

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE FOR YOUTH ASSEMBLY AT THE UNITED NATIONS****New York, 5 August 2009**

It is a great pleasure to greet the participants in the 2009 Youth Assembly at the United Nations. I thank the Permanent Mission of Hungary, the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation, the International Institute for Culture and Peace and all others involved in making this event possible.

The world needs you to make the most of this gathering. We face multiple, interconnected crises with severe impacts that fall disproportionately on the young.

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. The global economic downturn means that, in the near term, youth unemployment will continue to climb. Unemployment rates tell only part of the story, especially for the vast majority of youth who live in developing countries. For them, informal, insecure and low-wage employment is the norm, not the exception.

Climate change, meanwhile, continues to threaten tremendous upheaval, saddling young people with a crushing, unjust "ecological debt". At the same time, I am encouraged by the contributions that young people have made to the debate on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Their views and proposals can help build the momentum necessary to "seal the deal" in Copenhagen later this year.

Indeed, young people have proven themselves to be dynamic actors in our work for sustainable development. They have gotten involved in international forums such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, and have helped their Governments and communities to formulate poverty reduction strategies, entrepreneurial schemes and many other policies and initiatives.

Young people often lead by example: practicing green lifestyles, promoting innovative uses of new technologies such as social networks. They -- you -- deserve our full commitment -- full access to education, adequate healthcare, employment opportunities, financial services and full participation in public life.

This Youth Assembly offers a timely opportunity to learn from and inspire each other. I urge you to see your time here as a call to action. The world needs each and every one of you to do your part in transforming our world and building a more sustainable and equitable future for all. Please accept my best wishes for a successful and rewarding experience.