



General Assembly

Sixty-fifth session

111th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 26 July 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Deiss (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 27 (continued)

High-level Meeting on Youth

Social development

- (b) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**

Draft resolution (A/65/L.87)

The President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has before it a draft outcome document, issued as document A/65/L.87.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/65/L.87, entitled “Outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/65/L.87?

Draft resolution A/65/L.87 was adopted (resolution 65/312).

The President (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to the speakers, I should like to express sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Permanent Representative of Austria, and His Excellency Mr. Jean-François Zinsou, Permanent Representative of Benin, who so ably and patiently conducted the discussions and complex negotiations in the consultations on the outcome document. I also thank all Member States for their

valuable contributions, without which the outcome document could not have been completed.

Before proceeding, I should like to provide members with some practical information in order to allow for maximum participation within the limited time available. I request that statements be limited to three minutes when made in a national capacity and five minutes when made on behalf of a group. I also appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed, so that interpretation may be provided properly. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the speaker’s rostrum.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Thomas Yayi Boni, President of the Republic of Benin.

President Yayi (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to reiterate from this rostrum my deepest condolences to His Majesty King Harald V of Norway in connection with the car-bomb attack and the shootings that took place on Utøya Island — a terrible tragedy that has devastated his people. My Government strongly condemns these terrorist attacks.

The High-level Meeting on Youth, which opened on 25 July, is a way for us to build on contributions from different backgrounds and to build a shared vision around dialogue and mutual understanding, as outlined in the outcome document (resolution 65/312). The outcome document represents the culmination of the International Year of Youth, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/134. The

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International Year has given us an exceptional opportunity to mobilize in favour of this very important segment of the world's population.

Above and beyond the ideals it promulgates in favour of a culture of peace, respect for human rights and solidarity among generations, cultures, civilizations and religions, the theme of this Meeting sounds a call to Governments and young people themselves concerning their responsibility for the future of our nations.

As we all are aware, young people are demanding more in terms of democracy, social justice, participation and integration. These are very deep-seated aspirations that run counter to trends of fundamentalism and extremism.

Because of their enthusiasm and sensitivity, their great capacity for mobilization and dissent, their idealism and their strong willingness to take great risks, young people, in their quest for greater freedom and greater well-being, represent a powerful driving force for change in all human societies. Recent events at the international level have demonstrated this quite clearly.

We must respond to their aspirations by intensifying inclusive dialogue and promoting a culture of peace and international cooperation aimed at preventing problematic developments that become outlets for pent-up, legitimate frustrations, which must be channelled and pacified in order to maintain stability and harmony within and among States.

We know that the United Nations is not indifferent to those major challenges. This is clear from the numerous initiatives that have been undertaken in recent years under the auspices of the United Nations, which have enabled us to set international development goals, backed by projects undertaken at various levels that are aimed at improving the living conditions of peoples in all respects.

However, progress towards these international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, is being achieved unevenly, highlighting to an even greater extent the inequalities that characterize today's world. We need to devote greater energy and greater determination to closing these gaps, because we are aware that their continued existence represents a threat to international peace and security.

To that end, we need to build synergies among the various existing programmes and harness the energy of young people, so as to make them both actors and beneficiaries in the process of the elimination of these inequalities. Young people need to be taken account of in all of our policies, strategies, plans and development programmes at the national, regional and global levels, because it is only those societies that give young people opportunities that will be able to meet the challenges of this century and beyond.

Our faith in young people must be rock-solid. We must motivate them and ensure that they shoulder their historic responsibility. That was the focus of the seventeenth ordinary session of the African Union, held at Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 30 June to 1 July 2011, whose theme was "Accelerating youth empowerment for sustainable development". It resolved, inter alia, that Member States should allocate sufficient resources to regional organizations for the purposes of youth-oriented programmes.

In my country, Benin, young people are seen as the main driving force behind the rebuilding of our nation, at the core of our social project. In this context, young people occupy important positions of responsibility and are invested in a real way in the future of the country. Such a rebuilding effort requires that young people have certain crucial touchstones, namely virtue, a surge of patriotism, and faith in oneself, in one's country and in the cardinal spiritual principles: patriotism, responsibility and leadership.

For all countries of the world young people are, as members know, an invaluable asset, an inexhaustible gold mine and a profitable growth area for investment for sustainable economic and social development. The twenty-first century will be the century of human capital, as embodied by young people.

Organized around the various activities carried out in the context of the International Year of Youth, the outcome document that this High-level Meeting just adopted conveys a vision that calls for a commitment to action and a coordination of efforts to do away with the obstacles that prevent youth from flourishing. The United Nations must shoulder a special responsibility in supporting Governments in this area. A United Nations agency for youth similar to UN-Women would be the best way of going about this.

Given the role of employment in ensuring the social and economic integration of young people, the

development of a global employment strategy according particular attention to eradicating youth unemployment and underemployment is of immense urgency. So too are measures to ensure mobility for young people as an expression of their sense of freedom. That can be promoted by increasing the legal channels available for temporary migration — a measure that could only enhance friendly international relations, understanding and cooperation.

These various projects, which should be launched at the conclusion of the International Year of Youth, could be carried out in the framework of a decade dedicated to youth aimed at a coordinated and sustained campaign in this direction. The General Assembly should pay particular attention to this matter when examining the report that we have just requested the Secretary-General to prepare.

We should set up a group of friends of youth, made up of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York, in order to monitor the implementation of the outcome document of this High-level Meeting. It concerns the future of humanity, which will depend upon our capacity to put young people to work at the service of peace, international security, and humane, sustainable and equitable development.

Long live friendship between peoples and nations! Long live international cooperation for the health of young people! Long live the United Nations!

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): This High-level Meeting on youth is indeed most timely. Over the past few months, in the Middle East and North Africa, educated young people — many of them graduates who nonetheless faced unemployment and the inability of their leaders to offer them a future — have mobilized to reclaim rights and liberties and policies that would ensure social justice and an equitable sharing of wealth.

I do not want to compare what cannot be compared, but what is happening today south of the Mediterranean and in the Middle East marks a step in the emancipation of youth as political and social stakeholders in their own right that is as important, in my opinion, as the events of May 1968 were for the

youth of Europe. The international community must live up to this historic opportunity.

In this context, Luxembourg welcomes the outcome document of our meeting (resolution 65/312). I thank the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Benin for having facilitated the consensus on a text that encourages us to do more in order to provide young people, including young women, with the tools to build a better future.

Luxembourg welcomes the fact that our declaration reaffirms the World Programme of Action for Youth, which remains as relevant as ever. We need to continue to implement it decisively at all levels.

Allow me to highlight a few priorities identified in that document: first, youth employment; secondly, the access of youth to basic social services such as education and health; and thirdly, the effective promotion and protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of young people, including in situations of conflict.

In Luxembourg, our youth policy is based on the framework law of 2008. Our policy is intended to be cross-cutting, as it encompasses all political fields that have a bearing on the lives of young people. Our policy aims to be participatory. The Youth Parliament allows young people to make their voice heard in our national political debate.

On the basis of a detailed analysis of the situation of the youth in Luxembourg, a national action plan is about to be finalized. It will focus on a limited number of priorities, the first two being support for young people as they are transitioning from the world of education to the world of work, and support for young families.

I would also like to stress that our development and humanitarian cooperation policy attaches great importance to education and to vocational and technical training for young people. With our partners, whether in Cape Verde, Senegal, Nicaragua, Viet Nam or the occupied Palestinian territories, Luxembourg's development cooperation works to improve youth employment. We also support microfinance programmes designed to enable access to entrepreneurship for young people.

Finally, given our commitment to peacebuilding, in particular in West Africa and especially in Guinea, Luxembourg is aware that youth employment is

essential to establishing peace and lasting social cohesion in countries emerging from conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paul Abena, Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs of Suriname, who will speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Abena (Suriname): On behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I extend sincere condolences to the people and Government of Norway on the tragedy involving young people.

It is a distinct honour to address the General Assembly on this historic occasion on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community. I also have the pleasure of bringing greetings on behalf of the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Desiré Bouterse, who holds the portfolio for youth, sport, gender and culture within the Community.

CARICOM associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

As we near the end of the International Year of Youth, this High-level Meeting provides a timely opportunity to address the vulnerabilities of young people, the challenges that they face with regard to progress and development, and how issues such as poverty, unemployment, health and an inadequate education system affect them. Such issues are of particular interest to CARICOM, since young people, under the age of 30, comprise approximately 60 per cent of the population of our region.

CARICOM is at the forefront in engaging and integrating young people within the region by providing them opportunities to be actively involved and to further their creativity and talents.

In that regard, I call attention to the Special CARICOM Summit on Youth Development, which was held in January 2010 in Suriname. The Summit endorsed the report of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development, launched in 2007 by the mandate of the CARICOM Heads of Government to undertake a full-scale analysis of the challenges and opportunities for youth in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. The Commission also made recommendations to improve the well-being and empowerment of young people. The Summit adopted the Declaration of Paramaribo on the Future of Youth in the Caribbean Community, which identifies youth as

a resource and a partner in development and strongly links youth development with national and regional development.

The CARICOM youth agenda aims to empower young people between the ages of 15 and 29 to take advantage of and contribute to regional integration and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. It is anchored in the Regional Strategy for Youth Development, with the following thematic priorities: social and economic empowerment, opportunities for development, protection, leadership, governance and participation, health and reproductive rights.

Since 2003, an important component of our youth agenda has been the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors programme. The programme is a Community mechanism for deepening levels of youth participation, partnership in regional integration and region-wide social and economic development processes. CARICOM Youth Ambassadors form a network of young Caribbean leaders mandated by CARICOM Heads of Government to advocate for, and to educate young people about, regional priorities such as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and HIV and AIDS.

Young people are increasingly affected by or at risk of developing non-communicable diseases. To ensure that all our citizens, including our youth, enjoy the highest attainable standards of health, addressing the incidence and prevalence of such diseases remains a regional priority.

Another issue of concern to the region is the high rates of youth unemployment, with female unemployment rates being significantly higher. CARICOM will support efforts to develop a global strategy on this issue.

Crime and violence also remain a major concern among adolescents and youth in almost all countries in the Caribbean region. They are associated with poverty, unemployment and social inequities. This led CARICOM Heads of Government to direct that the Social and Development Crime Prevention Action Plan, developed with the assistance of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, be treated with the utmost urgency.

We support initiatives within the United Nations system that prioritize and increase support for youth development. In that regard, it is CARICOM's view

that there should be follow-up to the framework approach developed by the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development to guide its work during the International Year. That framework also addresses the persisting challenges outlined in priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The overarching objectives of the framework — to increase commitment to and investment in youth, increase youth participation and partnerships, and increase intercultural understanding among youth — could guide the work of United Nations agencies beyond the International Year.

The global community would make an excellent investment by increasing financial and capacity-building support for youth development, particularly in disadvantaged regions and communities. In that regard, the UN-Habitat Youth Fund should be strengthened. It could stand as a model for financing youth development in other thematic areas.

Finally, CARICOM recognizes that young people are already actively involved in society and make valuable contributions to it through achievements in leadership, democratic processes, business, technology, research, sports, music, art and many other fields. Their affinity with information and communication technology allows them to share knowledge and experiences beyond the borders of their own communities and to build bridges between their societies and cultures and those of others.

CARICOM understands the potential of young people to be creative and to act as agents of change. We are convinced that our future depends on our youth. Therefore, there could be no better title for our youth commission report than “Eye on the future: Investing in youth now for tomorrow’s community”.

We stand ready to cooperate with other Member States, donors and the international community to advance youth development. We reiterate our commitment to continue to provide young people accelerated opportunities, within the possibilities of our limited means, as a prerequisite for the well-being of the world and future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kazenambo Kazenambo, Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture of Namibia, who will speak on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

Mr. Kazenambo (Namibia): First, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), I would like to extend our condolences to the people of Norway.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, which is composed of the following countries: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and my own country, Namibia. SADC aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the representative of Rwanda on behalf of the African Group, respectively. The SADC will lend its full support and cooperation towards a successful conclusion of this crucial gathering.

Youth development issues are a big priority in the Southern African Development Community. National policies, legislation and programmes exist at different levels in our region to promote the development of youth in general. As part of the African Union, SADC member States continue to commit ourselves to 2009-2019 as the decade for youth empowerment and sustainable development. At the regional level, a programme has been established to collectively address the growing challenges of vulnerable youth in our region.

At the recent African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Equatorial Guinea from 30 June to 1 July, the leaders of Africa dealt with the theme “Accelerating youth empowerment for sustainable development”. They took a decision to prioritize the youth agenda and they adopted policies aimed at the creation of safe and competitive employment opportunities. Despite those achievements, we are aware that many daunting challenges remain, the biggest among them being unemployment. A substantial number of young people lack productive and self-employment opportunities, and some in the region are either unemployed or underemployed.

Studies conducted by the SADC secretariat also suggest that there are challenges in the way existing policies, strategies and service-delivery efforts are being implemented to address the challenges facing young people in some cases across our region. Existing

structures to empower young people to effectively contribute to national and regional development in some areas are weak and grossly underfunded at the national and regional levels. In addition, the understanding of the concept of youth participation and empowerment often varies among member States and organizations working across the region, creating a lack of comparability in the region. That situation makes coordinating youth development another major challenge.

SADC member States recommend the creation of a specialized United Nations agency for youth in order to support and fund youth initiatives in Member States. This proposal has been made in light of the fact that the existing United Nations agencies do not adequately address youth development issues. The specialized youth agency should report and be accountable to a United Nations youth committee. The World Programme of Action for Youth must be reviewed and mechanisms for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation established.

It is our hope that the outcome document adopted at the beginning of this meeting (resolution 65/312) will help advance the agenda of the well-being of youth at the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Moncef Belkhat, Minister of Youth and Sports of Morocco, who will speak on behalf of the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports.

Mr. Belkhat (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express the condolences of the King and people of Morocco to the Kingdom of Norway in the wake of the tragedy in Oslo.

Young people have changed, and so has their environment, including their cultural, social, political, economic and information framework — and their way of life — as their ambitions have crystallized. They have a different view of politicians and those who steer public affairs and their confidence in the future has been shaken. Today's youth range in age from 18 to 30 years. Some drop out of school, forced by their family circumstances into an early entry into the labour market, while some pursue their studies until a late age. They constitute a new demographic with its own peculiar needs.

Young people are an essential force for change in developing countries, and the internet is their favourite and most widely used medium and tool. They have embraced it and made it a means of discourse that transcends borders. Modern technology has become their primary means of communication, and they derive from it values and lifestyles unknown to their elders. That virtual world has a marked effect on their thinking and behaviour. Although attached to their values, they are inclined to establish other, new rules of conduct, including a new language.

What programmes do we have in place for this new generation? Do we have enough to satisfy the wide-ranging needs of youth between the ages of 15 and 30?

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, over the past decade Morocco has experienced profound changes, sectoral reforms and structural transformations that have included all fields, including the economic, social and political. It has also made major strides towards achieving development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals, with particular emphasis on combating poverty, marginalization, fragility and exclusion. Morocco has also made remarkable progress in gender equity and equality, enhancing the political representation of women and their active presence in public life in the areas of health, family, education and the labour market.

All through these years, our country has made young people a strong strategic priority of our country. We have focused on their education, their training and their preparation for the labour market. We strive to ensure their participation in political life and their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Morocco.

This interest has been reflected since 2009 in a national youth strategy. We have sought to lay down a general framework in which all players can be included, and through which we expect to consolidate and coordinate a plan of action for all the governmental sectors concerned, and to prepare a comprehensive offering to youth that would fulfil the aspirations of every young woman and young man.

The speech given by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, on 9 March 2009 marked a major turning point in Morocco. Through that speech, His Majesty identified young people as the main engine of

development. Consequently, his will in that regard was embodied in the drafting of a new Constitution responsive to the aspirations of the Moroccan people, especially the young among them.

In determining how to proceed in tackling this issue and formulating policies for youth, Morocco has decided to take the path of soliciting the contributions and involvement of all stakeholders, especially young people. To that end, we organized our first national youth debate, in which more than 1,000 young men and women, representing every region of Morocco, held a dialogue with the Government. The debate was a genuine opportunity for young people to contribute to formulating an integrated national youth strategy.

Finally, 1 July marked a historic date in Morocco's democratic process, when more than 10 million Moroccans came out to express their decision regarding the new Constitution, which honoured our young people by genuinely involving them in the development of our economic, social and political institutions by encouraging their active contribution to the electoral process. Moreover, a consultative council for youth and collective action was set up as an essential guarantor of the integrated national youth strategy.

Fulfilling the aspirations of young people in our Arab countries has always been a concern of paramount importance in our national policies and in the decisions taken at the Arab summits, the most recent of which declared 2010-2011 the International Year of Youth and called for the drafting of an Arab youth policies document, which was adopted by the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers in Marrakech, Morocco, on 4 May. The document included the recognition by all Arab States of the need to enhance young Arabs' sense of belonging and attachment to their identity and culture.

In their assessment of the situation of young people in the Arab world, the States acknowledged that they share with the rest of the world's youth many common concerns and attitudes on matters of universal interest, such as the desire for security, liberty, equality, dignity, health and acceptance of others. They also recognized such issues as the lack of job opportunities, emigration and migration, political participation, conservation of the environment and controlling pollution. The States also affirmed their resolve to invest in young people, who have the most

potential for bringing a multiplier effect to bear on their countries' economies, and the importance of providing them with opportunities to participate in policymaking and leadership.

Regardless of the extent of individual countries' national efforts and the effectiveness of their youth policies, their success will remain contingent on concerted endeavours at the regional and national levels to overcome the challenges facing young people. That is the goal of the Arab Youth Observatory recently established in Rabat, which will serve as a mechanism for predicting trends among young people. It is our hope that the Observatory will contribute to eliminating barriers and creating a new communications dynamic among the peoples of the Arab region, aimed at fostering economic integration and mobilizing young people's capabilities in order to ensure development.

The year 2011 is the International Year of Youth; we suggest that 2012 should be the year that all these promises are implemented and that we invest in our young people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Khalid Mohammad Al-Attiyah, Minister of State for International Cooperation of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Attiyah (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the State of Qatar, to express our deep sorrow and condolences for the crime that has cost the lives of dozens of innocent people in Norway — a result of the same kinds of violence and intransigence that have led us to hold our meeting today. I offer our condolences to the people and Government of Norway.

The declaration of 2010-2011 as the International Year of Youth and the selection of "Dialogue and mutual understanding" as the theme of our discussions were decisions based on the ideals of human rights and a spirit of solidarity. These are subjects that we must consider if we are to come together to reject stereotypes and reinforce a culture of understanding and mutual respect among peoples.

The State of Qatar believes that young people are an essential component of every society that must be taken into account in order to build a promising future that affords every member of a community the opportunity to live in dignity and enjoy fundamental

rights, including human rights and the right to education, health and freedom of expression. In this regard, the State of Qatar, through its various youth, sport, cultural and social institutions, attaches great importance to the International Year of Youth and has integrated its theme of dialogue and mutual understanding into its policy priorities.

The State of Qatar is eager to engage young people in all its development policies and to involve them in every area of society. We have therefore supported initiatives for cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa, aimed at developing and implementing strategies for providing decent, productive work for young people through the Silatech Foundation. This is designed to address the problem of unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa by creating jobs for young people, bringing them into the labour market and setting up programmes for their training and rehabilitation, and supporting owners of small and medium-size enterprises. Our goal is to reach 100 million jobs by 2020.

Moreover, the State of Qatar is doing its utmost to provide a high level of education for young Qataris and equal opportunities for both sexes, while ensuring that the educational system meets the labour market's needs. The State also strives to provide health care for young people, while focusing on awareness and preventive campaigns against deadly diseases such as AIDS, in addition to raising awareness of the risks of drug abuse and psychotropic substances.

I would like to emphasize an important aspect of the State's youth policies, which is gender equality. We recognize the importance of encouraging the education of girls, since efforts in support of young people cannot be complete if they do not take into account girls and boys alike. The State of Qatar has made great strides in this area and is one of the leading countries of our region in terms of the education and involvement of women in society and decision-making.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 29 represent more than 30 per cent of Qatar's population. In this context, and based on our consciousness of the human wealth represented by this sector of society and their skills and potential, which must contribute effectively to the country's development, they are a significant component of the Qatar Vision 2030 programme. Through Qatar Vision 2030, the State seeks to enhance the achievements of

sustainable development by allowing young people to participate fully in the development process.

In recent years, several studies have addressed the social and economic problems facing young people in the Arab world, including unemployment and higher poverty rates. There is no question that the economic and financial crisis that began in 2008 has exacerbated social and economic problems. Young people represent the most numerous group in the world and are the most affected by the world's economic, social and environmental challenges and face great difficulties in the areas of access to education, health, decent work and minimum living standards.

We also call for action to enable young people to enjoy fundamental rights and real opportunities for effective participation in building their countries' future through participation in decision-making, helping them become a pillar of sustainable development, and building an economic system that provides opportunities for success for every member of society. There is no doubt that international cooperation has a major role to play in securing the necessary material resources and the exchange of technical expertise and capacity-building needed to achieve the majority of the goals we all seek in this area. The genuine commitment of all parties to implementing the pledges made in this meeting's outcome document (resolution 65/312) at the national, regional and international levels is essential to achieving those goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

President Mugabe: I would like to begin by recognizing all the young people who are present here on this occasion of commemorating the International Year of Youth, but in doing so, also repeat and reiterate our expressions of sympathy to Norway over the tragedy that has visited that country.

My delegation commends the decision made by the General Assembly to convene this very important meeting, whose theme is vital to reinforcing the fundamental principle of international relations, namely, that of peaceful coexistence. It is my sincere hope that the deliberations and outcomes of this meeting will provide young people with opportunities to foster the spirit of dialogue and mutual understanding across cultures and faiths, while

promoting the ideals of peace, respect for human rights, freedom and solidarity.

The youth agenda has been a priority of my Government's programmes since the attainment of our independence in 1980. In recognition of the sacrifices made by our youth in fighting for our independence, my Government not only created a Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation, but also adopted a policy of education for all children that would give them varied educational skills and capabilities in order to enable them to participate both in the economy and in the social and political life of their country.

With those first steps of our formative years as a newly independent country, the Government ensured that the youth in Zimbabwe would consistently enjoy being a part of various representative institutions and political pluralism. At the same time, Government established and expanded vocational skills training centres. The benefits of those measures, coupled with a broad educational curriculum, have seen my country attain top-notch positions in education and human resources development on the continent.

However, in spite of these achievements, we still face the challenges of unemployed and underemployed youth. The demands of changing demographics and the current global economic condition now challenge us to employ greater innovation in addressing the needs of young people who are unemployed and idle. Indeed, the entire continent of Africa faces urgent challenges as a result of the numbers of unemployed youth.

In 1995, my Government adopted the Zimbabwe Youth Council Act, which gave further impetus to efforts to include children and young people in national dialogue, empowerment and governance issues. The Council provides a platform for a harmonious working relationship between Government, youth, the private sector and civil society. The Zimbabwe Youth Council is responsible for coordinating programmes for the Junior Parliament, junior local Government structures and youth business forums. The activities of the Zimbabwe Youth Council have thus given our youth vital experience in governance issues and decision-making processes. The deliberations and decisions which evolve from those noble initiatives directly feed into our national youth development programmes.

Just one month ago, on 29 June, our high school students successfully held a model United Nations General Assembly debate, at which they reviewed the

progress made by the country on the Millennium Development Goals.

In 2001, my Government introduced a national youth service programme whose principal goal is to promote a culture of peace, dialogue, mutual understanding, tolerance, equality, justice and democracy. The objective is to instil a sense of patriotism and national identity, while empowering young people for community and nation-building by moulding character and leadership skills. The programme has been a tremendous success, with over 80,000 youths having participated and now proceeding to establish programmes for self-reliant livelihoods. More pointedly, the programme has proved our Western detractors wrong in their unfounded allegations against Zimbabwe.

My Government has, over the years, initiated youth empowerment programmes that have transformed our young people into power engines for achieving long-term development. A notable example of the empowerment programmes is the land reform exercise, which has provided land to young people and youth cooperatives, enabling them to become active players in our national economic development endeavours.

My Government is further encouraging the youth to create wealth through an indigenization and empowerment policy that aims to promote ownership and control of the means of production by indigenous Zimbabweans. Further, my Government has established two important credit facilities — the Youth Development Fund and the Empowerment Fund — both of which provide State-guaranteed financial assistance to support micro-, small and medium-size enterprises. The Fund's schemes are implemented in partnership with local commercial banks. The challenge faced by this programme is that of limited resources. It is in this context that we encourage our development partners to assist us by providing additional funding to enable us to meet our goal of preparing our youth and achieving the internationally agreed development goals.

Zimbabwe envisions an education system that incorporates its young people meaningfully in national development and equips them with appropriate industrial, trade and entrepreneurial skills. The youth of many developing countries, including Zimbabwe, are as talented, entrepreneurial, innovative and creative

as their counterparts in the developed countries. What they lack are resources and, often, skills training and entrepreneurial opportunities.

As a result, developing countries have lost some of their young creative and innovative talents to the developed world in such critical areas as engineering, health, industry, commerce, law and entrepreneurial management. We call upon United Nations entities and other development partners to assist developing countries in providing more up-to-date scientific and technological training, which has become necessary because of the current levels of technological advancement.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be a clear and present danger to youth development, especially in developing countries. My Government, with assistance from partners such as the Global Fund, has invested heavily in HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment programmes. My country also introduced an AIDS levy in order to broaden the financial base from which to fight the pandemic. We once again call upon the international community to increase its assistance to the developing countries to combat the debilitating HIV/AIDS challenge.

Zimbabwe fully supports the resolutions of the African Union Heads of State and Government summit that was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June and July this year, the Youth Decade Plan of Action (2009-2018), and the Ouagadougou 2004 Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation to promote the active participation and involvement of young people in all spheres of national development. These resolutions recognize that our youth, who constitute the largest percentage of the population in Africa, should not be on the periphery of our national programmes and mainstream economic activities. We need to view them as an asset rather than as a liability to the socio-economic development of our nations.

Indeed, it is time that the international community came up with a well-conceived and properly structured international framework that has comprehensive action plans for youth development. The framework should fully address the real contemporary challenges facing the youth.

Zimbabwe condemns any country or group of countries that uses the plight of young people in weaker States to achieve their own sinister political ends, such as regime change. Zimbabwe has been and

continues to be a victim of the sinister neo-colonial machinations through illegal sanctions and constant interferences in our domestic affairs. Such actions should stand condemned — and condemned forever — as they adversely affect development and thus retard youth development in particular.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ximena Ponce, Minister for Economic and Social Inclusion of Ecuador.

Ms. Ponce (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President of the General Assembly. For the Government of Ecuador of our comrade Rafael Correa, it is truly a source of pride to be here. We consider ourselves democratic Governments — some Governments in Latin America that are finding alternative tracks to development in which we have changed the axis of the concept of what constitutes a government.

We are changing the axis from that of a government that is dedicated to offering market solutions to a government in which the human being is at the centre of our development. That is timely, because here in this summit we are speaking specifically of youth — a group of people with specific needs — as well as other groups of people who have been excluded from earlier development models — women, indigenous people, people in rural sectors.

In this summit we are focused on youth. We think the alternate tracks to development that we are working on can in some way offer many responses to issues raised here. But there are also questions, to which we as a national Government must respond.

We have heard here, with much emphasis, of the need for citizen participation. Much of this has to do with what we think of as an essentially democratic system in Ecuador. In our experience, we have seen two different tracks for consolidating the democratic system: the track of representative democracy and the track of participative democracy. These theories are found in all political developments in all concepts of the State. However, along the way we have seen practical applications.

The track of representative democracy is something that we are institutionalizing. The idea is that all State structures should provide solutions so that a true representative democracy can be installed. In that representation, which concerns us in this summit,

we should see the possibility that youth and other disenfranchised groups have the possibility to be represented, so that the policies for these populations develop in a fluid manner throughout the State structure. That allows us to achieve what we have always sought through social organizations or citizens' groups. That is, people can have a role in public policy.

We are working arduously on this, on the normative structure that enables democratic governments to have instruments, whether a constitution or legal frameworks, and that they allow for all sorts of projects and programmes and management within the State of Ecuador. The idea is that these guiding principles and policies should make possible ongoing activities, fundamentally with regard to youth.

In the non-institutional area there is a need to ensure that civil society — organized in some manner, including sometimes people acting on an individual basis — also has means to express itself so that in their own realities people have opportunities to express themselves and bring their weight to bear on public policy.

We have made progress in both tracks. There are several examples of progress. In the Constitution, on one hand, we have recognized, in a specific article, youth as the actors in their own destiny. The idea is to have a general framework for youth to contribute in the whole of public policy. We have also, in the Constitution, set out conscientious objection — the highest expression of freedom for the youth to determine their need, their concern, their decision or choice when it comes to military service. In our country military service is not obligatory. The idea is to make this a concept around the world.

We have made progress in decent and dignified work for youth in the work experiences they need with a public sector programme called "My First Job", to which \$3.3 million have been allocated in one year to motivate youth to enter the job market. We are making progress in sexual and reproductive rights through a strategy to eliminate or reduce unwanted teen pregnancy. In one year the Ecuadorian State will invest \$8 million in that undertaking. Free education from the primary level to university can allow for the youth to gradually make their own decisions to the degree that they have the opportunities and knowledge to do so.

Those are the two tracks for democratic participation of youth that we think have been possible in our country. Thus, as with the dreams and ongoing struggle of the youth, we hope that together we can all make possible a world that will necessarily be for them.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Marco Antonio Midence Milla, Minister of Youth of Honduras.

Mr. Milla (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to convey our heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the brotherly nation of Norway.

I represent a country that is at the heart of Central America. Though rich in diversity and endowed with nature's gifts, my country's greatest treasure is its people. Of the nearly 8 million Hondurans, our demographic profile shows that 68 per cent of the population is of less than 30 years of age, making Honduras a young country. Despite that, our country's youth face a serious situation of exclusion. In the area of education, only 35 per cent of young people successfully complete secondary education, 15 per cent advance to higher studies, and 4 per cent graduate successfully.

Of our working population, 46 per cent are young people, yet four out of five unemployed workers are youths. In the area of emigration, 60 per cent of those who leave the country to seek a better life in the north are also young. Even more serious is the issue of security, where two out of every three youth deaths result from violence. While it may be accepted that these scourges primarily target young people, it is not enough for us to give up our efforts in this fight. We view the current state of our nation more as a challenge than as a grim prison for our hopes.

Today, we are seeking our own path ahead. I express these words as a young man and a civil servant. I represent a Government whose President has entrusted me with the Ministry of Youth, although I am only 26 years of age. I am the youngest Minister in the democratic history of my country.

The Government has provided authentic venues for youth participation. A framework law on comprehensive youth development was adopted in 2005, enabling youth decision-making and participation. The law also set up the Office of Youth in the State Department, enabling us young people,

who comprise the great majority of Hondurans, to have voices and votes at the highest level of executive decision-making. The most important result of the framework law on youth has been the Government policy on youth, which is aligned with the national plan that will run to 2038. That policy enables young people to act not merely as consumers of State policy, but as authentic agents of strategic change.

In the area of citizen participation, we have launched an initiative to draft a law on volunteerism in order to promote civic solidarity. An electoral reform law is aimed at 30 per cent representation by youth. In the area of education, we are considering laws that would allow the community to participate actively in youth training. In economic rights, there are initiatives aimed at young people in business and as entrepreneurs, as well as training opportunities to acquire the skills necessary for entry into the labour market.

Given that progress, I take this opportunity to express Honduras appreciation for the adoption by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session of the outcome document of the High-level Meeting on Youth (resolution 65/312). We very much hope that this mechanism will enable States, civil society organizations, families and youth to become decision-makers. We hope that the international community can breathe life into those processes so that Honduras can move from words to deeds in including the youth.

In conclusion, I wish to join with all to banish the age-old cliché that the future belongs to the young. It is not the future, but the present that belongs to the young. The International Year of Youth may be scheduled to end on 11 August, but the present is only the start for a new generation to make a difference in favour of a better world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than three minutes when speaking in a national capacity, and to five minutes when speaking on behalf of a group. I urge speakers to respect those time limits. As I have indicated, we have more than 100 left on our list and I wish to give the floor to every one.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dullas Alahapperuma, Minister of Youth Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Alahapperuma (Sri Lanka): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important and

timely High-level Meeting. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his opening remarks. I join other speakers in extending our heartfelt condolences to the Norwegian families who lost loved ones in last week's twin attacks. We stand with the Norwegian people in support and solidarity. We are also very sad that a majority of the victims of that national tragedy were youth.

Sri Lanka and its people understand the pain and trauma that follow attacks of such magnitude, having suffered similar relentless violence for close to 30 long years. Such events, whether in Sri Lanka or Norway, give the theme of the High-level Meeting on Youth added meaning. Dialogue and mutual understanding within and without are both critical to the evolution of national harmony and international coexistence.

I address this forum as the Minister of Youth Affairs and Skills Development of a country with a youth population of almost 26 per cent of its 20 million people. Following the end of the scourge of terrorism, the hopes of the country's youth for a secure, better and more progressive Sri Lanka have been renewed.

It was in recognition of this new dawn of opportunity and progress that the Youth Parliament of Sri Lanka was conceived and implemented to mark the International Year of Youth. The Youth Parliament comprises 335 members between the ages of 15 and 26 years, representing all ethnic communities in the country. Twenty-five per cent of the young parliamentarians are from the predominantly Tamil areas in the north. The Youth Parliament is also inclusive, with members from the different ethnic and indigenous groups.

The impetus for setting up the Youth Parliament was to create leaders or representatives nurtured in the finest democratic ideals and practices. It also provides an important opportunity in post-conflict Sri Lanka to foster ideals of peace, solidarity and harmony among the country's younger generation. The aspiring leaders in the Youth Parliament could one day meaningfully contribute to strengthening and revitalizing the country's democratic institutions and democratic governance, and further promote the ideals of peace, tolerance and justice.

Youth issues receive special policy attention in my country. The problem of unemployment remains a sensitive political issue for the country's leaders and policymakers, as unemployment is concentrated among

the educated youth. Sri Lanka experienced two violent youth insurgencies in 1971 and 1988, and is therefore especially mindful of the issues concerning young adults. It is precisely in recognition of this reality that the policy document of His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa, known as “Mahinda Vision”, gives utmost priority to programmes for the country’s youth.

In order to broaden the employment opportunities for our youth and to enable them to compete better in job markets, the Ministry of Youth Affairs is integrating skills development. We encourage our youth to be innovative and creative. The General Assembly’s 2010 outcome document on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (resolution 65/1) has also endorsed a similar call for effecting such improvements.

The Government of Sri Lanka provides training and capacity-building to complement the needs and demands of the local, regional and global labour markets. In addition to regular educational opportunities, more than 1,300 young people — including former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam combatants — are being given vocational training in the former conflict-affected north and east of the country. In addition, the National Youth Services Council of Sri Lanka, which coordinates the youth clubs in the country, has initiated a foreign-language training programme.

Since ending terrorism in our country, we have restored political stability and taken many measures to improve the social, civil, economic and political conditions of all Sri Lankans. We have also made remarkable progress in rehabilitating, reintegrating and empowering former child combatants for a better future.

It is our dedicated commitment to youth that has enabled Sri Lanka to host the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations this year in New York. We would like to have the opportunity and honour to host the United Nations World Youth Conference of 2014 in Sri Lanka as the international community prepares to formulate a new, post-MDGs agenda.

Finally, as we heard during the opening plenary meeting, today’s youth need opportunities to participate and contribute. They seek positive engagement in community life. They look forward to

being active partners in the development processes in their countries, to being stakeholders in their communities and societies rather being dependents or mere beneficiaries. Their fears are real, given the current multiple global crises, particularly the financial and food crises and climate change.

Youth no doubt ask themselves whether the quality of their lives will be better than that of their parents. For those in the developing world, there is a real need to bridge the digital divide, including through transfer of technology and international cooperation to impart needed knowledge and skills for gainful employment. Through international cooperation, it is also important to address issues surrounding international migration. Therefore, recognizing the real concerns and needs of youth is an imperative of the present. We have already heard them say that now is their future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Guy Nzouba Ndama, President of the National Assembly of Gabon.

Mr. Nzouba Ndama (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I wish to convey to you the thanks of the President of the Gabonese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, for your invitation to this High-level Meeting on Youth. Because his schedule prevented him from coming, he asked me to represent him at these meetings in order to deliver the following message.

“I am delighted to participate in this important High-level Meeting, which is the high point of the International Year of Youth proclaimed, in resolution 64/134, to commence on 12 August 2010.

“Dialogue and mutual understanding are instruments in service of sustainable peace. They enable the coming together of peoples and lead them to get to know each other better in the deepest, truest and most sacred parts of themselves.

“The constant use of these tools by young people enables them to open up to the world and provides the most effective way to prepare them intellectually and spiritually to be instruments for peace and development.

“It is among today’s youth that the leaders of tomorrow will be selected, through ways that

are not yet known to us. The popular movements that have shaken the Middle East and North Africa have shown how important it is to be alert to the concerns of young people. We have been wrong to have often failed to involve them in processes of elaborating and implementing major decisions that affect the fate of the world.

“In Gabon, we have understood for many years the need to invest in young people in order to increase the likelihood of a better future for our country. My predecessor, the late President Omar Bongo Ondimba, was accustomed to saying that youth is sacred. My political commitment is part of an extension of this vision, which puts young people at the heart of Gabon’s development. Indeed, I have committed myself to making Gabon into an emerging country by 2025. To achieve such an objective, we must value and draw upon our human resources, that is, train young people in key sectors of our economy.

“It is with a view to meeting this requirement that I have decided to make substantial increases in the budgetary allocations to the education, training and the socio-economic and professional integration of young people in my country. I have also decided to hold a regular, direct dialogue with young people in different forums on their aspirations and vision for Gabon.

“We must fight isolation and distrust of others by looking at the world, not through us, but beyond us. It is the ideals of peace, tolerance and mutual understanding that we must transmit to today’s young people.

“I hope that the document that we have just adopted (resolution 65/312) will reaffirm our commitment to improve the conditions for young people the world over and to give them a new hope — that of involving them in building the world of tomorrow to which they belong.”

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Adoum Garoua, Minister for Youth of Cameroon.

Mr. Garoua (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to convey, on behalf of the Cameroonian delegation, our condolences to Government and the people of Norway following the

calamity that happened in Oslo on Friday, 22 July 2011.

It is a immense privilege and great honour for me to take the floor at this podium, in this High-level Meeting organized by the United Nations, to convey to the General Assembly Cameroon’s position with respect to youth matters.

I wish, through this statement, to paint a picture of the situation of young people in Cameroon and to present the various strategies implemented by the Government to help young people flourish, particularly through better taking into account the concerns of the youth of my country, who represent more than 60 per cent of a population of more than 20 million people.

Our country has demonstrated its intention through the establishment by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, of a whole ministerial department dedicated to youth. Since its establishment in 2004, the Ministry of Youth has set about drafting a set of strategic documents to guide its activities. These guidelines are set out in the Employment and Growth Strategy Document, a reference framework for Government activities over the period from 2010 to 2020. It underscores the central role of young people and shows the resolute will to make Cameroon an emerging country by 2035.

The document of the National Youth Policy, implemented through a youth plan comprising 13 projects and programmes, stems from that vision. Those various projects and programmes seek the full, effective and able participation of young people in the State-building and durable development of Cameroon. They also propose fitting responses to the concerns and scourges affecting young people. Moreover, they are anchored in the 10 priority areas identified for young people and contained in international instruments, such as Millennium Development Goals, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Plan of Action of the African Youth Decade 2009-2018.

Given their cross-cutting and priority nature, in view of the time allotted to us, I will focus on the following four areas: education and vocational training, health care, employment, and youth participation in decision-taking.

With regard to education and vocational training, the Government has strongly stressed building human capital. One fifth of the gross domestic product is

dedicated to that. Public primary education is free. Quality basic education, which covers the primary cycle and the first cycle of secondary education open to children aged 6 to 15, makes it possible to provide an average level of education that is in keeping with the vision of a Cameroon emerging by 2035. Secondary education, built on a dynamic balance between general and technical education, prepares for higher education in courses that have priority for the development of an economy expecting further industrialization and for a professional university education.

In the area of health care, improving the state of health, in particular of the young population, remains an ongoing goal of the Government. There is also intervention with regard to maternal, neonatal and child mortality. With regard to the fight against HIV/AIDS, to which young people in particular are vulnerable, an entire programme, based on the multisectoral approach implemented since 2000, focuses primarily on reducing the prevalence rate of that disease. Prevention activities for young people have been developed along the lines of "Holidays without AIDS" campaigns, advice on voluntary screening and the treatment of orphans and vulnerable children.

In the area of work, the national employment policy primarily seeks to promote full, decent and freely chosen jobs. The focus is on developing salaried work through support for the establishment and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. Promoting self-employment will assist that primary feature. There are specific programmes to promote employment among young people. Here I would like to cite the Rural and Urban Youth Support Programme, the Integrated Support Project for Informal Sectors, the National Employment Fund and, lastly, the National Civic Service for Participation in Development, whose goal is to help harness the energies of young people.

In the area of youth participation in decision-taking, I would mention the establishment of the National Employment Council, which is a framework for the cooperation, representation and action of young people.

Allow me to conclude my statement by mentioning challenges and prospects. For the Cameroonian Government, young people are a major asset in a country where there are stable institutions

and where the body of reforms already undertaken clearly demonstrates the emergence of responsible youth, aware of the notion of peace, dialogue and mutual understanding.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shaw Kgathi, Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture of Botswana.

Mr. Kgathi (Botswana): Botswana joins other delegations in conveying our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Norway on the recent attacks, in which many innocent lives were lost.

We also join other speakers in commending you, Mr. President, for the very effective manner in which you have steered this High-level Meeting. I therefore pledge the full support of my delegation to you in your stewardship of our deliberations towards a meaningful and fruitful outcome.

Botswana associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation noted with pleasure and satisfaction the Secretary-General's introductory statement at the commencement of this High-level Meeting (see A/65/PV.110). Consistent with the Secretary-General's statement, Botswana supports the deepening of inter-agency coordination and the mainstreaming of the youth development agenda in the United Nations. To that end, Botswana also fully supports the African Union's call for the creation of a United Nations special youth agency to support and fund youth initiatives in Member States. Botswana also fully supports the development of indicators linked to the World Programme of Action for Youth in order to assist Member States in assessing the situation of youth in their countries.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth on the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding (resolution 65/312).

The Government of Botswana recognizes youth as a major human resource and an important constituent in the development of the country. As such, youth issues occupy a central place in the national development agenda. We view youth development as a strategic socio-economic, cultural and political investment in Botswana's future. The Botswana Government is committed to nurturing and developing

its youth and empowering them for a better future. That arises from the fact that the existence, future and prosperity of every nation are dependent, to a large extent, on an empowered youth.

There is therefore a national consensus on the need for the development and empowerment of young people in Botswana in order to realize the full extent of their potential. Consequently, youth and leadership development has been included among the strategic thematic areas within Botswana's National Youth Policy.

Since independence in 1966, the Government of Botswana has been consistent in the development and promotion of pro-poor policies and programmes that have also targeted both urban and rural youth. The first National Youth Policy, which was adopted by Parliament in 1996, has been reviewed to address emerging issues that affect young people. The implementation of that Policy is guided by the Revised National Youth Policy action plan.

One strategic thematic area to be addressed through the 2010 Revised Policy is the issue of poverty eradication. In an effort to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment, as well as the emerging challenge of HIV/AIDS among young people, the Government of Botswana has a comprehensive cross-sectoral policy, which embraces the Millennium Development Goals, the National Vision 2016 and the National Development Plan.

The commitment of the Botswana Government to youth development and empowerment is further demonstrated by the continuous inclusion of their issues in the annual state of the nation address. That address by the State President provides an opportunity for announcements on youth policy, programmes and projects, whose implementation is given high priority in Government business.

However, there are other emerging challenges confronting young people, arising from the effects of the global economic recession and resulting in increasing unemployment and poverty levels. It is therefore imperative that Governments heavily invest in youth empowerment and development programmes. There is also a need for investment in expertise to guide proper youth policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In conclusion, allow me to lend support to the request to the Secretary-General to lead the development of indicators for youth development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Glen Phillip, Minister of Youth, Empowerment, Sports, Information Technology, Telecommunication and Posts of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Phillip (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Saint Kitts and Nevis aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Caribbean Community.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is proud to participate in this important international gathering, and we today affirm our commitment to the objectives and actions that reflect the themes of the International Year of Youth. These, as we know, are participation, development and peace, and they draw us here today to discuss "Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding".

As one of the world's smallest nations, we believe, as a Government and as a people, that every citizen and every resident is a key component in the engine of our social and economic aspirations. It is this belief that compels us to leave no son or daughter behind. My country has a population of 50,000, of which our youth comprise a significant majority. We believe that it is in the preparation and inclusion of our youth population that we in Saint Kitts and Nevis will continue to accomplish our social objectives. Indeed, it is through preparation and inclusion that those important objectives will be transformed into sustainable economic advancement for all.

The qualities of youth are innovation, inspiration and adventure, and as the world around us changes, Saint Kitts and Nevis understands that we, too, must be ever vigilant, resilient and purposeful as we seek to build a most progressive society.

Our country has made significant strides in education, from the implementation of universal access to education by our first national hero, Robert L. Bradshaw, to the implementation of early childhood education. Under the leadership of the current Prime Minister, the Honourable Mr. Denzil Douglas, Saint Kitts and Nevis has pursued an even greater vision. Through a culture of student Government, we prepare our students, and therefore our people, for active participation in the time-honoured democratic ideals on which stable Governments everywhere depend. We are

seeking to develop and manage an e-learning and communications network to digitally connect all our high schools and institutions of higher learning. Our aim is to prepare our youth to effectively participate in the knowledge society of the present, as well as in the knowledge society that is yet to emerge.

We continue to work assiduously in defence of our youth in the 10 priority areas identified by the international community, and we actively pursue equal education and equal employment opportunities for of all our youth as we implement programmes to eliminate hunger, poverty, drug abuse and juvenile delinquency, while delivering improved health care and a cleaner, safer environment.

Through information, communications and technology advancements, and through the support of local youth organizations, such as the Saint Kitts National Youth Parliament Association and Island Expressions, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, through the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, advances the ongoing preparation of our young people to meet the challenges of today and the uncertainties of tomorrow.

Our great love and stewardship of our youth — and indeed our very nation and several other Caribbean nations — are beset by a very harsh challenge that is foreign to our pristine, idyllic and nurturing Caribbean lifestyle. I make direct reference to the spectre of guns, drugs, gangs and crime, which loom ominously over our nations, our economies and our youth. All of those scourges are foreign to us. Ironically, we do not manufacture guns or dangerous drugs. However, we seem to be the victims of our own geographical locations, where these two elements, combined with crime, constitute a new era of exploitation in which our young people, because of their innocence and fervour, are the prime targets of exploitation by universal and — sad to say — unscrupulous regional “businessmen”, for want of a better word.

At this juncture, therefore, I want to make a most sincere appeal on behalf of the youth of my nation and the entire Caribbean to leaders of conscience to intervene with us on behalf of our youth, our future. The technical and financial resources for combating the three-pronged scourge are far beyond the reach of our developing nations. International assistance therefore in curtailing this foreign agent is crucial to the

development of our nations and, by extension, all nations.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is ever thankful for the role that the United Nations plays through UNESCO and UNICEF. Those bodies help us to achieve our youth empowerment and development goals. Today, the UNESCO Small Islands Voice and Path projects, for example, play pivotal roles in raising issues in Saint Kitts and Nevis that otherwise might have been left unspoken.

Leigh Hunt reminds us that there are two worlds — the world that we measure with line and rule and the world that we feel with our hearts and imaginations. Saint Kitts and Nevis understands that it is via the fusion of both that our nation will best fulfil the aspirations of our youth.

We meet today in this Hall because we all desire greater opportunities for our youth. With vision, dedication and perseverance, this, I pray, we shall achieve.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paul Otuoma Nyongesa, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports of Kenya.

Mr. Nyongesa (Kenya): I join my colleagues and all previous speakers in offering my country's and my own condolences to the people of Norway for the tragic event there. Its effect on the young people of Norway is all the more bitter in light of our gathering here to celebrate the International Year of Youth, whose main theme is “Dialogue and mutual understanding”. May the Lord our God grant rest in His eternal peace to those who lost their lives, and may He give strength to the young people of Norway to continue pursuing dialogue and mutual understanding.

It is a great honour to be part of this gathering, which seeks to put youth at the centre of development. This event gives us an opportunity for direct interaction with youth and to share our achievements challenges, hopes and fears.

The International Year of Youth is now coming to an end, and it is time for us to review the ground we have covered towards the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding. The young people of the world are an asset and an important source of creativity, energy and potential. As the bearers of our future, it is only through them that this theme can be realized.

To add to the importance that the United Nations and African Union give to addressing youth issues, the Kenyan Government created a fully fledged Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in the year 2005. At present, Kenya is endeavouring to implement its Vision 2030, the Millennium Development Goals, the African Union Plan of Action for Youth Development, the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the African Youth Charter goals.

Young people in Kenya, and indeed many from elsewhere in our region, face many challenges. Some of these have already been mentioned. They include education and skills training, unemployment, poverty, access to credit, high vulnerability to diseases such as HIV/AIDS, drugs and substance abuse, and environmental degradation, to mention but a few. There is also a lack of opportunities and mechanisms to participate in decision-making that affect their lives.

Both before and during the celebration of the International Year of Youth, the Republic of Kenya has established measures to address the numerous challenges facing young people. These measures include enacting the Kenya National Youth Council Act of 2009, paving the way for youth to participate in national decision-making, and the construction of youth empowerment centres, which are one-stop-shops for youth to access information, in every constituency. We are also in the process of creating jobs for young people through the Kazi Kwa Vijana programme, from which more than 300,000 youths benefited in 2010.

There is also the Kenya Youth Empowerment Programme, a project owned and implemented by the Government of Kenya in collaboration with the private sector. The programme is also being funded by the World Bank to expand this job creation programme through Kazi Kwa Vijana by providing market-driven training and internships in the private sector for young people to gain experience required by employers. The project is now entering its second phase and plans to build on and enhance existing efforts. It will cost \$43 million and will engage over 11,000 youths.

The National Youth Volunteerism Scheme is an effort of the Government of Kenya to involve youth in community development through volunteerism and community service.

Entrepreneurial programmes are also being implemented by the Government of Kenya in partnership with development partners. In this context,

the Government of Kenya has carried out intensive training in entrepreneurship aimed at inculcating an entrepreneurship culture in youth. The Kenya Youth Development Fund is a State corporation that supplements entrepreneurship by facilitating access to affordable credit for young people.

I conclude by echoing that young people are the future of our nations and the world. Kenya is committed to promoting and empowering youth in all aspects, for a strong building is determined by its foundations, and in this case young people are our foundation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zacharie Kimpouni, Minister of Physical Education and Youth of Congo.

Mr. Kimpouni (Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of the Congo and its leader, President Denis Sassou Nguesso, our compassion to the people of Norway following the tragedy their country has just suffered.

The participation of the Republic of the Congo in this High-level Meeting underscores the level of interest and commitment my Government attaches to all issues relating to youth. Indeed, the Congo has a youthful population — some 60 per cent of an estimated population of 3,687,490. In light of that statistic, Government policy is strongly focused on education, training and employment to give young people all the means necessary to become a driving force and fully play their role in decision-making. The establishment of the Congo National Youth Council following the second general conference on youth in October 2010 is evidence of that firm commitment.

I note that, in the context of the fight against deviant behaviour, which is an obstacle to development, our actions includes the development of civic education programmes and teaching guides for the formal and informal sectors, and the organization of civic meetings in all local districts throughout the country as opportunities for education, exchange and mutual dialogue among people of all ages. This was achieved with the support of our United Nations partners, in particular the United Nations Population Fund.

I can affirm today that my Government is sparing no effort to ensure that young people take advantage of

all the activities being carried out for their benefit, so that they may take control of their own futures and become the future generation of leaders and economic, cultural and commercial actors, thereby promoting the emergence of a creative, attractive, dynamic and sustained private sector.

Despite these efforts, there remains a great deal to be done at the national level to address certain gaps. That is why we are still working in decision-making areas affecting youth. This meeting is therefore an excellent occasion to broach together the problems affecting young people with a view to identifying appropriate approaches and solutions.

The decisions taken at the seventeenth African Union Summit, recently held in Malabo, whose overarching theme was “Accelerating youth empowerment for sustainable development”, and at the world youth ministers meeting held recently in South Korea, bear witness to the broad interest in Africa and elsewhere in the world to develop collaboration at all levels. Thanks to information and communication technology, we have opportunities today to establish synergies and develop solidarity among all the young people of the world.

We are therefore called upon to unite in action, dialogue and mutual understanding. Let us mobilize to implement resolution 65/312 adopted at this meeting under the agenda item “Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family”. I hope that this Meeting will be stimulating and that it will yield results that are commensurate with our expectations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Ajay Maken, Minister for Youth Affairs of India.

Mr. Maken (India): Mr. President, let me begin by complimenting you on your organization of this High-level Meeting on Youth. This meeting is a fitting tribute to the culmination of the International Year of Youth at the United Nations.

Last time the United Nations commemorated the International Year of Youth, in 1985, we had the good fortune of having the late Mr. Rajiv Gandhi as our youngest Prime Minister. He was instrumental in capitalizing on the international momentum for the development of youth and in setting up the Ministry of

Human Resource Development for the holistic development of youth in India. Under his able leadership, the Parliament also took the historic decision to lower the voting age to 18 years so as to enable young people to participate in the democratic processes of our country. He went on to announce the first national youth policy in 1988.

In order to further enhance the involvement of youth in the democratic process of governance, the minimum age for elected representatives in around 300,000 local bodies was lowered to 21 years.

I am glad that today my delegation has three of India’s young elected representatives, representing both Parliament and state legislatures, including the youngest Member of Parliament.

Young people constitute a vibrant and dynamic segment of society. They are also the most valuable human resource in any country. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, has rightly referred to youth as the building blocks of the nation.

A total of 840 million people, close to 70 per cent of India’s population of around 1.2 billion, are under 31 years of age. India is therefore the country with the youngest population in the world. We are making special efforts to ensure a high degree of skills development. The Prime Minister heads a national skills development mission which aims to reach out to nearly 500 million people in the country by 2022. We have also launched a youth employability skills development programme. In its first phase, we will carry out a district-level mapping of skills gap assessment, and then marry the aspirations of youth with the needs of the community.

The two field arms of my Ministry are the National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS). They have been entrusted with the job of carrying out youth-related development activities. NYKS operates through 125,000 voluntary youth clubs spread out all over the country, and NSS has a membership of more than 3.2 million students at over 251 universities and covering 15,000 colleges and 8,000 higher secondary schools.

We are also in the process of revising our national youth policy, a draft of which has already been put up in the public domain for comments and feedback.

The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development is our professional resource agency and

acts as a think-tank of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. On the occasion of this International Year of Youth, we are upgrading its status to that of an institution of national importance. Legislation to this effect will be moved in Parliament in the coming weeks.

We are eagerly awaiting the deliberations and outcome of this High-level Meeting on Youth. This will help us to enhance our national initiatives in the empowerment of youth.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm India's strong commitment to developing mutual understanding and dialogue and to extend our support for the declaration to be adopted shortly.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alisbek Alymkulov, Minister of Youth of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Alymkulov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on this timely and important issue.

Kyrgyzstan is a peaceful and democratic country that is seeking to build a State based on the rule of law. Our country is entitled to call itself a young republic, because young people from 14 to 28 years of age account for 35 per cent of the total population, and young people up to 35 years of age account for more than half of the population.

Since our independence, Kyrgyzstan's youth policy has been directed at creating the legal, social, economic and organizational conditions necessary for the development of youth and democracy. Today the implementation of our youth policy is moving to a new level. Since April 2010, the task has devolved to a special Ministry for Youth Affairs. This demonstrates that Kyrgyzstan sees the development of young people as one of the main priorities of our State policy.

As English politician Benjamin Disraeli said, "Almost everything that is great has been done by youth". The political events of 2005 and 2010 in Kyrgyzstan showed that young people are one of the main driving forces in society. Young people in Kyrgyzstan have shown themselves to be a progressive segment of society who are striving for democratic reform and the social and economic development of the country.

Kyrgyzstan actively participated in events related to the International Year of Youth. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to contribute to the development of our country and society. The Ministry of Youth organized various events in connection with the International Year of Youth, including a meeting between the President of our Republic and young people. We also organized an event entitled "Our year, our voice: dialogue and mutual understanding". Our comprehensive programme calling for increased cooperation between young people and the State is a useful example of participation.

Notwithstanding its political, social and economic challenges, Kyrgyzstan is looking to increase the number of opportunities for active participation by young people in shaping the future of our country, and we continue to strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In that connection, the Ministry for Youth Affairs has begun to put together a conceptual framework for a youth policy for the period through 2015 that seeks to involve society as a whole in the sustainable development of our country.

Kyrgyzstan supports the outcome document (resolution 65/312) adopted by the General Assembly. We deem it important to strengthen international cooperation with a view to increasing youth employment and enabling access to quality education, preventing drug use and crime, eradicating poverty and promoting social integration. As the Minister of Youth, I wish to call, on behalf of the President of Kyrgyzstan, on all States Members of the United Nations to increase our attention to youth affairs, because tomorrow's history is being made today and tomorrow depends on how we address the problems facing young people today.

In conclusion, I wish to recall the words of our President, who said that in the economy, as in all aspects of society, we rely on young people. Today, young people are bringing Kyrgyzstan forward. We are moving ahead thanks to the intelligence and the positive spirit of our young people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zeferino Martins, Minister of Education of Mozambique.

Mr. Martins (Mozambique): First and foremost, allow me to start my statement by presenting to the General Assembly the compliments of His Excellency Mr. Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the

Republic of Mozambique, who was not able to participate in this great event due to agenda constraints.

The choice of the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding is appropriate, since the current international moment can be characterized by enormous challenges of a political, economic and social nature that require great attention to be paid to the age group in question, since demographic statistics show that 1.8 billion of the world's population are young people between the ages of 15 and 24, which means that their contribution to the development of the United Nations cannot be questioned.

The Government of the Republic of Mozambique attaches primordial importance to the issues of youth. That is why, in its agenda, the Government gives priority to policies, programmes and institutions dealing with youth; to their social and economic empowerment; to their rights, inclusion and participation; to their development and well-being, the funding of self-employment projects and activities for the generation of income.

The creation of opportunities for youth participation is the result of our investment and recognition of the potential of this sector of the population. This investment is based on our desire to transmit such values as national unity, the culture of peace, dialogue, self-esteem, solidarity, mutual respect, freedom of expression, democracy and inclusive participation.

Taking into account the multidisciplinary and multisectoral issues of youth and considering dialogue as an element of capital importance, the Government of Mozambique has created the Multisectoral Committee for Adolescent and Youth Development, which is a consultative body of the Council of Ministers devoted to monitoring and evaluating youth programmes and policies. As a result of the dialogue between the Government and youth, we are in the process of revising youth policies and related strategies pursuant to the recommendations of article 12 of the African Youth Charter. These revisions take into consideration the multidisciplinary and multisectoral issues relating to youth.

It is in context of our constant quest to consolidate and maintain openness in the relationship between the Government and youth that we are structuring our efforts to make that age group more

participative in the development of the country. It is our hope to witness the adoption of the ministerial declaration at the end of this High-level Meeting because it will help advance the United Nations agenda on the well-being of youth.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Franklin Rodríguez, Minister of Youth of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Rodríguez (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin my statement by thanking Almighty God. It is clear that, in this world, we are called upon more to get along with another than to clash, compelled more to agree than to have differences. God protects all of us under the same mantle of His eternal wisdom and His infinite grace, and sanctifies us, making us worthy of His estate.

On behalf of the Dominican Republic and our President, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, I would like to express my solidarity with the sister nation of Norway in the wake of the brutal events that took place recently in that country.

Since 2002, Dominican young people, working in association with the United Nations, have taken a remarkable part in the participatory forums of the Organization. As a fruit of this involvement, in 2009 we set up a youth delegate programme at the General Assembly. Moreover, we are the only Latin American country that has a country profile for its youth delegate programme on the United Nations Youth Programme website. Similarly, we have participated actively in the UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris and, since 2002, we have had a Dominican Model United Nations — the only one in Spanish — which has made it possible for more than 800 Latin American young people to participate in the programme.

In our country, young people constantly seek to draw attention to the need for decision-makers around the world to act responsibly in their roles. In 2010, Marcos Díaz, a young long-distance swimmer from the Dominican Republic, under the aegis of the United Nations and working with the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Youth, decided to launch a project in which he would swim in open waters from each of the five continents in order to draw attention to the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to demonstrate that, despite the distance between peoples, we are living on the same planet and must all work for this common cause. This young man was received by

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at a ceremony that took place near this building.

With a similar objective, three Dominican youths climbed Mount Everest, the point on the Earth closest to the heavens. Only a few days ago, five Dominicans youths read aloud for 365 uninterrupted hours to set a new Guinness world record. Similarly, the young people who protested around the world yesterday hope for a positive response from this Meeting. Let us show that we are aware of our titanic responsibility for protecting the well-being of the youth of the world.

We welcomed the recent creation of UN Women, led by the honourable former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. Given the difficulties experienced by young people around the world and the essential need to find solutions to those problems, we call on the authorities to create an organization that is dedicated solely to working with youth and which could be called UN Youth.

Similarly, aware that, as has been said in this Hall by the President of the Republic of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, who is known as a bringer of peace to Latin America, education is the cornerstone of the development of peoples. Starting from that premise and in view of the broadening educational opportunities available to the youth of the world, we call on the United Nations to create a world scholarship fund in which each country would be obligated to set up a certain number of educational opportunities that would be offered to worthy youth from the most remote regions of the world.

We invite the youth of the world to participate, play a role in and be part of the social organizations that contribute to the progress of peoples; to join literary circles, dance troupes, various university organizations, sports clubs, music academies, and volunteer services; and to be part of all that would ensure progress for the homelands in which they were born. Just as their fingerprints are distinctive and important, their contribution to the development and advancement of all peoples of the world is unique.

Finally, the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Youth is committed to shaping young citizens who participate deeply, who go from being spectators to being agents of change, who go from the stands to the playing field, who dare to take chances and remain dedicated, and who make sure that things happen, because, in the end, we understand that, in this twenty-

first century, being silent and detached is no longer an option for young people. Such attitudes must be cut out of the body of society — using a scalpel for precision — so that never again may we fail to uphold the unshakeable objective that brings us here today — a to be potential sponsors of change.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to Ms. Ajulu Joy Ifeoma, Director of Youth of Nigeria.

Ms. Ifeoma (Nigeria): Mr. President, permit me to join other delegations in conveying the condolences of the Nigerian delegation to the Government and the people of Norway on the unfortunate incident that took place a few days ago and led to the deaths of many Norwegians, many of them young people who were gathered to contemplate their role in the future of their country.

As we all know, the youth of any society are its assets and its hope for the future; early investment in them is imperative for meaningful national development. Their energy, if properly harnessed, will contribute in no small measure to today's success and tomorrow's hope.

It is in recognition of the important role of youth in society that a special Ministry dedicated to the issue of young people was established in 2007 by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Since its establishment, the Federal Ministry of Youth Development has created various structures and programmes for youth empowerment and entrepreneurship, including youth development and skills-acquisition centres, a youth parliament, and a national youth council of Nigeria which serves as an interface between the Government and the various youth organizations in the country. At the moment, the Federal Government is exploring the possibility of establishing youth desks in all ministries, departments and agencies so as to facilitate the mainstreaming of youth issues into the national development agenda.

In addition, the Government is in the process of establishing a youth fund from which young people can draw to realize their self-development and entrepreneurship aspirations. This has become necessary in view of the usual difficulties associated with securing loans from regular financial institutions.

Furthermore, the Government organizes regular workshops for youth aimed at value reorientation, mentoring and leadership development skills. The

outcomes of such workshops are communicated to the Government and used in the formulation of youth-related policies, taking into account the views of young people themselves. There are also ongoing advocacy programmes to encourage the participation of youth at the grass-roots level in youth-oriented policy formulation and implementation.

Nigeria is proud to be a major contributor to the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps, which is mandated to popularize and promote the implementation of the African Youth Charter. In demonstration of this support, Nigeria hosted the launching and training of the first group of Corps members at the Obudu cattle ranch in Nigeria. Our strength lies in the fact that Nigeria has considerable experience in youth development programmes, as is evident in our National Youth Service Corps scheme and the Technical Aid Corps programme, through which Nigeria provides technical assistance to many African, Caribbean and Pacific States. We are willing to put our experience to use at the continental and global levels.

Let me conclude by urging all present to heed the advice of one of our young people: take care of them today so they can take care of us tomorrow.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Olivia Grange, Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture of Jamaica.

Ms. Grange (Jamaica): The Government and the people of Jamaica join in conveying our deepest sympathies and solidarity with the people of Norway in the wake of the recent tragic events.

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement to be made by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Suriname on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the United Nations on the work it has done in the Latin American hemisphere in advancing the welfare of young people, and I urge the United Nations to redouble its collaboration with the Caribbean subregion. We look forward to strengthening levels of cooperation with the United Nations Programme on Youth.

Jamaica supports the decision by the United Nations to establish a network on youth development, and we are committed to collaborating in that respect,

since we believe that this is an excellent framework for sharing best practices on a global scale.

Approximately half of Jamaica's population is aged 30 years and under, and we therefore understand the benefits of investing in our youth to ensure their engagement in the development process. We are proud of our history, culture and traditions, which have led Jamaican youths to excel in academics, entrepreneurship, leadership, volunteerism, community service, sports and the visual and performing arts. Our young people are indeed one of Jamaica's greatest assets. Today, we boast the fastest man on Earth, Usain Bolt, and we gave the world the musical icon Bob Marley and reggae music.

My Government is deeply concerned about the impact of drugs, crime and violence on our young people, and we are committed to addressing the situation. However, this is a global challenge, and we urge Member States to work collaboratively to find long-term solutions to these problems.

I take pleasure in reporting that in response to domestic intervention policies, Jamaica has made significant progress in developing social and economic programmes for youth using a multi-sectoral and multifaceted approach.

Research indicates that Jamaican sports and the cultural industries contribute approximately 10 per cent to gross domestic product and 5 per cent of jobs. We are linking our national youth and sports policies and programmes, using our cultural assets as the primary tools to propel our young people to social and economic prosperity and healthy adulthood. This approach also presents significant opportunities for youth engagement in new career paths and the development of dynamic cultural and sports industries.

In celebrating the International Year of Youth, Jamaica involved our young people in many different ways, including facilitating youth leaders to engage street children in dialogue so as to determine the types of interventions they need and to work towards effecting positive changes in their lives; conducting a national youth census to tap into the vast potential of our young people; undertaking a national youth situational analysis to better understand their needs and concerns, and to develop appropriate policy frameworks; and organizing national consultations designed and directed by youth leaders themselves which will further enhance the national youth policy.

We have created youth information centres and made significant progress with our HIV/AIDS programme. We have developed a national youth entrepreneurship strategy and implemented a Prime Minister's Youth Award Programme for Excellence. We have also appointed youth ambassadors, including a youth ambassador to the United Nations. My Government has also made a significant financial investment in youth business development through the Jamaica Youth Business Trust.

Jamaica supports the World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted in 1995. However, there is a need to further develop the international framework by reviewing and updating the World Programme to take into account current global realities. I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity, and I hope you will share in some of the initiatives we have presented as Jamaica strives to realize its national goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Djiguiba Keita, Minister for Youth and Sport of Mali.

Mr. Keita (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me the pleasant duty of conveying the brotherly and friendly greetings of the people of Mali and His Excellency Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, President and Head of State of the Republic of Mali. As with every invitation the General Assembly has extended to him, the President would have very much liked to be here to share these moments of reflection on youth, that source of wealth and asset for the development of every nation. Unfortunately, due to other engagements, he has asked me to represent him at this important meeting. I would therefore like to heartily thank the Assembly on his behalf for convening this High-level Meeting on Youth, whose theme of dialogue and mutual understanding has been the organizing principle for the activities celebrating 2010 as the International Year of Youth. I assure the Assembly that my delegation associates itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the African Union.

Like others who have spoken before me, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences — as my President has also done — to the people of Norway on the occasion of the tragedy they have experienced.

I would be remiss in speaking of youth from this rostrum if today, 26 July, I did not recall the same date in 1953 when the young people of Cuba, led by a man named Fidel Castro, attacked the Moncada Barracks in

order to liberate their people. The young people of Tunisia and Egypt did essentially the same thing at the beginning of this year. Young people are often the engines of history. It was thus that men such as Modibo Keita, Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Agostinho Neto, Amílcar Cabral, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah and others — all young men — committed to freeing their peoples from the colonial yoke.

The theme “Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding” is in perfect harmony with the founding principles of our society. Mali is a land of ancient traditions and civilizations whose mingling and harmony have greatly contributed to our socio-cultural influence. Indeed, Malian society's cohesion and glue are the results of language, listening and mutual understanding. Our masters of speech; our *flaniya*, or age groups; our *sinankuya*, or kinship through joking; our *nimogoya*, or familial joking among in-laws; and our parable tree are all elements and vectors that contribute to a culture of dialogue and peace between ethno-cultural groups. Such exchanges between our ethnic groups, especially our young people, have helped them mix together, forging our country's unity and cohesion.

Within this dynamic, our policies and strategic directions have been focused principally on the welfare of our communities while taking our cultural wealth into account. Thus, the traditional meeting areas, gatherings of young people such as youth weeks, artistic, cultural and sport biennials, festivals, sessions on Malian understanding, youth camps, friendship caravans and other events have helped us cultivate certain virtues and values such as courage, dignity, respect for the differences of others, listening, tolerance, loyalty, and solidarity — all essential to producing social order and building peace.

In conclusion, I would like to note that all these social norms do not nullify individual identity. On the contrary, since time immemorial these social rules have helped to make Mali a country of peace and stability and continue to make it a model of democracy and a country of cultural diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Clement Kofi Humado, Minister of Youth and Sports of Ghana.

Mr. Humado (Ghana): It is indeed an honour to be given the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of Ghana at this High-level Meeting on youth development, on the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding.

Permit me to express, on behalf of the Government and people of Ghana, our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the Government and people of Norway on the occasion of the tragic shooting and bombing incidents that led to the loss of many lives and left many injured.

This meeting is particularly important to us in Ghana because we have a very large youth population that is very vulnerable to the worsening social and economic conditions around the world. Ghana therefore associates itself with the meeting's theme of dialogue and mutual understanding, in the belief that it provides us, as stakeholders, the opportunity to share information about best practices for mechanisms that can enhance the active participation of young people in policy- and decision-making processes at the local, national and international levels, in order to achieve social integration, full employment and poverty eradication.

In order to give full effect to the global and continental youth charters, Ghana launched a national youth policy and action plan in August 2010. The Parliament of Ghana also ratified the African Youth Charter in December 2010. The National Youth Authority, the agency mandated by law to facilitate youth development in Ghana, works in the following areas: first, young people's sense of direction and nationalism, grounded in the national development agenda; secondly, young people's health and sexuality; thirdly, young people's education for employment and entrepreneurship development; and fourthly, young people and the management of national resources and a sustainable environment.

The National Youth Authority currently implements 19 priority areas derived from the national youth policy, and also manages 11 schools and training institutes in the 10 regions of Ghana. This year, in order to promote dialogue and understanding, the Authority is organizing 30 volunteer youth work camps, in addition to those of other stakeholders throughout the country, to enable young people to appreciate national cultural diversity, as well as to provide volunteer services in the rehabilitation and

construction of rural infrastructure, including classrooms, clinics, toilets, rural water projects, green projects such as tree-planting, and so forth. These camps will also help promote youth awareness through programmes and activities in the youth action plan, derived from the National Youth Policy.

Other regional, continental and international youth exchanges are being implemented by the Authority to expose Ghanaian youth to other cultures and societies in order to promote dialogue and understanding. A Youth Parliament has also been organized by the National Youth Authority and linked to the Parliament of Ghana to enable dialogue and involvement of young people in policy- and decision-making processes.

Ghana has also embarked on a national youth employment programme to engage and empower young people in productive and skills-training activities as a prerequisite for preparing unemployed youth for industry and public service. The programme is currently running 12 work modules comprising internships, trades and vocations modules for 400,000 beneficiaries in a two-year cycle. Exit strategies and programmes have been developed and modules aligned to funding sources. To date, 111,000 youth beneficiaries have been exited in all modules over the past four years. Ghana also runs special modules to take care of persons with disabilities and women to ensure social inclusion and integration.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports also collaborates with ministries in other sectors, such as education and health, in dealing with issues such as HIV and AIDS, drug abuse and other health-related lifestyle issues.

However, we still face some challenges. With regard to future prospects, the Government is linking with donor partners to increase funding for the national youth employment programme.

With regard to the social and economic impact, the relatively peaceful youth front in Ghana is partly due to the openness and transparency of Government and society that enable young people to have dialogue leading to mutual understanding. Youth development programmes being implemented in Ghana have started to impact positively on society in promoting dialogue and understanding among young people and between youth and stakeholders. It is also creating job opportunities, thereby reducing unemployment and

poverty and resulting in the relative stability in the youth front.

At this forum, Ghana is prepared to listen others and to share experiences with them in order to enrich our methods and approaches.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Radhouan Nouicer, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Nouicer (Tunisia): I would like to start my brief statement by conveying the sincere condolences of the Tunisian people to Norway, its people and its leadership, and to express our solidarity with the families of the victims of the horrible acts of last Friday in Oslo. This tragedy reminds us that we cannot let our world and our youth be held hostage by those who occupy the extremes of the political spectrum.

The Tunisian people have, in a brief space of time and armed only with their democratic convictions, achieved a peaceful and spontaneous revolution that had no political leadership, no ideological orientation and no external interference. The slogans chanted during the revolution by the people — especially young people and, in particular, what is referred to as the dot.com generation — were deeply rooted in the universal values of freedom, dignity and democracy.

The young people who invaded the streets of Tunis and other cities in the country in late December 2010 and early January 2011 belong to all strata of society: poor and rich; men and women; boys and girls; entrepreneurs and unemployed; educated and illiterate people. They all agreed that enough was enough and that Tunisians deserved better governance — a Government that listens to people and works for their welfare and prosperity in full transparency and accountability.

Today, the Tunisian people owe to their young people the freedom of expression they enjoy and the democratic prospects they aspire to. Tunisian youth were also instrumental in protecting their families, neighbourhoods and villages in the difficult days following the revolution.

The non-governmental organizations and associations created by young Tunisians are today very active in promoting the principles of tolerance, equality and gender balance, and in creating awareness of the importance of the participation of youth in national political dialogue. Young Tunisians are also very active

in providing care and help to their Libyan neighbours when they enter Tunisia fleeing their war-torn country.

Today, Tunisia is at a turning point in its history. The country stands at the beginning of a fundamental process of democratization. We are counting on our own strengths to fulfil the promises of the revolution, and we do have strengths: a highly educated population, a well-established middle class and highly emancipated women. But our strongest asset is perhaps the dynamism and high degree of engagement of our youth. Tunisian young people are the country's primary asset and will be a key factor in any successful transition.

Tunisia has drawn many lessons from its revolution. We have learned that Government must listen to young people; perhaps it can not offer them more, but it must treat them with respect and dignity, develop their self-esteem and give them hope. Government must consider young people feel like fully fledged citizens and involve them in decisions concerning their future.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Urgamal Byambasuren, State Secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour of Mongolia.

Mr. Byambasuren (Mongolia): I would like to thank the United Nations for having organized this very important and timely High-level Meeting. Mongolia is a country of youth, and therefore conventionally young people have always been at the heart of Government policies. The Government of Mongolia is implementing policies and programmes aimed at promoting youth employment, providing them opportunities to attain education consistent with labour market needs, introducing modern technology to help young people to keep up with world development, and supporting young families and providing housing through soft loans. We are making significant progress through these efforts.

Young people should be at the centre of sustainable development. Still, there are several challenges facing young people. Let me stress the main such challenges facing youth in my country.

First, young people are not benefiting sufficiently from our economic growth. Economic growth in Mongolia has not dropped below 6 per cent in the past few years. However, youth unemployment has not

decreased in that same period, and has remained at twice the national average. Addressing youth unemployment is the key to overcoming poverty, promoting families and stability and to discouraging involvement in crime. It is therefore essential to make the distribution of resources and wealth more just and favourable to youth.

Secondly, another issue that greatly affects young people is internal and international migration — from rural to urban areas and from urban areas abroad. As a consequence, overpopulation is becoming a reality in urban communities, while in rural areas a shortage of labour in traditional animal husbandry is evident. Thirdly, youth health issues, particularly alcohol abuse, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS, are another concern. Fourthly, problems such as environmental degradation and climate change are becoming global issues, and are no longer problems of single nations. Particular focus is needed on educating young people to foster in them the moral attitude of caring for the environment and taking social responsibility. Fifthly, disparities in standards of living and education levels are widening among youth, leading to unequal treatment.

To address those challenges, it is essential for us to engage in greater international cooperation, in addition to national efforts. The creation of decent and productive work opportunities for young people and improving their qualifications, education and skills to allow them to contribute to and benefit from economic growth should be at the centre of development policies.

We call on the United Nations to issue comprehensive recommendations and provide us with methodologies. There is a need to introduce comprehensive policies to manage international migration in a way that favours migrants, acknowledging the contributions of international migration to the economy. It is especially crucial to support young people in migrating with their families in order to help them avoid the problems of family dissolution, alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS.

We call on international banking, finance, business and investment institutions to focus more on the sustainable development of countries and to work to have a more positive impact on the well-being of the environment, society and youth by departing from their conventional position of concentrating on economic gain. Direct foreign investment plays an important role in the economic life of every developing country. In

that regard, it is essential that investment contracts — especially in the mining sector, which has an extensive impact on the environment — be tied to the use of ecologically friendly techniques and technologies, the training of the national youth work force in their application, and continued improvement of youth qualifications and skills.

Expanded activities aimed at the exchange of information among youth and at cooperation and sharing experience at the regional level are of crucial importance in broadening their knowledge and expertise, raising their self-confidence, educating them in the notion of caring for the environment and the Earth, and shaping in them a sense of collective social responsibilities. We therefore appeal to the United Nations and its agencies to increase their efforts for various groups of young people at the regional and subregional levels. All our work and efforts for youth are a great investment in a great future. I believe that together we can do something extraordinary.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zhou Changkui, Vice-Minister of China.

Mr. Zhou Changkui (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I am honoured to participate in this High-level Meeting on Youth on behalf of the Chinese Government. The Chinese Government and youth organizations highly appreciate the organization of this important General Assembly meeting in the International Year of Youth. The Chinese delegation would like to associate itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to youth development and youth work. The Government has been formulating and implementing youth policies from a long-term and strategic perspective by improving youth-related laws and relevant coordination mechanisms, fostering youth talents and supporting the development of youth organizations. In the 11 years since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Chinese Government has increased financial support in areas of education, employment, culture, health and others.

The All-China Youth Federation is responsible for coordinating and co-managing youth affairs. Over the years, guided by the four basic functions of organizing youth, guiding youth, serving youth and protecting their legal rights, the Federation has promoted the

formulation and implementation of youth policy and developed a series of programmes that befit the characteristics of youth. Those programmes focus on the fields of youth participation, employment and entrepreneurship, voluntary service, protecting youth rights, environmental protection, culture and sports.

The year that began in August 2010 was proclaimed by the United Nations the second International Year of Youth. Focusing on the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding, the All-China Youth Federation organized the International Peace Day Celebration on the theme of “Chinese Youth and Peaceful Development”, the Shanghai World Expo Youth Summit 2010, the 2011 European Union-China Year of Youth, and the Beijing Model United Nations 2011, among others. Those dialogues and exchanges provided a platform for young people to enhance mutual understanding and promote youth participation and development.

The International Year of Youth is another milestone in United Nations youth affairs. I would like to take this opportunity to propose three ways to move forward.

First, let us support the United Nations in continuing to play an important role in promoting youth development. As an important leader and advocate for youth development, the United Nations has greatly promoted the well-being of world youth and the improvement of youth policy. Today, youth issues share many common features across borders, and young people are facing increasingly global

challenges. Youth development has become an integrated part of the global development agenda.

Secondly, let us promote youth participation and common development. As youth is an important political force, facilitating young people’s political participation reflects a society’s equality and progress. Participation is a way for young people to improve their status, exercise their rights and promote common development. Besides traditional political elections and consultations, we should respond to new features of political awareness and ways of expression among young people, providing them with more channels and options, such as virtual organizations and internet-based new media. Only through wider and better participation can young people really be both participants and beneficiaries in the process of globalization and modernization.

Thirdly, let us encourage young people to create a harmonious world through cultural dialogue. Diversity of cultures and civilizations is a fundamental characteristic of human society. Cultural pluralism is the common heritage of humankind. Diversity among civilizations and cultures should not be a cause for conflict in the world but an important driving force for the advancement of human civilization. As the heirs of civilization, young people should not only absorb the spiritual essence of their nationalities and regions, but also contribute to dialogue among civilizations. As the pioneers of cultures, youth should contribute to the creation of a compatible, open and new youth culture, leading to a new era of cultural coexistence.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.