



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 November 2013

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-second session

11-21 February 2014

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Pax Romana, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Youth at the centre of development

The primary purpose of the Millennium Development Goals was to usher in a new era of development that eradicates extreme poverty and allows for greater equality among the peoples of this world. Although the Millennium Development Goals have led to significant progress and development, numerous obstacles remain in terms of how the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals have benefited and continue to benefit young people. To this day, it appears as if youth are being left out of the current development paradigm. Also, the lack of implementation of agreed-upon youth development policies, especially the World Programme of Action for Youth, has prevented young people from becoming not only beneficiaries of development, but also agents of development.

Pax Romana, a unique Catholic non-governmental organization that is comprised of both a student movement and a professional movement, fully understands that education is the key to providing youth with the tools necessary to become empowered agents of change. Certainly, education has a central role to play in allowing young people to become critical drivers of development. Nonetheless, in many countries, access to quality education for youth, especially young women and girls, is a challenge and entry into higher education appears utopian. Lack of a quality education has deprived young people of their ability to contribute to the welfare of their communities and countries as a whole.

Moreover, in the global macroeconomic context, especially in consideration of the need to move towards a transformative post-2015 development agenda, it is critical to transition from the old rhetoric of growth-centric development. Progress must be qualified through human development, life satisfaction and harmony with the natural world. This requires reducing our ecological footprint, which is currently beyond the biocapacity of the Earth, and creating patterns of sustainable consumption and production. Degraded environments lead to degraded economies and trap the most vulnerable in a cyclical pattern of poverty. Undoubtedly, the full realization of a development paradigm where youth are drivers of change cannot occur while the world is mired in continuous conflict over finite resources.

Moving forward: youth in the post-2015 development agenda

The era of the Millennium Development Goals is almost over and the world is now in the process of preparing the post-2015 development agenda. As a result, while it is critical to highlight the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, it is even more crucial to understand how the challenges surrounding the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals can be overcome, so as to formulate a development agenda that is inclusive of the needs of youth. Youth have a major role to play in development, yet young people continue to face numerous challenges that prevent their contributions from making an impact on their societies: namely, youth unemployment remains a major obstacle to youth empowerment and development. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) report *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, the number of economically active youth who are unemployed is the highest number ever on record: over 81 million, with girls suffering disproportionately. ILO warns of a possible lost generation of young people dropping out of the labour market, having lost all hope of being able to work

for a decent living. In developing economies, home to 90 per cent of the world's young people, youth are more vulnerable to unemployment and poverty. In 2008, nearly 30 per cent of all of the world's young workers were employed but remained mired in extreme poverty in households surviving on less than \$1.25 per day.

Besides unemployment, the political participation of youth is an issue that Member States must tackle. Youth must be engaged politically if we hope to allow them to be drivers of development. They must be allowed to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives and their societies as a whole. Essentially, youth must be considered equal partners in the development of a post-2015 framework. This will help improve the conditions in which young people live, as well as empower them to help the post-2015 development agenda be as effective and meaningful as possible. Pax Romana recognizes the achievements of partner organizations that make up the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations network. We, youth-led and youth-serving organizations, have been at the centre of development for decades and are eager to continue playing a positive role in the formulation of the post-2015 framework. That is why we are throwing our full support behind the 2014 world conference on youth in Sri Lanka, which is meant to allow young people to work directly with policymakers from Governments, United Nations agencies and other groups that affect the lives of young people. We are proud to be part of the international youth task force planning the world conference on youth and are excited for the fruitful policy discussions that will take place in Sri Lanka in 2014. In addition, in terms of youth participation in policymaking, young people must be provided with permanent mechanisms that allow their policy recommendations to feed directly into the deliberations of the United Nations system. This can be accomplished through a United Nations permanent forum on youth, a structure that will allow the voices of young people to have a meaningful impact on policy.

Recommendations

In conclusion, Pax Romana urges Member States to:

- Implement to the fullest extent possible the policy recommendations outlined in the World Programme of Action for Youth, especially the proposals associated with the education priority area. A quality education can provide young people with the tools necessary to become the drivers of development they are meant to be.
- Live up to their commitment to accelerate the progress of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as outlined in the recent outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (General Assembly resolution [68/6](#)). While several targets of the Millennium Development Goals have been met or are within reach, stronger political action is necessary if this acceleration is to lead to any fruitful human development for youth.
- Give youth the opportunity to play a role in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations have been instrumental in development. It is critical that Member States recognize their efforts and provide them with more meaningful mechanisms through which they can identify problems with the current development agenda and

contribute to building the new development paradigm, which should include specific enabling policies that will help to actualize it.

- Support the 2014 world conference on youth in Sri Lanka and incorporate the policy recommendations of the young people who attend it into the post-2015 development agenda.
- Allow youth to play an active role in decision-making at all levels of society and endorse the creation of a United Nations permanent forum on youth. Governments must ensure the full and effective participation of youth in political deliberations and young people must be permitted to have a say in decisions that will affect their lives for years to come.
- Heed the recommendations of the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which called for a data revolution, and begin collecting data that is disaggregated by both gender and age across all development goals, both current and future. Development cannot be effectively measured until data is credible, accurate and specific to target groups.
- Allow youth living in refugee camps, as well as those suffering from the effects of armed conflict, to participate in meaningful education programmes, so as to empower them to become primary actors in peacebuilding. Youth can be agents of peace and should be granted the opportunity to build bridges among communities in conflict.

Pax Romana and other youth-led and youth-serving organizations are committed to forging a meaningful partnership for sustainable development and look forward to working with Member States and other stakeholders towards an inclusive post-2015 development agenda.
