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## **UN jobs forum hears call to unlock potential of young people**



Rampant unemployment in Somaliland has prompted thousands of young people to leave the territory every month. Photo: IRIN/Mohamed Amin Jibril

27 February 2012 –

Governments, corporations and policy-makers must do more to realize the potential of young people worldwide, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said today, calling for action to overcome the structures and problems that are keeping youth unemployment rates high around the worldwide.

In an [address](#) in New York to a partnership event organized by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Ms. Migiro said the lack of decent jobs for young people had become a “key source of social and political upheaval” around the world recently.

“From Brooklyn to Cairo, Barcelona to Belfast, Tunis to Tripoli, too many young people are jobless and disaffected,” she said. “Some are poor, some are school drop-outs, some are highly educated but with no immediate prospects.

“But as we have seen all over the world, they are demanding their rights and a greater voice in economic and political life. I urge all of us to come together as never before to support a new social contract of job-rich economic growth. Here at the United Nations, we believe that we should start with young people.”

[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon has made the empowerment of youth one of his priorities for his second term in office. He is expected to soon appoint a UN special representative on youth issues who will be tasked with leading a UN youth volunteers’ programme and implementing a youth agenda.

Today’s partnership event, which brought together representatives of government, civil society and the business community is a preparatory exercise for the 2012 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) to be held in early July.

In their remarks, delegates focused on more and better jobs for young people worldwide. The event included not only debates about youth employment challenges, but practical discussions on how collaboration among governments, social partners, the private sector and young people themselves can be maximized to increase employment. Young entrepreneurs also offered their views on what is required to create new and high-growth businesses that will employ young people.

Ms. Migiro warned that the diagnosis is grim, with research showing that youth joblessness leaves behind a “wage scar” that persists into middle age and serves as a predictor of future unemployment.

“Yet there are reasons for hope. Green jobs, new technologies and entrepreneurship all provide reasons for hope. Our challenge is to realize this potential. It is time for policy-makers to become more focused on the structures that perpetuate unemployment.

“Governments must open up labour markets that lock out younger workers. They should also strengthen human capital, in particular through education. Yet rigid labour markets are only part of the problem, and education only part of the solution. We must also redesign our monetary and fiscal policies to promote youth unemployment. Above all, getting young people into work demands economic growth.”

ECOSOC President Miloš Koterec told the event that there is a jobs crisis worldwide, including in affluent countries such as member States of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

He said today’s event was a unique gathering of countries, private businesses, foundations, employer organizations, labour unions, young entrepreneurs and youth advocates with the aim of devising new ways to tackle youth unemployment.

Mr. Koterec said proposals from the partnership event will serve as an input to the AMR.

For his part, Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, stressed that partnerships remain the way forward for dealing with complex challenges such as youth unemployment and for producing innovative ideas or solutions to long-standing problems.

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