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POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH

Work of the Interagency Task Force
on Youth Policies and Programmes

Note by the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 1979/27 of 9 May 1979, the Economic and Social Council, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General "to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session, through the Council, on the work of the interagency task force drawn from the Secretariat of the United Nations and the specialized agencies directly concerned with youth policies and programmes". By its decision 1979/69 of 3 August 1979, the Economic and Social Council decided to authorize the Secretariat to submit the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the interagency task force on youth policies and programmes, being prepared pursuant to Council resolution 1979/27, directly to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session. The present note has been prepared pursuant to these decisions.
2. The interagency task force on youth policies and programmes was set up in 1977 pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2078 (LXII), in which the Council, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General, in order to give effect to a co-ordinated and practical approach to youth policies, to establish an interagency task force drawn from the Secretariat of the United Nations and the specialized agencies directly concerned with youth policies and programmes, and to report on the work of this task force to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council.
3. The Task Force met twice in October 1977 and May 1978. It was composed of officials of the Secretariat and of the following organizations: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); World Health Organization (WHO); International Labour Organisation (ILO); Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Volunteers programme; United Nations Environment Programme

(UNEP); United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The United Nations Division of Social Affairs (Geneva) provided secretariat services for the Task Force.

II. WORK OF THE INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE

4. The Task Force adopted the following terms of reference:

(a) To collect, collate and review information from different parts of the United Nations system about current and projected programmes and projects directly relating to youth or having a substantial youth component. This includes surveys, reports, studies, seminars, conferences, and, in particular field operations, including consultancies, advisory missions, and special projects;

(b) On the basis of the priorities established by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other policy-making bodies and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) for youth policies and programmes:

(i) To make specific proposals for joint action, in ways which will enable the objectives of youth policy and programmes to be more effectively implemented at global, regional or national level;

(ii) To identify areas of work in relation to youth programmes which are neglected or inadequately covered by present arrangements and to make proposals by which this state of affairs can be remedied or improved and whereby agency activities may be mutually reinforcing;

(iii) To make proposals for the improvement of the programme classification system and other aspects of the harmonization of programme planning and budgeting which would facilitate more co-ordinated and effective action in relation to youth programmes;

(c) To respond, through the appropriate channels within each agency, to requests from Governments, funding bodies and the agencies themselves, for joint missions (advisory, project preparation, evaluation) with detailed suggestions for the composition, terms of reference and methods of work.

5. At the first meeting of the Task Force, a preliminary discussion took place on a range of possible tasks which had been previously identified by ACC. It was agreed that the Task Force should focus its activities on regional and subregional activities and that there should be participation by the relevant regional bodies of the agencies concerned. In this connexion, it may be noted that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was represented at both meetings of the Task Force and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) at the second meeting.

6. Among the questions dealt with by the Task Force were the following:

(a) International Youth Year. In view of the decision taken in General Assembly resolution 32/134 to discuss a possible International Youth Year at its thirty-third session (a discussion which subsequently led to the adoption of

Assembly resolution 33/7) the Task Force held a preliminary discussion on the approach which might be used for the Year, should the General Assembly decide to proclaim such a year. All members of the Task Force favoured primary emphasis on activity at the regional level. Simultaneously, a dialogue and exchange of information could also be initiated among the international youth non-governmental organizations. It was considered essential that national, regional and international youth organizations should be actively involved both in the preparation for and in activities organized during the International Youth Year. It was considered that the over-all aim of the Year should be the encouragement of full youth participation both in the process of achieving and in enjoying the benefits of national development and international co-operation.

(b) Channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/135 in which the Secretary-General was requested to implement the guidelines relating to channels of communication with youth and youth organizations contained in the resolution, through consultations both with the Administrator of UNDP and through the interagency task force on youth, the Task Force discussed the implementation of the guidelines. It noted that at the national level the Administrator of UNDP was actively exploring possibilities of associating youth organizations with development activities of all kinds, in particular through the activities of the volunteer programme aimed at strengthening domestic development services and national volunteer movements especially among young people. It recognized the difficulties in reaching young people and noted that there were many reasons for this, including those of language, as well as the difficulty in identifying active groups of youth. It was felt that the Directory of Youth Organizations which the Task Force proposed to compile could help to improve this situation in some measure (see para. 6 (g) below). It was agreed that a publication presenting in attractive form a selection of activities undertaken through the United Nations system, to support and promote youth activities at national level in various countries, could be of considerable interest to young people who would see in it a United Nations effort of direct concern and significance for themselves. It was emphasized that even at the national level young people do not necessarily constitute a homogeneous group and that therefore information material would have to be prepared with the interests and needs of the various subgroups in mind and that strategies for its distribution would need to take account of the different sectors such as urban/rural/in-school/out-of-school youth.

The Task Force considered at some length section A.3 of the guidelines, which requested the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of identifying national liaison and focal points for youth. It took account of replies received from a number of Governments in connexion with the Commission on Human Rights resolution 1 B (XXII) of 11 February 1976 (see E/CN.4/1223 and Add.113). In the light of the very greatly differing situations in different countries, including the relationship between governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions for youth, it was felt that further development of this idea might be included among the national objectives for an International Youth Year if such were proclaimed.

The guideline on the intensification of work through the regional commissions, in improving the channels of communication with youth, was considered to be of great importance. The chief function of the commissions in this respect was seen as the promotion, through various means (meetings, training courses, publications) of an exchange of views and experiences between countries, as already exists within some regions. It was noted that there appeared to be an increase in the number of non-governmental youth bodies operating at the regional level, and that it was important for the regional commissions to make contact with such bodies. At the international level (section C of the guidelines), it was noted that the Youth Information Bulletin was now appearing quarterly in three languages (English, French and Spanish) and that interested agencies should provide material for its contents and information about youth groups known to them in order to broaden its circulation.

(c) A project for joint United Nations system training workshops for youth leaders and youth workers in southern Africa was discussed. Copies of this proposal were circulated to UNDP resident representatives in the southern Africa subregion in order to obtain the reactions of the Governments and liberation movements concerned. It was agreed that, subject to positive replies being received, detailed plans would be worked out by the agencies involved, and UNDP and the United Nations Volunteers programme would, possibly in co-operation with ECA, undertake a project identification mission.

(d) Interagency country mission. UNESCO referred to the Task Force the report of a mission undertaken in 1978 at the request of the Government of Madagascar in connexion with its newly established Ministry of Youth and plans for a national youth training centre. The report made recommendations for follow-up action on an interagency basis. The Task Force agreed to co-operate in this matter, and, in January 1979, at the request of the Government an interagency mission visited Madagascar and subsequently submitted a report to the Government. Officials of the Secretariat and the following agencies participated: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Volunteers programme, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Development Fund (FED). Detailed suggestions were made for continuing co-operation at the field level by all agencies, co-ordinated by the UNDP Resident Representative.

(e) Employment-oriented national youth service programmes. Several members of the Task Force expressed interest in co-operating with the ILO, which had submitted a regional project proposal for a multi-country study on national youth service schemes with a view to compiling a manual of guidelines for Governments and others concerned in such schemes. As a contribution to the first stage of this proposal, UNESCO commissioned a consultant at the end of 1978 to undertake a study of some educational aspects of national youth service programmes in five selected African countries. After further consultations with the other interested agencies, the ILO submitted its revised proposals as a regional project for UNDP support, the first stage of which would be carried out over a period of 18 months. The expected

outcome will include the publication of a manual on employment-oriented youth service programmes, the establishment of a permanent advisory service for African countries and the possible extension of the project in the future to non-African developing countries.

(f) Directory of youth organizations. It was agreed to undertake the compilation and publication of a directory of youth organizations with the co-operation of international youth non-governmental organizations. In a joint effort, the United Nations Division of Social Affairs (Geneva) and UNEP (Nairobi) allocated staff time to work on this project; financial contributions to cover the cost of the preparation and publication in stencilled form were made by UNESCO and UNFPA, and a number of international youth non-governmental organizations have been directly associated with the project. The Directory, covering international youth organizations and national organizations listed country by country, has been published.

(g) Environmental education for youth. The Task Force reviewed a paper submitted by UNESCO and based on the discussions and recommendations of the conference on Environmental Education held at Tbilisi in 1977.

7. As a result of the restructuring of the subsidiary machinery of ACC, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/197, the work covered by the task force has been assumed by the new consultative committees concerned with the programme and operational aspects of substantive questions CCSQ (PROG) and CCSQ (OPS). At its second regular session held in October 1979, CCSQ (PROG) decided to consider next year ways of strengthening co-ordination and co-operation in this area in the light of the General Assembly's decisions relating to International Youth Year and to convene a meeting of specialists to advise it in this respect.
