

UNA Youth statement drafted for UN high-level meeting on “Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”

Mitali Nikore, 26 July 2011, UN Headquarters, New York.

UNA Youth has identified youth unemployment as a key challenge requiring swift, concerted action. According to ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth Report 2010, there were about 81 million young people struggling to find work at the end of 2009 across the world. We are increasingly observing young people getting discouraged about finding gainful employment in the UK. Also, being a young woman on the verge of entering the labour market, I truly appreciate that young women suffer from the dual burden of working age and gender.

Another issue in this regard is the severity of the digital divide. In 2007, UNA Youth volunteers spent six weeks in Ghana preparing students for Model UN activities. However, they spent about a third of their time training them in using computers for word-processing, making presentations & using the internet effectively for research. From this small instance, we can appreciate that the millions of young people who are unable to keep up with rapidly changing technologies will find themselves ill-equipped for the demanding job market, be it a developed or developing country, and could face severe challenges in achieving their full potential.

UNA Youth wholeheartedly welcomes initiatives like the Youth Employment Network, ILO's Youth Employment Program, and the Youth-to-Youth Fund. We feel that member states must make sustained efforts to enhance access and to improve technological literacy amongst young people. In this regard, we believe that increased interaction between those young of diverse backgrounds and nationalities is essential, and hence, request member states to support more youth volunteering initiatives.

Additionally, we feel that member states need to intensify their focus on increasing 'green jobs'. Boosting investments in a wide array of environment-friendly industries can result not only in greener growth, but also provide sustainable employment opportunities for youth.

Most importantly, we feel that partnerships with youth organisations are the key to not only reaching large numbers of young people, but also to identifying the specific constraints to youth employment in each country. This can enable more efficient policy responses to the problem of youth employment at a national, regional or local level.

In conclusion, I would like to assert that the challenges of violence, HIV/AIDS, poverty, hunger, unemployment, and depression are universal. They affect youth across the world, albeit in different dimensions. The key point here is that - be it a protest against the education cuts by British students in London, or one by Indian students against corruption in New Delhi - youth are united by their determination to change their world.

And as a young global citizen, I look upon this forum with hope for a better future. Thank You.