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POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH

International Youth Year

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 32/134 of 16 December 1977 entitled "Youth in the contemporary world". In considering the report, the Assembly may wish to recall Economic and Social Council decision 1978/47 of 1 August 1978 in which the Council, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, taking into account experiences of previous international years which could form the basis for establishing uniform criteria and procedures to be applied to the proclamation, organization and evaluation of all future international years. The Council also decided to consider the Secretary-General's report at its second regular session, 1979. In this connexion, it may also be appropriate to note that a growing concern has been expressed in the legislative organs of the United Nations over the proliferation of international years.
2. In its resolution 32/134, the General Assembly recalled that since 1965 numerous resolutions on the situation, needs and aspirations of youth had been adopted by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council; recognized the profound importance of the direct participation of youth in shaping the future of humanity; expressed its conviction that an international youth year could usefully serve to mobilize efforts at the local, national, regional and international levels in order to promote the best educational, professional and living conditions for young people to ensure their active participation in the over-all development of society and to encourage the preparation of new national and local policies and programmes in accordance with each country's experience; invited all States to make known their views concerning the proclamation of an international youth year and to send their proposals and observations in this regard to the Secretary-General before 1 July 1978; requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing the views of Member States; and decided to include the item in the provisional agenda of its thirty-third session and to grant it the highest priority, due consideration being given to the idea of proclaiming an international youth year at that session.
3. In pursuance of resolution 32/134, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to all Member States, in which he drew their attention to the Assembly's resolution and requested that they make known their views and proposals. As at 30 July 1978, replies had been received from the Governments of the following 42 Member States: Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Benin, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Kenya, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Seychelles, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Yugoslavia. The Government of Switzerland also replied.
4. The present report is based on those replies of States on the issue as well as on other information available to the Secretary-General.

II. VIEWS OF MEMBER STATES CONCERNING THE PROCLAMATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR

5. In the observations of the 31 Member States which were in favour of proclaiming an international youth year, it was emphasized that proclaiming such a year would provide an opportunity to stress the importance of the role of youth in all stages of development and help consolidate the efforts of all States in bringing youth into the mainstream of societal development and in carrying out specific programmes concerning youth. In particular, the promotion of educational, professional and living conditions for youth was mentioned. Many States noted that the preservation and strengthening of international peace is a prerequisite for a secure and happy future for the youth of all countries and therefore recognized the necessity to promote, under the umbrella of such a year, the active participation of youth in all countries in efforts for peaceful relationships among peoples and States, for disarmament, for social progress and for a new international economic order, as well as for the elimination of colonialism, neo-colonialism and racism in all their forms. It was the general opinion that the year would serve as a good occasion for international exchanges of experience on national measures taken to involve youth in the political, economic, social and cultural development of society, as effective means of calling world-wide attention to the increasing awareness of the situation of young people as well as getting useful information as a result of deliberations on the issue.

6. Eleven Member States which replied that they were not in favour of proclaiming an international youth year emphasized that they took such a position not in principle but because they did not consider it desirable at this time to have such a year. Many of them pointed out that the rapidly increasing number of international years proclaimed by the United Nations makes the usefulness of yet another year questionable, and that, in particular, the proximity of the International Year of the Child (1979) could cause repetition and confusion. Therefore, in that view, plans for proclaiming an international youth year should be postponed until after the results of the International Year of the Child have been evaluated. Some Member States suggested that sufficient time be allotted to an in-depth consideration of the proposals to proclaim any year; one State proposed to assess the year's desirability as compared to possible alternatives, the methods of implementation, and the timing and costs of the year, if proclaimed by the Commission for Social Development; it further proposed that the assessment should also cover the more general question of international years, with special regard to the need to elaborate a set of guidelines to be applied to all such events. In general, those States that opposed the proclamation of an international youth year at this time questioned whether such an event would be, in fact, an effective means for attaining specific goals related to the needs and aspirations of youth, particularly in view of the probable high costs involved and the difficulty of evaluating the programmes that would be undertaken.

III. PROPOSALS FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR

7. In the opinion of the Secretary-General, the potential contribution of an international youth year to the advancement of an understanding of the situation,

needs and aspirations of youth, and to the increased satisfaction of those needs and aspirations could be substantial. However, many questions of planning, programming, evaluation and finance remain unanswered and it appears necessary for additional groundwork to be done before a decision on the proclamation of such a year is made. Indeed it would be counter-productive for such a year to be proclaimed prematurely without a clear purpose and adequate preparation, and for the year to become primarily an occasion for the repetition of clichés and generalities.

8. The Secretary-General believes that additional study is required before he will be able to comment on whether the proclamation of such a year is desirable and, if so, propose a framework and specific activities for its observance.

9. In this connexion, the Secretary-General wishes to point out that the goals of an international youth year might also be achieved to some extent by means other than the proclamation of such a year, including means currently available to the Organization such as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Youth and increased efficiency in the organization and implementation of the existing United Nations programme in the field of youth. However, such alternatives might not have some of the advantages that would come from the proclamation of a youth year, namely higher awareness among the public of the problems and potentials of youth and the possibility of concerted efforts at the national and regional levels to address specific youth issues.

10. Proclamation of an international youth year would not, by itself, increase the chances that the situation of youth will be better understood and that youth needs and aspirations will be better met. If improved programmes to attain those goals exist, however, such a year might enhance their chances of success. Therefore, the Secretary-General believes that the existence of viable and productive United Nations programmes should be a pre-condition to the proclamation of an international youth year. At present, he believes that, while the Organization and the United Nations system are carrying out a number of excellent programmes in this field, further study is required as to whether those programmes would be enhanced by the proclamation of a year. It will also be necessary to develop methods for evaluating the impact that an international year would have.

11. The Secretary-General proposes, therefore, that a final decision on the proclamation of an international year be deferred to the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly. In the interim, a further series of inquiries could be made by the Secretary-General among Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, youth and youth organizations and academic and research institutions concerned with youth as to the nature and content of the programme of an international youth year and possible alternatives to the proclamation of such a year.

12. The Secretary-General proposes that the principles and approaches set forth below be used in making further inquiries on the subject.

A. General principles

13. Observance of an international youth year would be focused primarily at the regional and national levels, and international level activities restricted to certain specific youth-related questions of a technical nature, such as research programmes and training of youth workers.

14. The international youth year programme would be in addition to, but in concert with, the established programme in this field carried out by the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The activities of the year would be carried out with certain specific goals in mind, and followed by an evaluation of the effectiveness of those activities in terms of the stated goals.

15. Observance of an international youth year would be undertaken with the full co-operation of national, regional and international youth organizations, and with the fullest possible participation of individual young people themselves through activities at the local and national levels.

B. Activities at the international level

16. A series of general information publications on the situation, needs and aspirations of youth might be produced and circulated by the United Nations during the international youth year to libraries, relevant government ministries, organizations concerned with youth questions, the news media and other outlets that will help disseminate information on the actual and potential role of young people in the process of national and international development. To assist in this effort, a small advisory group of young people could be established by the Joint United Nations Information Committee to advise it on the production and circulation of United Nations publications of interest to youth, with special emphasis on the activities of the United Nations.

17. A series of symposia might be organized on an international basis to discuss certain specific youth-related issues of a technical nature, such as research programmes concerning the situation, needs and aspirations of youth, youth exchanges as a means of strengthening international peace and security, voluntarism and other approaches to increasing youth participation in national and international development, and techniques of training professional youth workers. Such symposia could be publicized as a means of increasing public awareness of constructive means available to deal with youth issues.

18. Since the absence of adequate data on the situation, needs and aspirations of youth is a significant impediment to the adoption of successful national youth policies in many countries, a major project might be undertaken by the United Nations to develop and promote adequate data-gathering and analysis capabilities related to youth at the national level. The development of such capabilities could constitute one of the major goals of the international youth year.

19. During and prior to the international youth year, the United Nations could intensify its efforts to improve its channels of communication with youth and youth

organizations, through the implementation of the guidelines for the improvement of the channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations adopted by the General Assembly in the annex to resolution 32/135.

C. Activities at the national and regional levels

20. Pursuant to recommendations of the General Assembly calling for increased attention to youth issues by the regional commissions, preparations for the international youth year and activities during that year could emphasize increased levels of technical co-operation and material assistance from the United Nations to Governments concerned with such issues. The regional commissions could become a principal vehicle for such assistance. This could require improved co-ordination of resources within the United Nations and among the agencies of the system, and increased levels of programme expenditures in this field by the commissions. The existence of significantly higher levels of programming capabilities by the commissions at the end of the international youth year could be a major goal of that year.

21. A focal point with each Member State for United Nations communication on youth issues could be established by the end of the international youth year, to enable the Organization to maintain and extend the momentum created by the year and help ensure that channels of communication with youth are maintained during the subsequent years.

22. The Secretary-General proposes that the results of the above-mentioned inquiries be reported to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session along with his conclusions and recommendations. Should the Assembly decide that an international youth year be proclaimed, the year 1985 could be so designated, thus permitting three years of preparation. In this connexion, it may be noted that 1985 will be the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples, contained in General Assembly resolution 2037 (XX) of 7 December 1965, and the 15th anniversary of Assembly resolution 2659 (XXV) of 7 December 1970 establishing the United Nations Volunteers programme.