Colombo Declaration on Youth

Zero Draft - For Distribution - 21st March 2014

A joint declaration from governments and young people on mainstreaming youth in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Timetable for draft
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Preamble

We young people, youth-led organizations, Ministers in charge of the subject of Youth Development, Senior governmental officials, representatives of governments, United Nations agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations, other development partners and representatives of academia, media and the private sector, have gathered in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 6th-10th May, 2014 for the World Conference on Youth to explore strategies on strengthening partnerships with youth in the development and implementation of the global development frameworks, particularly through their active engagement in the discussions on the internationally agreed development agenda, including the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with a renewed focus on the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY).

In this regard we;

**Note** the summary of the discussions held before and during the World Conference on Youth 2014 included as an appendix to this document;

**Recognise** a common understanding that youth contribute significantly to their families, communities, society and our common future through their creativity, capacity for innovation, energy and optimism and therefore are actors and strategic partners in national and global development;

**Further recognise** that the ethnic, cultural, religious, political and socio-economic diversities of young people enable them to contribute positively to the formulation of actions for development strategies and plans. In this context, youth participation in development at local, national, regional and global levels would be a strong and essential pillar in all current and future development frameworks;

**Uphold** the Major Group system, as reinforced in the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012 - “Future We Want”, and in particular the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) as a vital space for self-organized youth in the post-2015 framework, whilst also welcoming coordination initiatives made by the global youth-led organisations inter alia the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO)

**Acknowledge** further that the world has made significant achievements in the social integration of young people since the Millennium Declaration in 2000 and the first International Year of Youth in 1985. However, recognize that many challenges remain which impede integral development of young people and thereby constrains the development of nations they deserve;
Reaffirm the importance of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), and consider the urgent need of effectively implementing it through plans, mechanisms and programs at all levels, including WPAY’s role in guiding United Nations, inter-governmental processes and youth programmes of inter-governmental and international organisations;

Commit to the Colombo Youth Declaration as a joint agreement made among global youth and Ministers responsible for youth development, representatives of governments, United Nations agencies, representatives of academia, media and the private sector on youth priorities in relation to current and future development frameworks;

Further commits to ensure sustained youth partnership in the development of programmes by governments, international organizations, the United Nations system, youth and youth-led organizations;

Call upon all to appreciate and recognize these commitments and feed into the discussion of the formulation and implementation of the post-2015 global development agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.
Recommendations for Action

WE IDENTIFY THE FOLLOWING AREAS FOR ACTION which arise from the participation of youth, civil society, representatives from governments and international development partners to be included in all future development frameworks, particularly in post-2015 discussions:

Inclusive Youth Participation at All Levels
1. Explore the establishment of permanent mechanisms that allow for policy inputs by youth at all levels of governance and society;
2. Integrate youth more into political processes by inter alia strengthening existing process like the UN Youth Delegate Program and volunteering programs at all levels;
3. Create spaces for open, free and safe political action by young people, where they can express their concerns and have their voices heard by policymakers;
4. Provide youth-led organisations and existing youth-led constituencies active in sustainable development and other international policy processes with the support necessary to continue playing an active role in negotiations;

Achieving Good Governance and Accountability
5. Implement to the fullest extent possible, UN conventions which promote good governance, transparency and accountability such as UN Convention Against Corruption;
6. Make every effort to strengthen the rule of law and establish mechanisms that allow young people to engage political institutions;
7. Ensuring young people have greater access to political institutions and information, and implement policies that protect the rights of young people to be politically active in society;
8. Providing access for justice for all to reduce crimes against children and young people

Youth Rights
9. Call upon the Secretary General of the United Nations to take the initiative, with the help of specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and youth-led NGOs, to start discussions on a declaration on Youth Rights;
10. Take measures to further promote and protect the rights of youth by developing where necessary mechanisms such as ombudspersons for the rights of young people;
11. Recognise the fulfillment of young peoples’ human rights as a key indicator for the fulfillment of the Post-2015 Development Agenda;

Globalized & Inclusive Youth Led-Development
12. Call for indicators on increased investment in the global aid architecture, and private sector investment in strengthening global/regional/national/local partnerships for and with youth in the development and implementation of the post-2015 agenda;
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13. Urge traditional and emerging development partners to strengthen international cooperation for the development of young people, including by providing financial assistance and a youth aid architecture;

Ending Systemic Inequalities
14. Recognise further the cultural, ethnic, religious and socio-economic diversities of young people and the necessity of taking this into consideration in the formulation of actions for the development of young people;
15. Ensure participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes, which is critical to ensure that strategies to address inequalities, discrimination and poverty are relevant and tailored to their needs;
16. Recall Governments’ commitment to pass and enforce laws to protect the poorest and most marginalized, including adolescent girls and women affected by violence as well as rural populations;
17. Invest in better measurement of development progress for the most excluded and marginalized groups, including programs to ensure effective education systems for persons with disabilities

Gender Equality
18. Support the prioritization of gender equality in the sustainable development framework though a goal and targets to end all forms of discrimination against women of all ages, incorporating structural causes of inequality with particular focus on intersectionality to ensure no one is left behind;
19. Propose a target on ending violence against girls, women and young women in the post-2015 development agenda and invest in collection of data disaggregated by gender and age to ensure monitoring of the development and youth policies’ impact on young women;
20. Ensure the equal participation of women in education at all levels, decision making and employment opportunities, as well as equal pay for equal work and equal access to assets and resources;
21. Introduce gender sensitive policies and resource allocation including gender responsive budgeting in equal partnership with young people;
22. Ensure the full engagement of men and boys as agents of change in promoting gender equality and preventing and condemning violence against women and girls;

Empowering Marginalized Youth including Most at Risk Young People
23. Agree to report on how young people, particularly those from marginalised groups, are represented in economic, social, cultural and educational structures within each country;
24. Support youth organisations and National Youth Councils in an effort to reach out to self-organised groups of marginalised young people;
25. Ensure there are no legal barriers in terms of access to health, education, employment or other services because of the identity or practices of young people;
Realising Equal Access to Quality Education

26. Ensure universal free primary education for girls and boys equal and equitable access to education at all levels;

27. Increase financial contribution by Governments, or in the cases of governments having limited resources, funding through alternate sources, towards education and investments in quality educational institutions at all levels, as well as fulfilling the call of the Rio+20 Outcome Document in supporting non-informal education by including a non-formal/lifelong learning indicators in the post-2015 framework;

28. Ensure equal access target for education beyond primary level, fulfilling Agenda 21’s call for secondary and tertiary education, for all with particular focus on quality education systems for young women and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas;

29. Increase efforts to integrate education for democracy and sustainable development, along with civic, human rights and peace education, into national curricula;

30. Ensure effective learning outcomes at all levels that impart knowledge and skills that match the demands of the labour market

31. Increase recognition of non-formal education, including through volunteer schemes, as an effective means of skills transfer, which increases employability.

32. Encourage the governments to provide career guidance, mentoring and counseling to achieve their education and career goals;

Full Employment and Entrepreneurship

33. Boost youth employment indicators in the post 2015 framework by ensuring that a target with quantitative (NEET numbers) as well as qualitative (decent work according to ILO standards) are measured;

34. Consider creating schemes to provide seed money to support enterprise and employment for young people and empower young entrepreneurs;

35. Governments should ensure the quality of life of migrant youth workers;

36. Deliver equal recognition to all positions and forum of work and thus provide protection to sectors of the workforce that are often victims of discrimination inter alia work traditionally occupied by women, garment or immigrant workers;

37. Call on the UN to conduct an effective survey to identify the changing needs of demands of the youth and the availability of job opportunities;

38. Provide more job opportunities to young people with disabilities, displaced persons, street children, indigenous youth and minorities;

Poverty Eradication and Food Security

39. Increase commitment by Governments to advance economic policies that reduce income inequality and guarantee to young people equal opportunities for development, including income, food and employment;
40. Strengthened policies and programs for overcoming poverty and hunger with a view to better incorporate the developmental needs of young people by inter alia ensuring year-round access by all to affordable, adequate, safe and nutritious food;

41. Increase efforts by Governments to encourage and enhance educational and cultural services that would make agriculture and food production more appealing to young people;

42. Provide social protections to reduce the vulnerability of young people, especially young people with disabilities and indigenous youth;

43. Promote sustainable consumption by young people and provide education for youth on healthy food culture while minimising food waste and postharvest crop losses;

Promoting Healthy Lives and Access to Health

44. Promoting healthy lifestyles and taking all available steps to make health coverage universal;

45. Adopt measures to ensure young people have access to youth friendly health services, including public health services under national universal health coverage systems, as well as national policies that address the health of young people across all health areas including the unrealized MDG agenda such as HIV/AIDS and key emerging issues, such as non-communicable diseases, mental health and injuries;

46. State Parties with the full involvement of youth, identify their sexual and reproductive health needs which includes sexual & reproductive health education;

47. Provide non-discriminatory, right-based, age appropriate, gender-sensitive and health education which includes comprehensive sexuality education;

48. Ensure coordinated mechanisms that promote the participation of young people, including at the policy level, as key stakeholders in health development across all levels including the United Nations system;

Environmental Sustainability, Disaster Risk Reduction and Youth Centered Urbanisation

49. Agree to strengthen the participation of young people as actors in environmental negotiations through the creation and support of a cross-issue constituency of youth incorporating the separated youth spaces already provided for in other negotiations;

50. Report on the effects of urbanisation, disasters and environmental degradation on young people so as data can be collected on this issue;

51. Call on states to adopt the Secretary General’s recommendations creating an institutional mechanism for Future Generations;

52. Call upon local authorities and mayors to promote youth friendly cities to forward youth engagement in implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda and to strengthen positive socioeconomic links between cities and semi-urban and rural states;
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Realizing Peace, Reconciliation and Ending Violence

53. Recognise the central role young people can play in post-conflict reconciliation efforts and provide them with the necessary spaces and fora to play that role;

54. Increase commitments to protect children and young people against unlawful military recruitment

55. Increase participation of young people, including young women, in peace building and youth-led rehabilitation and reintegration processes at all levels;

56. Promote inclusive and effective rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms

Ensuring Inclusive Recreation, Sport, and Culture

57. Prioritise the funding of sport, leisure and art programs for young people as to encourage youth from all social strata, ethnic and religious groups, including young people in rehabilitation and delinquency programs, to come together in meaningful ways;

58. Recognise the unifying language of sport and the arts in bringing young people together and therefore ensure that every young person has access to at least one sporting and one cultural activity in their local communities in the post 2015 framework;

59. Provide young people with the ability to participate in policymaking bodies of sports, arts and culture at all levels, and encourage them to pursue careers in arts and sport;

60. Recognize the role of inclusive recreation, sports and culture can play in important role in social integration and in particular the role of sports in avoiding non communicable diseases;
Our Commitment Going Forward

BASED ON THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED, THE PARTICIPANTS AGREE TO:

**Take necessary measures** and work in partnership with Member States, civil society, international organizations and international cooperation agencies to implement the priorities identified in this roadmap with full and effective participation of youth;

**Continue** the ongoing discussions within the framework of the United Nations General Assembly regarding the effective implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, as well as strengthening mechanisms of coordination within the United Nations System to support global, regional and national policies and programmes for youth;

**Welcome and encourage** further support and accountability for existing platforms of youth-led organisations, inter alia the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organisations, and youth spaces, inter alia the Major Group for Children and Youth, to act as participation spaces for youth;

**Call** for youth focused targets and youth focused indicators in the post-2015 development framework, which could lead to a youth focused goal;

**Consider** discussing a global framework for youth participation in the review, monitoring and implementation of the World Programme for Action on Youth at the UN jointly with Member States;

**Request** the UN Member States to ensure availability of adequate funds to meet the needs to address the priorities of the youth;

**Request** the United Nations Secretary General consider this document an important input from Member States, youth, youth-led organisations, other NGOs, business and the media as to how youth should be incorporated in the Post-2015 Sustainable Development process and reference it in his synthesis report;

**Request** the General Assembly and the Secretary General of the United Nations to recognize this document at its 69th session as a critical contribution to the ongoing Post-2015 Sustainable Development process.

Note: The Mission of Sri Lanka to UN will be developing this working document. Please contact the Mission of Sri Lanka with your feedback. For further clarification, comments and requests please contact: Ms. J. Wickramanayake

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Appendix

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Summary of discussions from the pre-conference and round tables of the World Conference on Youth 2014

This appendix to the Colombo Youth Declaration is meant to capture the breadth of discussions that took place at the World Conference on Youth 2014 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Although it in no way represents the consensus reached by the participants of the conference, it provides a glimpse into the various and often divergent views expressed.
Foundations
Foundations are identified as having a cross cutting and foundational role for youth in the development framework.

Achieving good governance and accountability
Good governance is one of the main drivers of social well being and is vital to the achievement of long lasting development. A transparent and accountable governance structure reduces corruption by national, local and private authorities and can guarantee that no one is left behind. Young people usually lack access to governance structures at all levels and are thus unable to deal with problems that plague their societies. As a result, young people are often disillusioned with political leadership and political institutions, and are excluded from policy development.

The post-2015 process has allowed young people to demonstrate their willingness to participate in shaping the future through for example voting their priorities in the MY World survey, and by presenting their views and Calls for Action. The survey, as well as the national consultations overall, have demonstrated that “there is a need to engage people, more specifically the youth. In the formulation of the development agenda, which in many ways can tie into a desire for increased volunteerism that can empower youth, transform the often passive relationship between citizen and state in addressing development challenges, and provide work skills” (Kyrgyzstan national post-2015 report, thematic areas: Values, p16).

Governments must abide by the principles contained in the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. At Open Working Group 7, Member States referred to the declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Rule of Law at the national and international levels. The document states that the rule of law and development are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and that advancement of the rule of law must occur at the national and international levels.

Young people need governments to be transparent, accountable and responsive to their rights and needs. Youth must have the ability to organise themselves in a legal environment that enables them to form and join youth-led and other civil society organisations, as well as the right to protest and express their opinions peacefully.

Inclusive Youth Participation at All Levels
Through active participation, including through volunteering, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities in formulating, implementing and following up on policies and programmes (WPAY, J, p42).

Youth-driven political change throughout the world is an indication that young people feel marginalized by and left out of political processes at all levels. Only “1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20’s and 11.87% are in their 30’s” (UNDP and IPU: Global
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Parliamentary Report, 2012). Moreover, at the global level whilst limited youth participation structures exist, they are often fragmented and lack coherence. Review of WPAY is left to voluntary reporting and fails to include youth voices in monitoring its evaluation. Youth feedback through the MY World Survey shows that “An honest and responsive government” is priority number 4 for youth between the ages of 16 and 30 (nearly 800,000 votes).

There has been much agreement to support youth participation and the recognition of the importance of youth and youth-led organisations in development (WPAY, Section J(c) and A/RES/68/130), and calls to strengthen the involvement of young people in international forums, inter alia, by considering the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly (WPAY, Section J(f)).

It has already been agreed that with youth led-organisations and member states further exploration should take place to promote effective, structured and sustainable youth participation in designing, implementing and assessing United Nations youth policies, programmes and initiatives (A/RES/68/130). Whilst recognising the importance of developing the capacity of civil society, including youth, to participate as appropriate, in designing and implementing sustainable development (JPOI, 127(c)) with the commitment to promote and support youth participation in programmes and activities relating to sustainable development through, for example, supporting local youth councils or their equivalent, and by encouraging their establishment where they do not exist. (JPOI, 170)

There needs to be a shift in working with young people. Recognizing youth as partners, colleagues and stakeholders and having an active approach to participation is crucial if development policies are to be truly representative and effective. The active, informed and inclusive involvement of young people in decision-making both locally and globally is vital if development is to be achieved.

Youth Rights
In light of the paradigm shifts taking place in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, where social groups that were once seen as objects of development are being recognized as integral drivers of development, a global youth rights framework would guarantee that young people are granted the legal agency and legitimacy to play a concrete role in development. Throughout the world, young people are still seen as objects of development policy, as a social group that simply burdens the state because of a lack of reporting, it is often hard to assess which rights are being fulfilled for young people and a lack of clarity in the overlap between children and youth whilst a period of transition often remains leaving young people vulnerable up until and beyond the age of 30 years.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the seminal document upon which to recognize young people as rights holders. It is also important to consider other affirmations such as the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)
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where global consensus have been reached, to call for the operationalisation of the rights available, derived and extended to young people.

Some regional bodies have already passed youth charters that outline the rights of young people. The Ibero-American Youth Organisation and the African Union, for example, have a comprehensive document on the rights of youth. It was already called for in the Braga Youth Action Plan (1998) for the creation of a “Special Rapporteur on Youth rights” to address the need for youth rights and/or elaborate how present human rights especially affect young people.

A clear understanding of how the infringement of human rights has affected young people is needed with full reporting according to age and an assessment of what, if any, specific rights for young people needs further work to come to agreement, whilst specific action can already be taken on ensuring that the rights outlined in UN, regional charters and covenants are upheld irrespective of age.

Globalized & Inclusive Youth Led-Development

Globalization has opened up new opportunities for global economic development. Globalization has also permitted countries to learn from one another's achievements and has promoted a cross-fertilization of ideas, cultural values and aspirations. Globalization has thus helped to connect youth not only to the rest of the world, but also with each other. (WPAY) Whilst globalization can be seen broadly positive – the ability of social networks of young people to work together and promote greater collaboration has been particularly groundbreaking – difficulties remain, such as the exploitation of young people by bodies which go beyond national jurisdictions, as well as the challenges of making sure that youth-led development is not overlooked for the sake of a globalized ‘one size fits all’ development model.

The implementers of aid and aid architecture have slowly started to recognize that youth and youth-led organisations have unique grassroots ability to take action from a bottom up perspective. The UN Secretary General made public the United Nation’s commitment to the Child and Youth Finance Movement. UNCDF and UNICEF have fully endorsed the Movement, which is a collaborative effort of organizations and individuals, including national authorities, financial institutions and networks, NGOs, educators and academics. The implications of underinvestment for growth and well-being provide a strong incentive to allocate sufficient public resources for child and youth development, with particular attention to vulnerable groups. To guide public investment decisions, several principles can be considered. Therefore specific aid architecture and an enhanced fund with Member States and other foundations paying in could enable youth-led development and more efficient use of ODA.

Ending Systemic Inequalities

Inequalities and established patterns of discrimination across a wide array of social domains – inter alia health, race, age, education, social status – are deeply ingrained in our social structures. Persistent inequalities and exclusion have significant impacts, both for the individuals
and for their communities and countries. Due to endemic inequalities, the MDGs resulted in uneven progress, often increasing social polarization between different groups.

Youth are often marginalized and excluded from access to resources, opportunities and decision-making processes. The intersecting nature of inequalities renders youth to one of the most vulnerable demographic categories. Marginalised youth are at an even higher risk of experiencing discrimination, with disproportionately higher chances of being poor. All young people should be enabled to participate as both drivers and beneficiaries of development: unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination against indigenous young people, against young people with disabilities or discrimination based on religious belief and other forms of social exclusion are threats to development (Braga Youth Action Plan).

The post-2015 agenda should embrace a holistic, rights-based approach to development where the most marginalized can equally benefit from development and no one is left behind. Participation in decision-making processes must allow for a wider, more inclusive and gender balanced representation of all youth including groups such as indigenous people, youth with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and minorities (Braga Youth Action Plan).

Gender Equality
Gender equality is first and foremost a human right and as such has to be the cornerstone of the post-2015 development framework. Recognizing the rights and aspirations of girls and young women who make up half of the global youth population is critical to our shared goals of prosperity and peace and is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

One of the “most important tasks of youth policy” acknowledged by the WPAY is “to improve the situation of girls and young women.” Gender inequality including discriminatory social norms, practices and gender stereotypes continue to prevent girls and young women from enjoying the full spectrum of their human rights and opportunities. States have agreed to promote gender equality and girls’ and young women’s right to non-discrimination in line with the existing international framework, in particular CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action (L section) WPAY (I section).

Gender equality and young women’s empowerment must remain a strong priority in the post-2015 framework. Girls and young women should be able to live in an environment free from discrimination and violence, where gender equality is a norm rather than a development objective. Acknowledgment of the role of young women as active citizens, equal partners and contributors to development is essential for building stronger and fairer societies.

Empowering Marginalized Youth including Most at Risk Young People
Particular groups of young people tend to be marginalised in society or become at risk to certain health issues such as HIV. The World Bank defines social inclusion as “the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their
identity, to take part in society” (World Bank, Inclusion Matters, 2013). Young people may also be marginalised due to their educational status or economic background. The term Most-At-Risk-Populations is specifically used to describe those at higher risk of HIV due to their activities. Youth with disabilities often face marginalization and severe social, economic, and civic disparities due to a range of factors from stigma to inaccessible environments. Young people in prison or young migrants are also prevented from enjoying their rights.

Numerous conventions and resolutions have dealt with specific groups and in some cases their rights (such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Often it can be said that this should be ensured irrespective of age and that the participation of marginalised young people must be included in their communities. It has already been noted in previous UNGA youth resolutions and the world plan for the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth that engaging with marginalised young people is critical.

International and national laws, regulations and policies should not include obstacles and barriers for marginalised young people (such as having no requirement to pay for educational access) or those most at risk (such as having no legal, policy, social, cultural and economic barriers for access to HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health Services).

Themes
Themes are identified as having an important stand-alone and priority for young peoples’ development whilst recognising the interrelated nature of all areas of any post-2015 framework.

Realising equal access to quality Education
Education is the very foundation for the development of human potential and knowledge through which the improvement of the lives of young people could be attained globally. Especially in relation to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, access to quality education is crucial to eradicate poverty and hunger and to promote sustainable development. A quality and inclusive education will also foster effective participation of young people in decision-making processes as well as in the promotion and protection of human rights. In this technologically advanced age, there should be an effective system through which modern technology, science and information technology can be taught to every student, especially the students in rural and underdeveloped areas as well as students with disabilities.

Worldwide 10.6% young people are non-literate, lacking basic numerical and reading skills, and as such lack the means to be able to sustain a living through full and decent employment. Many educational and training systems do not provide young people with the basic skills needed to escape poverty and unemployment, even when they continue to receive formal education. (UNDESA: Youth and education) The persistent gender gap in education further intensifies the situation and progress towards gender parity in basic education (UNESCO: Sixth meeting of the High Level Group on Education for all, pg. 2), the importance of non-formal education has been highlighted by encouraging Member States to inter alia by promote programmes for non-formal
education in accordance with the goals of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (A/RES/66/288 par231). There is also a need to ensure that curricula are up to date and lifelong learning is emphasized in formal education systems.

Education is indeed by far the top priority of global youth, according to votes expressed within the MY World Survey, which comes from 70% of youth under 30 years of age, regardless of their education level and gender. Education should be fully funded and resourced so that high quality education can be ensured for all.

Young women and girls need to have access to education on an equal footing to young men and boys whilst education should be specifically tailored to the needs and talents of each young person, taking into account the particular socio-economic and cultural realities in which young people find themselves. Education outside formal settings (non-formal education and informal education) is key to ensure a rounded and holistic education is provided to young people through participatory and experiential learning methods in youth-led organisations and opportunities to engage in volunteer activities, which provide many possibilities for skills learning and can play an important role in stimulating or reinforcing civic engagement. Civic participation can help to improve links and coherence between education, training and labour opportunities.

**Full Employment and Entrepreneurship**

Everywhere young women and men face challenges in the labour market. Achieving decent work for young people is a critical element in poverty eradication and sustainable development, growth and welfare for all. (93rd Session of ILO, Geneva 2005)

It was with concern that the youth look into the recent figures that indicate the global youth unemployment rate, estimated at 12.6 percent (73 million) in 2013, is close to its crisis peak (ILO Youth Employment Trends 2013). Young people are prone to work longer hours under informal, intermittent and insecure work arrangements characterized by low productivity and reduced social protection. Youth encounter disproportionate difficulties in finding and maintaining decent jobs and starting up their own businesses. The inability to find stable employment creates a sense of frustration and idleness among youth. It poses significant economic costs in terms of loss of output and social costs. (UN Issue brief: Youth & Employment) Pressure from highly qualified but unemployed youth can create major social unrest.

The International Labour Conference 101st session, focused on employment and economic policies for youth employment and the importance of mobilizing resources to address the youth employment crisis (A/RES/68/130). Rio+20 encouraged the sharing of experiences and best practices on ways to address the high levels of unemployment and underemployment, in particular among young people. (A/RES/66/288 par. 155)
Policies to advance decent work for young people should be developed learning from best practice to promote decent employment among disadvantaged young women and men including policies for first time employment, apprenticeships and vocational training, internships, contracts for working students, programmes to promote youth entrepreneurship, skills and employment programmes and measures to facilitate the transition of young workers from informal to formal employment and from temporary to stable jobs. (WYC Mexico: Section 16). The full monitoring of young people who are not in Education Employment or Training will also be a first step to tackle youth unemployment.

Poverty Eradication and Food Security
Poverty eradication plays a significant role in mainstreaming youth participation in the post-2015 development agenda. Without adequate living standards and food security, young people lack incentive to take active and full participation in the decision making process and in the implementation of policies. Youth development remains hindered by challenges brought about by the food crisis and continued food insecurity, the energy crisis and climate change. (HLM on Youth A/RES/65/312 – Line 15)

Over one billion people in the world today live in unacceptable conditions of poverty. Young people are particularly affected by this situation. Poverty has various manifestation including hunger and malnutrition, loss of education, social discrimination, degraded health, lack of access to resources and lack of participation in decision making. (WPAY, 21) Majority of the world’s youth live in rural settings in developing countries with lack of access to productive resources and rely on their own labor to earn a living. In recognising this, it is vital to ensure that decent rural employment creation, sustainable agriculture livelihoods and food production are integrated into rural youth development policies, strategies, programmes and partnerships. Without increased involvement of youth in agriculture, long term shortages in skilled agricultural labor will negatively affect food supply in ageing farm populations. Linking this need to formal education and training is a long term solution that needs to be addressed through policy initiatives, awareness and capacity development.

Recalling the World Program of Action for Youth, the Guanajuato Declaration of 2010, the Braga Youth Action Plan and their conclusions on as to how young people should be given central attention in eradicating poverty and hunger, and urging the governments to adhere to the General Assembly resolutions on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty (UDHR Resolution 8/11).

Making sure no one is left behind is key in the Post-2015 framework and young people will need particular attention with disaggregated data, and specific indicators that look at poverty for those that are not always included in work statistics such as those in training and education. Going beyond $1.25/day P.P.P will also be vital in ensuring that the aspirations of young people are met.
Promoting Healthy Lives and Access to Health

Health is essential to achieving equality. Equitable access to quality health care underpins equitable access to employment, engagement with economic activity, and quality of life (Report of the Global Thematic consultation on Health). Promoting healthy practices during adolescence, and taking steps to better protect young people from health risks is critical to the future of countries’ health and social infrastructure and to the prevention of health problems in adulthood (WHO factsheet).

Young people remain particularly vulnerable to health risks. Today, more than 1.8 million young people aged 15-24 die each year, mostly due to preventable causes, and nearly two-thirds of premature deaths and one-third of the total disease burden in adults are associated with conditions or behaviours that began in their youth. About 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 years give birth every year. About 20% of adolescents will experience a mental health problem, with suicide being one of the leading causes of death in young people (WHO fact sheet).

The need for young people to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health by providing youth with access to sustainable health systems and social services without discrimination and by paying special attention to nutrition, the effects of non-communicable and communicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health has been acknowledged in youth declarations and outcome documents (Guanajuato Declaration, para 14; Outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding).

A holistic view of young people's health is essential. Young people should be covered under universal health coverage and have access to information and opportunities to benefit from healthy lifestyle. Access to non-judgemental, confidential comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information as part of the holistic approach to health issues is essential for both young men and young women. The social and economic determinants of youth health such as poverty, stigma, unequal access to health care, poor environmental conditions and lack of education should be addressed for young people to benefit equally from comprehensive health services.

Environmental Sustainability, Disaster Risk Reduction and Youth Centered Urbanisation

Consumption and production patterns, food security, climate change, growing urbanisation and disasters are all areas in which young people can face specific and acute issues which must be addressed in a development framework.

Current trends predict the number of urban dwellers will keep rising, reaching almost 5 billion by 2030. Cities hold tremendous potential, however, cities today can also generate and intensify social exclusion, denying the benefits of urban life to poor youth (UNHABITAT).
The effects of climate change render youth particularly vulnerable. Youth have the power to move our societies towards sustainable behavioural patterns within the agreed Consumption and Production Patterns 10 Year Framework and their participation in this through the UN Major Group Children and Youth is welcomed. Still, the deterioration of the natural environment has direct implications on the well-being of youth both currently and in the future, and the governance and use of natural resources (as well as social and economic issues) must take into consideration future generations (Rio+20 Outcome Document and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation). Agenda 21 makes specific reference to Youth and these commitments have travelled throughout the UN system. Also, WPAY recognised that natural environments must be maintained and preserved for both present and future generations. The causes of environmental degradation must be addressed.

Participation of young people, as important actors in the protection of the environment through training and capacity-building on environmental issues, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, tackling desertification and other challenges, is critical. (HLM on Youth A/RES/65/312) A stronger, resourced and self-organised youth constituency in all UN negotiations (UNFCCC, HLPF, UN-HABITAT, UNEP etc) must be coordinated. A governance mechanism for future generations such as a General Assembly mandated Envoy for Future Generations, as outlined by the Secretary General, is a vital step in ensuring sustainable urbanisation, environmental protection and disaster risk reduction in the long run.

People and communities which are affected by crisis and development challenges, including young people are a powerful resource. Youth enthusiasm and idealism can be turned towards positive change with regards to climate change and volunteerism has a pivotal role to play in this. Shifting from being service recipients to service providers and increasing people’s participation in development would also strengthen the accountability of the new development framework.

Since the post-2015 agenda is meant to usher in a paradigm shift in how the world views development, it is critical that the value of indigenous knowledge in terms of the environment and DRR is elevated in the future development framework. Moreover, the post-2015 development agenda means that cooperation in the field of DRR and environmental sustainability is critical. More cooperation between provinces, municipalities and different local government units within a state is needed to promote environmental protection and ensure that the benefits of the resources in an area are reaped by the communities living there. The private sector must also play a more central role in greening the economy and, while recognizing that technology can be a transformative tool to help people adapt to more sustainable lifestyles, it can also be a source of social harm and environmental degradation.

Unfortunately, the apathy of young people and the public in general terms of addressing climate change and environmental concerns is certainly dangerous to the future of the planet. Conscience raising initiatives among young people through formal and non-formal education,
university or community based movements, intergenerational dialogue, and training opportunities to influence young people to engage and participate can increase awareness specifically on the effects of climate change, consequences of pollution, benefits of recycling and disaster risk reduction strategies. It is absolutely critical to ensure that young people from rural areas also benefit from these.

Realizing Peace, Reconciliation and Ending Violence

Young people are vital stakeholders in realizing peace and ending violence. In the Post 2015 framework, the participation of young people in all spheres of decision making and implementation is of extreme importance. Empowering young people to emerge as peace builders and active partners of a reconciliation process is one way of ensuring peace and reconciliation to be more sustained and inclusive.

Children and youth represent the majority of the population in most countries affected by armed conflicts and are thus disproportionately affected by war. They are uniquely vulnerable to recruitment. Youth is affected by direct violence such as armed conflicts as well as other conflicts such as structural violence and cultural violence. They also suffer from other consequences of conflict such as poverty, unemployment, poor governance and the disintegration of families and communities (UNDESA Policy Briefs: Armed Conflict).

Young people are not viewed as a catalyst for building peace and harmony, but as passive participants in rehabilitation processes. A number of agreements are relevant on this issue, the first WPAY (A/RES/50/81), which provides a policy framework and outlines the impact of conflict on youth and highlights the role youth play in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. There remains a focus on youth as victims or young people as risks to conflict (youth unemployment, former child combatants) but more agreement is needed on young people's roles in peacebuilding.

Ensuring Inclusive Recreation, Sport and Culture

Culture, sports and leisure time are an integral aspect of youth development. According to the World Programme of Action for Youth, “Appropriate leisure programmes for youth are elements of any measure aimed at fighting social ills such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and other deviant behaviour.” Moreover, inclusive sport and leisure time activities for youth can instill better discipline in society and reduce the possibility of young people being involved in violence and sexual harassment, as well as increase social integration. The success of the post-2015 framework depends on people to be empowered. Sports, culture, and inclusive recreation can help facilitate this empowerment.

A lack of proper funding for education, art and sports programs for youth means that young people are being excluded from meaningful leisure time activities that are effective vehicles for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Moreover, lack of motivation by parents, schools and
the community for recreational activities, arts and sports and the attitude towards these leisure time activities often means youth are not willing to participate in them. Young people are being deprived of outlets through which they can use their free time constructively for skills building and healthy activity that combats NCDs such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

In the Braga Youth Action Plan, Governments, NGOs, IGOs and the UN system agreed to promote inter-cultural understanding among different cultures through workshops, seminars, exchange programmes and youth camps with an adequate evaluation process to ensure that all cultures and specifically Indigenous young people are fully recognized, respected and valued in society (Para 11).

The lack of research and academic work in indigenous cultures and traditions, will lead to their knowledge on unique ways of sustenance, identity and sustainability being lost. The 2010 World Youth Conference in Mexico incorporated the involvement of young people in programs that encourage a healthy lifestyle, the practice of sports, physical activity, rest, leisure and other healthy habits. It is critical that this line of thought is furthered even more as to ensure the participation and representation of youth at the policy making level for sports and recreational activities and in the decision making of such bodies.