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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Situation of youth in the 1980s

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 5	3
II. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	6 - 18	4
A. World youth population and its growth	6 - 8	4
B. Youth population in the major regions of the world	9 - 10	6
C. Youth population in urban and rural areas	11 - 14	6
D. Male and female youth population	15 - 16	7
E. Youth in the age structure of the population	17 - 18	8
III. GENERAL TRENDS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1980s	19 - 28	8
A. Need for integrated youth policy and planning	19 - 21	8
B. Position of youth in the global social and economic structure	22 - 28	9
IV. YOUTH IN MARGINAL SITUATIONS	29 - 35	12

CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
V. REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES	36 - 68	14
A. General problems	36 - 40	14
B. Africa	41 - 46	16
C. Asia and the Pacific	47 - 51	17
D. Europe and North America	52 - 56	18
E. Latin America	57 - 61	19
F. Western Asia	62 - 68	20
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	69 - 71	21

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1983/14 of 26 May 1983, requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the situation of youth in the 1980s, in connection with the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace, for the consideration of the Commission for Social Development at its twenty-ninth session and the subsequent transmission of the report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council.
2. In response to that resolution, the present report on the situation of youth has been prepared with contributions from various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).
3. The report seeks to provide a conspensive view of the global situation of youth with the approach of the mid 1980s. The rationale for a study of this nature is manifest in that, at present, one out of every five inhabitants in the world is a youth - defined as a person between 15 and 24 years of age. The present global youth population is estimated to be 922 million, which constitutes 19.4 per cent of the total global population, and is projected to exceed 1,000 million towards the end of the decade. The demographic significance of the global youth population, detailed below, is, of course, a factor of the more general societal significance of youth. What exactly constitutes this significance is difficult to measure, though there has been considerable progress in this regard. The hinge of the issue is the conceptual question of what is the exact meaning of "youth". Definitions have been changing continuously, in both spatial and temporal terms. The common denominator that runs through all this variety is the belief that youth constitutes the period between the end of childhood and the entry into the world of work. For this reason, the United Nations definition of youth - persons between 15 and 24 years of age - offers a certain statistical utility as well as the practical convenience of a definite analytical tool for examining a complex web of regional differences.
4. The concept of youth has been evolving at a particularly rapid pace since the 1960s. This is because of the recognition that youth, despite the heterogeneity of its components, constitutes a social group with its own specific identity, needs, problems and cultural configurations, and because of the actual articulation of these things by young people in different parts of the world. The international community has been cognizant of these specific needs, and considerable efforts have been invested in coming to grips with the problem. The decade of the 1980s is crucial in this respect, because the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 35/56, recommends that all countries should give high priority to the mobilization and integration of youth in development. As a result of efforts to sharpen the focus of these general development plans, the General Assembly, in its resolution 34/151, designated the year 1985 as International Youth Year, significantly located at the mid-point of the Decade.

5. The preparations for the International Youth Year, in train since 1981, have generated a corpus of knowledge which can now be used to form the basis of a report on the global situation of youth, as well as to fill out the skeletal framework of the Specific Programme of Measures and Activities for the Year, also formulated in 1981. 1/ Preparatory work is well under way, progress has been monitored consistently and regional meetings have developed regional plans of action based on regional assessments of the situation of youth. On these bases, a global study on the situation of youth, with prospects to the year 2000, is being prepared by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, which will serve as an analytical tool and an empirical basis for refining the conceptual parameters of the Year, as well as strengthening the pragmatic utility of its three concurrent frameworks: (a) thematic: participation, development, peace; (b) temporal: before, during and after 1985; and (c) spatial: the international, regional and national levels.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A. World youth population and its growth

6. The world youth population was estimated to be 922 million in 1984, an increase of 79 per cent from 515 million in 1960 and 39 per cent from 661 million in 1970. The size of this population group is projected to exceed 1,000 million near the end of the 1980s and to increase to 1,062 million in the year 2000 and 1,309 million in the year 2025 (see table below).

7. Although the world youth population has been growing continuously since 1950, the annual rate of growth has changed considerably. It rose sharply from 0.8 per cent in 1955-1960 to 3.2 per cent in 1965-1970. Since then it has been gradually declining to 2.0 per cent in the first half of the 1980s. The downward trend is projected to continue, with a sharp drop to 0.4 per cent in the 1990s.

8. The size of the global youth population is determined by two factors: the number of births 15 to 24 years before (a function of the number of women at childbearing ages and their fertility), and the rate of survival from birth to the age group in question. The low level of growth of the youth population in the late 1950s is likely to have reflected the slow increase of births during the Second World War. However, the large proportional increase of the youth population around 1970 was a result of the rapid increase in the number of births in the post-war decade of 1945-1955. The growth rate of births then declined through the 1960s, which was primarily a result of the accelerated fertility reduction in the less-developed regions. This trend of a decreasing growth rate of births from the 1950s to the 1970s, with a slow decline in the early years and a sharp drop at the end, is reflected in the growth rates of the youth population from the 1970s to the 1990s, which is marked by a current gradual decline that will be followed by a steep fall in the last decade of the century. Despite this fall, the absolute number of young people will still be considerable and will constitute 17.3 per cent of the total global population in the year 2000.

Table
Youth population of the world and by region, 1950-2025

Region	1950	1960	1970	1980	1985	1990	2000	2025
<u>World</u>								
Population a/	463 958	514 659	661 003	849 536	940 368	1 022 147	1 061 519	1 308 560
Growth rate b/	-	0.8	3.2	2.1	2.0	1.7	0.4	0.3
Percentage c/	18.5	17.1	17.9	19.1	19.4	19.5	17.3	16.0
<u>More developed regions</u>								
Population	142 928	144 002	174 799	192 060	185 947	177 027	173 990	179 158
Growth rate	-	-0.1	2.5	-0.6	-0.6	-1.0	0.1	0.1
Percentage	17.2	15.2	16.7	16.9	15.9	14.7	13.7	12.9
<u>Less developed regions</u>								
Population	321 029	370 657	486 203	657 476	754 420	845 120	887 529	1 129 402
Growth rate	-	1.2	3.5	2.5	2.8	2.3	0.4	0.3
Percentage	19.2	17.9	18.4	19.8	20.6	20.9	18.3	16.7
<u>Africa</u>								
Population	41 545	51 634	65 692	90 235	105 461	122 040	170 069	341 263
Growth rate	-	2.2	2.6	3.3	3.1	2.9	3.4	2.1
Percentage	18.7	18.6	18.4	19.0	19.1	18.9	19.4	20.8
<u>Latin America</u>								
Population	31 325	38 686	53 572	73 673	82 138	88 858	104 817	128 949
Growth rate	-	2.2	3.6	3.0	2.2	1.6	1.7	0.5
Percentage	19.0	17.8	18.9	20.3	20.2	19.6	19.1	16.4
<u>North America</u>								
Population	24 553	27 197	40 483	47 546	44 159	39 491	40 526	44 773
Growth rate	-	2.5	3.5	1.0	-1.5	-2.2	1.2	0.4
Percentage	14.8	13.7	17.9	18.9	16.8	14.3	13.6	12.9
<u>East Asia</u>								
Population	130 340	135 692	183 047	225 652	263 426	300 081	219 385	226 086
Growth rate	-	-0.1	4.4	1.0	3.1	2.6	-3.8	-1.6
Percentage	19.4	16.9	18.6	19.1	21.0	22.8	14.9	13.3
<u>South Asia</u>								
Population	133 729	161 815	202 983	282 916	319 372	351 695	407 501	446 742
Growth rate	-	1.7	2.7	3.2	2.4	1.9	1.4	-0.1
Percentage	19.2	18.7	18.3	20.1	20.3	20.2	19.7	16.1
<u>Europe</u>								
Population	63 304	62 400	71 405	76 280	76 952	74 136	66 974	63 786
Growth rate	-	-0.2	1.4	0.4	0.2	-0.8	-0.7	-0.3
Percentage	16.2	14.7	15.5	15.8	15.7	14.9	13.1	12.2
<u>Oceania</u>								
Population	1 961	2 364	3 426	4 199	4 409	4 565	4 850	5 814
Growth rate	-	3.0	3.2	2.0	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.6
Percentage	15.5	15.0	17.7	18.2	17.8	17.1	16.0	14.7
<u>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</u>								
Population	37 199	34 871	40 395	49 036	44 449	41 482	47 396	51 148
Growth rate	-	-2.3	4.9	1.0	-2.0	-1.5	1.6	0.6
Percentage	20.7	16.3	16.7	18.5	16.0	14.2	15.2	13.9

Source: Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

a/ Population: Total youth population (persons 15 to 24 years of age), in thousands.

b/ Growth rate: Average annual rate of increase of the youth population for each five-year period preceding the given year.

c/ Percentage: Youth population as a percentage of the total population of the world or region.

/...

B. Youth population in the major regions of the world

9. In 1984, 187 million young people lived in more developed regions and 734 million lived in less developed regions. Thus, four out of five young people are residents of less developed regions. The difference in the relative size of the youth population between these regions is increasing, owing to the differential growth rates of group 15 to 24 years of age in the two regions. In 1984, less developed regions comprised 76 per cent of the total global population. The youth component of the population of these regions rose from 69 per cent of the total global population in 1950 to 74 per cent in 1970 and 80 per cent in 1984, and will be 84 per cent in the year 2000.

10. The distribution of youth population among the major regions of the world in 1984 was as follows. Asia had the largest share (more than 60 per cent), as South Asia constituted 34 per cent and East Asia 28 per cent of the world youth population. Following Asia were, in decreasing order, Africa (11 per cent), Latin America (9 per cent) Europe (8 per cent), North America (5 per cent), The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (5 per cent) and Oceania (0.5 per cent). The youth population in these regions is growing at considerably different rates. Between 1970 and 1984, the share of the world youth population increased in Africa, Latin America and South Asia, remained constant in East Asia and Oceania and decreased in North America, Europe and the Soviet Union. These trends are projected to continue in 1984-2000, except that Africa's share will increase at a much more rapid pace than before and the share of East Asia will exhibit a sharp downturn.

C. Youth population in urban and rural areas

11. Of 922 million young people in the world in 1984, 410 million (44 per cent) lived in urban areas and 512 million (56 per cent) in rural areas. Thus, approximately 9 out of 20 young people were urban residents. For a variety of social reasons, young people are more likely to live in urban areas than the rest of the population. The proportion of the world population living in urban areas was 41 per cent for all ages combined in 1984, somewhat lower than the percentage for youth. This tendency is observed in both more developed regions (78 per cent for youth versus 72 per cent for the total) and less developed regions (36 per cent for youth versus 31 per cent for the total). Such tendencies are considered to be a reflection of the migration of young people from rural to urban areas for employment, education and other opportunities.

12. The proportion of the youth population residing in urban areas differs significantly among major regions of the world. It was 78 per cent in more developed regions in 1984, considerably higher than the 36 per cent in less developed regions. The highest proportion was observed in the Soviet Union (81 per cent) and North America (80 per cent), followed by Oceania (79 per cent) and Europe (74 per cent). On the other hand, fewer than half of the youth were urban residents in Africa (36 per cent), East Asia (35 per cent) and South Asia (30 per cent) in 1984. Among less developed regions, Latin America had a relatively high proportion of urban residents (70 per cent).

13. Demographic trends in the youth population are substantially different in urban and rural areas. The increase in the urban youth population the world over has been significantly higher than the increase in the rural youth population. From 1970 to 1984, the world urban youth population grew at an average annual rate of 3.1 per cent, and is projected to continue growing at 2.0 per cent between 1984 and the year 2000. The comparable average annual growth rates for the world rural youth population were 1.8 per cent between 1970 and 1984, and a decline of 0.2 per cent from 1984 to the year 2000. The slow-down in urban increase in the developed regions of the world, will be overridden by an accelerated increase in the less developed regions, where the proportion of youth living in urban areas rose from 29 to 36 per cent between 1970 and 1984, and will rise steeply, to 47 per cent, in the year 2000.

14. Among the major regions of the world, for the period 1984-2000, the largest increases in the proportion of urban youth population are projected for Africa (36 to 47 per cent), East Asia (35 to 47 per cent) and South Asia (30 to 42 per cent). The increases in Africa and South Asia are mainly attributable to the high growth rates of the urban youth population between 1984 and 2000 (4.9 per cent in Africa and 3.6 per cent in South Asia). On the other hand, a substantial decline in the growth rate of the urban youth population is projected in East Asia. However, the decline in the growth rate of the rural youth population in East Asia will be even greater than that in urban areas, resulting in a significant increase in the urban youth population relative to its rural counterpart.

D. Male and female youth population

15. Currently, the number of males aged 15 to 24 years of age exceeds that of females. In 1984, there were 470 million males and 452 million females in that age group. The sex ratio, defined as the number of men per 100 women, is 103.9. This is somewhat greater than the sex ratio of 100.8 for the total population. The higher sex ratio of the youth population reflects the tendency for the sex ratio of population to decline with age, which is a combined result of excess male over female births and higher female than male survival rates.

16. The ratio of male to female youth in the world has changed only slightly since 1950. It decreased from 104.3 in 1950 to 104.0 in 1960 and to 103.9 in 1984, and is projected to decline continuously to 103.7 in 1990, then rise again to 103.9 in 2000. The difference in the sex ratio between more developed regions (104.2) and less developed regions (103.8) is not significantly large. The regional variation in the sex ratio, however, is not negligibly small. The excess of male over female youth population is most pronounced in Oceania (105.4), South Asia (105.1), Europe (104.9) and East Asia (104.2). The excess is less in the Soviet Union (103.7) and North America (103.2), and substantially diminishes in Latin America (101.6) and Africa (100.6).

E. Youth in the age structure of the population

17. The youth population comprised 19.4 per cent of the total world population in 1984. It was 16.1 per cent of the total population in more developed regions and 20.4 per cent in less developed regions, reflecting the younger age structure of less developed regions.

18. The proportion of the world youth population decreased from 18.5 per cent in 1950 to 16.9 per cent in 1965, then rose to 18.8 per cent in 1975. The proportion has since been growing slowly, reaching 19.4 per cent in 1984. The slow increase is projected to continue to 19.5 per cent in 1990, then fall to 17.3 per cent in 2000 and 16.0 per cent in 2025 (see table above). In sum, the trend of youth's share of the population in the second half of the twentieth century is marked by a decrease in 1950-1965, an increase in 1965-1990, and a decrease in 1990-2000. This down-up-down sequence in the proportion of youth population during the second half of the century will be observed in many of the major regions with somewhat different timing of trough and peak. In Latin America, North America, South Asia, Europe, Oceania and the Soviet Union, the proportion of youth population reached a peak some time in the past 10 years and will decrease during 1984-2000, although a small rise is projected in the 1990s in the Soviet Union. A somewhat "lagged" pattern will be seen in East Asia, where the proportion of youth population is still increasing at present, and is projected to decrease very sharply after a peak around 1990. A notable exception is Africa, where the proportion of youth population in 2000 is forecast to be larger than that in 1984.

III. GENERAL TRENDS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1980s

A. Need for integrated youth policy and planning

19. In recent years, it has become something of a platitude to say that young people are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the global social and economic crisis. Equally commonplace is another formulation related to this view: that young people must be effectively integrated into the process of development, in order to overcome the global crisis and its regional manifestations. The validity of these positions is as unquestionable as it is demonstrably important. However, there is little unanimity on how exactly these things should be done - how the mechanics of young people's participation, in development in particular and in society in general, should be facilitated. In the various solutions adopted, there is considerable regional and national diversity, and there has been a general tendency towards fragmentation in both identifying and attempting solutions to the specific problems of young people.

20. This fragmentation stems from the fact that the social component of development has often been neglected in favour of a narrow economic conception. As a result, there are often serious deficiencies in social policies, which tend to be fragmented sectorally and have a high degree of dispersion. The mechanisms of society concerned with planning for youth often occupy a peripheral position in the political and administrative structure. Although, in recent years, the relationship between economic planning and social planning has tended to become

biased in favour of the former, fragmentation has often remained an attribute of the latter. Social planning has proceeded on the traditional assumptions that the social space can be comprehended within the categories of the so-called "social sectors": education, employment, health, etc. This has tended to denature the essentially human concerns of development, as well as fragment, rather than integrate, these different social sectors. In the context of many national youth policies, the result is often a weak linkage between general aims and principles on the one hand, and specific programmes of action on the other. The problem is exacerbated by a dispersion in the process of implementation: a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies are responsible for different components of the youth policy, and there is insufficient integration of the various efforts. Moreover, while the differentiation of responsibility between the various agencies should be based on dynamic criteria of social needs, it often ends up being based on the criteria of mere administrative convenience. Consequently, many vital needs of various subgroups of young people, in many different areas, are neglected.

21. Dispersion and fragmentation also frequently characterize the linkages among national, regional and international levels of youth policy and planning. There is therefore a great need to streamline the flow of ideas and operational initiatives, upward from the national level and downward from the international level, with regional bridges linking the two. This section of the report seeks to connect the demographic profile above with the specific issues to be detailed in subsequent chapters. It also attempts to look at the basic structural features of the global social and economic crisis, and examine the linkages between these and the global situation of youth.

B. Position of youth in the global social and economic structure 2/

22. Since the beginning of 1983, there has been a limited improvement in the global economic situation as a result of the reversal of recessionary trends. Recovery, however, has not become general. The recession of the early 1980s was the largest of the post-war period, and the sharpest for a number of countries. Its negative consequences will be present for a considerable period of time. Evidence of economic recovery is different in various regions. Some parts of the world, particularly North America and some developing countries of South and East Asia, are now in the midst of a rapid advance in income and output. In the centrally planned economies, economic growth has accelerated, though its rate remains at a lower level than in previous years. Recovery in Western Europe has thus far been limited. For most developing countries, the outlook continues to be bleak, and they are confronted with problems which seriously hinder their prospects for a rigorous reactivation of development. World output appears to have expanded at a rate of about 2.0 per cent in 1983, and may accelerate to 3.5 or 4.0 per cent in 1984-1985. While these rates are considerably higher than those from 1980 to 1982, they are still modest for a period of ostensible economic recovery. The situation regarding world trade, on the other hand, is less positive, and reflects the weak and uneven character of global economic recovery. For the first time in decades, an increase in world output was not accompanied by a proportionate increase in world imports, which remained virtually stagnant during 1983-1984. Strong rates of import growth were registered only in North America, a few developing countries in Asia and some centrally planned economies, notably China

and the Soviet Union. However, real imports fell in Japan and remained stagnant in Western Europe. Even worse was a sharp decline in import volumes in most developing countries. Not merely in international trade, but also in the international financial system, the cumulative effect of recent events could continue to be baneful. Protectionist measures have multiplied, and the transfer of capital to developing countries has greatly diminished. Therefore, it is clear that a reactivation of development can only take place if the international financial and trading system is reinvigorated, and the economic recovery - so far tenuous - is strengthened.

23. However, because of a number of uncertainties in the policy stances of major actors in the world economy and considerable unevenness in the recovery, the outlook for the future is not entirely clear. There is extensive divergence in the policy stances in different regions, which does not always conduce to a shared and concurrent global improvement. Among the developed market economies, the upswing in North America, continued growth in Japan and limited recovery in Western Europe are qualified by differences over the issues of fiscal and monetary policy, structural budget deficits and high interest rates. Among the centrally planned economies, a strong performance in the Asian countries, continued growth in the Soviet Union and limited recovery in the Eastern European countries are qualified by the fact that some countries borrowed substantially in the 1970s and faced increased debt service payments and a drying up of credit in recent years.

24. With the exception of some countries in South and East Asia, the situation for most developing countries is very difficult. Many of these countries are emerging from the recession with a legacy of difficulties that are unlikely to be dissipated by recovery elsewhere. As a result of the drought that began in 1982, it is estimated that 150 million people are currently threatened with hunger and malnutrition. The drought has had a major effect in many sub-Saharan African countries, which are now in a very precarious payments position. Debt-service ratios, particularly in Latin America, are likely to remain extremely high, even after recovery in industrial countries. Debtor countries will be compelled to continue drastic retrenchment measures, and most developing countries have had to make very sharp adjustments.

25. The social implications of these global economic tendencies have been extremely baneful in many parts of the world. This is particularly so in developing countries, most of which have no reserve "safety net" to dampen the effects of economic hardship and austerity. The social cost of economic adjustments for recession has been very high and even onerous in certain areas. These adjustments have had a general contractionary effect, and the biggest squeeze has been on social development investments. Most countries are fast approaching the limits of contractionary adjustment: import levels cannot be further reduced without dangerous consequences - economic, social and even political. In almost one out of every four developing countries, per capita output has fallen in each of the last four years. Fiscal austerity has led to curtailed assistance for lower income groups, and open unemployment has reached unusually high levels. The result has been much hardship for economically weaker sections of the population; herein lies the significance of these global economic trends for the situation of youth, particularly since an overwhelming majority of young people live in the less developed regions of the world.

26. The International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade postulates a harmonious international environment which would encourage and support national and collective development efforts. Such an environment has been conspicuously absent in the first years of the Decade. 3/ The instability in the world economy has been exacerbated by strained international co-operation and continued political conflict in various parts of the world. The cumulative impact of all this on the process of social development has been increasingly negative. Another prerequisite for achieving the goals of the International Development Strategy is the full and effective participation of the entire population in development, including vulnerable groups such as women, children, disabled persons and youth. Yet progress in securing this effective participation has been very limited. While there has been some evidence of involvement in the process of social change as well as in the articulation of specific interests on the part of these groups, no general configuration has emerged. 4/ In some parts of the developing world, like East and South Asia, the standards of living of large numbers of people have improved. Elsewhere, however, particularly in Africa, poverty has increased quite considerably. In many countries of Latin America, both poor and middle income social groups have encountered a deterioration in their living conditions. Disparities in income have continued to be very large, the goal of full employment ever more difficult to reach.

27. In such a bleak milieu, the situation of young people the world over continues to be very tenuous. The picture becomes even less bright when global economic and social trends are considered in the light of the demographic profile of youth detailed above (see paras. 6 to 18). Even though it is not possible to view youth as a monolithic social group, with common experiences and responses, there is little doubt that young people often constitute the most vulnerable sections of different social groups and classes. This proviso notwithstanding, young people constitute a generational group which, despite the heterogeneity of its components and their specific experience, still undergoes a socializing process within concrete historical and structural conditions. Thus, certain common features enable youth to play a specific social role, which may assume different forms in different societies. Consequently it becomes possible to perceive youth as a relatively autonomous social group with its own characteristic social aspirations and behaviour.

28. It follows that the problems affecting young people have a certain universal dimension, but take on a specific character according to the ways in which they are seen, felt or lived. In the 1980s, the major problem areas that have affected young people across the global spectrum are those concerning development, the family, the world of work and culture. The integration of young people in the development process has clearly been insufficient. The problems of unemployment and underemployment have worsened implacably. The relationship of young people with their families has become increasingly fragile as a result of a variety of exogenous pressures. Much cultural ferment has been in evidence. The process of socialization of youth is no longer a simple transmission, through the family, of accepted values, attitudes and roles. Economic recession has not stopped social change; in some cases it has intensified it. Thus, in many parts of the world, traditional systems of authority and values are being steadily supplanted by ideas

and attitudes that do not yet constitute a coherent frame of reference. At the same time, these new ideas create expectations which are impossible to satisfy in a period of contracting social policy. In all these varied processes of change, young people play a double, apparently contradictory role: on the one hand, they are active agents of the process of social change; on the other hand, they often suffer as a result of it.

IV. YOUTH IN MARGINAL SITUATIONS

29. Before moving on to an assessment of the major issues confronting young people in the 1980s, it is important to look carefully at the manner in which different kinds of youth are integrated into different levels in society. Of crucial significance is the position of young people in so-called marginal situations. They happen to be particularly vulnerable to the social stresses and pressures that are an inevitable concomitant of the development process. Despite many efforts and initiatives, the process of their marginalization continues inexorably. It is thus a vital necessity for development planning to proceed upon assumptions that are informed by the special needs and problems of these subgroups.

30. The concept of marginality is a wide one, encompassing a variety of situations and cases. It is not merely a problem of economic underdevelopment, but of social underdevelopment as well. It is a multidimensional concept, and must be seen as such. Young people who are marginal are poor, incompletely urbanized, culturally unassimilated, spatially segregated and often peripheral to much of society. Yet they are a part of it, often a large one. Marginality is consequently a plural and relative condition. Economically it implies a situation of being on the periphery of the major economic structures of society. Politically, it means no participation in party, electoral, local or other modes of decision-making. Psychological marginality is caused by a lack of personality attributes appropriate to life in modern society, from work habits and consumption orientation to scientific ways of thought and rational conceptions of self and society. Cultural marginality means being cut off from the mainstream by differences, for example, of language or life-style. If the concept of culture is seen in its widest sense, then marginality happens when people come to accept the values of the dominant culture, but lack the means to achieve them, or are prevented from doing so by various kinds of social constraints.

31. Often, marginality is caused by situations of cultural transition which resulted in inadequate adjustment: migration, educational mobility, marriage or external influences across boundaries of any kind of social group - one locality to another, one country to another, one occupation to another, even one generation to another. Youth, by its very social nature, has to make such cultural transitions frequently and becomes marginalized as a result.

32. Young people in marginal situations are thus in a position that is as difficult to categorize as it is to ameliorate. They are not socially functional, because they often derive less from the society and economy than they contribute to it. Neither are they in a dysfunctional position, because the societies in which they live could well integrate and support them. They are not even afunctional

because their role, which may be insufficiently appreciated, is still significant to the functioning of the social system in one way or another.

33. There are many subgroups of youth in marginal situations. Perhaps the biggest one is young women; women are marginalized in general, young women in particular. While their marginality is a multidimensional phenomenon, one specific area is perhaps the most crucial. Often omitted from all official statistics, housewives make a huge contribution to both economy and society through undervalued, unappreciated and unpaid domestic labour. This does not apply only to housewives, moreover. In many developing countries, young female children seldom have the luxury of being "young" at all. They are integrated into the labour force before they enter their teens, often as domestic and family labour. By the time they reach the age of youth, they often have two jobs, one of which they are not paid for. The personal service sector is a huge one, particularly in the cities of less developed regions. In a major city of Latin America, 60 per cent of the working women are maids; there are 200,000 of them. Seventy-two per cent of that group live with the families they work for, are on call 24 hours a day, with one or two days off a month, and have no normal social life. Seventy-five per cent are from rural areas and illiterate, and 80 per cent receive less than the official minimum wage. Approximately 30 per cent are between 8 and 14 years of age and four out of five are under 20 years of age. Patterns of this kind are replicated in many parts of the world. 5/

34. Many other young people live on the margins of society. Young migrants and refugees face a situation of inadequate cultural and educational transmission in an alien environment. Young workers, who struggle on the margins of the labour force, hired or fired as needed, are meagrely paid when they do work. Disabled young people face a perpetual social stigma as they attempt to participate more fully in the society which spawns and then rejects them. Young people are often driven by social circumstance into an increasingly articulated machinery of crime and deviance. In many situations, students are also a marginalized subgroup. Though they may be integrated into the formal educational structure, they are often victims of the disjunction between education and the world of work, as well as of an increasingly inadequate socialization process.

35. There are many more young people in positions and situations that are difficult to categorize, but their predicaments are real and very often tragic. As workers, they are poorly paid for long hours of work, often in impermanent, hard-labour, dirty and dangerous occupations, which do not make them eligible for even the meagre social security benefits that do exist. They often live in environments that make a mockery of the term "housing": shanty towns, old slums, new tenements and sometimes simply on pavements. As consumers, they lack the purchasing power to acquire the goods and services enjoyed by the rest of society. Socially, their status brings them only insult and injury. Culturally, they are outsiders, mostly lacking formal education, and sometimes even the ability to speak the national language.

V. REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

A. General problems

36. It would appear to have been established, thus far, that young people constitute a group that is particularly vulnerable to the effects of the global crisis. Conversely, the way out of the crisis - the development process - is also closely linked to the situation of youth and their possible participation in it. Herein lies the essential dynamic of the situation of young people: they are often agents of social change; but equally often, they are the victims of that change. The early 1980s have been a period of very considerable economic and social transformation in the world at large. The involvement of young people in this process has been of the dual nature elaborated above. It follows then, that the crucial need during the rest of the decade, from the point of view of youth, is to minimize their marginalization and to maximize their participation in the development process. An important element in planning for this adjustment would be an assessment of how the situation of young people has changed and developed globally, and in the major regions of the world, in recent years. This section of the report therefore attempts such an assessment, using as its basis the documentation for the five regional meetings devoted to the International Youth Year, held in 1983.

37. For all the regional diversity, there is still a global nexus that could be established vis-à-vis the situation of youth. Some problems are universal, even though they may manifest themselves in ways unique to each region. The problems that young people face, after all, are merely reflections of the problems of society at large. They should therefore be analysed within the larger framework of global and regional social and economic structures, with, of course, specific emphasis on the social, economic and cultural elements that together constitute the general category of youth.

38. The central problem is the lack of participation of young people in development. The three forms of participation - political, economic and social - often overlap and are frequently interdependent. Political participation, a crucial element in the structure of society, is very controversial because it concerns the distribution of power. This makes it difficult to quantify and analyse. Moreover, the frontiers between political participation and political mobilization have tended to become increasingly blurred. In any case, young people, particularly students, have often been deeply involved in this form of participation and have frequently articulated demands for a more democratic process of political participation. Economic participation, which implies the direct involvement of people in the management of their work and in a sharing of its benefits, is easier to analyse. The position of young people here, though it has certainly improved over the years, is still tenuous. They constitute the younger and often impermanent section of the labour force which is not consulted in many workers' activities. Traditional structures of authority, often based on a generational conception, tend to circumscribe the efforts of young people in this direction. The position of marginalized groups of young people is particularly bad with regard to this form of participation. Social participation, which covers a great variety of activities, is seen here as the area of involvement of young

people in their immediate neighbourhood or community. As the socialization process within the traditional family becomes increasingly inadequate for many young people, they tend to move out of its ambit into different forms of social association - peer groups within the educational structure, for instance. Several of these initiatives lack a definite direction, which is a reflection of the cultural crisis that many young people face in the 1980s. Common to all these forms of participation appears to be the need to help young people in articulating their own specific interests, and to direct these initiatives into national youth policies and development plans.

39. Another problem which has a universal dimension, across the major regions, is that of youth employment, and the related issues of unemployment, underemployment and migration. The connection between the economic recession and the lack of jobs available, especially to young people, is clear and well established. What is not so well documented, however, is the situation prevailing with regard to the actual search for work, as well as the real nature of that work itself. Through the first few years of this decade, it has become evident that these problems loom large in reality as well as in the consciousness of young people. Environmental hazards, physical risk, psychological and cultural alienation, economic marginalization - these are some of the issues that are subsumed within the larger question of the nature of work that is available to youth. Statistics on employment, given the complexity of the problem, are often inadequate. Little information is available, for instance, on the work patterns of young people in the informal sectors of the economy. Unpaid labour, mostly provided by young women, is omitted from official statistics. Economic activities of other marginalized youth groups are not categorized or quantified. In the less developed regions of the world, and particularly in the cities and shanty towns around them, young people work in a variety of occupational categories: sweat-shop workers, self-employed artisans, service technicians, street vendors, itinerant salesmen, casual wage labour, refuse collectors, prostitutes, beggars and the huge personal service sector. Far too many young people's lives are characterized by an immense volatility of occupation, and by the fact that the process whereby they try to become workers is often not consummated at all. Any effort directed at integrating young people more closely into the world of work must therefore be informed by an adequate appreciation of these situations.

40. Problems related to the sector of education also have many common denominators that span the regions of the world. Especially since the 1960s, a critique of educational systems has been evolving, in both more and less developed regions. This has hinged essentially on the unsuitability of educational systems to modern social needs or, in more specific terms, the wide gap between formal schooling and the world of work. While considerable progress has been achieved, it is evident that educational reform has not kept pace with the rapid growth of the critique. In this context, the second half of the 1980s may well be crucial, because the apparatus of education is a manifestly vulnerable sector of society during periods of economic crisis. Young people the world over have participated in various ways in the development of critiques of education, and have articulated coherent demands for a further democratization of the educational process. While there has been evidence of much democratic transformation in terms of volume and quantity, this has not always been accompanied by a corresponding transformation of quality in the

ways in which knowledge is transmitted. A related global tendency has been the generally distorting effect of scarcity in the labour market in relation to supply. As more and more young people acquire the requisite qualifications for jobs, the number of these jobs does not increase proportionately. A way out of the situation, for many employers, has been to raise progressively the educational credentials required for the job in question. The negative aspect of this process has been that young people who have recently acquired some degree of education are being pushed out of the job market by others with a better education and have had to shift to occupations of lower rank. There is thus a generalized downward movement in which the lowest ranks - those with rudimentary education - are being driven out of the formal job market. A solution will have to be found in better educational coverage for marginal groups of youth, so that they may compete for jobs more effectively. Only by such means will the rigid, vicious circle between educational deficiency and poverty be broken.

B. Africa 6/

41. In 1984, the youth population of Africa numbered 102.2 million, or 19 per cent of the total African population. The rural/urban distribution of this youth population was 64 and 36 per cent, respectively, and is projected to be 53 and 47 per cent in the year 2000.

42. Rural youth thus constitutes the largest segment of the youth population of Africa. This group is confronted with three specific sets of problems: a general lack of basic social amenities in rural areas; a general problem of isolation with very few organizations meant specifically for young people; and a variety of contradictions between new aspirations and traditional values and systems.

43. The proportion of young people living in urban areas continues to rise steadily, a result of the fact that youth constitutes a majority in the large flow of migration from rural to urban areas. Public services have not been able to keep pace with these rapid rates of urbanization. While rural youth is a fairly homogeneous group, except for distinctions of educational level, urban youth is far from being homogeneous, and many young migrants face a rapid process of marginalization.

44. Young women constitute a sizeable proportion of the out-of-school young people in Africa. With few exceptions, school enrolment for girls is generally lower than that of boys. Traditional cultural influences relegate young women to a certain place in society, and many of them never even enter the world of formal education. Moreover, drop-out rates are higher among girls, and comparatively few girls are likely to attain higher academic levels. A number of African countries have made considerable efforts towards providing for the needs and problems of young women through the establishment of non-formal educational and training programmes. However, given the formidable disadvantages that young women face in these areas, the quality of such programmes needs to be improved.

45. There are over 5 million refugees in Africa, a large proportion of whom are young people. A survey of one of the four principal settlements of Zimbabwe

refugees in Mozambique showed that only 500 of 5,000 refugees were adults. Another survey of refugees in Kenya showed that 20 per cent were 6 to 17 years old, and 43 per cent were 18 to 30 years old. Most countries, with the assistance of the international community, have tried hard to help young refugees, chiefly in the area of education and training. However, the problem grows progressively larger and, in some regions like southern Africa the flow of refugees continues to swell.

46. Agricultural performance continues to be an alarming problem in Africa, where the most severe drought in a decade has reduced per capita food production for the fifth consecutive year. Although agricultural output in Africa is small in the total global context, it is the dominant economic activity in the region, often in the form of subsistence farming, for over 200 million people. ^{7/} When one considers the above, in light of the fact that 65 per cent of the youth in Africa live in rural areas, the situation begins to look extremely bleak, particularly since young people and children are often the worst affected by hunger and malnutrition. Moreover, the modest growth in Africa's agricultural production, coupled with stagnation in food output, has had wide repercussions on overall economic activity in the region, a matter specially relevant to the employment prospects of young people.

C. Asia and the Pacific ^{8/}

47. In the Asia and Pacific region, the youth population in 1984 was 255.8 million for East Asia, 311.9 million for South Asia (including Western Asia), and 4 million for Oceania, constituting 20 per cent of the total population of each of these areas. The rural/urban distribution of these youth populations was 65 and 35 per cent for East Asia, 70 and 30 per cent for South Asia and 22 and 78 per cent for Oceania. Projections of this distribution for the year 2000 are 53 and 47 per cent for East Asia, 59 and 41 per cent for South Asia, and 17 and 83 per cent for Oceania.

48. For most of the countries which are members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the percentage of youth population is around 18 to 20 per cent, or approximately one fifth of each country's total population. This is even more significant when we take into account those under 15 years of age, many of whom will be entering the phase of youth in the near future. Youth therefore represents a substantial portion of the region's population and of the labour force of individual countries. This is particularly significant, since the percentage of economically active young people in relation to total youth population ranges, in individual countries, from 33.0 to 76.5 per cent.

49. In the rural areas of many Asia and Pacific countries, young people are among the most disadvantaged groups. Their problems are specific manifestations of a general rural milieu characterized by poverty, exploitation, lack of access to land, lack of stable work, illiterary and minimal participation. Rural workers - many of them young - are seriously underemployed, working short days or short seasons for very low wages. The problem of underemployment, traditionally linked to the phenomenon of seasonal labour, is now further complicated by the phenomena of cash-cropping and mechanization.

50. Unemployment and underemployment are equally serious problems for young people in urban areas. Young rural migrants are a particularly vulnerable group here, as in many other parts of the world. In the less industrialized countries of the region, urban unemployment of young people is exacerbated by the disjunction between educational and occupational structures, and between the expectations of jobs and the reality of their unavailability to many. In fact, with the exception of Japan, unemployed youth form the bulk of the total unemployed in the ESCAP countries.

51. Although considerable efforts have been invested in raising educational levels in the region, a large percentage of rural youth - young women in particular - never even enter the formal educational system, and have minimal contact with non-formal education programmes. In urban areas, the proportion of unemployed graduates with secondary and tertiary education has increased, despite the fact that school enrolment ratios in the region have doubled in the last two decades, and the literacy rate of youth is as high as 90 per cent in some countries. Even school drop-out rates are generally on the increase. This essentially reflects the fact that school systems often do not cater to children who are unprepared, in their homes, for even a basic education. School enrolment remains lower for girls than for boys at both secondary and tertiary levels. The drop-out rate is also higher for young women and their participation in vocational and technical courses is more limited. A much wider educational coverage for young marginals - especially young women - is therefore imperative.

D. Europe and North America 9/

52. In 1984, the youth population of Europe numbered 76.8 million, or 16 per cent of the total European population. The rural/urban distribution of this youth population was 26 and 74 per cent, respectively, and is projected to be 21 and 79 per cent in the year 2000. The North American youth population was 44.8 million or 17 per cent of the total. The rural/urban distribution of this youth population was 20 and 80 per cent, respectively, and is projected to be 16 and 84 per cent, respectively, in the year 2000.

53. The present generation is the most widely educated one in the history of Europe and North America. Many young people have obtained a level of education well beyond what was once considered average. There has been a commensurate increase in opportunities for vocational and technical training. Education in the two regions has become more responsive to concepts of equality and the rights of all citizens to participate in the various decision-making processes that concern them. This has proceeded in conjunction with a tendency towards attempting to make curricula conform more closely to the demands of work and social participation.

54. In Western Europe and North America, however, youth unemployment has been assuming increasingly serious proportions. Even in areas where youth unemployment per se hardly exists, related questions have assumed significance: underemployment, job satisfaction, working conditions and the value of the work performed. In recent years, the tendency of low economic growth has made the prospects of

improving youth employment look very dim. In 1981, for instance, some Western European countries had to face youth unemployment figures as high as 40 to 50 per cent.

55. In the centrally planned economies of Europe, there is no unemployment because the right to work is guaranteed by the national constitutions. After completing their education or training, young people are integrated into the production structure or the tertiary sector. In fact, the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe have a shortage of labour, a result of the low birth rate and of the high proportion of young people in school or in training programmes. Sometimes there have been problems regarding how best to distribute the young labour force among various sectors, and how to ensure its smooth integration into working life. The aging of the labour force in, for example, agriculture, which has long been a source of supply for other sectors, is causing concern, since more young workers are needed to increase productivity in agriculture and related activities.

56. Young women continue to face a difficult situation in Europe and North America. They still maintain narrow occupational aspirations, and have difficulty in entering occupations traditionally held by men. Traditional attitudes, prejudice and discrimination are the principal reasons for these difficulties. Despite different programmes and schemes in many countries, young women are still a minority in skilled occupations, for example, the mechanical and electrical engineering field. However, this must be balanced against a positive trend: throughout the 1970s, female labour force participation rates rose, as have rates of female enrolment in formal education. This is qualified by the fact that women still carry the disproportionate burdens of child care and other domestic responsibilities. In fact, with rising female labour force participation rates, the total hours of work of women, combining domestic and other work, have, if anything, been rising.

E. Latin America 10/

57. In 1984, the total youth population of Latin America numbered 80.4 million, or 20 per cent of the total population. The rural/urban distribution of this population was 30 and 70 per cent, respectively, and is projected to be 23 and 77 per cent in the year 2000.

58. The most significant phenomenon in the transformation of the Latin American occupational structure in recent years has been the decrease - in both relative and absolute terms - of the number of persons in the agricultural sector. This is particularly pronounced among young people, who constitute a majority of the flow of migration from rural to urban areas. Since these rural young people are less educated than their urban counterparts, they are rapidly marginalized when they enter the city. This marginality then leads into a vicious circle in which it reproduces itself in subsequent generations. As the process of urbanization proceeds, more and more young people enter the informal sector, and there is an increasing segmentation in the forms of their occupational integration. One significant tendency here has been the extreme polarization between different social strata of youth.

59. Female labour is often not recorded statistically, especially in the agricultural sector. Despite gaps in information, however, there is some evidence of a growing incorporation of young women into the labour force in Latin America. This has not always been a completely positive tendency, because of the quality of the work that many young women have to do. It is estimated that in 1980 the informal sector absorbed 14 per cent of the total economically active population of urban areas in Latin America. Domestic service absorbed around 6 per cent, a substantial proportion of whom were young women. Moreover, the tendency of polarization of young people, described above, tends to have even stronger manifestations in the case of young women.

60. A lack of employment opportunities is probably the greatest problem facing young people in the region. Open unemployment rates of 15 per cent among urban youth are common. In many cases, young people, particularly in the group 20 to 24 years of age, constitute more than half the total number of unemployed persons. As usual, these tendencies are more pronounced in the case of young women. The related problem of underemployment is also serious. A survey of a marginal area in one of the major cities of the region showed that 43 per cent of employed persons in the group 15 to 18 years of age were either in casual jobs or in jobs with fluctuating income; another 14 per cent worked as domestic servants and 12 per cent in the government minimum employment plan. Only 25 per cent had regular jobs with steady incomes, and half of these worked as messenger boys or maintenance workers.

61. In Latin America, particularly the urbanized areas, education seems to become more and more of a discriminatory variable. Hence there is a clear linkage between poverty and educational deficiency. While great changes have taken place vis-à-vis education in the region, many have been relatively recent, and their effect will be seen only in the future. Though illiteracy has generally become residual among young people, countries with large agricultural populations or with a substantial indigenous ethnic component still record illiteracy figures of 15 per cent or more. Closely connected to this is the fact that although nearly all children in the region have access to primary school, only half of them manage to complete an average educational cycle of six years. These tendencies are somewhat mitigated by the fact that secondary education has become more integrated and higher education has a broader base. However, there is a great need for a more integrated educational coverage for marginal youth groups.

F. Western Asia 11/

62. In 1984, the youth population of Western Asia was 22.6 million, or 20 per cent of the total population of the region.

63. The broad contours of the Western Asia region are defined by its rapid population growth, the young age structure of the population, large migrations and a relatively low population density.

64. The situation of young people here needs to be examined in relation to these factors, as well as in the context of the enormous upheaval which has characterized the region in the last few decades. While large transformations have been a global

characteristic for this period, the Western Asia region was affected by two unique sets of events, both of great consequence for the population generally, and for youth in particular: the successive wars that have rocked the region, and the oil crisis. Wars always tend to decimate the youth population of the areas concerned. Much historical evidence can be adduced to substantiate this view, and the experience of the region has been no different. The petroleum factor has completely transformed the social and economic structure of the region, and has been responsible for changes as diverse as the inflow of huge masses of foreign labour and the creation of several detrimental consumer patterns among young people.

65. Extensive efforts to improve education in the region have had considerable success. However, it is estimated that 75 per cent of the total youth population of Western Asia still receive no formal education. Youth programmes and services provided by Governments usually operate through formal educational institutions which means that 75 per cent of young people cannot be reached, and hardly feel the impact of these initiatives. Much more effort is needed, therefore, to integrate out-of-school and marginalized young people.

66. In 1980, 27 per cent of the young people in the region were economically active. This average balances much higher percentages in the Gulf States with lower ones in the other countries. The difference is primarily because the former group of countries have a large imported labour force, the majority of whom are young people. There is a great need, then, to integrate more young people into the world of work - especially the kind of work that would contribute to a more balanced development of the region.

67. Young women, as in so many other regions, are a particularly vulnerable group. Although there is much evidence of the integration of women into the development process, illiteracy among women remains a major problem. Girls' enrolment rates are lower than those of boys and drop-out rates are higher. Young women's participation in technical education programmes is minimal or even completely absent in some areas. In the labour market, young women hardly figure at all.

68. A number of States in the region have large immigrant populations. For instance, in six of the Gulf States, the foreign component accounts for 32 per cent of the total population. The foreign youth population in these States is 35 per cent of the total youth population. This immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon whose social implications, in the long run, are still not entirely clear. Of specific interest vis-à-vis the situation of youth is the question of the availability of programmes and services to the young immigrants, in order to facilitate the process of their adjustment to the different kinds of societies they encountered.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

69. The present report is an attempt to provide a conspectively view of the situation of youth in the 1980s. Being an overview, the report is limited to a sketch of the broad contours of some of the major problems confronting young people, and does not explore the variety and complexity of those problems. The

fact that the situation of youth varies from one country to another, and from one region to another, does not preclude a global perspective but points, rather, to the need for such a world-wide perspective to be viewed in conjunction with the unique configuration of each country and region. What is needed then, is not merely a unity of analysis to form a composite picture but, equally, a unity of national, regional and international operational initiatives for ameliorating the situation of young people. This has been the primary thrust of this report.

70. The International Youth Year has provided an opportunity for integrating policies and programmes pertaining to youth, and for strengthening the linkages among the national, regional and international levels at which these policies and programmes operate. The preparations for the International Youth Year show clearly that this opportunity has been adequately utilized. At the national level, Governments have increasingly recognized the importance of youth and have taken many concrete steps towards improving their situation. These national efforts have been consistently supported by regional and international policies. There is, however, increasing manifestation of the need to secure an adequate follow-up for the International Youth Year - to ensure that the needs and aspirations of young people remain at the forefront of development efforts.

71. Thus, the Secretary-General recommends that the momentum gathered during the preparations for the International Youth Year should be maintained; that Governments should continue their efforts to develop integrated youth policies; that these policies should continue to receive adequate infrastructural support; and that regional and international activities should continue to be supportive of national action, and to utilize effectively the opportunities that have been opened for a regional and international exchange of views and experience that are germane to young people everywhere.

Notes

1/ A/36/215, para. 43, decision 1 (1).

2/ Macro-economic data in this section are taken from: World Economic Survey 1984: Current Trends and Policies in the World Economy (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.84.II.C.1).

3/ See A/39/115-E/1984/49 and Corr. 1.

4/ See A/39/171-E/1984/54.

5/ Survey reported in Uno Más Uno (Mexico City), 30 January 1978.

6/ Unless otherwise indicated this subsection is based on "The situation of African youth in the 1980s" (ECA/SDEHSD/IYY/83/WD.1, June 1983). Paper presented to the African regional meeting for the International Youth Year, held at Addis Ababa from 20 to 24 June 1983.

7/ See World Economic Survey 1984 ..., annex.

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Notes (continued)

8/ This subsection is based on "The situation of youth in the Asian and Pacific region" (SD/RPMIYY/1, 19 May 1983). Paper presented to the Asia and Pacific regional meeting for the International Youth Year, held at Bangkok from 26 to 30 July 1983; and on "The situation of youth in the Asian and Pacific region" and "Youth unemployment and underemployment", ESCAP, Social Development Newsletter, No. 9, December 1983.

9/ This subsection is based on "The situation of youth in Europe" (IYY/ECE/RPM/2, 24 June 1983). Paper presented to the European regional meeting for the International Youth Year, held at Costinesti, Romania, from 5 to 9 September 1983; and on the report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action (E/CONF.76/PC/10, 2 December 1983).

10/ This subsection is based on "Situation and prospects of youth in Latin America" (E/CEPAL/CONF.75/L.2, 5 September 1983). Paper presented to the Latin American regional meeting for the International Youth Year, held at San José, Costa Rica, from 3 to 7 October 1983.

11/ This subsection is based on "The situation and needs of youth in Western Asia" (E/ECWA/SDP/W.G.I/3, 1 August 1983). Paper presented to the Western Asia regional meeting for the International Youth Year, held at Baghdad from 9 to 13 October 1983; and on a report on the mid-term review and appraisal of progress in the implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade in the ECWA region (E/ECWA/XI/6/Add. 1, 9 April 1984).
