goal of cutting poverty and hunger in half by 2015. They remain at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS. And they bring fresh, innovative thinking to longstanding development concerns.

Approaching the mid-point of the race to achieve the MDGs, we need their participation more than ever. Their energy and idealism can help make up for lost ground, and achieve our development goals in full and on time.

In turn, we must fulfil our obligations to youth. The World Programme of Action for Youth asks Governments to consider the contributions of young persons on all policies affecting them. Governments must honour this commitment. They must also increase the financial, education and technical support made available to young people, and help them realize their potential.

Despite growing recognition of their needs, young people in many parts of the world continue to be marginalized and ignored. Their status as a group experiencing disproportionate levels of poverty and unemployment is frequently overlooked. As a result, the young are three times more likely than adults to lack jobs. In fact, while they constitute one fourth of the world's labour force, young people make up almost half of its unemployed.

It is high time that we stopped viewing our young people as part of the problem and started cultivating their promise and potential. On this International Youth Day, let us all resolve to invest in and protect our most valuable resource, and give young men and women a fair and full stake in our society, and in its success.