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POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH

Channels of communication with youth
and youth organizations

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 32/135 of 16 December 1977, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its thirty-third session a report on comments and suggestions offered by Member States and regional commissions relating to the guidelines contained in the annex to the present resolution and on the progress achieved in their implementation with specific, action-oriented recommendations for the further development of the guidelines and of the co-operation between the United Nations system and national and international youth organizations.

2. The text of the resolution, together with a request for comments and suggestions regarding the further development of the guidelines contained in its annex, was transmitted to Member States, regional commissions and regional and international youth organizations on 28 February 1978. The resolution was also brought to the attention of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Youth at its 2nd meeting in May 1978, as requested in paragraph 5 (b) of resolution 32/135.

II. VIEWS EXPRESSED

3. In response to the Secretary-General's note verbale, the Governments of 13 Member States have replied: Argentina, Finland, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Kuwait, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Sweden. The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See also replied. Comments were also received from the Economic Commission for Western Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Africa. Eight of these replies recommended that the United Nations increase its direct contacts with youth organizations, and provide additional published materials, radio and television programming concerning youth issues to such organizations and to government ministries. Three Governments suggested specific organizations in their countries as focal points for United Nations contacts on youth issues. One Government suggested the adoption of a comprehensive United Nations programme concerning youth as means of improving communication with youth. Several Governments also recommended the strengthening of contacts between youth organizations and the regional commissions, and an increase in exchange programmes among youth of different countries; another emphasized the importance of international youth organizations in strengthening communications. One Government expressed its formal reservations concerning the advisability of the United Nations continuing to use existing channels of communication with youth and youth organizations.

4. In addition to these formal replies, the Secretary-General wishes to draw attention to:

(a) The declaration made during the eighth special session devoted to disarmament by the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, in which he said that his Government was in favour of the United Nations considering specific ways of bringing the youth of different nations into closer contact and was willing to make a material contribution towards a United Nations programme aiming to foster understanding among the young generation of all nations.

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(b) The action of the Netherlands Government which has made a donation to the Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth NGOs which meets regularly under United Nations auspices to enable it "to improve the geographical balance between the participating youth organizations".

5. The Executive-Secretary of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) emphasized the importance of identifying a national liaison and focal point on youth within each country. He added that full consideration was being given in ECWA to the request that regional commissions should consider at their forthcoming sessions appropriate forms in which they can assist Governments in this field and establish contacts with youth and youth organizations.

6. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) called attention in its reply to the importance of practical links between youth and the United Nations, as with youth forums, conferences and training courses for youth leaders and youth workers, and to the usefulness of designating a focal point on youth questions within each country.

7. The reply from the Economic Commission for Africa emphasized that the information provided to youth organizations by the United Nations system should be in a form and of a nature that interests and attracts young people, but that a good deal of such information at present does not appear to meet these requirements.

8. One non-governmental organization, the World Alliance of YMCAs, looked forward to seeing effective channels of communication following the proposed guidelines and which will be reflected in co-operative programmes of development at the national and local level: it also referred to the Geneva Informal Meeting and assumed that under guidelines C.7, the United Nations will continue to work through this meeting.

9. As indicated above, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Youth considered the guidelines at its 2nd meeting.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Secretary-General believes that the paucity of replies from Member States to his note verbale precludes his making comprehensive and new recommendations on the further development of the guidelines contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/135. He suggests that the guidelines be circulated once again to Member States, the regional commissions and youth organizations with the request that continued attention be given to them.

11. Should the General Assembly recommend that steps be taken to further study the nature and programme of an international youth year, the Assembly may wish to recommend that those steps include the strengthening of communication with youth as outlined in the guidelines annexed to resolution 32/135, as well as the following specific actions:

(a) More Governments could be encouraged to follow the example of the Netherlands in supporting the Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth

Intergovernmental Organization so as to enable it to increase its representativity of organized youth from all regions and systems.

(b) Governments and non-governmental organizations with youth programmes could be encouraged to contribute material for publication in the quarterly Youth Information Bulletin issued in three languages, and also to identify channels through which copies of the Bulletin can be circulated in order to reach the maximum number of young people.

(c) The practice of providing internships for young people could be expanded to give young people from all regions of the world the opportunity of serving the United Nations for short periods and thereby learning of its activities at first-hand. Internships might not be confined to United Nations Headquarters, but extend in particular to Geneva and Vienna as well as the offices of the regional commissions, where programmes of direct concern for youth are organized.

(d) The Economic and Social Council could be requested through its committee on non-governmental organizations to review the situation of regional non-governmental organizations and their relationship to the regional economic commissions as well as to the Economic and Social Council itself in order to facilitate the working co-operation between the regional commissions and non-governmental organizations, especially those active with young people.

(e) The joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) could be empowered to establish a small group of young people to advise it on the production and circulation of United Nations publications which will be of interest to youth, with special emphasis on the activities of the United Nations rather than on its structures.

(f) The Inter-Agency Task Force on Youth could be requested to initiate and co-ordinate a system-wide programme of regional and national meetings (seminars, workshops, training courses), so as to ensure that the concern and activities of the United Nations which are of immediate interest to young people should become a reality to young people and to youth organizations and so that young people themselves may actively participate in the planning and conduct of such meetings. Such a programme could be planned on approximately a five-year cycle, bearing in mind the transitory nature of youth and it should involve a wide range of offices within the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, as well as the Division of Human Rights, the Centre for Disarmament, the Office for Science and Technology and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Governments could be encouraged to support such a co-ordinated programme by offering to act as host or otherwise support such meetings.
