

Ban calls for protection of young against recession, climate change



12 August 2009 – Young men and women around the world are hit excessively hard by the impact of the global economic meltdown and climate change, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today in a message marking International Youth Day.

“In 2007, for example, youth comprised 25 per cent of the world’s working age population yet accounted for 40 per cent of the unemployed,” **noted** Mr. Ban, adding that in the “near-term, youth unemployment will continue to climb.”

Mr. Ban said that unemployment is only part of the problem, especially for youth in developing countries, where informal, insecure and low-wage employment is the norm, not the exception.

Climate change, he said, continues to compromise economies and threaten upheaval, “saddling people everywhere with an unjust ‘ecological debt.’”

He added that he was also encouraged, however, by the contribution on the global warming mitigation and adaptation debate made by youth.

“Their views and proposals can help build the momentum necessary to ‘seal the deal’ in Copenhagen later this year,” said Mr. Ban, referring to the UN climate change conference in December, bringing together world leaders to agree to a successor carbon emissions pact to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

Stressing that “young people often lead by example: practising green and healthy lifestyles, or promoting innovative uses of new technologies, such as mobile devices and online social networks,” Mr. Ban said they deserve full access to education, adequate health care, employment opportunities, financial services and full participation in public life.

“On International Youth Day, let us renew our pledge to support young people in their development. Sustainability is the most promising path forward, and youth can lead the way.”

In her **message** for the Day, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director, noted that there are more than 1.5 billion people between the ages of 10 and 25, the largest-ever youth generation.

“The world has been hit by the food, financial and climate crises and many young people are eager to help steer our world into greater balance,” she said. “To ensure their full participation, we must invest in their health, education and leadership.”

She said that this is especially true for adolescent girls, many facing discrimination, and denied opportunities.

The more than 500 million adolescent girls living in the developing world represent a huge untapped potential, said Ms. Obaid, adding that if “educated, healthy and empowered, they can build a better life for themselves, and their families and nations.”

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