

Actress Monique Coleman named first UN ‘Youth Champion’



Monique Coleman

16 November 2010 – United States actress Monique Coleman, best known for playing Taylor McKessie in the “High School Musical” movies, was today appointed the first ever ‘Youth Champion’ by the United Nations to raise awareness about the challenges facing young people.

At a ceremony at UN headquarters in New York, Ms. Coleman was presented with a letter of recognition of her new role by Assistant Secretary-General Jomo Kwame Sundaram of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

In presenting the letter, Mr. Sundaram said Ms. Coleman will work “to raise awareness about the challenges young people face and will highlight the positive contribution they make to their communities.”

Ms. Coleman said that receiving the designation of Youth Champion was “beyond an honour” and that she would use her new position to promote global efforts to achieve the anti-poverty Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), which have a 2015 deadline, with a special emphasis on the empowerment of youth.

“It is extremely important that they are aware of the Millennium Development Goals and what they mean specifically to them,” she said during a news conference.

Ms. Coleman hopes that she can help young people to achieve the MDGs by encouraging them to speak out and voice their concerns. She will do so through Facebook, Twitter and through streaming her “Gimme Mo’” online talk show, which is aimed at young people.

Youth, defined by the UN as people between the ages of 15 to 24, represent 18 per cent of the world’s population, or 1.2 billion people.

“I believe that the youth aren’t just our future, they are the present, and with 85 per cent of youth currently residing in the developing world, it is our global responsibility to access that untapped potential,” Ms. Coleman said.

Although she said that youth in the developed and developing worlds have different priorities, she also thinks their aims might be closer than the economic and geographic distance might imply.

“I think ultimately youth all over the world have the same goal and intention, which is to find purpose in their lives.”

Building those links between young people is part of Ms. Coleman’s job in line with the theme of the UN International Year of Youth, which is Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, calling for bridge-building between generations and across cultures, religions and civilizations.

The International Year was launched on 12 August and runs through 11 August 2011, and among its aims is to advance the participation of young people on global, regional and national issues that affect them.

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