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POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH

Youth, its education and its responsibilities  
in the world of today

Report of the Secretary-General

1. On 14 December 1973, the General Assembly adopted resolution 3141 (XXVIII), entitled "Youth, its education and its responsibilities in the world of today", in paragraph 6 of which it requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its thirtieth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.
2. The Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Governments of Member States, in which he drew their attention to General Assembly resolution 3141 (XXVIII) and requested information concerning any action they were taking on the matters raised in paragraphs 1 and 5 of the resolution. Information on matters raised in paragraph 4 was requested from administering Powers only. As at 2 July 1975, replies had been received from the Governments of the following 30 States: Algeria, Austria, Barbados, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Germany (Federal Republic of), India, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Madagascar, Malta, Mauritius, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Singapore, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates and United States of America.
3. The present report is based on those replies as well as on other information available to the Secretary-General.
4. In paragraph 1 of resolution 3141 (XXVIII), the General Assembly invited the attention of Member States to their responsibility for maintaining a policy conforming to the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

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and conducive to the elimination of colonialism, racism, apartheid and similar policies, thus preserving and strengthening the faith of youth in those values.

5. The question of the role of youth in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the education of youth in the principles of respect for human rights set forth in United Nations instruments have received much attention from Member States over the past few years, as evidenced by the resolutions on this subject adopted by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. 1/ The importance of maintaining a policy that conforms to the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and conducive in particular to the elimination of colonialism, apartheid and similar policies is widely acknowledged by Member States, in conformity with obligations they assumed under the Charter of the United Nations.

6. Most of the replies received to the Secretary-General's note verbale indicate that the teaching of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an integral part of the educational system and is reflected in the curriculum at the various levels of education as well as in out-of-school programmes and activities. While in some countries specific provisions exist for instruction in the principles and aims of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant instruments, the general trend is to view the process of education itself as a means of acquiring and strengthening moral values which are consonant with the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

7. The Commission on Human Rights considered the question of conscientious objection to military service during its recent sessions and most recently at its thirty-first session held at Geneva from 3 February to 7 March 1975. A report was prepared for that session which updated information previously submitted (E/CN.4/1118 and Corr.1 and Add.1-3).

8. The Commission also considered the report of the first Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Youth established under General Assembly resolution 3022 (XXVII) of 18 December 1972 to advise the Secretary-General on activities that should be undertaken to meet the needs and aspirations of youth. The report of the Group contains recommendations on the subject of youth and human rights. Owing to lack of time, the Commission decided to defer the items to its thirty-second session where they will be given high priority.

9. In paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 3141 (XXVIII), the Assembly emphasized the importance of increased co-ordination between United Nations organs and the specialized agencies in the activities and programmes relating to youth and of continuing co-operation with the Governments of Member States, in

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<sup>1/</sup> General Assembly resolutions 2037 (XX), 2447 (XXIII), 2497 (XXIV), 2633 (XXV), 2770 (XXVI) and 3023 (XXVII). Commission on Human Rights resolutions 20 (XXV), 12 (XXVI), 11 (XXVII) and 17 (XXIX).

order to achieve an effective and harmonious approach to the problems confronting youth.

10. The question of co-ordination in the field of youth has been of concern to the policy-making bodies as well as the organs and agencies of the United Nations. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, at various times in the past when examining questions related to youth, have called for better co-ordination in this field. <sup>2/</sup> Within the United Nations system, formal efforts for the co-ordination of activities in the field of youth can be traced back to the institution, in 1964, of interagency meetings on youth, under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

11. Between 1964 and 1972, a total of eight interagency meetings on youth were held with the participation of the United Nations, UNICEF and those specialized agencies that carry out youth activities in their field of concern - the ILO, FAO, UNESCO and WHO. These meetings were convened not only for the purpose of exchanging information but also to harmonize the activities of the system in the field of youth in order to achieve the best use of limited resources. The effect of these meetings was primarily to improve opportunities for exchange of information and, to some extent, to identify lines of concerted action. The meetings were discontinued in 1972 after the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and its Preparatory Committee decided that interagency consultations on youth matters should be carried on through informal contacts in Geneva unless special justification existed for a meeting.

12. The present arrangements for co-ordination in the field of youth consist of bilateral and multilateral exchanges of information and co-operation between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The United Nations has an interagency youth liaison officer at Geneva who maintains regular contact with the agencies on matters of mutual interest. Informal contacts on youth-related matters also continue with international non-governmental youth organizations at Geneva and Headquarters. The Review of Current and Future Activities Related to Youth, issued originally as a working paper for the interagency meetings, is now issued annually as a general distribution document. The Review consists of sections contributed by each specialized agency and other units of the United Nations that have programmes in the field of youth.

13. At present, plans are being made to hold an ad hoc interagency meeting on youth early in 1976, at which the question of co-ordination will be fully discussed.

14. Ongoing co-operation between Governments and the United Nations is achieved through the United Nations technical co-operation programme, primarily in the form of advisory services on youth policies and programmes. In its efforts to assist Governments in the formulation of national policies and programmes

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<sup>2/</sup> General Assembly resolution 2497 (XXIV) and 3022 (XXVII).  
Economic and Social Council resolutions 1354 (XLV) and 1407 (XLVI)

designed to help the creation of meaningful structures for youth participation in national development, the United Nations has since 1965 made available to Governments, at their request, the services of an interregional adviser on youth policies and programmes for short-term advisory missions. The services of long-term advisers and experts in the field of youth is also available to Governments. Since 1971, 56 interregional advisory missions and six long-term expert services have been provided to Governments.

15. The United Nations has also assisted and continues to assist Member States in their efforts to enhance the role of youth in the promotion and protection of human rights and in particular the abolition of colonialism, racism, apartheid and similar policies. Within the framework of the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2497 (XXIV) of 28 October 1969, the United Nations organized on a world-wide basis two seminars on youth and human rights. The purpose of these seminars was to discuss the ways and means by which youth at the national and international levels could further contribute to the implementation of the principles and standards set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant United Nations instruments.

16. The first seminar, organized in co-operation with the Government of Yugoslavia, was held at Belgrade from 2 to 12 June 1970. The second seminar, organized in co-operation with the Government of Italy, took place at San Remo from 28 August to 10 September 1973. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 2633 (XXV) of 11 November 1970 and 3140 (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, took note with interest of the reports and the conclusions of these seminars. 3/

17. Both seminars were attended by qualified participants; including leading members of youth organizations from approximately 30 countries, as well as by observers from the specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

18. The United Nations has also undertaken measures to improve the teaching of human rights and to disseminate widely knowledge of United Nations activities in the field of human rights. A school pamphlet on human rights, which is issued in English, French and Spanish, sets out in simple terms the main tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is accompanied by a teacher's guide containing recommendations on how to use the pamphlet and make the Declaration relevant to the life of young people.

19. In addition to these, the text of the Universal Declaration in leaflet form was distributed in 61 languages in 1973 by the network of the United Nations information centres and the United Nations Development Programme offices. The following publications were also issued in English, French and Spanish: United Nations and Human Rights, a booklet containing a comprehensive review

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3/ ST/TAO/HR/39 and ST/TAO/HR.47.

of the human rights activities of the United Nations, and Questions and Answers on Human Rights, a brief pamphlet explaining in layman's terms the rights enumerated in the Declaration.

20. In paragraph 3 of resolution 3141 (XXVIII), the General Assembly solemnly invited all young people to affirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in order to further the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding among peoples.

21. A number of activities of the United Nations Office of Public Information, including the programmes of the Centre for Economic and Social Information, are designed to make young people aware of the work of the United Nations that is designed to foster respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Each year many thousands of young people reaffirm their commitment to these ideals through activities in schools, on United Nations Day and in their work with non-governmental organizations whose aims coincide with those of the United Nations Charter.

22. At the same time, the Secretary-General believes that the faith of youth in the purposes and principles of the Charter is dependent to a great extent on the existence of adequate channels of communication between the United Nations and youth whereby young people may meaningfully contribute to the work of the United Nations. In his report on channels of communication with youth and international youth organizations (A/8743), presented to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session, the Secretary-General pointed to the inadequacy of existing channels of communication. He therefore proposed a series of measures designed to improve and strengthen communication between the United Nations and youth, thus providing a basis for greater co-operation on matters of mutual concern to the United Nations and youth. These measures were considered by the General Assembly which adopted resolution 3022 (XXVII), in which it called for further action to improve communication with youth. The Secretary-General will submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirtieth session, in which he will outline the progress achieved and make recommendations for further action.

23. In paragraph 4 of resolution 3141 (XXVIII), the General Assembly reaffirmed the importance for the administering Powers of urgently undertaking all necessary measures to further by all appropriate means and in conformity with the Charter the education and training of youth in the countries and territories still under colonial and alien domination and foreign occupation, with a view to expediting their liberation and the full exercise of their right to self-determination. This paragraph was brought to the attention of the administering Powers through the Secretary-General's note verbale.

24. In paragraph 5 of resolution 3141 (XXVIII), the General Assembly urged Governments to ensure to youth: (a) more favourable conditions in the fields of education, training, health, social welfare and employment; (b) an appropriate opportunity to participate in the preparation and implementation of national development plans and in programmes of international co-operation; and

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(c) the possibility of participating in decision on questions of national interest, particularly those which concern youth.

25. The need to provide young people with adequate opportunities for their personal development was widely acknowledged by the Governments in their replies to the note verbale, which indicated that they all subscribe to the principle of equal access to educational and training facilities, to employment, and to health and welfare services regardless of race, religion, sex or status. Free education at the elementary level and, to a lesser extent, at the secondary and higher levels is prevalent in most of those countries. Where opportunities for free secondary and higher education do not exist, assistance in the form of scholarships, loans or grants is often made available to students. Free education is usually accompanied by such benefits as free textbooks, free transport to and from school, free medical and health care, and free milk.

26. Several countries also reported on laws or regulations providing for the participation of students in the process of setting policies and implementing programmes in education. In Austria, for example, the 1974 law on education in school provides for the participation of elected pupils in all decisions concerning school matters. This has been achieved by the creation of a body where teachers, parents and pupils are equally represented. In Finland there exists for each secondary school a representative School Council whose function is to develop and co-ordinate educational planning in the school. Teachers and students elected by secret ballot are equally represented in these councils. Secondary school students in New Zealand were recently elected for a term of three years to Boards of Governors which are responsible under the Education Act for the administration of secondary schools.

27. In most countries programmes of training are usually part of the educational system and are carried out in schools and vocational institutions. In some instances special training schemes have been set up with a view to meeting the needs of young people who are out of school and unemployed. Youth training and social development centres have been established in the Sudan, for example, to provide training for unemployed youth both for regular employment and for useful occupation outside the labour market, especially in the form of self-employment. In the Philippines training for out-of-school youth is carried out by the National Manpower and Youth Council with the assistance of the Department of Education and Culture. A National Development Volunteer Programme has been established in Pakistan to provide for the training of unemployed youth. In Singapore the People's Association, a statutory body with a network of some 173 community centres, administers the National Youth Leadership Training Institute, which offers a variety of training courses to young people. The Government of Singapore is also establishing a vocational guidance movement at the school level and at the community level to assist young people to make career decisions consonant with their interests, aptitudes and education. In India there is a national programme to prepare and train non-student youth for employment and for assuming social and civic responsibilities. In the

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United States of America the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 established a Job Corps, through which federal support was granted for education, vocational training and work experience for unemployed youth.

28. In their efforts to enable young people to play a greater role in national development, many countries which had not previously done so have lowered the age of voting to 18. In the case of the Phillippines the right of suffrage has been extended to those 15 years and over, which enabled young people to take part in the recent national referendum.

29. Various other measures illustrating different approaches designed to provide adequate opportunities to young people to participate in national development were reported by the Governments who replied to the Secretary-General's note verbale. In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics 144 members of the Young Communist League (the Komsomol) were elected to the Supreme Soviet in the last election. The Komsomol, which has 35 million members between 14 and 28 years of age, is also represented in the executive organs of a number of government bodies, including the Ministry of Education. In Romania the post of Minister of Youth has been held by the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Union of Communist Youth since 1968.

30. In Singapore the People's Association, which co-ordinates youth organizations and activities, has been taking various measures to ensure greater participation of youth in the decision-making process. Youth organizations are represented on the board of management of the Association which is also in the process of establishing a Central Youth Council and regional youth councils. In Finland young people nominate their own candidates for state and municipal elections. In addition, the Act on Municipal Youth Boards (1972) provides for a youth board in each municipality. These boards are composed of representatives of youth organizations and are co-ordinating bodies for youth programmes at the municipal level.

31. In the Sudan young people are represented in the Sudanese Socialist Union through the Sudan Youth Union, as well as in the People's Council, which is the highest legislative power in the country. A National Advisory Committee on Youth Affairs was recently instituted in Barbados to advise the Government on youth policies and programmes. The Committee is composed of representatives from the Government, youth organizations and voluntary bodies interested in youth work. In Denmark a Liaison Committee on which all major youth organizations and 10 ministers are represented has been established. The Committee is empowered to review legislation in matters concerning youth and to put forward recommendations to the Government for changes and amendments.

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