

Report on
World Youth Conferences
in Portugal
August 1998

Lisbon Declaration
Braga Youth Action Plan

Prepared by
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Introduction

In August 1998 a World Conference concerning young people was hosted by the Portuguese Government under the auspice of United Nations. This World Conference for Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon, Portugal, 7-12 August, 1998, was the first of its kind and of great importance for the enhancement of young people's concerns in the world today. Issues concerning young people were put on the world agenda by 140 countries, with participation of 100 ministers responsible for youth.

In connection with the Lisbon conference a World Youth Forum of the United Nations Systems was held in Braga, Portugal, 2-7 August, 1998, attended by about 500 delegates from youth and student movements and organisations.

The result of the two meetings was the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes. The Lisbon Declaration on Youth is as important as the Cairo and Beijing documents. It will therefore be tabled at the Fifty-third session of the General Assembly for official adoption.

This Sida Document contains a Sida Report on the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, 2-7 August, 1998, Braga, Portugal and the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, 7-12 August, 1998, Lisbon, Portugal. It also contains the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth; and the Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted at the Third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System.

With this Document Sida wishes to highlight the Lisbon Declaration in order to further the cause of young people in the world. Young people are the future and should not be seen as a problem but as an integral part of the solution to world peace, prosperity and well-being.

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1. Summary

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has posited youth as one of their major target groups in their work in general and on sexual and reproductive health and rights in particular. In order to advocate for youth concerns as well as strengthen and develop partnerships with Governments, United Nations agencies and youth-serving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a senior officer from the Health Division, Ms. Anna Runeborg, and a consultant, Ms. Wanjiku Kaime-Atterhög, represented Sida at these two important meetings.

The third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System was held by the United Nations in partnership with the Portuguese National Youth Council in Braga, Portugal, from 2 to 7 August 1998. About 500 delegates from youth and student movements and organizations from all around the world as well as representatives of the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations attended the Forum. The following week, from 8 to 12 August 1998, representatives of 140 nations, among them more than 100 youth ministers, met in Lisbon at the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth convened by the Portuguese Government in collaboration with the United Nations.

Both the World Youth Forum and the Ministerial Conference were concerned with the review, appraisal and implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, on the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year. The World Programme of Action for youth, *inter alia*, urges governments to formulate and adopt an integrated national youth policy, strengthen national coordinating mechanisms for and with youth, and undertake national youth service programmes. It especially calls for both the Ministerial Conference and the World Youth Forum to be held to reflect the view of governmental ministers responsible for youth and of young people and youth non-governmental organizations in this process.

At the close of the Youth Forum and Ministerial Conference, delegates adopted the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes respectively. The Action Plan, containing specific recommendations, is a blueprint for action to empower young people to participate in human development. By adopting the Declaration, Governments agreed to develop cross-sectoral national youth policies and operational programmes in such areas as youth education, employment, health and drug abuse.

The adoption of the Lisbon Declaration is a capping event of more than a decade-long effort to raise youth policy to a level of prominence on both the national and international agendas and will strengthen and accelerate the development of national and global actions in support of young people. It is therefore important that Sida intensifies its support of youth activities at the international, regional, sub-regional and national levels. In line with the goals of the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Lisbon Declaration, Sida should support the formulation of cross-sectoral, comprehensive youth policies and operational programmes in 'programme countries'. In particular, the Health Division of Sida could consider serving as a flagship donor in an upcoming regional project to be implemented by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

and the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). The project will focus on integrated approaches to promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention.

2. Purpose of Sida Health Division's Participation at Both Meetings

Sida's interest lies in putting youth concerns in a broader perspective. The purpose of Sida Health Division's participation was to particularly ensure that health problems and needs of young people including sexual and reproductive health and rights were discussed and incorporated in the deliberations of the World Youth Forum and the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth. Ms. Anna Runeborg, a senior Programme Officer at the Health Division of Sida, attended the Ministerial Conference and Ms. Wanjiku Kaime-Atterhög, a Sida consultant, attended both meetings.¹ In both meetings, Sida was concerned to ensure that there was a focus on those youth who are still "children" in terms of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and on young people who are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged because of individual factors, such as age, sex, ethnic origin, disability or because they are living in urban poverty, conflict settings or other situations that deprive them of family and community care and support.

Both meetings were an opportunity to review the follow-up to a number of recent International Conferences that have included a focus on young people's health and development. The meetings gave Sida the opportunity to advocate for youth concerns, including adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to develop and expand the contacts and working relations with youth, youth-related non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies, especially new partners. Both the Forum and the Conference gave Sida a chance to identify practical and effective interventions that will contribute to implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and Beyond.

3. Background

Youth, as a distinct social group, are defined by the United Nations as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years.² According to that definition, youth constitute approximately one fifth of the population - more than 1 billion people. The majority of them live in developing countries, striving to be healthy, educated and active participants in their communities. Employment, health and education are thus immediate key issues in the lives of all youth. Youth are also vulnerable to

¹ Ms. Kaime-Atterhög briefed Ms. Runeborg on the outcome of the Braga World Youth Forum on the first day of the Ministerial Conference, thereby linking the two meetings. For follow-up purposes, it was decided that the consultant should also attend the Conference.

² "Youth" is defined by the United Nations as 15 to 24 years. The World Health Organization defines "adolescence" as the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years, and the term "young people" is used to refer to the composite age group 10 to 24 years. A "child" according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is defined as every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

global and regional trends - many young people live in poverty, in conflict situations, with a deteriorating environment, face violations of their human rights, or are excluded and marginalised due to, for example, unemployment, drugs or crime.

Issues affecting this group received worldwide attention in 1995 with the commemoration by the international community of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year: Participation, Development and Peace (1985). A special session of the United Nations General Assembly convened in 1995 to review issues affecting youth. In concluding its deliberations on the subject, the General Assembly in December 1995 adopted the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. The Programme of Action recommends priority action to improve the situation and participation of young people in 10 areas - education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women and the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision making. The World Programme of Action contains proposals for action in each of these 10 priority areas and also identifies the possible actors, including governments, non-governmental organizations and international institutions. This important document was the foundation of all the discussions at the Forum³ and Conference.

Complementary to the World Programme of Action was the *Draft Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes*, which was to be finalised and adopted in Lisbon.⁴ According to the Draft Declaration, Governments were not only to agree to foster efforts to reach the goals of the World Programme of Action, they were also to pledge to include young people in charting national youth policy. Throughout the Draft Declaration, terms are outlined by which governments pledge themselves to empower young people and groups working on their behalf, to enhance cooperation on youth-related policy at all levels, to improve information gathering and analysis, to continue promoting equality between young women and young men, and to provide the means to ensure the effectiveness of their actions, including adequate financial resources.

In developing their national policies, governments were to agree to introduce measurable time-bound goals and indicators to allow a common basis for evaluating the effectiveness of youth programmes. While committing themselves to greater action in such areas as youth education, employment, health and drug abuse, governments were to urge relevant United Nations bodies and other inter-governmental organizations to provide greater support to national youth policies and programmes.

³The Programme of Action suggests that the Youth Forum of the United Nations System and youth ministers responsible for youth could contribute to its implementation in paragraph 125 and 118 respectively.

⁴The first Draft Declaration was prepared by the Government of Portugal and the final Draft Declaration, which was the starting point for the deliberations at the Conference, reflected agreement reached on most of the text during four informal sessions of the international consultations for the Conference. At the close of the fourth session held in New York in mid July, several small segments of the text remained under contention and a small number of amendments to the overall text remained pending.

4. Organization of the Forum and Conference

4.1. World Youth Forum

The United Nations in partnership with the Portuguese National Youth Council held the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System in Braga, Portugal, from 2 to 7 August 1998.⁵ Around 500 delegates from youth and student movements and organizations around the world met with representatives of the United Nations System and other inter-governmental organizations.⁶ The overall theme of the Forum was Youth Participation for Development, with a focus on youth policies, youth participation and youth and human rights.

The objectives of the Forum were to:

- (1) Provide a forum to strengthen youth efforts and enhance youth involvement in the decision-making processes of the United Nations system and to develop joint youth policies, projects and programmes;
- (2) Establish more effective channels of communication and modes of cooperation between and among youth and youth-serving organizations, youth-related organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and other youth-related intergovernmental organizations; and
- (3) Promote the implementation and monitoring of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and other policies and programmes related to youth based on the objectives and priority areas of these policies and programmes and the interests of young people.

In the short term, the World Youth Forum was expected to contribute to elevate the concerns of young women and men on the political agenda. In addition, the Forum aimed to develop three recommendations from each of the ten working groups of the Forum, which put together, would form the Braga Youth Action Plan to be adopted in the plenary at the end of the Forum.

The Action Plan was to be presented to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth as well as the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-third session, beginning this month. In order to follow up on major developments after the Forum, it is planned that training seminars and youth consultations at the regional and sub-regional levels will be convened in cooperation between the United Nations system, inter-governmental organizations and relevant youth organizations.

The recommendations from the previous sessions of the World Youth Forum⁷ were an important point of departure for the discussions in Braga. At the second session

⁵ Preparations for the World Youth Forum were undertaken at several levels and with a spirit of co-management. Regional preparatory meetings organized by United Nations agencies in collaboration with regional youth NGOs and the youth were held in Cairo, Egypt; Dakar, Senegal; Vilnius, Lithuania; Bangkok, Thailand; and Santiago, Chile to plan for the Forum. In addition, an Advisory Planning Committee, open to all interested regional and international youth organizations provided input regarding the preparations of the Forum. A Preparatory Team, composed of youth focal points in the United Nations System, other inter-governmental organizations and major regional and international non-governmental youth organizations, was responsible for the overall planning and coordination of the Forum.

⁶ Ms. Wanjiku Kaime-Atterhög attended the Forum as a Sida consultant.

⁷ The first session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System was held in Vienna, Austria in 1991, and the second session took place in 1996, also in Vienna.

of the Forum, twelve working groups focused on the different chapters of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Building on the results from Vienna, the third session of the Forum aimed to make the links between the different chapters, by a focus on mechanisms and structures, which have an impact on the situation of young people. Therefore, the Forum was organized with working groups in three cluster areas as follows:

Cluster Area One: Youth policies.

Working Groups: (a) Integrated Cross-Sectoral Youth Policies; (b) Youth NGO Cooperation at the National Level; and (c) Youth, Poverty Eradication and Development.

Cluster Area Two: Youth participation.

Working Groups: (a) Participation of ALL Young People; (b) Youth Organizations and the United Nations System; (c) Education for the 21st Century; (d) Youth Employment for Social Development; and (e) Youth, Health and Development.

Cluster Area Three: Youth and human rights.

Working Groups: (a) The Role of Youth in the Promotion of Human Rights; and (b) Youth Rights Charter and a Special Rapporteur on Youth Rights.

Each working group was guided by a background document on the subject prepared by various United Nations agencies.⁸ The detailed programme of each working group was prepared jointly by representatives from the United Nations System, other inter-governmental organizations and youth organizations. The United Nations and the Portuguese National Council jointly took responsibility for finalising the programme and ensuring that the technical arrangements were suitable. The working groups addressed several sectoral issues - but the common denominator was a focus on best practices, tools for action and concrete plans for future cooperation between youth organizations and the United Nations systems. Each working group developed three key recommendations for inclusion in the Braga Youth Action Plan as well as a strategy of how to implement and follow-up those three recommendations. That strategy was to be very specific and contain examples of indicators of success, targets and deadlines as well as a division of responsibilities.

4.2. First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth

The first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth was held from 8 to 12 August in Lisbon and brought together representatives of 140 nations among them, more than 100 youth ministers. Ms. Anna Runeborg attended the Conference as a Sida representative and Ms. Wanjiku Kaime-Atterhög as a Sida consultant. The Conference, which had been welcomed by the fifty-second session of the General Assembly⁹, was convened by the Portuguese Government in

⁸ The background document on youth, health and development was prepared jointly by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNAIDS. A separate document on drug abuse was prepared by UNDCP. Both documents were distributed at the Forum and the Ministerial Conference.

⁹ See document A/RES/52/83.

cooperation with the United Nations.¹⁰ The Conference provided a rare opportunity for Governments, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other partners to focus on an age group of growing importance to nations and communities in all regions of the world. It provided an arena for sharing successful experiences, and advancing the consensus about the priority activities that are necessary for protecting young people's rights. The realisation of their rights to health, education, employment and drug abuse prevention are fundamental to maximising young peoples ability to contribute to the development of communities that surround them.

The Conference focused on the implementation of the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The main topics were national policies of an inter-sectoral nature; the relevance of the United Nations International Youth Year themes of participation, development and peace; and social development and major priority issues for action, including education, employment, health and drug and substance abuse. More specifically, the objectives of the Conference were to:

- (1) Assess national youth policies for further implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;
- (2) Appraise progress since the 1985 International Youth Year, as well as the relevance of its themes of participation, development and peace; and
- (3) Review the national youth situation, focusing on four priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth, namely, education, employment, and health and drug abuse.

The most visible goal for Delegates to the World Conference was to finalise and then adopt, on the last day of the Conference, the Lisbon Declaration by which their Governments would commit themselves to strengthening policies to benefit youth. States would agree to enhance youth participation in all spheres of society, ensure the right to development of all young people, strengthen the role of youth in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, promote education, full employment and health, and address drug abuse. While each government would agree, with the Declaration's adoption, to move towards achieving international goals, national administrations would be urged to tailor their policies to the particular priorities, realities, limitations and cultural conditions in their countries.

Three sessions took place simultaneously during the Conference: (a) Main Committee session; (b) Plenary session; and (c) Working Group session.

The **Main Committee** of the Conference was tasked with incorporating relevant aspects of deliberations in Lisbon into the text of the Draft Lisbon Declaration and finalisation of the proclamation to be adopted as the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes.

During the **Plenary session**, a general exchange of views on the implementation of the World Programme of Action incorporated the three themes of the Conference, participation, development and peace. In addition to statements

¹⁰ The conference, in addition to being the first international meeting of ministers of youth, was the first conference to be held by a Member State in cooperation with the United Nations. Under this new cost-saving measure, all expenses were borne entirely by the Government of Portugal.

made by government representatives, heads of United Nations agencies had the opportunity to report on efforts and present views on youth matters, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations aligned with young people.

Three **Working Groups**, opened to all participants, were established to deliberate on matters related to the Conference themes in a more informal fashion. The contributions of the Working Groups were summarised in a report prepared by the Chairman at the end of each day. The summaries of the three Working Groups were then presented to the Conference's Main Committee, which finalised its recommendations on the final day of the Conference and presented them to the Conference Plenary for consideration and approval.

5. Summary of the Forum and Conference Deliberations

The summary of the Forum and Conference deliberations in this section follows the main agenda items in the Programmes.

5.1. World Youth Forum

Regional meetings were held on the first day of the Forum¹¹ and provided an opportunity to share information about youth work in each region and to brief each other on the regional preparatory meetings for the Forum.¹²

The Sida consultant attended the African regional meeting, as she is familiar with the Asia and Pacific situation. About 41 persons from 15 African countries as well as representatives of United Nations and intergovernmental organizations attended the meeting. After brief introductions of participants, representatives from regional youth networks presented their work. Participants were thereafter briefed by Mr. Abdoulaye Diallo of the Senegalese National Youth Council on the organization and outcome of the preparatory meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, from 23 - 27 March 1998, with the support of UNESCO.

The Dakar meeting was organized jointly by the Senegalese Youth National Council, the Panafrikan Youth Movement and the African Youth Network. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the Organization for African Unity, CONFEJES and the Youth Unit of the United Nations. At the close of that meeting, the youth of Africa adopted a Plan of Action for 1998-2006 and a Declaration. The areas of priority activities that were identified in Dakar were organized into hierarchy by taking into account the specific African context as follows: (a) the creation of a space for lasting peace and democracy; (b) the fight against poverty; (c) education, training and employment; (d) health in general and reproductive health in particular; (e) prevention of drug addic-

¹¹ Regional meetings were also scheduled to take place in the afternoon of the last day of the Forum to discuss concrete plans of how to implement the Braga Youth Action Plan in each region and how regional youth NGO cooperation could be strengthened. The Sida consultant left for Lisbon after the official closing ceremony but a colleague from UN-ESCAP informed her that the regional meetings did not materialise as participants dispersed soon after the closing ceremony.

¹² The documents from Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific were distributed as official documents at the Forum, while the African report was distributed at the Forum only after requests were made by participants at the regional meeting and the working group on youth, health and development.

tion and STDs/AIDS; (f) the management of the environment and living space; and (g) the responsibility of the youth and their access to monitoring structure.

The Dakar Plan of Action and the Declaration were distributed to the participants at the regional meeting in Braga for consideration. Participants debated on their importance and decided that Senegal should present the Dakar Declaration during the plenary session the following day, when the regional groups were to report on process and outcome of the preparatory regional meetings.

The representative of the Youth Commonwealth Programme mentioned that his organization was willing to support the Action Plan once this had been translated into practical projects. Other participants voiced concern over the poor participation of countries in general and youth organizations in particular at the Dakar meeting. Only 13 countries had attended that meeting. Representatives of youth organizations noted that they had not been contacted in time and could therefore not make arrangements to attend the meeting. There was general discontent about information dissemination from United Nations agencies. Some participants were of the opinion that the meeting would have been more successful had UNFPA also participated.

At the conclusion of the African regional meeting in Braga,¹³ participants were asked to serve as “ambassadors” in their respective working groups highlighting the priority areas identified in Dakar.

On the first plenary of the Forum, opening statements were delivered by Mr. John Langmore, Director, United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development; Dr. Mesquita Machado, President of the Town Hall of Braga; Mr. Marcos Andrade, Acting President, Portuguese National Youth Council; and Mr. Hirofumi Ando, Deputy Executive Director and Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations Population Fund.¹⁴

A roundtable discussion on Youth Participation for Human Development was also held. Mr. William D. Angel, Officer-in-Charge, United Nations Youth Unit, Division for Social Policy and Development provided the background of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system. Mr. Maxwell Haywood, Social Affairs Officer, United Nations Youth Unit, gave an introductory statement on youth participation for human development which was followed by presentations by panelists who spoke on the key priority areas of the Youth Programme for Action - youth participation, national youth policy, education, employment and health.

An exhibition of the work of youth organizations, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations was also organized.

¹³The meeting ended at 20.00 hours. Most of the other regional groups were ready by 18.00 hours. The reason why the African group took much longer could be because the meeting started one-and-a-half hours behind schedule as registration of participants was not completed by the time the meeting was to convene, the Dakar report was not included in the official information folder and copies had to be made for the participants, and all discussions had to be conducted in two languages - French and English.

¹⁴The last speaker from UNFPA was the only one who said something substantial. He mentioned that UNFPA addressed issues related to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and young people as well as other sensitive issues related to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. He stressed the importance of listening to young people and ensuring their full participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of interventions meant for them.

Working Groups

The most important part of the Forum was the discussions in the ten working groups that met on the entire third day and mornings of the fourth and fifth days of the Forum. Participants were placed in a working group of their choice. Each group was facilitated by an international youth organization, with input from other youth organizations as well as from relevant United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations.¹⁵ In most working groups there was some kind of keynote presentation, enabling participants to start discussions on common ground. After the first session, most working groups continued their exchange in smaller groups to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to actively contribute. Each working group was expected to develop three key recommendations for the Braga Youth Action Plan as well as develop a strategy for the implementation and follow-up of those recommendations. The strategy was to be specific and contain a division of responsibilities. Each working group presented a preliminary draft of the recommendations at the mid-week plenary for feedback from other groups. The working groups then reconvened to incorporate the contributions from the plenary and finalise the recommendations. All thirty recommendations were thereafter submitted to the drafting committee¹⁶, which was tasked with preparing the Braga Youth Action Plan.

The Sida consultant participated in the working group on youth, health and development. Five representatives of United Nations agencies active in the area of health and three representatives of international youth organizations facilitated the group. The keynote address was given by the representative of WHO and was based on the background document on youth, health and development, prepared for the Forum by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNAIDS. Ms. Kaime-Atterhög, the Sida consultant, then presented the outcome of the regional preparatory meetings held in Dakar, Bangkok and Santiago, focusing on the health problems of the youth in each region and the recommendations from each meeting.

The youth were divided into small groups and asked to brainstorm on the major *interventions that were available* for young people's health and development in their respective countries. The facilitators of the groups wrote these interventions on yellow VIPP cards (visualising in participatory planning). Once the youth had identified current interventions, they were then asked to identify *what interventions were still needed* for young people's health and development. These areas were recorded on pink VIPP cards. These cards were sorted and grouped by the facilitators and discussed in plenary. Three major areas where interventions were still needed emerged, namely, policies and legislation, services and IEC (information, education and communication).

¹⁵ A person from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies co-ordinated the preparations for the working group on youth, health and development with input from WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNAIDS. However, she was unable to attend the Forum due to illness. The organizers of the Forum thus left the final preparations for the working group very much in the hands of the four United Nations agencies that are active in this area. They did not want to be responsible for selecting one of the four United Nations agencies as the lead organization for the working group. The Sida consultant was informed by the organizers of the Forum that there had been disagreements between WHO and UNFPA, which may explain why UNFPA did not join the team of facilitators for the working group. The main facilitators were representatives of WHO, UNICEF and UNAIDS. On the day before the working group convened, four additional persons from UNDCP, UN-ESCAP (represented by the Sida consultant), YWCA, Bahai Students Movement and the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations joined the United Nations team.

¹⁶ The drafting committee was comprised of 15 persons, one representative from each regional group and working group. A representative from the organizers of the Forum was also available to assist the drafting committee.

Three groups were formed according to these major intervention areas identified to further discuss the kind of interventions that were successful and those that were not and the reasons for this. This was followed by a discussion of what needed to be done and the development of recommendations for inclusion in the Braga Youth Action Plan. The Sida consultant facilitated the sub-group on policies and legislation, together with the representative of UNDCP.¹⁷

Closing Session

On the last day of the Forum, in the closing plenary, the Braga Youth Action Plan was finalised and adopted.¹⁸ This session was chaired by Mr. Seth Ofori-Ohene, representative of the All Africa Students Union in Ghana and Lisa Pelling, representative of the International Union of Socialist Youth who also presented the Action Plan to the Ministers in Lisbon. The Action Plan contains specific recommendations on how Governments in collaboration with United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, youth organizations and young people themselves can enhance youth participation in development and, in so doing, take an active part in charting the path to a better future.

To achieve real and sustainable solutions to the injustice and exclusion facing young people, the Action Plan, in its introduction, calls on the international community, the private sector and especially governments to provide young people with adequate financial resources to realise their full potential. It states that youth should participate in political decision-making on all levels, and young people must be enabled to organize themselves in youth NGOs, student unions, trade unions, political parties and in the creation of mass media in order to fully participate in political, economic, social and cultural life.

Stating that young people must be seen as actors in today's society who have direct stakes in the development process, the Action Plan specifies goals and actions to be taken on youth policies, participation and human rights. Its thirty recommendations include those concerning integrated cross-sectoral policies; youth NGO cooperation at the national level; youth, poverty eradication and development; education for the twenty-first century; youth employment for social development; youth, health and development; the role of youth in the promotion of human rights; and a special rapporteur on youth rights.

Recognising the responsibility of young people to take upon themselves efforts to implement the Braga Plan, participants offered the international community the service of youth at the national, regional and international levels.

¹⁷ A detailed report of the working group on youth, health and development, was prepared by the youth from each of the three sub-groups and finalised by the representatives of WHO, UNICEF and UNAIDS.

¹⁸ The drafting committee had prepared the final draft based on the introductory text and thirty recommendations from the working groups. They had altered the text of some of the recommendations, which displeased the youth that had worked tirelessly on the original text during the working group sessions. The youth wanted to know who had the final word – the youth or the drafting committee. In the end, the youth did have their way and it was agreed that the original text from the working groups should be maintained. A Ghanaian youth representative who had participated in the working group on youth, health and development wanted to be assured that the strategies from her group would be appended to the final document. The Braga Youth Action Plan is contained in Annex II.

At the concluding meeting, Secretary-General Kofi Annan ¹⁹ told the Forum participants, that their efforts showed what it meant to intervene to change the world for the better. He called on young people to act on their ideals and to explore new frontiers where older, wiser, more cautious people might not. When he was presented with the Braga Action Plan, he told the youth that courage did not mean lack of fear, it meant, “doing things in spite of your fear”. He advised the youth to confront their fears and to take risks for what they believed in because that is the only time they would find out what they were capable of doing. He continued to say that the youth would discover that even though their opponents may try to hurt them, they could never break them and that they should therefore go out and make a difference to the world.

President Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio of Portugal, in his closing remarks, said that young people must have their own voice, their own experience, their own identity, and they must be allowed to hold their own destiny in their own hands. To that end, the environment must be created to allow all young people to fulfil their potential.

5.2. First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth

At the first plenary meeting, on 8 August 1998, the President of the Portuguese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Sampaio and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, addressed the Conference. The President said that, while there was a need to “think globally, act locally”, because concerted global action was required to address the needs of youth today. He urged those responsible for youth policies to take up the challenge presented by the many recommendations on youth participation, contained in the Braga Youth Action Plan. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, told the youth ministers that they were charged with preparing young people and future leaders for the challenges of the next century. “You have a mission to open up for them a maximum of perspectives and possibilities, for it is young people’s hope and energy, their enthusiasm and willingness to experiment, that makes society move forward”, he said. A society that cuts itself off from its youth had severed its lifeline, the Secretary-General said. He expressed the hope that exchanges in Lisbon would inspire the ministers to new and imaginative approaches. “You are the guardians of that lifeline...nurture it, develop it, and give it strength”, he added.

Following the election as Conference President, the Deputy Minister to the Prime Minister of Portugal, Jose Socrates, said social policy must focus on issues of importance to the world’s youth, such as environmental protection and efforts to combat drug abuse. That social policy should transcend national interests and overcome selfishness.

Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres, also addressing the Conference said youth policies must focus on the objective of creating the conditions for full citizenship for young people that allowed them to take part in all aspects of political and social life. The voices of young people must be heard, and they must be supported in expressing the values relevant to their lives at the global level.

¹⁹ As soon as the Secretary-General entered the hall and had barely made his way to his seat, the youth swarmed onto the stage to take photographs of him! When he addressed the Forum, his speech met with loud applause!

The Conference also adopted its agenda and rules of procedure. It also adopted its organization of work, including the establishment of its Main Committee and its three working groups. Her Excellency Ms. Filomena Martins, Director-General of Support, Research and Planning Office of the Secretary of State of Youth Affairs of Portugal was elected as Vice President *ex-officio* of the Conference, His Excellency the Honourable Mr. J.K. Marimoi, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, National Heritage, Culture and Social Services of Kenya was elected Rapporteur-General and Her Excellency Ms. Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Secretary of State for Children, Youth, Human Resources Development of Canada was elected Chairperson of the Main Committee. In addition, 27 Vice-Presidents of the Conference were elected from regional groups.²⁰

Presentation of the Outcome of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System

Seth Ofori-Ohene, representative of the All Africa Students Union in Ghana and Lisa Pelling, representative of the International Union of Socialist Youth presented the Braga Youth Action Plan to the Ministers for consideration. In his presentation, Ofori-Ohene said youth from all over the world had adopted the Action Plan in a spirit of North-South dialogue. It contained recommendations on measures to correct the many economic and social injustices existing today. Ms. Pelling joined in presenting the Action Plan. She invited ministers at the Conference to join the young people of the world in the work that they must undertake together. The young worldwide were prepared to help the international community in efforts to address problems facing them. She urged the ministers to "listen to our voices calling you to action".

Plenary Sessions

Presentations and discussions during the session revolved around three themes. Firstly, using national efforts already taken to fulfil the 1995 World Programme of Action as a benchmark, Governments considered what national policies were effective and should continue, and what additional national action was required. Secondly, progress since the 1985 International Youth Year was appraised, as well as the current relevance of the International Youth Year's major themes of participation, development and peace. Thirdly, representatives discussed social development and work to determine actions related to major priority issues, namely, education, employment, health and drug abuse. To assist Government representatives in their review of youth social development within the context of the above mentioned areas of priority action, the United Nations agencies active in these areas had prepared reports with recommendations for action.

Heads of United Nations agencies, representatives of NGOs and young people themselves complemented the statements made by Government representatives with reports on their efforts to implement the Programme of Action and views on youth matters. In relation to health, two presentations that can be mentioned here are that made by the Head of UNFPA and the one delivered by a youth delegate.²¹

²⁰ The following groups were elected. From the African States: Algeria, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and South Africa; From the Asian States: China, Fiji, Iran, Pakistan, Philippines and Syria; From the Eastern European States: Azerbaijan, Czech Republic and Romania; From the Latin American and Caribbean States: Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay; and from the Western European States: Andorra, Australia, Greece, Luxemburg, Sweden and the United States.

²¹ The Sida consultant worked very closely with the young people in preparing the statement.

Dr. Nafis Sadik, the Executive Director of UNFPA told the Ministers that while adolescent reproductive health, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among young people, and sexual violence had been largely neglected by the international community, the framework for action was already in place. The Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) had clearly stressed the importance of providing youth access to information and services on sexual and reproductive health, such as the prevention of early pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. The Draft Lisbon Declaration reinforced that consensus. Reproductive health, she noted, was universally accepted as a human right. The Lisbon Conference was making excellent progress in extending that right to adolescents, she added.

A youth delegate from the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts presented the three Braga recommendations from the working group on youth, health and development. She asked the Ministers to not only listen but to go a step further and implement them. She further noted that although some countries had made appreciable progress in implementing the recommendations from the two previous World Youth Fora, there was room for better implementation. "To those who have not responded to the voices of young people, THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW", she added. She concluded by telling the ministers that the young people wished to see visible progress in the implementation of the three recommendations by the time they gathered again at the fourth session of the World Youth Forum.

The Working Groups

The working groups met for three days and discussions focused on the following themes:

- Day one: National youth policies of an inter-sectoral nature;
- Day two: Relevance of the themes of the 1985 International Youth Year-participation, development and peace; and
- Day three: Social development and major priority issues for action, namely, education, employment, health and drug abuse.

The informal discussions that took place were summarised in a report prepared by the Chairman and which was presented to the Main Committee on the final day for incorporation into the recommendations to the plenary. The working groups on the first and second day took place without any disagreements and even adjourned early as the group ran out of things to discuss. The Working Group on the third day touched on the very sensitive issue of sexual and reproductive health and discussions were heated, almost confrontational between mainly the young people from the working group on youth health and development at the Braga World Youth Forum and the conservatives, including the Holy See, that advocated for societies with strong moral foundations that respect marriage.

Despite the fact that the youth mentioned the need for sexual and reproductive health services severally during the discussions, this was omitted in the summary submitted to the Main Committee on the last day of the Conference. The youth had even made an effort to provide the chairman with a copy of the recommendations, which they wished to have included in the report but this had been ignored. The Sida consultant was informed that the initial summary of the working

group discussions was prepared by the United Nations Youth Unit and included the Braga recommendations on health. However, these were deleted by the chairman of the working group, who was from Andorra and a close ally of the Holy See.

Main Committee sessions

As mentioned earlier, the main task of the Main Committee was to finalise the proclamation to be adopted as the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes at the close of the Conference.

The delegates discussed at length various aspects of the text that remained under contention, for example, paragraph 69 on reproductive health. The Holy See wanted the phrase “as well as access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable legal methods of family planning of their choice” to be deleted because it was open to misinterpretations that could lead to recognition of abortion in general or “emergency abortion” in particular, being used as methods of family planning. After two days of so called ‘informal informal’ meetings called for by the Holy See to discuss paragraph 69, the Main Committee decided to maintain the old text.

The Main Committee also considered additional proposals submitted by Canada, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, United States of America, Holy See and UNICEF which were presented, but not discussed, during the last round of informal consultations in July. Both United States of America and UNICEF had proposed separate paragraphs on tobacco to be inserted under the health and substance abuse sections. During the Main Committee session, UNICEF and United States of America worked together in ‘informal informal’ meetings, and came up with a joint paragraph on tobacco to be inserted under the health section. This was accepted by the Main Committee and included in the Draft Lisbon Declaration.

Finally, the Main Committee considered the summaries and recommendations from the three Working Groups. There were strong objections from the Delegates from Sweden and a number of African States to the omission of sexual and reproductive health in the report of the third Working Group.²² The chairman of that group assured the delegates that he would make the necessary changes and incorporate these issues into the document. The youth and the delegates of African States that had raised objections offered to assist him in doing so. Two representatives of the conservative group forced their way to where the newly formed group was meeting to discuss the revisions to be made, which made the discussions confrontational.²³ After about 20 minutes of heated exchanges between the two groups, the chairman bowed to the pressure from the African Gov-

²² The youth had come running to Ms. Anna Runeborg and the Sida consultant as soon as the two arrived at the Conference Centre that morning and informed them what had taken place. The Main Committee session had already started and fast action had to be taken. Ms. Anna Runeborg asked the Sida consultant to work with the youth on a statement that would be delivered by them at the Main Committee Session while Ms. Runeborg rushed to brief the Delegates from Sweden and Botswana of what had transpired at the Working Group the previous day and the obvious omission in the summary submitted to the Main Committee. Thus it was Ms. Anna Runeborg who was behind that strong voice of objection from participating States!

²³ The representative of the conservative group said that WHO had formulated the three recommendations on youth, health and development in the Braga Youth Action Plan. She insisted that the youth in the working group had all agreed on one recommendation which was focused on the family but the representatives of United Nations agencies, and in particular WHO, refused to accept their recommendation. It is not certain what her source of information and motive was, since she had NOT even participated in the working group on health in Braga! What she had not counted on was that the very people who had developed the recommendations, she claimed originated from WHO, were right there to defend them! The youth also prepared to respond in plenary should the matter be raised for discussion during the closing session.

ernment and youth delegates and agreed to insert sexual and reproductive health in both the main body of the summary as well as in the recommendations. Ms. Anna Runeborg of Sida managed to get a copy of the revisions from the chairman of the Working Group, and it was noticed that he had not specifically mentioned reproductive health services under the recommendation on health services as the group had agreed. The youth and the delegate from Botswana had proposed that the recommendation be phrased thus: "The provision of youth friendly services, including reproductive health and counseling, ..." But the chairman had written the following: "Provision of youth-friendly health services as referred to in the Braga Youth Action Plan", which did not specify that reproductive health services should also be included. This obviously served the purposes of the Holy See rather than the wishes of the youth of Braga.

The Final Plenary Session

The Draft Lisbon Declaration was finalised and presented to the Plenary.²⁴ It was adopted by acclamation by the youth ministers and representatives of 146 States attending the Conference. Speaking following the adoption of the Lisbon Declaration, the representatives of the Holy See and Guatemala said that their delegations had some serious concerns regarding the Declaration as there was no mention of the vital role of parents in regard to their prior rights and duties and responsibilities for the guidance and education of their children. For that reason, these States gave their partial consent to the document. The representative of Iran said his delegation had joined the consensus on the Declaration with the understanding that policies and programmes for its implementation were to be consistent with the cultural and religious values of the countries concerned.

In other action, the Conference proposed the proclamation of 12 August as an international youth day. The Conference took that action through the adoption of a draft resolution, following an oral amendment to change the date in the draft text from 8 August to 12 August. The acceptance of 12 August came after interventions by the representatives of Mali and Botswana, who suggested that the closing date of the Conference be marked with the commemoration of the International Youth Day. The Conference also considered a draft resolution on the establishment of networks and mechanisms for youth follow-up. The representatives of Germany and the United States²⁵ voiced objections to the draft, including the late introduction of the text and the presentation of a topic which, they said, should be considered at the United Nations. Based on the suggestion of the Conference President, the draft text was withdrawn, with the understanding that it could be presented to the United Nations General Assembly when it convened its session in New York in September 1998.

²⁴ The Lisbon Declaration submitted by the Main Committee and as adopted in the Final Plenary is contained in Annex I.

²⁵ As the majority of those belonging to the conservative group opposed to sexual and reproductive health were Americans, the youth suddenly became very attentive when the delegate from USA was delivering her speech! After this, and very spontaneously, the youth came up with the idea that they too wished to deliver a very brief statement to thank the Government of Portugal for hosting the Conference. This was however not possible because by the time they had received permission to deliver their statement from the organizers, the Conference was coming to a close.

6. Contribution of Sida Consultant

The consultant's contribution to the World Youth Forum and the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth centred on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual abuse and exploitation and youth participation. At the African regional meeting in Braga, for example, the consultant informed the participants that HIV/AIDS is not the only consequence of unprotected sex. Young people who engage in sexual activities also risk getting various STDs and for girls, there is the added risk of becoming pregnant and undergoing the associated problems of motherhood and abortion. The consultant also highlighted the issue of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of young people, which in Africa is often a hidden phenomenon. The African delegates welcomed these elaboration and suggestions. One youth delegate from Uganda became very interested in these issues and made the decision to attend the working group on youth, health and development.²⁶

The Sida consultant presented the outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings at the working group on youth, health and development in Braga. This was meant to provide the participants with a background of the key health concerns of youth and recommendations developed by youth to address those problems in the respective regions. The consultant took part in the planning of the working group's programme and facilitated the sub-group on policies and legislation. She also worked very closely with the facilitator of the sub-group on services and assisted her in drawing guidelines for the recommendations of her sub-group.

At the Ministerial Conference in Lisbon, the Sida consultant worked very closely with the young people who had participated in the working group on youth, health and development in Braga as well as with representatives of UNFPA. Together, they were able to push forward the message from Braga and particularly the recommendations from the working group on youth health and development. These were presented in both the Plenary and the Working Group sessions.

Also in Lisbon, the Sida consultant noticed that the Braga Youth Action Plan had been distributed at the Conference without the annex that contained details of when and how the recommendations were going to be implemented including the roles and responsibilities of the various actors. In order to keep the recommendations short, the working group on youth, health and development, which met in Braga, had been forced to move important details of the recommendations to the annex, and it was therefore crucial that the recommendations and the annex were read together. With permission from the United Nations Youth Unit, the consultant printed out the annex, had it copied and distributed as an official document of the Conference.

²⁶ This youth delegate was the one that presented the outcome of the working group on youth, health and development to the Ministers in Lisbon.

7. Recommendations

The adoption of the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Lisbon Declaration will undoubtedly lead to the strengthening and development of national and global actions in support of young people. It is therefore important that Sida intensifies its support of youth activities at the international, regional, sub-regional and national levels. In line with the Braga Youth Action Plan and the Lisbon Declaration, it is recommended that Sida give support to the formulation/review of integrated national youth policies and programmes in general and an integrated national youth health policy and programme in particular within Sida country programmes. Support should also be given to regional initiatives.

Experience from Asia has shown that issues that are sensitive to address in a national context can be successfully addressed at a regional or sub-regional level by a respected United Nations agency. In this regard, the Health Division of Sida should consider supporting a 5-year regional project on "Promoting HRD of Young People through Integrated Approaches to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS Prevention" that is being developed by UN-ESCAP in collaboration with UNFPA and UNDCP. Sida could act as the flagship donor for this project with UNFPA and UNDCP providing financial support for specific components which are related to their areas of work, similar to the existing arrangements for the Sida supported project on elimination of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

The proposed UN-ESCAP project will include the following components: formulation of policy framework based on research and needs assessment; collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable and accurate information on health and behaviour of young people and the kind of services currently available to them; provision of youth-friendly health services that are comprehensive and accessible; development of information, education and communication (IEC) materials; training of young people as peer educators and counsellors; training of social and health professionals on care delivery; and development of an effective monitoring and evaluation system.

UNFPA and UNDCP have both expressed their interest in supporting the project. The project profile was developed by Asian youth and youth serving NGOs and Governments who met in Bangkok, Thailand, in preparation for the World Youth Forum and the First Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth respectively. The integrated approach to addressing the health concerns of young people was further emphasised by the youth and youth-serving NGOs at the World Youth Forum in Braga, Portugal, and the formulation/review of an integrated national youth health policy addressing the major health issues of young people is one of the recommendations in the Braga Plan of Action.

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS
RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION
AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS
AND THE FAMILY

LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Following the successful completion of the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998, I should be grateful if you would have both the texts of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth, Policies and Programmes (annex I), adopted at the conference, and the Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted by the Third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (annex II), held in Braga, circulated as documents of the General Assembly, under item 103 of its provisional agenda.

In this context I would like to express the deep appreciation of the Portuguese Government for the excellent cooperation received from the United Nations system in convening and organizing the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth.

(Signed) Antonio MONTEIRO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Portugal
to the United Nations

* A/53/150.

ANNEX I

Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, held at Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998

We, the Governments participating in the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, convened by the Government of the Portuguese Republic in cooperation with the United Nations, gathered in Lisbon from 8 to 12 August 1998,

Mindful that both the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 52/83 and the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1997/55 have welcomed the offer of the Government of Portugal to host a World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in cooperation with the United Nations and have requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to make the report of the World Conference available to all States Members of the United Nations,

Recalling the achievements of International Youth Year in 1985 and the special sessions of the General Assembly on youth in 1985 and 1995 leading to the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond¹,

Recalling that, as suggested in paragraph 123 of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the General Assembly invited regional and interregional conferences of ministers responsible for youth to intensify cooperation among each other and to consider meeting regularly at the international level under the aegis of the United Nations to provide a global dialogue on youth-related issues,

Taking note of and acknowledging the reports of the second² and third³ sessions of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, held in Vienna 1996 and Braga, Portugal, 1998,

Recalling also that the General Assembly in paragraph 124 of the Programme of Action invited youth-related bodies and organizations of the United Nations system to cooperate with the regional and interregional conferences and that such bodies and organizations have made contributions to those meetings as well as to this World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth,

Recognizing the efforts made by our Governments and societies to respond more effectively to the economic, social, educational, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of young people and their problems,

Recognizing that youth are a positive force in society and have enormous potential for contributing to development and the advancement of societies,

¹ General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex.

² A/52/80-E/1997/14, annex.

³ WCMRY/1998/5.

Recognizing the urgency of creating more and better jobs for young women and young men and the central role of youth employment in facilitating the transition from school to work, thereby reducing crime and drug abuse and ensuring participation and social cohesion,

Noting with concern the situation of youth living in poverty, as well as the special difficulties experienced by different groups of young women and young men such as those involved in or affected by unemployment, drug and substance abuse, violence, including gender-based violence, neglect, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation; youth involved in armed conflicts; refugees and other migrant young people; displaced and parentless youth; young women and young men living with disabilities; indigenous youth; ethnic and cultural youth minorities; young offenders; pregnant adolescents; and other disadvantaged and marginalized young women and young men,

Also noting, with concern, the situation of indigenous youth in many countries, in this International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, and taking into consideration the obstacles they face in regard to quality of life, participation and access to education, services and opportunity,

Taking note of the achievements made since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing 1995, and bearing in mind the constraints and obstacles that still impede the full participation of women in all sectors of society, and particularly that of girls and young women,

Having regard for the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁴ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁵ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,⁵ and having regard also for the progress achieved in the implementation by States parties of other human rights instruments and standards such as the Declaration on the Right to Development,⁶ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁷ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁸

Also having regard for the recommendations arising from major United Nations conferences, including the World Summit for Children, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), and the World Conference on Education for All, which adopted the Declaration on Education for All, the World Food Summit, which adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and Plan of Action, and the International Labour Conference at its 86th session, which adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work,

⁴ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

⁵ General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 41/128, annex.

⁷ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

⁸ General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

Recognizing that the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and actions in favour of young women and young men are the responsibility of each country and should take into account the economic, social and environmental diversity of conditions in each country, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of its people, and in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recognizing that the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened, that it is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support, and that in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist; also recognizing that young women and young men who enter into marriage must do so with the free consent of the intending spouses, and husbands and wives should be equal partners,

We therefore commit ourselves to:

National Youth Policy

1. Ensuring that national youth policy formulation, implementation and follow-up processes are, at appropriate level, accorded commitment from the highest political levels, including the provision of adequate levels of resources;
2. Developing national youth policies and operational programmes, at appropriate levels, to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, taking into account the national priorities, realities and limitations arising from different socio-economic and cultural development contexts;
3. Establishing the necessary policies and programmes by the year 2000 to improve living standards for young women and young men and to permit the effective implementation of national youth policies, of an intersectoral nature, foreseen, among others, in the Programme of Action;
4. Reviewing the situation of youth and their needs and incorporating young people's own assessment of priorities, through their participation in a consultative process, and ensuring that young women and young men actively contribute to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national and local youth policies, programmes and action plans;
5. Developing capacity building through the empowerment of formal and informal coalitions and networks of youth;
6. Strengthening responsible partnerships among all key stakeholders, especially youth networks, non-governmental youth institutions and organizations and other non-governmental organizations also including young women, particularly the girl-child, and young men, their families, governments, international agencies, educational institutions, civil society, the business sector and media in order to create synergies to better address youth potentials and problems both at national and at local levels;
7. Introducing measurable time-bound goals and indicators to allow a common basis for national evaluation of the implementation of the above-mentioned policies;

8. Supporting bilateral, subregional, regional and international exchange of best practices at the national level in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of youth policy, and the provision of appropriate development tools and technical assistance, through the creation of networks;
9. Ensuring the mainstreaming of national youth policy and international development, plans and programmes;

Participation

10. Ensuring and encouraging the active participation of youth in all spheres of society and in decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels and ensuring that the necessary gender-sensitive measures are taken in order to attain equal access of young women and young men and by creating the conditions necessary for the fulfilment of their civic duties;
11. Promoting education, training in democratic processes and the spirit of citizenship and civic responsibility of young women and young men with the view to strengthening and facilitating their commitment to, participation in and full integration into society;
12. Facilitating access by youth to legislative and policy-making bodies, through their representatives, in order to involve them closely in the formulation, execution, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of youth activities and programmes and to ensure their participation in development;
13. Upholding and reinforcing policies that allow independent and democratic forms of associative life, including the elimination of identified obstacles to youth participation and to freedom of association in the work place;
14. Giving higher priority to marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged young women and young men, especially those who are separated from their families and children living and/or working in the streets, with adequate programmes, actions and necessary funding, *inter alia*, in order to provide them with the means and motivation to contribute effectively to their societies;
15. Giving priority to the building of communication channels with youth in order to give them a voice, at the national, regional and international levels, and to give them the information they need to help them prepare for participation and leadership roles;
16. Encouraging youth voluntarism as an important form of youth participation;

Development

17. Ensuring the right to development of all young women and young men;
18. Promoting access of young women and young men to land, credit, technologies and information, thereby enhancing the opportunities and development resources of young people living within rural and remote communities;
19. Ensuring actions to promote equal access to and use of new information technologies by young women and young men once those are a privileged instrument to progressively reduce or eliminate inequalities and foster development;

20. Enhancing the role of youth organizations in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of national development plans and programmes;
21. Establishing or strengthening, as appropriate, a policy to combat poverty and ensuring actions on the alleviation of poverty, and recognizing the needs of young women and young men to adequate housing by ensuring safe, healthy and secure living and environmental and working conditions, including shelter, and to integrate youth concerns into all relevant national and local policies and programmes by supporting the ability of youth to play an active and creative role in the management and development of human settlements so that they can effectively contribute to the improvement of living and environmental conditions not only for themselves but also for their communities and society at large;
22. Encouraging awareness and commitment among young women and young men to sustainable development principles and practices, especially in regard to environmental protection, and supporting the actions of youth in promoting those principles in cooperation between countries, based on their mutual needs and common interests;
23. Recalling that the family unit has a vital role to play in the integration of youth into society by acting as an agent of transition, a facilitator of learning and education, a provider of emotional and economic support, a transmitter of values and a contributor to the formation and development of young women and young men as responsible adults; specific programmes and mechanisms should be created or reinforced within an integrated perspective of families;
24. Recognizing the need for a gender-balanced perspective in line with the concerns identified by the Economic and Social Council during the operational activities for development segment of its 1998 substantive session;
25. Encouraging bilateral, regional and international cooperation to create an enabling environment at the national and international levels in order to ensure the full participation of young women and young men in economic and social development;
26. Discouraging the adoption of and refraining from any unilateral measure, not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular young women and young men, that hinders their well-being and that creates obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights;
27. Taking measures in accordance with international law with a view to alleviating any negative impact of economic sanctions on young women and young men;

Peace

28. Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security, namely by taking effective collective measures against different forms of violence and any threat to peace by suppressing acts of aggression and by promoting a peaceful resolution of disputes, in conformity with the principles of justice and international law;

29. Bearing in mind the important role of youth in promoting peace and non-violence, measures should be taken in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law, including international standards of human rights, aiming at preventing the participation and involvement of youth in all acts of violence, particularly acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, xenophobia and racism, foreign occupation, and trafficking in arms and drugs;
30. Strengthening the role of youth and youth organizations in peace building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, *inter alia*, on the basis of the resolutions and treaties of the United Nations and the Security Council and the promotion of intercultural learning, civic education, tolerance, human rights education and democracy towards mutual respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, responsibility, solidarity and international cooperation, as a means of preventing conflicts and distressed circumstances;
31. Encouraging, as appropriate, the role of youth in working towards general and complete disarmament under effective international control, including disarmament of all types of weapons of mass destruction;
32. Building an effective culture of peace and tolerance by putting into practice a global system of education and training for peace, aimed at social progress, fighting inequalities and recognizing the importance of dialogue and cooperation behind lines of conflict, in order to promote tolerance, respect and mutual understanding;
33. Assisting youth and youth organizations in making a substantial input into the celebration of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000;
34. Preventing the participation, involvement and recruitment of children in armed conflicts, in accordance with international law;
35. Promoting and protecting the rights of peoples, including youth, living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, particularly those peoples' right to self-determination;
36. Mobilizing youth for the reconstruction of areas devastated by war, bringing help to refugees and war victims and promoting reconciliation and rehabilitation activities;
37. Ensuring that young women and young men live within an environment free from threat, conflict, all forms of violence, maltreatment and exploitation;

Education

38. Promoting education in all its aspects, namely formal and non-formal education, as well as functional literacy and training for young women and young men and life-long learning, thereby facilitating the integration of youth into the labour market;
39. Guaranteeing to young women and young men equal access to and continuity of basic good quality education, especially in rural areas and among the urban poor, aimed at eradicating illiteracy;

40. Setting national time-bound goals for the expansion of equal access for young women and young men to secondary and higher education and for the improvement of the quality of that education;
41. Ensuring that young women and young men are well informed about their human rights, *inter alia*, through education;
42. Offering adequate training in modern communication techniques and in media literacy as they have an impact on youth and their behaviour;
43. Providing for the rehabilitation and, where appropriate, the reintegration of young women and young men from juvenile detention and incarceration into society, especially in the educational setting;
44. Designing new strategies focusing on youth in distress and in violent circumstances, aimed at ending exclusion, offering renewed learning opportunities for early school leavers and continuous learning and training opportunities for both employed and unemployed youth;
45. Supporting family structures, especially assistance to the poor, and providing the necessary resources to family and schools dealing with young women and young men with physical and mental disabilities;
46. Reinforcing and designing new partnerships to enable young women and young men to learn, create and express themselves through cultural, physical and sports activities for the benefit of their balanced physical, intellectual, artistic, moral, emotional and spiritual development, as well as their social integration;
47. Allocating resources to vocational training and ensuring that education and training systems correspond to economic, social and entrepreneurial realities based on identified needs and technological advancements;
48. Developing education policies that support all young women and young men in gaining access to an education that corresponds to their specific capacities and potentials, while paying special attention to socially disadvantaged youth;
49. Encouraging the inclusion of issues such as family life education, reproductive health, including the adverse consequences of traditional practices that are harmful to the health of young women and girls, and drug and substance abuse prevention in the design of school curricula, as well as in extracurricular activities;
50. Encouraging youth participation in community work as an important part of the education system;
51. Supporting, as appropriate, students' organizations by creating the conditions for the exercise of their rights and providing them with the necessary means to enable them to discharge their roles and responsibilities;
52. Establishing and developing sport, cultural and recreational activities among young women and young men aimed at promoting and strengthening sport and cultural exchanges at the national, subregional, regional and international levels;

Employment

53. Affirming the ultimate societal goal of full employment so as to ensure that equal opportunities are available to young women and young men for income-earning work;
54. Promoting equal employment opportunities for young people as well as equal protection against discrimination, including in wage payments, in accordance with national employment legislation, regardless of ethnic or national origin, race, gender, disability, political belief, creed or religion, or social, cultural or economic background;
55. Promoting equal employment opportunities for young women, *inter alia*, by adopting and implementing laws against sex-based discrimination in the labour market as well as legislation to guarantee the rights of young women and young men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;
56. Improving complementary partnerships among public authorities, the private sector and educational institutions, along with civil society initiatives, for the promotion of youth employment;
57. Promoting research on youth unemployment, taking into account market trends and demands, in order to design and implement youth employment policies and programmes, with due regard to gender-specific circumstances;
58. Investing in the entrepreneurial capacity of young women and young men and providing them with the necessary skills and resources to establish their own enterprises and businesses;
59. Taking effective measures to secure the prohibition and immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including support to the ongoing negotiations towards the finalization by the International Labour Organization of a future instrument addressing this issue, and measures to protect young women and young men against other forms of exploitation, including through sex tourism, prostitution, trafficking in human beings and bondage and any kind of labour, paid or unpaid, which negatively affects their mental, physical, social and moral development, with due regard to the particular situation of young women;
60. Promoting employment-oriented education and training to ensure the constant adjustment of education to the changing social and economic environment, including market needs;
61. Promoting the development of mechanisms for career counselling for youth through educational and training institutions as well as the community;
62. Promoting a greater national and international commitment to the protection of youth migrant workers, with attention to their enjoyment of human rights, their social needs and their prevention from exploitation;
63. Promoting youth entrepreneurship in rural areas with a view to assisting youth to embark on self-managing and self-financing activities;

Health

64. Promoting equal health development for young women and young men, and preventing and responding to health problems by creating safe and supportive environments, providing information and building skills and access to health services, including counselling, involving the family unit, peer groups, schools, media health services and other partners;
65. Combating treatable diseases, and preventing and responding to non-treatable diseases by establishing workable partnerships between developed and developing countries and promoting information and vaccination campaigns, involving the family unit, peer groups, schools, media, health services and other partners in order to build capacity, with special attention to young women and young men;
66. Creating the political, legal, material and social conditions that allow access to basic health care with adequate youth-friendly services and that pay particular attention to information and prevention programmes, with special attention to major diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, onchocerciasis (river blindness) and diarrhoeal diseases, in particular cholera;
67. Recognizing that the consumption of tobacco and the abuse of alcohol by young women and young men pose a major threat to their health, support the development in each country of comprehensive programmes to reduce the consumption of tobacco, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, and the abuse of alcohol;
68. Elaborating programmes of information, education, communication and campaign awareness among young women and young men to fight HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases;
69. Recognizing the special health needs of young women and young men with mental or physical disabilities and ensuring their rehabilitation and reintegration in order to promote self-reliance;
70. Promoting humanitarian land-mine activities and increasing land-mine awareness among children and youth, in particular in countries affected by anti-personnel land-mines;
71. Recognizing and supporting the important role of the family unit, youth organizations and non-governmental organizations as the best mechanism to provide an enabling environment for a healthy life through the provision of knowledge, information, skills and motivation;
72. Formulating policies favourable to the development in rural and poor urban areas of health programmes, including safe water supply, sanitation, and waste disposal, taking into account the specific needs of young women and young men for a healthy environment;
73. Recognizing the importance of general health care, including reproductive health care, and establishing a dependable database on youth reproductive health and providing for information dissemination and for youth-friendly and gender-equitable services in order to ensure the physical, mental and social well being of young women and young men, as well as access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable legal methods of family planning of their choice;

74. Intensifying efforts and actions towards international cooperation concerning health relief under natural disasters and other emergencies;
75. Recognizing the problem of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and other types of violence against young women and young men, and taking effective measures for their prevention, such as those outlined at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm from 27 to 31 August 1996;
76. Ensuring full protection of young women and young men from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and promoting the physical and psychological recovery and the social and economic reintegration of the victim;

Drug and substance abuse

77. Recognizing the repeated references to youth in the documents adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem;⁹
78. Raising the awareness of youth, in partnership with young women and young men and youth organizations, of the dangers of drug abuse of both licit and illicit substances and promoting alternatives so that young people can move towards life styles that are healthy and free from substance abuse, and mobilizing the community at different levels to participate fully in drug prevention efforts;
79. Collaborating, in partnership with young women and young men and with youth organizations, on strategies aiming at preventing abuse, reducing the demand for drugs, combating drug abuse and trafficking and promoting support for treatment for and rehabilitation of drug abusers focusing on their social reintegration and for their families;
80. Strengthening international, regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation and increasing efforts towards demand reduction and efforts to fight against illicit production, supply and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
81. Instituting strong measures aimed at restricting and/or preventing access to drugs by young women and young men;

We will therefore agree on the following

82. To invite all relevant United Nations programmes, funds and the specialized agencies and other bodies within the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the World Bank and intergovernmental organizations and regional financial institutions to give greater support to national youth policies and programmes within their country programmes;

⁹ See General Assembly resolutions S-20/2, S-20/3 and S-20/4.

83. To promote at the national, regional and international levels research, data collection, statistical compilation and wide dissemination of the findings of such research and studies;
84. To invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to consider strengthening the Youth Unit of the United Nations Secretariat and to submit proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on ways and means to achieve that;
85. To invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to participate actively in the effective follow-up to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 52/83 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/55 and within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;
86. To implement coordinated and cooperative systems among the regional commissions and organizations and ministerial and other meetings in their youth-related activities, and to prepare, to allocate the necessary funding for and to ensure the follow-up of the recommendations of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth;
87. To urge interested Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to make increased financial contributions to the United Nations Youth Fund and to set up an advisory body to this fund to provide guidance both on fund raising strategies and on project formulation, implementation and evaluation to follow up the World Conference with specific youth projects;¹⁰
88. We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the above-mentioned measures and to foster the further implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, with the active participation of youth, ensuring that young people's unique perspective is reflected in our national policies and programmes.

¹⁰ See para. 139 of the Programme of Action (Assembly resolution 50/81, annex).

ANNEX II

Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted at the Third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System; held from 2 to 7 August 1998, at Braga, Portugal

INTRODUCTION

We, representatives of youth and youth-serving organizations, and of organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, have met from 2 to 7 August 1998 in Braga, Portugal, at the third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System.

We have gathered here to promote “Youth Participation for Human Development”, convinced that the participation of youth is a prerequisite for the development of humankind as a whole.

On the threshold of a new millennium, young people are full of hope and commitment. We are convinced that in partnership between youth and youth-serving organizations, national governments, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, we can shape our world for the creation of a better future for all.

Young people face the challenges of injustice and exclusion resulting mainly from the enormous inequities in income, wealth and power dominating today's world. Because trade and investment agreements and relations remain unfair there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Young people are burdened by the financial and debt crisis and as a result of structural adjustment programmes they experience the consequences of ongoing cuts in government expenditure in human services. There is a decline of educational systems, young peoples' access to health services is restricted and youth unemployment is growing.

Young people suffer because of xenophobia and racism, homophobia, and exclusion from democratic participation. Young people lack access to information despite new possibilities to communicate across borders that should promote tolerance in multiethnic societies, increased respect for human rights and greater participation.

Real and sustainable solutions to these problems can only be found at the global level through the development of new partnerships between all the parties involved. Such solutions include the promotion of social spending through the cancellation of external debt of the highly indebted poor countries; trade agreements respecting the right to work and decent working conditions; fulfilment of the agreed 0.7 per cent target of GNP for official development assistance; the full payment of United Nations dues in time without conditions; and further reform of the United Nations system.

Young people can and should be a part of the solution to the problems in the world. Everywhere, young people and youth organizations show that they are not obstacles, but invaluable resources for development. Youth are building democratic leadership, civil society and social capital for the twenty-first century.

With the Braga Youth Action Plan we want to empower young people to participate in human development. Youth Participation for Human Development requires that:

- The international community, the private sector and especially Governments provide young people with adequate financial resources in order to realize their entire potential in becoming full and active partners in the development process;
- Young people are recognized not only as future leaders but as actors of society today, with a direct stake in the development process;
- Young women and men should be enabled to participate on equal terms: sexism is an obstacle that must be overcome and the empowerment of women a prerequisite for development;
- ALL young people should be enabled to participate as both creators and beneficiaries of development: unemployment, illiteracy, the discrimination against indigenous young people, against young people with disabilities or discrimination based on religious beliefs, and other forms of social exclusion are threats to development;
- Justice between present and future generations is recognized as a fundamental base for sustainable development: young people should participate in the decisions taken today about the resources of tomorrow;
- Youth should participate in political decision-making on all levels, and young people must be enabled to organize themselves in youth NGOs, students unions, trade unions, political parties, and in the creation of mass media in order to participate fully in political, economic, social and cultural life;
- Youth issues are not treated in isolation, but mainstreamed into all policy-making. The third World Youth Forum is an example of how a cross-sectoral approach can be used successfully.

The Braga Youth Action Plan is a joint commitment to Youth Participation for Human Development made by youth NGOs, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations in partnership.

As participants at the third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, we pledge our personal and unwavering commitment towards Youth Participation for Human Development.

We now call upon all youth, Governments of the world and the international community to work together with us to carry out these commitments and make our vision of Youth Participation for Human Development a reality.

The World Youth Forum recommends:

Youth policies

Integrated cross-sectoral youth policies

1. The formulation in all States of youth policies by the year 2005 that are cross-sectoral, comprehensive and formulated with long-term vision coupled with action plans taking into consideration the guidelines set forth in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Youth policies should be accorded a legal status and backed by legislative structures and sufficient resources. We encourage all governments to establish and/or strengthen youth focal point institutions within the governmental structure. Youth policies should be formulated via a thorough consultation process between the government and the national youth NGO platforms as well as other stakeholders as equal partners in that process.
2. The effective implementation of cross-sectoral youth policies in accordance with the action plans and their time-frames that are formulated together with the youth policies. Action plans should be utilized as a guideline for monitoring and evaluating the status of the implementation of youth policies by all stakeholders, especially by the youth NGO platforms.
3. That the United Nations, in collaboration with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, identify the best practices on youth policy formulation and implementation and encourage the adaptation of the principles and experiences among the Member States of the United Nations. Greater use could be made of the youth theme group mechanism within the United Nations resident coordinators system to increase the coordination of United Nations entities in the field of youth for the promotion of national youth policies. The youth theme group should give priority to collaboration between youth NGOs and United Nations entities.

Youth NGO cooperation at the national level

4. The formation and/or strengthening of national youth NGO platforms, which represent the widest range of democratic youth organizations of each State to be established with the initiatives of the youth organizations themselves. The platforms should respect each member organization's independence and operate based on the principles of solidarity and democracy. The governments should recognize the national youth NGO platforms legally and as partner in policy-making, provide them with adequate financial support and guarantee the free development of NGOs.
5. The formulation of informal and formal consultative mechanisms between national youth NGO platforms and governments, which operate based on the principles of mutual respect and equal partnership, so that the concerns of youth are fully reflected in the national policy-making.
6. The United Nations system, international organizations, including international and national youth NGO platforms, strengthen the capacity of youth NGOs at the national, regional and international levels through enhanced cooperation at all levels.

Youth, poverty eradication and development

7. Based on the Braga initiative on debt crisis, governments, the international community, including the IMF, the World Bank and other United Nations agencies, should work in partnership with youth NGOs to organize regional seminars before the year 2000 to assess the impact of the debt crisis on young men and women in countries with such debts. The results of their findings should be used to make informed policy in the international community, particularly in the areas of structural adjustment programmes, capacity-building, awareness-raising, and advocacy with the aim of eradicating poverty. These regional seminars also should lead to a joint international conference of youth NGOs and the United Nations system, including the World Bank and the IMF, to be held before the year 2001.
8. We recommend that youth organizations, in cooperation with Governments, United Nations agencies and organizations, IGOs, and international financial institutions, establish where they do not exist and strengthen existing national, subregional, and regional youth networks and agencies. Such agencies, autonomous in planning, decision-making, and implementation, should carry out effective poverty eradication, participate in development programmes, and act as a monitoring body to evaluate progress. They should give due consideration to the social and cultural background of target groups, and appropriate training and follow-up should involve local community members.
9. While emphasizing the fact that Governments and the international community have the primary responsibility for poverty eradication, the World Youth Forum affirms the indispensable contributions made by young people in poverty eradication and development. We recommend that all major actors concerned with poverty and youth promote, support, develop, and fund youth volunteerism. Furthermore, high profile should be given to youth-led volunteerism during the International Year of Volunteers in 2001.

Youth participations

Participation of ALL young people

10. It should be recognized that young people with disabilities have greater difficulties participating in society due to lack of equal opportunities. To improve their independent access to the physical environment, information, devices of assistance, equipment, awareness campaigns and fund-raising are necessary. This should be promoted and enhanced at all levels through cooperation among NGOs concerned with disability, as well as United Nations agencies, Governments and IGOs.
11. Governments, NGOs, IGOs and the United Nations system should promote inter-cultural understanding through workshops, seminars, exchange programmes and youth camps, with an adequate evaluation process to ensure that all cultures, and specifically indigenous young people, are fully recognized, respected and valued in society. We also propose that the United Nations sponsor a world indigenous youth conference and for any future United Nations sponsored youth activities, processes be established to ensure specific indigenous participants are included as delegates in their own right.

12. That NGOs take the initiative, in cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds as well as national youth platforms, to establish conferences that enable an exchange of experiences and information about working with young people living in extreme poverty and those requiring protection from violence, in particular young women. Priority should be given to reaching young people living in extreme poverty and working in partnership with them in the design and implementation of youth policies and concrete projects in the areas of health, education, training and employment. We also propose the creation of national monitoring centres to submit an annual report to the United Nations system on young people victimized by violence. The results of the conferences on young people excluded by extreme poverty and the report on young people victimized by violence should be widely disseminated by all forms of media and used as a reference in evaluating the implementation of national youth policies.

Youth organizations and the United Nations system

13. The United Nations should support broad involvement of youth NGOs in the decision-making process in a democratic manner throughout the United Nations system. We ask for greater consultation and the full and effective participation of youth NGOs in United Nations system conferences, commissions, specialized agencies, programmes and funds - which should meet in different regions to ensure equitable geographic representation. We encourage Member States to include representatives of youth NGOs in national delegations to the General Assembly and other United Nations system conferences and commissions. This must allow for a wide, inclusive and gender-balanced representation of all youth, including groups such as indigenous people, the youth with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and all minorities.
14. The responsibility of youth to take it upon themselves to help implement the Braga Youth Action Plan and other United Nations initiatives should be recognized - thus we offer to the United Nations system the services of youth at the national, regional and international levels. In order for this to be successful, there must be increased coordination of such implementation at the national and regional levels; information should be made easily accessible to all young people (which may be facilitated by United Nations system offices); the question of national funding to broaden the effectiveness of youth NGOs with the aim of using such funds to set up eventual self-reliant organizations should be addressed; and non-associated youth must be involved in order to ensure effective implementation of all programmes.
15. Youth issues should be given higher priority in the United Nations system. We recommend the strengthening of the Youth Unit of the United Nations Secretariat and its counterparts in other funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the provision to them of greater resources and more staff - notably young people. We recommend the expansion of their mandate to include the dissemination of information and the coordination of policies and programmes between youth NGOs and the various specialized agencies, funds and programmes. There should be national liaison offices for young people at the United Nations local offices, and a quota for youth organizations in the national United Nations programmes. We must also

ensure the continuation of the World Youth Forum process, including the convening of regional youth forums/consultations both in the preparation and follow-up of the Forum and the strengthening of its links with future high-level, intergovernmental conferences on youth (such as the Ministers' Conference on Youth), through joint preparation, meetings and follow-up. Member States should contribute generously to the United Nations Youth Fund, which should give priority to South-South project.

Education for the twenty-first century

16. Education shall be free of charge at all levels and equally accessible to everyone. Access to all education should not be on the basis of economic status. We call upon Governments to increase resource allocation to education and for UNESCO to be the coordinating agency, with the technical and financial contributions of Governments, for the establishment of a world education fund to provide grants to facilitate equal access to all levels of education.
17. The empowerment of young people via full and active participation and representation in all types of education should be recognized as a right, and we call upon Governments to do so. We call upon Governments to recognize and promote the importance of non-formal education, it being integral to the full development of individuals and societies and as therefore being complementary to formal education. We recommend the establishment of departments of non-formal education within ministries of education, which would work in partnership with NGOs responsible for non-formal education policies, through a democratic NGO forum.
18. While recognizing that education should be relevant to employment opportunities, we call upon Governments to analyze and review their formal education policies to incorporate the teaching of languages, including local and indigenous languages, and global citizenship education, emphasizing universal concepts such as peace, human rights, intercultural and inter-religious understanding, environmental protection, sustainable development, and gender equality. The World Youth Forum calls for the development of regional and international teaching materials through United Nations agencies, the adequate training of all educators and the establishment of national coordination units.

Youth employment for social development

19. It should be recognized that the problem of youth unemployment is serious and complex and requires action at both the macro and microeconomic levels by governments, the social partners, NGOs, and the United Nations system. There is a need to promote, improve, and extend the design and implementation of policies and programmes to promote employment among young people. We recommend that the United Nations system, in close collaboration with youth NGOs, undertake a comparative evaluation of the situation of youth employment programmes in different countries from different regions. This evaluation should emphasize programmes for disadvantaged youth, such as, but not exclusively, women, youth with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, indigenous peoples and migrants. The evaluation should look at issues such as the sustainability of jobs created once programmes are completed, the quality of jobs created and the contribution of the project to social development.

20. It should be recognized that there is a lack of institutional capacity of NGOs in the employment area and communication between NGOs and the United Nations system. NGOs often face difficulties in raising funds to finance projects and lack knowledge about existing projects and programmes to promote youth employment. To overcome this, we propose a new system of information exchange between youth NGOs and the United Nations system and a framework of collaboration to provide technical and financial support to NGOs. The first step is for all NGOs to gain access to relevant communication facilities (with the assistance of the United Nations system). The second step would be to create a website and mail-out directory with and for NGOs as another means of communication. The Webster should contain, among other things, information regarding the NGOs and international organizations themselves, printed material in electronic format produced by the United Nations system, project updates and experiences and ideas on how to obtain financial and technical support for activities related to youth employment.
21. There is a need to empower, mobilize and inform young people about fundamental rights at work. In order to promote social development these rights must be respected by all. Youth NGOs should participate in the ILO's efforts to publicize its conventions, recommendations and resolutions, especially the "Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work" adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1998. We further recommend that an information dissemination campaign be undertaken by NGOs with the financial support of the United Nations system to educate young people about their rights under ILO instruments. The campaign should take the form of conferences, information materials and training, and will emphasize grassroots participation.

Youth, health and development

22. We recommend the formulation/review and implementation of an integrated national youth health policy addressing all major health issues including: sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, substance abuse, nutrition and hygiene, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health, occupational and environmental health. This requires the active participation of youth, youth-related organizations, government bodies, NGOs, international organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.
23. We recommend the provision of youth-friendly health services, counselling and especially reproductive health services that are comprehensive, accessible and participatory, to ensure the holistic well-being of all young people.
24. We recommend that the international community undertake reliable research, monitoring and assessment concerning the health needs of young people with the full participation of youth and wide-spread and interactive exchange of information addressing those needs. The government bodies, NGOs, international organizations, and agencies of the United Nations system, in collaboration with youth organizations should coordinate the efficient peer-education training of young people in all spheres of life on life skills, and the training of parents, teachers, religious and traditional leaders and caregivers on support skills. Information centres should be created that would be run by youth and for youth.

The role of youth in the promotion of human rights

25. We recommend that human rights education be recognized as a basic human right. This right includes access to and exchange of information on universally accepted civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and their violations. It aims at advocating the implementation of basic human rights. ALL young people must become involved in human rights education as key recipients and providers.
26. Institutions, including governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations and educational authorities, responsible for human rights education at the community, national, regional and international levels, must ensure an enabling environment for youth involvement in human rights education. This includes the opportunity for active participation of youth organizations in the decision-making process, in the implementation, as well as in existing monitoring and reporting procedures linked to human rights education.
27. We recommend that youth organizations commit themselves to develop and implement effective strategies on human rights education. We recommend a human rights focal point to be designated in each youth organization. Partnership between the United Nations system and such focal points should be established within the framework of the United Nations Decade on Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Human rights education methodologies shall take into account the need for cultural sensitivity and should include lobbying, networking, exchange of best practices, capacity-building and preparation of material in local languages.

Youth rights charter and a special rapporteur on youth rights

28. The United Nations Youth Unit should produce, and should assist youth NGOs disseminate at international, regional, national and local levels, a compendium on existing youth rights which would consist of the compilation of existing rights regarding young people already included in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and United Nations human rights instruments, including United Nations international conferences such as the conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen, Vienna and Beijing. The compendium should be made into a youth-friendly publication available and accessible to all youth around the world.
29. A United Nations special rapporteur on youth rights should be appointed by United Nations Secretary-General before the end of 1999 based on nominations through regional consultations of NGOs to be made by August 1999. He or she should be mandated for three years (renewal possible only for two terms). He or she should be a young independent expert (no older than 35 years of age at the time of appointment and renewal), experienced with human rights issues, recently and directly involved with youth organizations. Effort must ensure the elimination of discrimination with every appointment to ensure fair and equal opportunity in the position over time. He or she must submit an annual report to the General Assembly and other relevant bodies, including recommendations for better implementation of youth rights. He or she should be actively supported by all United Nations structures.

30. We urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take the initiative, with the help of specialized agencies, relevant regional organizations and youth NGOs, for the organization of an ad hoc event on youth rights, in order to bring together representatives of States and all interested national, regional and international youth NGOs. This world event (either a special session of General Assembly or a world conference on youth rights) should be prepared at the national and regional levels through campaigning to promote the largest possible involvement of young people. The ad hoc event on youth rights should address the questions of how to improve the human rights situation of youth under sanctions, embargoes and occupation.

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