

## **Youth Summit of Expo 2010 - “Youth - City - Future”**

**Topic: “Youth Participation – Creating Urban Future”**

**Prepared by: Ms. Ediola Pashollari, Acting Secretary General of the World Assembly of Youth**

Nee Hau Ma?

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be here with all of you on this great day.

I sincerely would like to take this moment to thank the community for the Youth Summit of Expo 2010 and All China Youth Federation for their invitation to this wonderful and meaningful event.

I know that the Expo itself has been on for the last five months and it is so fitting that it should ends with the Youth Summit as the final agenda.

As some of you may have been aware of the organization in which I am serving as the Acting Secretary General. World Assembly of Youth or WAY as it is known is the international coordinating body of National Youth Councils and National Youth Organizations, which aims to change and connect countries to new knowledge, experience and resources to help youth build a better life.

WAY works for the promotion of youth and youth organizations in program areas such as: democracy, environment, human rights, population, health, drugs, community development and leadership training.

The programs are organized by WAY Secretariat in collaboration with WAY members, Youth NGOs, Youth Ministries and UN agencies. These programs are usually held locally, regionally and internationally.

Our aspiration is that through these various programs, WAY is preparing and educating, youth and youth leaders to take a step forward towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

All of us here have in our hearts to see that the youth of our future are well prepared to face the many obstacles and be empowered and equipped as much as possible for the urban future. And yet at the same time, we do realize the many challenges that are faced by the youth of this world.

We, at WAY are constantly researching and providing avenues to assist our youth not only in the rural areas but in the urban. Their participation is very vital for the urban future of our world.

The growth of cities at extraordinary rates together with the demographic distribution in most developing countries has contributed significantly to the present youth explosion in the urban areas.

It has been estimated that 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities by 2030 and that as many as 60 percent of urban dwellers will be under the age of 18. Almost all of this growth will occur in developing world cities, where already 30 percent of the population lives below the official poverty lines.

The cities of the world have been transformed into magnets for those seeking a promise of a better life. Yet in the midst of the rapid urbanization of the 20th century, it has left the majority on the fringes of urban society with limited access to basic services, employment, and housing.

Youth are perhaps the most affected by this urban transformation: for us to invest in urban youth is not only a question of human rights and social justice, it is also about potential economic benefits and increasing citizen security.

Youth should be encouraged to become integrated members of society and into building a better future instead of contributing to the soaring urban crime and poverty rates.

There is a great need for all of us to fully understand the relationship between urbanization, youth, poverty, and conflict. In our planning and discussion we must highlight the importance of prioritizing youth needs on the policy agenda which will help to reduce the alienation that many youth feel.

The complexities of urban living and challenges rapid urbanization poses a great demand on the youth to cope and survive as they face drug pushers, the scare of HIVs, gangs and gang wars.

History has shown that urbanization cannot be stopped, but it can be transformed into a positive process, improving life prospects for youth while fostering both democracy and economic growth.

With a more inclusive framework, the urban environment has the potential to afford opportunities to previously deprived communities and vastly improve the lives of youth in developing countries.

I believed that young people can be integrated with society as we know that the urban environment provides a space that can promote development and improve livelihoods, on large associates of working age youth. Integrating youth into local economies is vital to the sustainability of any urban areas.

Yet, understanding the potential of youth will require that societies dispel the many myths about the inherent violence of youth. It is not enough for us to make youth a priority on our policy agenda.

We must seek to understand them, revolutionize the alienation they feel, and include them in the development process.

Great attention must be given in the creation of programs to improve the livelihoods and lifestyles of urban youth, particularly girls, as they are vulnerable to the same risk factors as boys.

There is a great need to address problems such as how youth can be assured a safe environment in which to grow and develop without the threat of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse and what can countries do to allow greater social and economic mobility opportunities for youth?

The lives of urban youth are often so unstable, and their needs are so great, that youth employment programming alone may yield only minimal success. The introduction of literacy and basic life skills may also be required, particularly given the severe impact of HIV/AIDS on the young. Accordingly, health education modules may be needed to address the dangers of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Adapting life skills curricula also promises to reduce the vulnerability of youth to at-risk behavior. Addressing the trauma in young lives, particularly among the war-affected, also promises to be important.

It is useful to examine, learn from, and form networks with urban youth programs that have demonstrated success in reaching the young people. We must work together across the globe for this concept to be an accomplishment.

In order to promote a better city there have to be participatory methods that directly engage and inquire about youth and their lives, backgrounds, and aspirations as that can help develop trust between them and us.

The information gathered here than become especially important when programs attempt to configure a better lifestyle and perspective programs that will adequately addresses youth needs.

Urban youth that lives in the fringes or boundaries tend to be unpopular with other members of urban society, including government officials everywhere.

They may not be viewed as vibrant, dynamic contributors to a city's culture and daily life, being perceived instead as carriers of disease and crime.

Though some urban youth may indeed be criminals or ill with HIV/AIDS or another disease, it is also true that limited efforts are usually made either to understand and accept urban youth or view them as a kind of untapped cultural and labor resource.

There is a tremendous need to develop customized program, so that the needs and concerns of male and female youth in our cities has the potential to help turn the tide against youth isolation and marginalization and to foster a greater understanding of their outlook and potential.

The most important youth to include in programs, finally, are likely the hardest to reach. Effective programming requires outreach, time, flexibility, networking, evaluation, support—and patience are maybe some of the key factors that we need to consider.

More than 1 billion people today are between 15 and 25 years of age, and nearly 40 percent of the world's population is below the age of 20. Eighty-five percent of these young people live in developing countries, where many are especially vulnerable to extreme poverty.

At the same time, the rate of urbanization is by far the highest in developing countries, and by 2015 it is expected that developing countries will account for more than 75 percent of the world's urban population.

### **Youth Are an Asset, Not a Problem**

We really need to see this aspect clearly and embrace it totally, particularly in view of the relationship among civil conflict and unrest, crime, HIV/AIDS, and even terrorism. Given the growing concern with the problems that confront young people and to which they are especially vulnerable, it is important to focus on unemployment—and not on youth—as the problem. The youth is a creative force today – and not only tomorrow.

I truly believed that the youth or the young people want to be seen as partners for the future. They are asking that their voices be heard, that issues affecting them be addressed and that their roles be recognized. Youth must be recognized and accepted as partners for development, thus helping to chart a common course and shaping the future for everyone. We must listen to their heart cry.

Lastly, we must consider investing in education and vocational training, providing equal opportunities for young women as well as men. Let us make it easier for young people to be involved in starting and running an enterprise that can give them a better and secure future.

I am sure that all of you have been greatly challenged, encouraged by the various speakers at this summit.

There is definitely a lot of work ahead of us to accomplish the goals that have been set out for this event.

We must now work in unity and implement the different suggestions and recommendations that have been presented to you.

I strongly propose that we take a hard look and make pertinent decisions so that the young generation can and will shoulder more responsibilities for the city's future.

Thank you once again for including me and my organisation to this meaningful event.

Thank you,