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## Intergovernmental Committee of Experts Meeting

Youth Working Group

Kigali, Rwanda

March 14 – 18, 2005

### **Sub-theme: “Enhancing Youth Employment Prospects in East Africa”**

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#### **Background**

On the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Committee of Experts Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, an intergenerational dialogue took place among young people, representatives of governments and international organizations on the issues of youth unemployment and poverty alleviation in Eastern Africa.

At the beginning of the session, the group elected a Bureau comprised of one chairperson from Rwanda (Mr. Frank Mukama), one Anglophone rapporteur from Uganda (Mr. Daniel Semakula), and one francophone rapporteur from Burundi (Ms. Violette Muzaneza). Four presentations, followed by related discussion, were made during the session by representatives from ILO (outlining commitments made by member states at the Ouagadougou Summit), YES Secretariat/EDC, and YES Rwanda.

This working group examined the issue of youth employment and its connection with four issues in the East African Sub Region: Urban and Rural Development, Poverty Reduction Strategies, Post Conflict Reconstruction and HIV/AIDS. Participants noted the commitment of governments in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce poverty by 50 %, the “YES Framework for Action” launched at Alexandria Summit, the United Nations response to Youth Employment through the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Youth Employment Network (YEN) and the Addis Ababa Declaration (ADF IV). It was also noted that African Heads of State and Government who at the African Union Summit for Employment and Poverty Alleviation, committed themselves to ensuring full, productive and decent work opportunities for African Youth as reflected in the Ougadougou Declaration.

Having examined the UNECA Eastern Sub-Regional Report on Socio Economic Conditions, the progress on development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the work programme of the UNECA Sub-Region for the last year, the youth working group deliberated on strategies for improving the employment prospects for young people in the Eastern Africa.

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## **Main Outcomes and Recommended Actions**

### **(1) *Youth Employment in Urban and Rural Sectors***

- (a) Informal Sector and Agriculture: Develop a regional advocacy programme to raise awareness among youth on the importance of the agriculture sector to the economy of Eastern Africa and the role of youth in agriculture from a livelihoods generation perspective by 2007.
- (b) Work with Commercial Banking Institutions, Governments and Private Sector to create micro-financing windows for youth in the agriculture sector. Removal of barriers youth face in accessing micro-financing including collateral requirement through the setting up of agriculture cooperatives and guarantee mechanisms. Provide higher loans for young farmers to diversify farming operations, reduce tax burdens, facilitate flexible repayment policies and reduce high interest rates.
- (c) Provide grant funding and business development support services for youth in agriculture to enable the creation of Young Farmers Associations and Companies, connect with new markets across the Eastern African Region and recruit more youth into farming activities. Acknowledge youth in farming at national fora on youth and farming and highlight their contribution to food security, employment generation and community building.
- (d) Develop Eco-Entrepreneurship programmes for young farmers, especially young women and provide incentives for forming community groups around the issue of farming.
- (e) Labour Market: Launch a Capacity Building Programme for Departments of Labour and Youth around developing effective demographic surveys to gather and examine data on youth, including their preparedness for the world of work and participation in the labour market. Additionally, strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity of departments of youth, labour, YES and YEN Networks and other youth serving organizations. Further, to link the Central Bureaus of Statistics with Ministries of Youth, Labour and Economic Planning. This programme should be implemented as part of a larger strategy to encourage and enhance evidence based policy and decision making.
- (f) Career Guidance for Eastern African Youth: UNECA should explore the setting up of mechanisms for the provision of funding to YES and YEN Network partnerships and other NGOs to enhance their capacity to advocate and engage with governments and civil society in the setting up and

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implementation of career guidance programmes for youth in and out of school.

- (g) Create and publish guidelines on how to establish National Youth Funds for employment creation following the model of Umsobomvu Fund in South Africa in close cooperation with the Government of South Africa and the Embassy of South Africa in Rwanda.
  - (h) Institutionalize the convening of a youth employment and poverty alleviation working group alongside the Inter-governmental Committee of Experts meeting of UNECA Eastern African Sub-Region; to report, review, analyze, identify gaps and develop new approaches for job-led economic growth strategies for poverty alleviation.
  - (i) UNECA should provide technical support to Eastern African Governments for the establishment of a special select committee of youth to work with Ministries of Finance to review national budget and make formal submissions on opportunities for increasing budgetary allocations for youth issues by 2006.
  - (j) Develop an online regional website on youth for the purpose of publishing vital data relevant to youth to inform policy makers and youth organizations on progress, challenges and opportunities for poverty alleviation in the Eastern African Sub-Region.
  - (k) UNECA should engage YES and YEN Network partnerships in the Eastern African Sub-Region in the development of a Regional Best Practices Handbook on effective youth employment practices and policies from urban and rural communities for distribution to all member states of the UNECA Eastern African Sub-region.
  - (l) Develop a Young Small Business Entrepreneurs Network to encourage information sharing and regional cooperation as part of the process of deepening regional economic integration. This network should be designed so as to facilitate its evolution into a business mentoring structure for young entrepreneurs in the Eastern African Sub-Region. An attempt should be made to bring representatives of this association to intergovernmental and private sector discussions on trade, commerce and negotiations.
- (2) *Youth Poverty and PRSPs*
- (a) To facilitate the review and enhancement of curriculum with a new component on values and attitudes that are fundamental for learning new

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skills among young people who compete in the labour market from Eastern African member states by 2006.

- (b) UNECA should set-up a technical committee to provide technical assistance to member countries in the convening of focus group discussions to collect youth input on poverty alleviation strategies through the integration of a livelihood strategy for youth especially young girls.
  - (c) An audit of existing policies should be carried out to examine the extent to which existing policies are linked to youth development and specifically youth employment. A policy review should be implemented that speaks to the situation of the region in addressing youth unemployment. The report of this audit should be published at the 10<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Committee of Experts meeting and a programme of technical assistance should be provided linking existing youth policies with the PRSPs and other national development strategies.
- (3) *Youth Employment and Post Conflict Reconstruction*
- (a) A five year programme on building community peace education and reconciliation should be launched. Young People should be trained and employed as community based peer educators and agents of reconciliation.
  - (b) Primary research should be carried out in all UNECA member countries to examine the impact of conflict on youth and a resultant programme should be designed with the active engagement of youth directly affected by conflict. ILO/YEN and EDC should be engaged in the designing an implementation of this study.
  - (c) UNECA should convene an intergovernmental committee on youth employment and post conflict reconstruction to examine the setting up of a fund to financially support innovative entrepreneurial ideas from ex-combatants and other youth directly affected by conflict. This fund should leverage development assistance from multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors. A National Entrepreneurship Scheme should be developed in UNECA Eastern Africa sub-region that provides micro-financing and business development support services. This scheme should use a viable financially sustainable model through direct linkages with manufacturing and services companies who will purchase the goods and services manufactured by youth who are attempting economic reintegration into society. Youth directly affected by conflict that are accessing formal technical, vocational and tertiary level education and young women should be consider as a priority groups for this funding programme.

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- (d) A five year targeted capacity building programme for YES and YEN Network partnerships aimed at building youth leadership. Technical assistance should be provided to youth serving NGOs in UNECA Eastern African Sub-Region to strengthen their institutional capacity to intervene programmatically in the area of youth employment in post-conflict reconstruction. This programme should be developed and initiated with the active technical support of the International Labour Organization and the Education Development Center.
  - (e) UNECA and the United Nations Drug Demand Reduction Programme (UNDCCP) should develop a technical cooperation agreement in the area of Drug Demand Reduction aimed at building community psycho-social interventions including rehabilitation for youth who abused illicit drugs during conflict. A community based education programme should be developed to complement this programme.
  - (f) An expert study should be commissioned to examine the connection between crime, drugs and prostitution in post-conflict countries in Eastern Africa and appropriate interventions should be designed and implemented to provide alternative livelihood generation opportunities for youth involved in these illicit activities. UNECA should form a partnership with YES Campaign and EDC to commission this research.
  - (g) Three support centers in each country in Eastern Africa should be established for ex-combatants (especially street children and former child soldiers) to provide youth employment services including skills assessment, linking unskilled ex-combatants to education and vocational training programmes to enhance their employability, psycho-social counseling and support, facilitate referrals to health services and programmes that enhance or improve their livelihood options and reintegrate them into society.
  - (h) UNECA should support Eastern African governments in convening national fora to examine the inter-relationship between conflict and national security, both internal security and security of other states and to develop strategies that improve socio-economic status of young people made vulnerable to recruitment for criminal and conflict purposes. A resultant capacity building programme for governments on enhancing national security strategy from a job-led economic growth perspective should be launched.
- (4) *HIV/AIDS and Youth Employment*
- (a) UNECA should engage the UNAIDS Programme, UNDP, Member Government, YES and YEN Network partnerships in commissioning a research into the link between HIV/AIDS and youth livelihoods.

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- (b) UNCECA should develop a training programme to equip young people with skills for employment as trained counselors for HIV/AIDS services at a community level, workplaces and in public health facilities.
- (c) UNECA should facilitate the development of a rights based curriculum on employment to train and raise awareness of employers and world of work actors on the importance of work-placed based care and support programmes for People Living with HIV/AIDS.
- (d) UNECA in collaboration with UNAIDS and Ministries of Health should develop a capacity building support programme to improve national coordination of HIV/AIDS Councils.
- (e) UNECA should work with National AIDS Programmes to integrate HIV/AIDS education into existing formal and informal education programmes.

### **Institutional Arrangements for Implementation**

- A youth desk should be established that coordinates and mainstreams youth involvement in the work of UNECA. This desk can also serve as a coordination point for dissemination of information on effective approaches that can be used in developing youth employment policies, strategies and programmes.
- YES Networks should setup a regional coordination structure for Eastern Africa with the support of ILO/YEN and UNECA.
- Explore AU-ECOSOC opportunity for regional coordination and harmonization of activities.
- Representatives elected from the 9<sup>th</sup> Inter-governmental Committee of Experts Meeting will continue to serve and monitor the implementation of this agreement.