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Statement submitted by Salesian Missions, 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.



Statement

Including the young in preparing a sustainable world

Some of the most effective strategies for addressing poverty and helping to achieve Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals in many places is due to the participation of people living in poverty. They shared their knowledge and experience. They found what worked when dealing with the daily struggles created in their lives by poverty and assisted policymakers in coming to new understandings about the reality of poverty and proposed new ways to overcome it. New solutions are often needed to address old problems.

As we are coming to the end of the Millennium Development Goals era and looking towards a post-2015 world, the world community finds itself still seeking solutions for seemingly intractable negative social realities including, inter alia, war and terrorism, global warming, health and environmental issues. Some of the best minds have not been able to implement ideas or programmes that effect positive social change. But one group has been successful in helping us all examine the status quo and revolutionizing the way we address these persistent problems: youth.

The Arab Spring, the “occupy” events, flash-mobs and other creative uses of social media have allowed young people to express the discontent, frustration and anger of not just their own generation, but of their parents and other adults weighed down by oppressive systems. By engaging others in confronting issues, they have empowered large coalitions and groups of citizens to effect needed changes. Social media has become more powerful than weapons in mobilizing people. Young people have also developed innovative technologies to help diagnose disease and analyse climate change. All of these developments will assist us as we work to create a more sustainable future.

While applauding the courage and creativeness on the young in effecting social changes, more needs to be done to create an enabling environment to further empower the young to find new solutions to persistent problems. Their willingness to experiment, take risks and think in new and innovative ways challenges us to think and act in ways that sometimes make us uncomfortable. Listening to their ideas and innovative approaches to problems may lead us to discover solutions that have long eluded us.

New businesses that have utilized technology created and designed by young people have enhanced all of our lives. The ease with which they are able to develop new applications for our everyday use, making it easier to accomplish routine activities and explore new ideas, needs to be tapped into in order to further the common good. This can only happen if we include the young in the ongoing dialog to create the world that we all want.

Youth make up nearly 20 per cent of the world’s population. They are major stakeholders in a sustainable Earth and inclusive societies. If all generations collaborate, teaching and learning from each other, the wisdom of the past and new horizons provided by new scientific inquiry, often led by the young, will converge to create a more sustainable world.