

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD POPULATION DAY

11 July 2014

The world today has its largest generation of youth in history – 1.8 billion young people, mostly in developing countries – with enormous potential to help tackle the major challenges facing humanity. But too many are denied their rightful opportunities to get a quality education, find decent work, and participate in the political life of their societies. World Population Day is an opportunity to renew our commitment to help young people unleash progress across society.

Action is urgently needed. Too many young people lack resources they need to lift themselves out of poverty. I am particularly concerned about adolescent girls who may face discrimination, sexual violence, early marriage and unwanted pregnancies. And even among those young people fortunate enough to receive university degrees, many find themselves without employment or stuck in low-wage, dead-end jobs.

The solution lies in investments in health, education, training and employment for young people as they undergo the critical transition to adulthood. This will improve prospects for their lives and our common future.

Young people themselves are speaking out. Earlier this year, more than 1,000 youth organizations endorsed a Global Youth Call, welcomed by 40 countries, which recommends youth-focused goals and targets in the post-2015 development vision.

Next year marks the deadline for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, shaping the successor agenda, and adopting a meaningful legal agreement on climate change. Youth have a major role in all these processes. The year 2015 also marks the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action on Youth. Its practical guidelines for national action and international support remain relevant today. In particular, to fully carry out this Programme of Action, governments must respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all youth and respond effectively to any violations.

On this World Population Day, I call on all with influence to prioritize youth in development plans, strengthen partnerships with youth-led organizations, and involve young people in all decisions that affect them. By empowering today's youth, we will lay the groundwork for a more sustainable future for generations to come.