

Informal Notes of the Breakfast Dialogue on the Follow-up to Rio+20 and the Post 2015 Development Agenda, 15 May 2013

Topic: Role of Youth in the Sustainable Development Agenda

Convened by the Bahá'í International Community and International Movement ATD Fourth World.

A diverse group of stakeholders¹ gathered to informally discuss key issues on the topic of the role of youth in the sustainable development agenda. The following are highlights of the comments made during the session:

- The Post-2015 agenda needs to prioritize youth issues; there are approximately two billion youth in the world today.
- The youth of today are confronted with a double challenge: they need to make a living for themselves and make provisions for a rapidly growing, aging population.
- Job opportunities are not as numerous for this generation; the youth of today face a very different market situation. Seventeen million youth are unemployed.
- The voices of youth need to be heard through platforms and mechanisms for participation at all levels – local, national, regional and international.
- In Sri Lanka, youth representatives are consulted at all levels of policy-making. The country will continue to support the interests of the youth at the Open Working Group and other platforms. Sri Lanka will host the World Youth Conference in 2014 and is seeking to mainstream youth perspectives into the post-2015 development agenda.
- Information and communication technology is largely the domain of youth; they have contributed extensively to its development.
- The development agenda should be viewed as a development contract as it represents collective responsibility.
- Youth should not only be seen as recipients of development assistance but as key contributors and protagonists of the agenda. They have energy and insights, which haven't been fully utilized by the development community. Youth need to feel a sense of ownership of the development agenda.
- Youth are not a homogenous group. There is great diversity within youth. While youth are often a marginalized group, as a whole, the most vulnerable subgroups must also be acknowledged, such as youth living in poverty, those in underserved rural areas, and girls. Eighty million girls are forced into early marriage and, as a group, have the highest rate of HIV. The diverse needs of the youth have to be identified.
- Unemployment is the number one challenge facing youth. While employment is often linked to

¹ Permanent Missions represented: Algeria, Austria, Bhutan, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, and Switzerland. Representatives from UN: Division for Sustainable Development (DESA), Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (DESA), International Fund for Agricultural Development, Non-Governmental Liaison Service, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Secretariat to the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team, UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, UN-HABITAT, UN Women, and UN Volunteers. Civil society organizations represented: ACT Alliance, Bahá'í International Community, CARE International, CIVICUS, Feminist Task Force, Franciscans International, Girl Scouts of the USA, Global Call to Action Against Poverty, Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Presentation Association, International Women's Health Coalition, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, Plan International, SOS Children's Villages International, United Nations Foundation, What Moves You?, Women's Environmental and Development Organization, and World Vision International.

growth, it should also be seen as a tool for empowering young people towards achieving greater independence.

- The language of the UN needs to be adapted to young people's level of understanding. Capacity building needs to be embedded in the school system so youth can participate in global-level processes. Fostering the participation of youth is a long-term investment; we cannot just focus on quick results.
- Social media can help youth to participate more fully, but 75% of the world's population is not yet connected to the internet.
- It is not only the UN's obligation to foster youth participation; a partnership is needed between, e.g. academia, media and the governments.
- Youth issues often need to be addressed regionally in order to recognize the diverse cultural and economic circumstances shaping the issues.
- UN regional offices could establish youth forums so that the youth can be involved in the decision-making process. Governments can also maximize UN's [youth delegate programme](#).
- There is also a need for political empowerment. In a global survey of youth, over half a million individuals said that their third development priority, after education and employment is an honest and responsive government.

Questions posed:

- How do we foster the participation of the most vulnerable and marginalized young people?
- How can we create more entry points for youth engagement?
- What kind of mentorship is needed to ensure that young people's voices do not become politicized?