

World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth

The first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth was held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 8 to 12 August [WCMRY/1998/28] with the objective of strengthening national capacities for implementing the World Programme of Action. Convened by Portugal, in cooperation with the United Nations, the Conference drew representatives from over 145 countries, including more than 100 government youth ministers and official youth delegates. Discussions focused on three major areas of concern: national youth policies of a cross-sectoral nature; relevance of the themes of International Youth Year (1985) [YUN 1985, p. 978]: participation, development and peace; and social development and major priority issues for action, including education, employment, health, drug abuse and others.

At its conclusion, the Conference adopted the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, by which Governments committed themselves to implementing numerous measures related to national youth policy, participation, development, peace, education, employment, health and drug abuse. The Declaration built on the guidelines of the World Programme of Action and outlined policy commitments of national Governments. In the 88-paragraph document, Governments recognized that the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and actions in favour of young people were the responsibility of each country, and committed themselves to placing those issues at the top of the political agenda and according that process an appropriate level of resources. States pledged to enhance youth participation in all areas of society, including government decision- and policy-making; to ensure the right to development of all young people; and to strengthen the role of youth and youth organizations in peace-building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The Declaration also outlined commitments aimed at guaranteeing access to education and equal employment opportunities, promoting health development and preventing drug abuse. In addition, Governments agreed to introduce time-bound goals and indicators to assess progress made by countries in implementing the Declaration and to foster the further implementation of the World Programme of Action, with the active participation of youth.

Among other resolutions, the Conference proposed the proclamation of 12 August as International Youth Day and addressed the role of youth in protecting the ocean environment, taking into account that the General Assembly, by resolution 49/131 [YUN 1994, p. 951], had designated 1998 as

the International Year of the Ocean. The Conference recommended that initiatives to raise the level of education on and awareness of ocean issues should be encouraged and supported among young people so that they could participate effectively in preserving and enhancing the ocean as the heritage of humanity.

During the Conference, the participants considered, among other things, the reports of regional youth meetings convened during 1997 and 1998 as part of the two-year Conference preparatory process [WCMRY/1998/15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25]. The Secretariat submitted a report on national youth policies to implement the World Programme of Action [WCMRY/1998/6] and a review and appraisal of implementation of the objectives of International Youth Year (1985) [WCMRY/1998/7]. Contributions on youth-related issues were also submitted by several UN agencies and organizations, including reports on youth and education, youth and employment, youth and health, and youth and drug abuse.

World Youth Forum

Prior to the World Conference, some 500 delegates representing youth organizations in 150 countries met with UN and other intergovernmental officials for the third session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (Braga, Portugal, 2-7 August) [E/CN.S/1999/12]. As with previous sessions held in 1991 [YUN 1991, p. 696] and 1996 [YUN 1996, p. 1096], the Forum sought to enhance youth involvement in the decision-making processes of the UN system, including the development of joint policies, programmes and projects, and to improve communication and strengthen cooperation between the UN system and youth organizations around the world. The Forum also aimed to promote implementation and monitoring of the 1995 Programme of Action for Youth, as well as other policies and programmes related to youth. With the theme "Youth participation for human development", the Forum was convened by the United Nations, in partnership with the Portuguese National Youth Council.

At its conclusion, the Forum adopted the Braga Youth Action Plan, a joint commitment of participants to goals and actions aimed at fostering youth participation for human development. The Plan's 30 recommendations focused on the advancement of youth policy, participation and rights, at the global and national levels. It was presented to national ministers attending the World Conference in Lisbon.

In September [A/53/378], both the Lisbon Declaration and the Braga Action Plan were transmitted to the Secretary-General for submission