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

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2012/100.



Statement

Unemployment and underemployment give rise to a true national disaster known as poverty. In Cameroon, as in other developing countries, poverty is the principal challenge to development and to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is not defined solely as a lack of income or financial resources, but also includes notions such as lack of access to adequate nourishment, education, health, drinking water, electricity, land, employment and information.

Globally, no less than 3 billion human beings are living in poverty. In Africa, where it is pandemic, estimates show that over 54 per cent of the people are living in absolute poverty. In the early 1980s, it was a marginal phenomenon in Cameroon and limited to rural areas, but in the 1990s, it spread among the urban population throughout the country, including all socio-professional groups. Three Cameroonian household surveys, conducted in 1996, 2001 and 2007, respectively, provided enlightening information on the scope of poverty in the country. The survey showed that 4 out of 10 people, or 8.8 million Cameroonians out of a total population of 22 million, are living in extreme poverty that has natural and economic as well as spiritual causes.

In the face of this scourge, the production strategy for promoting employment and decent work with a view to reducing poverty is to bring about an overall change in attitudes and in the way of thinking of all parties, strengthen the rule of law and democratic processes, and provide free education. The following are a few strategies that might be implemented in order to achieve these objectives:

- Educate the population in order to change attitudes;
- Promote a macroeconomic framework with a view to efficient, strict management of public finance, an equitable distribution of the benefits of growth, and access to basic social services such as education and health care;
- Encourage diversification of the economy in accordance with the potential of each region;
- Expand the private sector and facilitate the professional development of teachers: Cameroon's education system is characterized by a considerable mismatch between training and jobs since 65 per cent of job-seekers are graduates yet lack skills;
- Expand basic infrastructure;
- Strengthen institutional capacities as functioning democratic institutions are key to sustainable development;
- Ensure good governance, which includes combating corruption.

Reducing extreme poverty in Cameroon in order to come closer to the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 remains the major challenge of our Governments and of political leaders, civil society, the private sector and young people. We urge them to foster a change in attitude. For that reason, dialogue should focus on the promotion of productive employment for young men and women.