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COORDINATING UNIT FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

FIRST REGIONAL FORUM ON YOUTH:
“SECURITY, OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY”

Geneva, 26-28 August 2002

INFORMATION NOTICE

Organization of the Forum

The First Regional Forum on Youth: “Security, Opportunity and Prosperity” will be held in Geneva, Switzerland from 26 to 28 August 2002. The Forum is organized by the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in collaboration with:

**UNITED NATIONS DEPARTEMENT FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS
UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS
UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER ON HUMAN RIGHTS
ORGANIZATIONS FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, the situation of youth (young people of 15-25 years old) has dramatically deteriorated in terms of health, education and employment opportunities in a large number of the UNECE countries, causing a grave concern about its well-being and about future implications of such a change. Apart from the economic decline, fundamental alterations experienced by the region, such as a socio-economic transformation of the former centrally planned economies, disintegration of states, rapid technological change and the aging of population, all have had a significant, multifaceted and often mixed impact on youth. While many young people have succeeded in coping with these changes and were able to integrate in the mainstream activities and social life, many others have not.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund MONEE Report, in 2000, there were almost 18 million of young people of 16-25 years old in the UNECE transition countries, who were neither in education nor in employment. The dropout rate among the secondary school students has increased and continues to grow in some countries of Central Asia and South Caucasus, indicating the decline of the prestige of education, but also the effects of poverty and income inequalities on the opportunity sets of the young people, whose families have been impoverished.

The de-industrialization process observed in some countries has negatively contributed to the situation of youth, reducing the employment opportunities and narrowing career choices of young people. The shift of productive activities into the agricultural sector coupled with poverty has forced many families to use children and youth in household and agricultural activities at the expense of their schooling. The young adults from the urban poor families, on the other hand, have had to work in the informal sector in order to earn an additional income, therefore, leaving the school before graduation.

Youth unemployment has been chronically higher than that of the adults throughout the region, exceeding the adult unemployment rate two-three times in some countries. This phenomenon has been traditionally justified by the lack of skills, work experience of the young or by the high mobility of young people at the beginning of their working life, making employers reluctant to hire young people. Another traditional explanation suggests that there is a direct relationship between the performance of economy and the scale of youth unemployment, linking the increase in youth unemployment with the lack of growth. In some recent debates, the irrelevance of youth education was also singled out as another contributing factor.

From the societal perspective, regardless which of the explanations is offered, the economic, social and psychological costs of youth unemployment are enormous, especially, when considered against the trend of the aging of the population of many countries in the region. The lack or the erosion of the employability of young people requires an urgent attention from policy-makers and other agents of the civil society.

Furthermore, considering some recent negative changes in youth behaviour (e.g. substance abuse and violence) induced by the stress of unemployment, social change or as a result of illicit activities of organized crime groups, the need for more active pro-youth policies and interventions to mitigate the risks of youth marginalization is of paramount importance in terms of safety and security.

There are other important aspects of the current youth situation that cause concerns. These include the spread of smoking, drinking, drug abuse, risky sexual behaviour and other behaviours that aggravate the risk to the health of the young and, hence, to their capacity to work and earn decent income, in many countries of the region, including the risk of the HIV infection.

The above concerns have been translated into new policy initiatives and actions at the national, regional and international levels, among which was the initiative of the United Nations General-Secretary on the creation of an international youth employment network in the partnership with all civil society agents who has a stake in the youth well-being and prosperity. The results of such initiatives in the region have been mixed with some of the countries appeared succeeding in reversing the worsening of the youth situation, while in some others failing. Most disturbing, however, is that, in a number of the UNECE member countries, facing the large-scale youth marginalization, pro-youth policies and programmes are either absent or/and unable to reach the target groups due to the lack of expertise, resources or the community's involvement. There is an obvious need in disseminating the best practices and the lessons learned from the experiences in addressing the youth problems among the countries of the region from both perspectives, the humanitarian and a more pragmatic one - to undermine the social base of the organized crime, militant fundamentalism and terrorism.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM

The First Regional Forum on Youth will be organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in cooperation with United Nations Department for Social and Economic Affairs, the International Labour Organization, the Secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a follow-up to the Millennium Summit recommendations referring to the vulnerable social groups and poverty alleviation, as well as to the recommendations of the High-level Panel of the Youth Employment Network (A/54/422), the UNECE mandate to promote entrepreneurship and the development of SMEs in countries in transition, and the recommendations of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, encouraging the United Nations Economic and Social Council to request the regional commissions, within their respective mandates and resources, to support national efforts in their respective regions in combating HIV/AIDS.

The main objectives of the First Regional Forum on Youth will be as follows:

- to raise the awareness of the European and Central Asian constituencies about the negative trends in the youth situation in the region and their potential implications for economic development and social progress;
- to stimulate the debates on the youth problems;
- to bring the stakeholders in the youth prosperity together;
- to jointly look for appropriate, effective and efficient solutions;
- to provide an impetus to the mobilization of and a support for the affected communities;
- to share the experiences and lessons learned;

- to discuss concrete youth employment and entrepreneurship programmes and projects to be presented at the Forum; and
- to adopt a regional plan of action.

THE TARGET AUDIENCES

The target audiences will be the representatives of the governmental structure responsible for youth and/or labour and social welfare, and/or health, youth and other non-governmental organizations concerned with youth problems, the representatives of the United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations, regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, the representatives of the private sector and the employer associations affairs.

THE EXPECTED OUTPUTS

It is expected that the Forum will energize the governments' efforts to remedy the situation in the mid- and long-term perspective. It is also anticipated that various partnerships between the parties concerned will be formed to augment the impact of activities aiming to re-integrate marginalized youth and to mitigate the risks threatening the future generations.

Practitioners will have an opportunity to discuss the problems they have encountered in their work, exchange views and opinion about different ways and means of reducing the marginalization of youth. They will share their experiences with colleagues from other countries and with representatives of Governments and NGOs interested in acquiring technical and specific knowledge.

Concrete project-proposals presented by national coordinators on youth employment and entrepreneurship from the UNECE member countries will be considered and evaluated by experts. A regional plan of action will be adopted to set up common goals, a framework for national and regional cooperative activities and benchmarking.

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**FIRST REGIONAL FORUM ON YOUTH:
“SECURITY, OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY”**

26-28 August 2002
Palais des Nations, Geneva

PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

26 August 2002

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Opening session | 10 a.m. – 13 p.m. |
| 2. Working Groups’ session | 15 p.m. – 18 p.m. |
| a. Working Group on Youth Health and Security | |
| b. Working Group on Youth Employability and Employment | |
| c. Working Group on Youth Entrepreneurship | |

27 August 2002

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Working Groups’ morning session | 10 a.m. – 13 p.m. |
| a. Working Group on Youth Health and Security | |
| b. Working Group on Youth Employability and Employment | |
| c. Working Group on Youth Entrepreneurship | |
| 2. Working Groups’ afternoon session | 15 p.m. – 18 p.m. |
| a. Working Group on Youth Health and Security | |
| b. Working Group on Youth Employability and Employment | |
| c. Working Group on Youth Entrepreneurship | |

28 August 2002

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Plenary session | 10 a.m. – 13 p.m. |
| 2. Closing session | 15 p.m. – 18 p.m. |
| Cocktail | 18:15 p.m. – 20 p.m. |

PLENARY SESSIONS

Provisional Agenda

26 August 2002

- Opening plenary session: 10 a.m. – 13 p.m.

Current Situation of the Youth in the UNECE Region

28 August 2002

- Plenary session: 10 a.m. – 13 p.m.

Stakeholders in the Youth Prosperity

- Closing session: 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

The Way Ahead: Regional Plan of Action

WORKING GROUP ON YOUTH HEALTH AND SECURITY

Provisional Agenda

26 August (afternoon session) 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

- *Major Risk Factors Threatening the Health and Security of Youth*

27 August (morning session) 10 a.m. – 13 p.m.

- *HIV/AIDS: Effective and Efficient Means and Methods of Prevention*

Reaching the marginalized young adults: What has worked and what has not?

27 August (afternoon session) 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

- *Youth in Conflict and Militant Groupings*

WORKING GROUP ON YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT

Provisional Agenda

26 August (afternoon session) 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

- *Equality of Opportunity: Recent Changes in the Youth Opportunity Sets, Their Implications and Policy Responses*

27 August (morning session) 10 a.m. – 13 p.m.

- *The Employability of Youth*

27 August (afternoon session) 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

- *Youth Employment Programmes*

Disadvantaged Youth: what have we learned so far from national experiences, schemes and projects, aiming to improve the employability of this sub-group of youth?

WORKING GROUP ON YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Provisional Agenda

26 August (afternoon session) 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

- *Youth Entrepreneurship as a Strategy to Alleviate Poverty among Young Adults*

27 August (morning session) 10 a.m. – 13 p.m.

- *Promoting a Conducive Policy Environment for Youth Entrepreneurship*

27 August (afternoon session) 15 p.m. – 18 p.m.

- *Youth Entrepreneurship Programmes*

Annex II

REGISTRATION

The Forum will be held with simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Russian. There are no charge fees for registration. Participants are responsible for arranging their own travel and hotel accommodation in Geneva.

*As places are limited, completed **registration** forms should be sent as soon as possible and **not later than 10 August 2002** to the attention of:*

Ms. Larissa Kapitsa
Director
Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, office 436
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

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E-mail: larissa.kapitsa@unece.org

For further information and hotel reservations, please see the website:
www.unece.org/operact/

REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES: Access to the Palais des Nations

Security measures have been strengthened at the Palais des Nations and delegates attending meetings are required to have badges issued by the Security Unit and bearing their names, which will give access to Palais grounds. Delegates are invited to complete the attached **Conference Registration Form** and send it to the secretariat not later than **10 August 2002**. Once in Geneva, delegates will be required to proceed with the original of the form to the Security Section situated at the **Villa Les Feuillantines** (as indicated on the attached map, opening hours: 08:00 a.m.-05:00 p.m.), where the entrance badges will be awaiting. Delegates should plan on about an hour to obtain the badge and reach the meeting room.

All questions concerning the Forum should be addressed to:

Ms. Tatiana Apatenko
Administrative assistant
Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, office 434
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

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Fax: (+41 22) 917 0178
E-mail: tatiana.apatenko@unece.org



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

Conference Registration Form

Please Print

Title of the Conference

Date

First Regional Forum on Youth: "Security, Opportunity and Prosperity"

Delegation/Participant of Country, Organization or Agency

Participant

Mr.

☐

Family Name

First Name

Mrs.

☐

Ms.

☐

Participation Category

Head of Delegation

☐

Delegation Member

☐

Observer Country

☐

...

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NGO (ECOSOC Accred.)

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French

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☐

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First Name (Spouse)

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Spouse Signature

Date

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