

**295 (XXVI). Guiding Declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for
Western Asia on giving greater attention to Youth Policies:
An Opportunity for Development**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Stressing the need to enhance the capacity of member countries in formulating youth policies,

Having reviewed the main paper presented to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session, held in Beirut from 17 to 20 May 2010,¹ and which is based on the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the Supplement thereto;² the outcome and recommendations of the expert group meeting held in Abu Dhabi in 2009;³ and the regional survey conducted by ESCWA in 2008 on the response of member countries to the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY),

1. Stresses the importance of ESCWA continuing to assume its role as a regional hub in the following areas:

(a) Strengthening national capacity of member countries in the formulation of national policies and strategies targeting youth, organizing training workshops, preparing guides to enhance the capacity of national staff in the area of national policy formulation targeting youth, and encouraging research and surveys that determine the basic factors affecting youth and their needs, and ways in which these could be addressed;

(b) Activating the role of national coordination mechanisms and expanding them to include national organs concerned with youth issues in member countries;

(c) Preparing periodical regional reports on developments regarding the condition of youth in the region within the framework of the 15 priority areas of WPAY based on official data of member countries;

(d) Enhancing the role of national statistical offices in member countries in collecting and analysing statistical data on youth, developing multifunctional data systems and databases, and setting indicators and standards in accordance with the policies of each member country;

(e) Exchanging expertise between the countries of the region, and benefiting from successful experience in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of youth policies in the priority areas of WPAY;

(f) Adopting youth policies as a principal theme during the forthcoming meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in 2010 and continuing efforts towards expanding the scope of cooperation between United Nations regional agencies and programmes in promoting the

¹ ESCWA, *National Youth Policies within the Framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth* (E/ESCWA/26/4(Part I)).

² General Assembly resolutions 50/81 and 62/126. Pursuant to resolution 47/1 of the United Nations Commission for Social Development, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the Supplement thereto became a unified set of guiding principles, to be referred to as the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY).

³ ESCWA, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth Into the Development Process*, 29-31 March 2009 (E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/3/Rev.1).

recommendations of the present declaration and developing the capacity of Governments in this regard;

(g) Enhancing cooperation and coordination between ESCWA, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council in the context of encouraging Governments in the region to formulate national youth policies and with regard to incorporating youth issues into the Arab Family Health Project;

2. *Stresses* the importance of the Guiding Declaration on giving greater attention to Youth Policies: An Opportunity for Development, contained in the annex to this resolution.

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session a report on the implementation of this resolution.

Annex

Guiding Declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on giving greater attention to Youth Policies: An Opportunity for Development

1. *We*, the representatives of the countries members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) participating in the twenty-sixth session of ESCWA and the round table on Youth Policies in the Arab World: Challenges and Opportunities, held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 17 to 20 May 2010 under the patronage of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon, represented by the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, His Excellency Mr. Nabih Berri;

2. *We note* the concurrence of the twenty-sixth session of ESCWA in 2010 with the United Nations International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding;⁴

3. *We acknowledge* the importance of the United Nations resolutions on youth, the first of which was the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples, adopted in 1965;⁵

4. *We recall* the priority areas identified in WPAY, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolutions 50/81 of 14 December 1995 and 62/126 of 18 December 2007 and reaffirmed in subsequent resolutions, the most recent of which is resolution 64/130 of 18 December 2009;

5. *We note with appreciation* the achievements recorded in the Western Asia region during the last three decades, the first of which was the Regional Plan of Action on Youth, prepared in 1983 by the then Economic Commission for Western Asia, and which also include national youth strategies, the integration of essential youth needs into the objectives of national plans, and the adoption of the issue of youth participation as a means for the design and implementation of development programmes;

6. *We express* our appreciation of the value of youth as an essential agent in changing the present and shaping the future, and stress the importance of according priority to and providing care for youth;

⁴ General Assembly resolution 64/134 of 18 December 2009.

⁵ General Assembly resolution 2037 (XX) of 7 December 1965.

7. *We recognize* that investing in youth brings guaranteed dividends and that national youth strategies are primarily an expression of the commitment by a society towards its citizens;

8. *We stress* that unemployment is one of the main concerns facing youth and which therefore underscores the importance of creating new and promising employment opportunities in developing areas in order to avoid a social and economic drain on society;

9. *We stress* the importance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, which entrusted the United Nations regional commissions with the role of team-leading and responsibility for ensuring coordination and cooperation in all areas relating to the economic and social programmes carried out by the United Nations system in their respective geographical regions through the Regional Coordination Mechanism;

10. *We emphasize* the comparative advantage of ESCWA, within the context of its functions, in inviting member countries to meet and to attend conferences, and in undertaking a leading role in coordinating efforts of regional organizations and country bureaux of United Nations organizations with regard to the implementation of WPAY;

11. *We welcome* the fifth World Youth Congress to be held in Istanbul, from 31 July to 13 August 2010, and the initiative of the Government of Mexico to host a World Youth Conference in Mexico City from 24 to 27 August 2010, both of which will focus on the issue of youth and development in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

We renew our commitment to WPAY through the following:

1. *Activating* the response to WPAY by using the goals and targets proposed in the reports of the Secretary-General⁶ as a means to facilitate the formulation and monitoring of national youth policies;

2. *Developing* national youth policies in member countries which have not yet incorporated youth into their development programmes, and involving youth in the formulation of a vision based on rights and duties, reflecting their national youth development approach;

3. *Reviewing* existing youth policies and strategies with a view to activating them within the context of WPAY, pursuing efforts towards developing sources of self-financing to secure the resources needed for policy implementation and supplementing them from other national, regional and international sources;

4. *Adopting* a human rights-based approach in formulating national youth policies, engaging all social, economic and political actors in supporting and protecting the rights of youth, and changing the prevailing perceptions of youth, including youth with special needs, from mere receivers of grants or services to people possessing rights;

5. *Resorting* to the 15 priority areas of WPAY as a basic framework for identifying national priorities and requirements, discussing them through governmental institutions, civil society organizations and private sector organizations, with the participation of young people, and achieving a societal consensus in that regard in order to ensure the commitment of all parties;

⁶ Goals and Targets for Monitoring the Progress of Youth in the Global Economy, Sixty-second session (A/62/Add.1 – E/2007/7/Add.1); Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: Progress and Constraints with Respect to the Well-Being of Youth and their Role in Civil Society (E/64/61 – E/2009/3).

6. *Allocating* part of the statistical work programme in member countries to monitor youth development and pursuing the development of a list of indicators needed for that purpose, as a preliminary list subject to revision and which could be tailored to the priorities of each country;

7. *Exerting* the utmost effort to establish a high-level national mechanism, in countries where such a mechanism is currently lacking, to undertake coordination between ministries and parties concerned with youth issues, defining the functions of each party, enhancing their competence and setting cooperation frameworks allowing national youth policy to cover all sectors, to be implemented through national partnership between non-governmental organizations, governmental offices, ministries and other major stakeholders.

7th plenary meeting
19 May 2010