

A NEW STAGE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

Ioan Voicu*

บทคัดย่อ

จากข้อเสนอของกลุ่ม 77 คณะกรรมาธิการองค์การสหประชาชาติ (The United Nations General Assembly) ได้ประกาศเป็นเอกฉันท์ในวันที่ 12 สิงหาคม 2553 ถึง 11 สิงหาคม 2554 เป็นปีเยาวชนสากล (IYY) ปีเยาวชนสากลนี้ได้รับการกำหนดขึ้นภายใต้หัวข้อ “การสนทนาและความเข้าใจซึ่งกันและกัน” (Dialogue and Mutual Understanding) เพื่อส่งเสริมให้มีการสนทนามากขึ้นเพื่อสร้างความเข้าใจที่ดีขึ้นระหว่างคนต่างรุ่นกันและยังส่งเสริมอุดมการณ์ในเรื่องของสันติภาพ ความเคารพสิทธิมนุษยชน เสรีภาพและความสมานฉันท์ โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์หลักคือการใช้พลังจินตนาการและการริเริ่มของเยาวชนโลกในการเอาชนะปัญหาที่เราากำลังเผชิญอยู่ในปัจจุบัน ถึงแม้ว่าบทความทางวิชาการนี้จะให้ความสำคัญกับการมีส่วนร่วมของเยาวชนในเรื่องดังกล่าวแต่ก็เน้นให้เยาวชนมีส่วนร่วมในการต่อต้านความรุนแรงและการทุจริต การริเริ่มในระดับภูมิภาค รวมถึงการริเริ่มในภาคพื้นเอเชียแปซิฟิกมีส่วนสำคัญในการให้ความเชื่อมั่นกับเยาวชนที่ต้องการให้เกิดโลกที่ดีขึ้น นอกจากนี้ยังเสนอแนะการกระทำในระดับท้องถิ่น ระดับชาติ ระดับภูมิภาคและระดับโลกที่สอดคล้องกับวัตถุประสงค์ของปีเยาวชนสากล

Abstract

On the proposal of the Group of 77 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed by consensus an International Year of Youth (IYY): 12 August 2010 - 11 August 2011.

Under the theme “Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”, the IYY is expected to encourage a more intensive dialogue and better understanding across generations and promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and freedoms, and solidarity.

*Doctor in political sciences, (international law) of Geneva University (1968); doctor honoris causa in international law of Assumption University of Thailand (1998); alternate representative of Romania to the United Nations Security Council (1990-1991); ambassador of Romania to the Kingdom of Thailand and permanent representative to international organizations based in Bangkok (1994-1999); visiting professor in Assumption University of Thailand since February 2000.

The major objective is to harness the energy, imagination and initiatives of the world's youth in overcoming the current challenges facing humankind. While giving prominence to youth active involvement in this complex area, the article deals more specifically with the younger generation's contribution to fighting violence and corruption.

Regional initiatives, including those promoted in the Asia-Pacific region, are crucial in giving tangibility to youth aspirations for a globalization with a human face. Suggestions of action at local, national, regional and global levels are advanced, in harmony with the IYY objectives.

I. A Dramatic Situation

The winds of change are sweeping on all continents and young people have a visible and central position in this dynamic process. Dealing with youth aspirations, rights, frustrations and disappointments from an universalist perspective is a challenging operation.¹ The present generation of young people is the largest in world history. Young people are active agents of globalization. Some of them are beneficiaries of this complex process, but many are victims of major social changes and are frequently confronted by a lot of difficulties. They also face an unusual paradox: on the one hand they seek to be integrated into an existing order, but on the other hand they are called upon to serve as a force to transform that order.

Today's youth is defined by the UN as the group of people aged from 15 to 24 years. They represent 18 per cent of the global population or 1.2 billion people with 700 million living in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 2008, there were an estimated 152 million young women and men who worked, but were unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their families out of extreme poverty. This number corresponds to 28 per cent of total youth employment globally and shows that working poverty rates among

youth exceed those of adults, at least in 27 out of the 30 low-income countries for which data are available. At the end of 2009, 81 million young people were unemployed. This was the largest number ever recorded. "Young people in Southeast Asia are 4.6 times more likely to be unemployed than adults", specified the ILO Asia-Pacific office in Bangkok. This is the worst ratio in the world. Therefore, ILO described in 2010 unemployed youth as a "lost generation".²

The challenges young people face are not limited to unemployment. Drug abuse, delinquency, HIV/AIDS, poor access to education and resources, lack of leadership and participation, absence of opportunities to contribute to the process of development are just a few dramatic realities confronting the younger generation. Finding solutions to all of them is a particularly relevant objective in the context of the International Year of Youth (IYY), which commenced on 12 August 2010 with the theme "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding", which, if treated in a serious manner, is expected to make governments more responsive to the aspirations of youth for a better world.

For historical accuracy, it should be recalled that the IYY resolution was introduced by the Group of 77 and China and was adopted by consensus by the United

Nations General Assembly on December 18, 2009.³ The resolution contains a set of recommendations addressed to governments, civil society, individuals and communities worldwide to support activities at local, regional and international levels to mark the IYY. This event has the legitimate ambition to generate additional attention for youth participation and development. It can be used to give a new impetus to dynamic partnerships among youth organizations at the global level.

II. Searching for Solutions

On February 17, 2011, the representative of the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of Portugal, Senegal, Andorra, Hungary, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland, introduced draft resolution E/CN.5/2011/L.4 during the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development, which is a functional organ of the Economic and Social Council. The next day, after further consultations, the representative of Portugal, on behalf of the sponsors listed above, as well as Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, introduced a revised version of the draft resolution available under the symbol E/CN.5/2011/L.4/Rev.1. Subsequently, Argentina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Guatemala, the Netherlands and Slovakia joined in sponsoring this revised draft resolution. The draft resolution was entitled “*Policies and programmes involving youth*” and was adopted by consensus on February 18, 2011.⁴ A detailed analysis

of its provisions is useful and justifiable for understanding what are the most significant trends in dealing with cooperation in the field of youth under the UN auspices and what can be anticipated for the years to come.

In the preamble of the resolution under the symbol E/CN.5/2011/L.4/Rev.1, the Commission for Social Development emphasized that all fifteen priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth (hereafter World Programme) are interrelated and in this context it immediately recalled the United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/134 on the Proclamation of 2010 as the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding, while highlighting for obvious reasons various activities that are being carried out in this regard at the national, regional and international levels. The preamble stresses the idea that the implementation of the World Programme and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, require the full and effective participation of young people and youth-led organizations and other civil society organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels.

It should be recalled that two years earlier, in 2009, in the operative paragraph 1 of its resolution 47/1, the Commission for Social Development reaffirmed the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the Supplement thereto as a unified set of guiding principles in this field.

Another noteworthy idea of the preamble is the recognition of the important role of effective sectoral and cross-sectoral national youth policies, reflecting youth in all

its diversity, as well as of international cooperation in promoting the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, already mentioned above.

From the practical point of view another useful paragraph refers specifically to the fact that increased coordination and collaboration among United Nations entities and with other regional and international organizations working on youth contribute to making the youth-related work of the United Nations system more effective.

The ideas reflected in the preamble are further developed in the operative part of the resolution composed of 22 paragraphs whose content is summarized below, while respecting the terminology of the original text.

The Commission took note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: United Nations system coordination and collaboration related to youth” and welcomed the recent increased collaboration among the United Nations entities in the area of youth development. In order to convey a clear message about this Programme, the Commission reaffirmed its validity in clear terms and called again upon Member States to continue implementing it as a unified set of guiding principles for policies and programmes involving youth at the national, regional and international levels.

As the Programme has to be put into practice by all Member States, an appeal is addressed to them to make further efforts in strengthening their capacity to analyze the situation and well-being of young people at the national level in order to monitor

progress towards the implementation of the World Programme.

At the same time, Member States are encouraged to collect, on a continuous basis, reliable, comparable and relevant data, disaggregated by age and gender, to use to measure progress towards the implementation and monitoring of the World Programme. The United Nations system is requested to fully support national efforts in this regard. Moreover, the UN Secretary-General is specifically requested to intensify efforts to further identify, develop and propose possible indicators to measure the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme, in order to assist States in assessing the situation of youth, with a view to allowing them to be considered by the Commission for Social Development and by the Statistical Commission at the earliest opportunity.

The resolution as a whole gives appropriate prominence to the significant role of youth. Thus, it stresses the importance of recognizing young people as active agents in decision-making processes and for positive change and development in society, and in this regard emphasizes in particular the importance of involving them further as key stakeholders in the implementation of the World Programme.

In the same context, the current and future contribution of the UN Secretary-General is again mentioned. He is requested to further improve the coherent and integrated United Nations approach with regard to youth and, through this approach, *inter alia*, to contribute to identifying, developing and proposing possible indicators on the World Programme. Member States are urged to involve and work together with youth-led

organizations and other stakeholders, such as the private sector, to implement the World Programme and share experiences and good practices in this regard.

Several detailed and topical appeals are addressed to Member States. With the assistance of the international community, upon request, they are expected to promote the well-being of youth by developing effective national youth policies and programmes, in particular to address poverty and youth unemployment as an integral aspect of their national development agendas. Member States are called upon to take concrete measures to further assist youth in situations of armed conflict, to create effective channels for cooperation and information exchange among young people, their national Governments and other decision makers, and to support the establishment and functioning of independent national youth councils or equivalent bodies, including junior parliaments, with the assistance of the United Nations system, where needed.

In a more general context, the resolution emphasizes the need for Member States, the international community, the United Nations system and the private sector to support youth-led organizations in achieving openness and inclusiveness and to strengthen their capacity to participate in national and international development activities.

A very interesting and attractive request is addressed to Member States to consider including youth representatives in their delegations at all relevant discussions in the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions and at relevant United Nations conferences, as appropriate, bear-

ing in mind the principles of gender balance and non-discrimination. In connection with this request it is emphasized that such youth representatives should be selected through a transparent process which ensures that they have a suitable mandate to represent young people in their countries.

Additional tasks are assigned to the UN Secretariat which has to consult, as appropriate, with youth-led and youth-focused organizations to ensure that various youth inputs are duly shared with the Commission for Social Development during its deliberations.

In order to encourage youth participation in the UN deliberations, the resolution recognizes the positive contribution that youth representatives can make to the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies and their role of serving as an important channel of communication between young people and the United Nations. Therefore, the UN Secretary-General is requested to support the United Nations Programme on Youth of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat so that it can continue to facilitate their effective participation in meetings.

Conventional wisdom holds that all programmes for youth, be they national, regional or global, cannot be implemented without adequate financial resources. Consequently, the resolution takes care of this aspect and calls upon donors, including Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to actively contribute to the United Nations Youth Fund in order to accelerate the implementation of the World Programme in developing countries and to facilitate the participation of youth representatives from developing

countries, taking into account the need for a greater geographic balance of youth representation. It also requests the Secretary-General to take appropriate action to encourage contributions to the Fund.

There is no doubt that the primary responsibility for implementing the World Programme lies with Member States, and the resolution rightly stresses the need to strengthen international cooperation in support of increased national efforts to achieve its implementation, including through official development assistance. On the other hand, the existing United Nations Programme on Youth is requested to continue to act as the focal point within the United Nations system for promoting further collaboration and coordination on youth-related matters, while the relevant organizations of the United Nations system are requested to further increase coordination and collaboration in their work related to youth, including through United Nations regional commissions, and to further develop methods for promoting youth participation in initiatives on youth development.

Finally, the last two paragraphs of the resolution contain additional tasks for the UN Secretary-General. He is requested to strengthen the United Nations Programme on Youth within the existing resources of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs so as to meet the increasing demands on the Programme to support, evaluate and review youth development in all its facets. He is also requested to report to the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-first session, in 2013, on the implementation of the resolution analyzed in these pages, including on the efforts to develop possible indicators to measure the progress

of the implementation of the World Programme, in order to assist States in assessing the situation of youth.

III. Fighting Youth Violence

192 UN Member States are now in the process of implementation of the recommendations contained in the resolution of the Commission for Social Development summarized in the above section of this article, as well as of the relevant provisions from the resolutions related to the IYY. The platform of the Year should be used to more effectively mobilize international and national action to address the needs and aspirations of young people, as well as to find solutions to some negative phenomena affecting youth such as violence and corruption, which are not mentioned in the recent UN resolutions on youth, including the one dated February 18, 2011, analyzed in detail in the previous section of the present article. The concept of violence should be interpreted in a broad way, including its physical, verbal, psychological, structural, cultural, and symbolic forms of manifestation.

How does violence start and under what circumstances? There are numerous answers to this fundamental question, but we will quote a very simple, recent and suggestive one. Claude Clarke, a former trade minister of Jamaica, reminds in an inspiring article that it is contrary to the nature of man to be idle. If it is true, the old caution passed from parent to child throughout the ages, 'the devil finds work for idle hands', is based on this basic premise. Experience shows that people who are not engaged in working or learning will nevertheless be somehow en-

gaged. There is also evidence that this difference between the number of persons who need employment, and the number employed, provides the fodder on which the menace of crime feeds in Jamaica and creates a zone of opportunity for the 'devil' to promote his work. The personal observation of the author of the article is quite appropriate. A drive through any depressed community in Jamaica between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. on any working day sees dozens of young persons of working age lounging on the corner or sitting on a wall with nothing to do but wait on the 'devil' to recruit them.⁵

We will deal first of all with fighting youth violence prompted by unemployment, as described in the above quoted article, as its findings are not limited to Jamaica, but concern many other countries on all continents. On this aspect, we will refer a remarkable statement made during the 65th session of the UN General Assembly, in September 2010. The representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis stated on this issue that the data reveal that interpersonal violence accounts for about 4,300 deaths per day, one every 20 seconds, one half of them being due to homicide. In some countries homicide rates are as high as 60 to 70 per 100,000. "The human, social and financial costs of violence are unacceptably high and are escalating.[...] There is still, however, no General Assembly resolution that calls for an integrated approach to all forms of interpersonal violence; there is no resolution that speaks to youth violence, one of the major contributors to high murder rates and social breakdown.[...] Therefore, the same representative called for an integrated and multisectoral response to all forms of interpersonal violence and recognition of the

causes, with a view to its placement on the General Assembly agenda for debate in 2011. "As we celebrate the International Year of Youth, I can think of no better time to introduce such a resolution", said Sam Condor, Deputy Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis.⁶

Indeed, finding appropriate ways and means to eliminate the use of violence from youths' behavior is a fundamental objective worldwide. In this respect, we should agree with the above statement and recognize that the IYY with its major theme - dialogue and mutual understanding - offers an appropriate occasion to deal with the complex phenomenon of youth violence.

As a preliminary observation it should be recalled that educators should have an essential role in national and international debates on this theme. Practicing dialogue should not be treated as a reward for good behavior, but as a useful instrument of persuasion to fight youth violence. Mutual understanding should be understood as a genuine process conducive to better relationships at intra-generational and intergenerational levels.

As potential conflicts cannot be totally eradicated from social life, teaching young people in practical terms about the whole "arsenal" of peaceful settlement of disputes is an imperative prerequisite of successful education in all schools, at all levels, and not only in the faculties of law and business schools.

If negotiation leads to a peaceful life, it must become a visible reality in all educational institutions, using to that end adequate contextual strategies. Active teaching of negotiation, conciliation, mediation, good offices and clear communication of rules, with

warnings about corrective consequences, as well as many other appropriate measures may prove crucial in enhancing positive behavior and combating the use of violence among youth, which has become an alarming phenomenon at the global level with very high social, ethical, human and economic costs to society.

Violence by young people is one of the most striking forms of violence in society. Around the world, newspapers and the broadcast media report daily on violence by gangs, in schools or by young people on the streets. The main victims and perpetrators of such violence almost everywhere are the adolescents and young adults. Consequently, there is a great need to develop policies and programmes to reduce youth violence and youth involvement in crime and ensure that judicial systems and rehabilitation services are safe, fair, age appropriate and in accordance with the relevant international human rights instruments.

For further action, it would be advisable to pay more attention in all countries to the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/177 entitled *Follow-up to the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, adopted by consensus on 16 December 2005. By this resolution the UN General Assembly, endorsed the *Bangkok Declaration on Synergies and Responses: Strategic Alliances in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, which was finalized and adopted in Bangkok on 18-25 April 2005. In accordance with this resolution, Governments are invited to implement the Bangkok Declaration in formulating legislation and policy directives, taking into account the economic,

social, legal and cultural specificities of their respective States.⁷

The Bangkok Declaration contains relevant provisions on youth violence. It emphasizes the determination of governments to pay particular attention to juvenile justice and to consider ways to ensure the provision of services to children who are victims of crime and children in conflict with the law, in particular those deprived of their liberty, and to ensure that those services take into account their gender, social circumstances and developmental needs and the relevant United Nations standards and norms, as appropriate. The Declaration stresses the need to consider measures to prevent the expansion of urban crime, including by improving international cooperation and capacity building for law enforcement and the judiciary in that area and by promoting the involvement of local authorities and civil society.

Relevant considerations on fighting youth violence are contained in the document entitled *Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: progress and constraints with respect to the well-being of youth and their role in civil society*. It is a report of the UN Secretary-General addressed to the UN General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council and is dated 30 October 2008. The approach to youth violence is very circumstantial. It is asserted that too often, youth policies are driven by negative stereotypes of young people, including delinquency, drug abuse and violence. However, most young people do not engage in these activities, and most of those who do will eventually desist. The report says that young people should be seen as essential partners for building a society of the future.

However, it is recognized at the same time that “street youth” is a useful term for advocacy and policy-making because it successfully draws attention to a group of young people who, despite their visibility, have limited access to basic services (such as education, health-care and housing) and are outside the formal labor market. At the same time, “street youths” are exposed to types and levels of violence in public spaces which profoundly shape their views and behaviors. Dependency of young people on urban streets reflects failures at the levels of family, community and government to protect them from harm and prepare them for adult life within society. In high-income and low-income countries alike, evidence of youth involvement in street-based crime and violence sits alongside law-abiding behavior, healthy coping strategies and supportive social networks.

Some further realistic assessments from the above report deserve to be mentioned. It is recalled, for instance, that an overwhelming majority of those who participate in violence against young people in developed countries are about the same age and sex as their victims. In most cases the offenders are males acting in groups. Those most likely to suffer from violence are between the ages of 16 and 19. Police records indicate that the crime rates of juvenile and young adult male offenders are more than double those of females, and conviction rates are six or seven times higher. While the UN report containing this information is dated 2008, the realities described in it are even more obvious in 2011.

There is no doubt that unintentional injury is the leading killer of young people in nearly every region of the world, with ho-

micide, war, and interpersonal violence following closely behind. Economic incentives, social and political exclusion, unemployment, dissatisfaction with public services, and the breakdown of traditional family and social networks, are recognized as major factors pushing youth into the combatant role with dramatic and tragic consequence for all involved persons.

The research literature also suggests that youth bulges increase both opportunities and motives for political violence. This implies that in parts of the world where population growth rates are high, the threat of youth violence may also remain high.

It is evident, as the above UN report recognizes, that ongoing conflict situations pose a threat to the health of young people. Some of the most disturbing effects on the health of young people living in areas of armed conflict are anxiety, depression, stress and post-traumatic stress disorders, as well as self-inflicted injury and suicide. Other direct and indirect health consequences associated with conflict include the displacement of populations, the breakdown of health and social services, as well as the heightened risk of disease transmission which generates additional victims.

Young people are often among the first victims of the violent and brutal acts. Therefore, while witnessing the increasing engagement of youth in armed conflicts, more attention must be paid to efforts of building a culture of peace. The role of education in building such a culture must be reflected in positive measures meant above all to prepare the necessary background for engaging youth in conflict prevention and promoting non-violence.⁸

As cogently mentioned on August 27,

2010, in the Guanajuato Declaration adopted by the Mexico World Youth Conference, it is necessary to develop policies and programs to identify and address factors that put young people at risk of engaging in crime and prevent youth violence. At the same time it is necessary to adopt systems of justice specialized for dealing with young people in conflict with the law, putting as the highest priority their social rehabilitation, reintegration, including through their participation in education, and training programmes, and using detainment only as a last recourse, whilst also providing legal remedies for victims. The same document advocates for enhancing comprehensive measures that guarantee the safety of young people, protecting them from factors of insecurity derived from organized crime, physical violence and drug-related crimes.⁹

In this regard, some recent examples offer reasons for moderate optimism. In the article *Church commends Egypt's non-violent revolution* by John Malhotra it is recalled that the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) "joins the people of Egypt and affirms that the non-violent methods of tackling the violent forces bear fruits in history".[...] "The Egyptian youths have proved to be a source of strength and inspiration to the world youth at large. The UN has declared the year 2010 – 11 as the 'International Year of Youth' with the theme 'Our Year – Our Voice'. The young Egyptians have brought meaning to the UN's declaration and theme. We affirm that the power of youth is the heart of any society", the Council said.⁽¹⁰⁾

Such views are not shared at universal level. A British journalist, Howard Jacobson, in his article entitled *Save us from the opin-*

ions of the young, published in *The Independent* dated 26 February 2011, asserts *inter alia*: "As for anything else in the hands of the young, attend to the words of the Romanian writer E. M. Cioran, remembering his own youthful impetuosity. "Evil is the doing of young people. They are the ones who advocate doctrines of intolerance and put them into practice; they're the ones who have need of blood, shouting, turbulence, and barbarism". Change needs such energies. But just as we don't want old men calling the shots, neither do we want the young, with their brittle certainties and their thumbs twitching on the keyboards of their million mobile phones, exchanging all they don't understand at speeds too terrible to contemplate".¹¹

Such negative opinions about youth are quite questionable and unacceptable. Yet, they are relatively widespread nowadays. This is the reason for which in the Guanajuato Declaration adopted by the Mexico World Youth Conference on August 27, 2010, a significant and instructive sentence was inserted which reads: "Promote the recognition of young people as key actors for development and eliminate their stigmatization as causes of conflict and violence".¹²

However, anticipating views expressed in 2011, a great writer, Anthony Burgess, in his introduction to *A Clockwork Orange* makes the following assessment: "Senseless violence is a prerogative of youth, which has much energy but little talent for the constructive. Its dynamism has to find an outlet in smashing telephone kiosks, derailing trains, stealing cars and smashing them and, of course, in the much more satisfactory activity of destroying human beings".¹³ Such

opinions are not singular and reflect a serious negative myth about the younger generation as a whole.

Fortunately, on the other hand, from a humanistic perspective, the Gandhian literature and philosophy deserve to be given special attention, as they are particularly relevant for the topics under consideration during current turbulent times. In Hyderabad, India, a Gandhi-Awareness Programme was established in 2010 for students to participate in the National Campaign for promoting Gandhian literature and philosophy on the occasion of International Year of Youth and Gandhi Jayanti celebrations. In this context it was emphasized that the principles of self-reliance, honesty, austerity, non-violence, truth and tolerance are more relevant today and forever.¹⁴ To that we may add a reference to a piece of Chinese wisdom as summarized in a proverb circulated in many languages: “If you plan for tomorrow, sow rice; if you plan for a decade, plant a tree; if you plan for a lifetime, educate people”. Indeed, educating young people to firmly reject violence remains an imperative task of the day.

From this perspective, the “Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence”, produced by a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates – with the help of UNESCO, recommends itself as a valuable source of inspiration for action. It asserts that the major task today is to transform the culture of war and violence into a culture of peace and non-violence. It gives young people and future generations values that can inspire them to shape a world of dignity and harmony, a world of justice, solidarity, liberty and prosperity. The culture of peace makes possible sustainable development,

protection of the environment and the personal fulfillment of each human being.

In accordance with UNESCO Manifesto, youth must practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social. Young people must give preference always to dialogue and listening rather than fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.¹⁵

The truth of these propositions can be tested. The International Day of Non-Violence proclaimed by the United Nations which is marked every year on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence, offers a good occasion to young people to disseminate at the national, regional and global levels the message of non-violence, including through education and public awareness.

IV. Combating Corruption

The role of youth and the significance of its direct participation in combating the negative phenomenon of corruption can be illustrated by the outcome of a relevant event hosted in Bangkok on November 10-13, 2010. We refer to the 14th International Anti-Corruption Conference which brought together to Thailand more than 1,200 representatives from 135 countries. That meeting offered the occasion to many participants to focus on the fundamental contribution of youth in promoting integrity through values education, in preventing and curbing corruption and strengthening accountability. Engagement and solidarity were highlighted

as crucial tools for facilitating the mobilization of people in grass-roots campaigns and for the empowerment of others, including the younger generation.

During the Conference it was emphasized that systemic change can be meaningfully achieved only when people really become an active part of the anti-corruption process. However, it was equally recognized that for giving tangibility to this aspiration people need time, fresh new ideas and a vibrant civic space in order to be able to change the rules of the game for the future of the anti-corruption movement.

More relevant ideas can be found in the official outcome document of the Conference entitled *The Bangkok Declaration: Restoring Trust*.¹⁶ The document is based on the outputs of workshops and plenary sessions that took place in Bangkok and its provisions directly related to youth are summarized in a few paragraphs below.

The Bangkok Declaration recalled in clear terms the relevance of Conference's deliberations for youth: "We came back again and again to the role of youth in promoting integrity through values education and thereby preventing corruption and noted with great appreciation the participation of young journalists from across Asia in covering the conference through social media channels".

Good laws will not defeat corruption in the face of public indifference. The fight against corruption therefore becomes a moral issue. Civil society and the media were identified as the catalysts and driving forces to raise public awareness. Speakers noted that at no time has there been less trust in elected representatives.

The participants in the Bangkok Con-

ference dealt with strategies for reaching achievement of universal primary education by 2015, identifying systemic weak points from school procurement, to hiring, to the administration of examinations.

The Bangkok Declaration states that all people, individually and collectively, must not be obstructed from joining the fight against corruption. Special sessions on people's empowerment offered an important opportunity for the sharing of strategies, tools and lessons learned about people-centered approaches to curbing corruption and strengthening accountability.

The document also reminds that during the interactive sessions, participants engaged on facilitating the mobilization of people in grass-roots campaigns and approaches to supporting victims, witnesses and whistleblowers. They recognized the role of the diverse actors who facilitate the empowerment of others, including youth, and sought to leverage their capacities by building new connections through new and social media. It became quite clear from the wide variety of contributions that the rules of the corruption game won't change unless people are willing to stand up and demand integrity from their leaders, and demonstrate integrity themselves.

From a legal perspective, the Declaration rightly points out that the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003) was groundbreaking as the first global legal instrument to address corruption. It has been ratified by 148 countries. The Convention opens with a preamble whose very first paragraph expresses the concern "about the seriousness of problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and

values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law”

Regrettably, many countries have yet to ratify this Convention or are lagging behind in implementation.

In the light of this Convention, there is no doubt that while considering the provisions of the Bangkok Declaration young people themselves will be able to discover that there is a need to integrate anti-corruption efforts to work towards the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2015, with a focus on engaging citizens in monitoring of financial assistance and on local accountability projects, the right to information on aid, and the need to promote access to information. In this regard, it is rewarding to note that in its final paragraphs the Bangkok Declaration points the way for the future of the anti-corruption movement, one incorporating citizen mobilization and empowerment, as well as the inclusion of youth.

From the same perspective, recent events in some countries in Southeast Asia revealing cases of corruption should serve as a serious lesson, even when what young people complains concern only the practice of favoritism. As rightly pointed out “favoritism translates to nepotism and is tantamount to corruption”.¹⁷

Is the Bangkok Declaration a realistic document from the perspective of actual participation of young people in fighting corruption? To answer this pertinent question, we will refer to a scientific article entitled *Youth And The War Against Corruption In Africa: Roles And Policy Options* by Otiye Igbuzor (Nigeria). The point of departure of the author is in harmony with the

UN conception about youth. He believes that youth are one of the greatest assets that any nation can have and represent the greatest investment for a country’s development.

According to the Nigerian author, the difficulties confronting the youth in Nigeria as in other African countries include *inter alia* the problem of corruption. It is illustrated with examples from examination malpractices in schools to fraud and embezzlement, just like the adults. This is so because young people are very good at learning from the adults. Over the years, as the incidence, magnitude and extent of corruption increased, the youths were socialized into corruption by their lived social reality. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, young people in Nigeria and Africa in general were very puritanical and idealistic. They were the conscience of their nation. They struggled against many unjust policies, such as increase in school fees or petroleum prices immediately after independence. Unfortunately, most of the young people of the 70s and 80s are now holding the realms of power and engaging in all kinds of corruption. It is therefore frightening what will happen when a generation infested with occultist and corrupt practices assume the leadership saddle.

In his conclusions, the Nigerian author while recalling that there are a lot of conventions, policies, strategies and institutional frameworks to fight corruption in Africa, he believes that in order to win the war on corruption there is a need for many additional measures. In his view such measures may include: re-orientation of the youth to fight for social justice, equity and societal transformation; youth organizing for change and linkage with other agents of change in the

society; organizing to ensure that leaders match word with action; social movement for change and organizing for transformation of society.¹⁸

The most recent news from Asia are quite significant for the future of national efforts to combat corruption. We will quote two examples from China and India. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in a government report delivered on March 5, 2011 vowed to crack down harder on corruption, especially in key areas, to build a clean government. He said that anti-corruption efforts will focus on construction, sale of land use rights, exploitation of mineral resources, trading of stated-owed property rights and government procurement.¹⁹

Kevin Rafferty in his article *Corruption tarnishes shiny India* writes that corruption is one highly visible part of a hydra-headed monster that is preventing India from fulfilling its great promise and keeping hundreds of millions of Indians in poverty. The Asian Development Bank reported in 2009 that 50 billionaires in India control 20 percent of GDP and 80 percent of stock market capitalization. Some estimates say that pervasive corruption takes 2 percent a year off potential growth.²⁰

Fighting corruption remains a priority task at the global level and a more active contribution of the young people in this complex process of gradually cleaning national societies of a dangerous plague may prove to be a successful example of advancing towards a better human order. The Bangkok Declaration offers valuable guidance to that destination.

V. The Way Forward

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future”, asserted American president Franklin D. Roosevelt. These words repeated in many circumstances have a special resonance today. Why? In a world of global vulnerabilities, abrupt discontinuities and unavoidable perplexities, authentic solutions can be found only in a climate largely open to a genuinely democratic dialogue inspired and guided by universal values.

In this regard, it is rewarding to note that in the Guanajuato Declaration adopted by the Mexico World Youth Conference on August 27, 2010 it is clearly recognized that “states have made significant achievements in the social integration of young people since the declaration in 1985 of the first International Year of Youth, and yet many important challenges remain in poverty, education, health, employment, technology, culture, security and conflict, civic engagement, democracy, gender equality and the environment, that impede integral human development and along with it, prevent the development of nations”.²¹

Expressing pessimism about youth’s future is not a recommendable option. More academic research on youth should be done. However, juventology as a branch of science focused on youth seems to be in its infancy. The true scientific treatment of young people is not sufficiently encouraged. Many issues are still on the waiting list. They include: fighting vandalism, preventing social loafing and deviant workplace behavior, drinking age, voting age, age of consent, labor laws, driving age, adoption, corporal punishment, the age of majority, military

conscriptio, specific student rights etc.

All these issues cannot be ignored. Young people must be involved in their consideration and in finding appropriate solutions to them. The younger generation represents the hope and the future of humankind and must have a strong say in shaping the societies young people will live in as adults. It is of paramount importance, therefore, to pay adequate attention to this vital segment of the world population and focus on their particular needs, expectations, ideals and frustrations. In this regard, the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth (Vienna, 13-15 April 1993) estimated that the majority of young people “value solidarity and fraternity and expect political leaders to assert these values in developing a humanist policy offering prospects for a better future”.²²

In a similar spirit, on 14 December 1995, after celebrating a decade since the observance of the first International Youth Year (1985) under the motto “Participation, Development, Peace”, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 50/81 entitled “*World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*” in which the Governments are requested to “promote non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, with full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of their young people, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all young women and men”.²³

In the 2010 message from Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the launch of the IYY it has been recalled that it has been 25 years

– more than one generation – since the UN dedicated a special year to youth. Young people represent today a force of 1.2 billion persons who have the energy and motivation to propose innovative solutions to current global challenges and the aspirations and tools to build bridges of dialogue across cultures. It is more important than ever to encourage young people to dedicate themselves to achieving a more just and sustainable world.

In the same message it was also recalled that the UNESCO Youth Forum, held since 1999, continues to be an integral part of all sessions of the UNESCO General Conference, the organization’s highest decision-making body. In 2011 UNESCO Youth Forum will provide space for all UN agencies and other partners to report on their activities carried out during the IYY and chart a future course of action.

There seems to be general agreement that public investment in youth provides lasting dividends for all society. The global economic and financial crisis has made the world more insecure for young people, especially for those from vulnerable or marginalized groups. Youth policies that promote equity and directly engage with young people must be strengthened. Development assistance policies should be better geared to address youth’s needs and concerns.

It is encouraging to see that UNESCO is committed to empowering youth and ensuring that their voices are heard. The United Nations Interagency Network on Youth Development, which was formally set up in February 2010 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, is an important step towards better coordinating knowledge, reflections and actions on youth. It was announced that

UNESCO will reinforce support to Member – States in developing effective policies and programmes affecting youth, running from access to quality educational opportunities, the empowerment of young women and partnerships for HIV/ AIDS prevention to the promotion of cultural diversity, measures to address youth violence, and sports for development and peace.

All these activities are inspired by the clear recognition of the valuable contributions that youth can make in promoting mutual understanding. In fact, the IYY embraces UNESCO's vision of building peace in the minds of people, as stated in its Constitution. At a practical level, young people must be given opportunities to participate as respected partners in decision-making processes. Empowering youth with the skills they need to build more sustainable future must be treated as a priority. Governments and international institutions must act hand in hand with youth and their organizations. Young people themselves must seize the opportunity the IYY offers to network, share ideas and launch initiatives oriented towards promoting peace, mutual understanding and development for all.²⁴

Such ambitious but legitimate objectives summarized in the above UNESCO message could be facilitated in its materialization by the preparation and implementation of a Decade of Youth to be proclaimed by the United Nations after consultation with states and youth organizations. During the Decade further consultations and negotiations could be envisaged for the preparation and adoption of an international legal instrument that recognizes the specific rights of young people, as reminded in the Guanajuato Declaration.²⁵

An initiative of this nature would be in perfect harmony with the letter and spirit of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) which voiced the common belief that “the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people”.²⁶ This is particularly relevant for younger generation who can bring a valuable contribution to giving tangibility to this major objective through their creativity, capacity for innovation, altruism, adaptation to change, energy and optimism which can give a new impetus to appropriate forms of cooperation at the regional and global levels.

Regional cooperation will have an important role in implementing such generous objectives. In this regard, positive initiatives may emerge from the ten countries situated in the area covered by the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN Summits have already encouraged and inspired greater institutional collaboration in promoting ASEAN awareness among the younger generation, and advocated for an increased involvement of ASEAN's youth and students in national and regional activities to give them an opportunity to make valuable contributions towards the achievement of the ASEAN's objectives.

There is a useful institutional structure which can coordinate activities in this field. In fact, ASEAN cooperation on youth is overseen at the ministerial level by an ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Youth which meets once every two years. In practical terms, the implementation of the programmes and activities for youth matters is carried out by a special organizational mechanism called the ASEAN Senior Officials on Youth which reports to the ASEAN

ministerial meetings on youth.²⁷

From the perspective of both regional and global requirements in the field of cooperation on youth matters, a 2010 initiative, supported by ASEAN, – the launching the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) – deserves to be mentioned. The UNAI already includes more than 500 members in 90 countries, and among them Assumption University of Thailand. This global alliance of institutions of higher education and research with the United Nations intends to promote a culture of intellectual social responsibility. While many universities are already carrying out studies on environmental conservation, human rights, peace and security, independently of United Nations efforts, the Academic Impact will provide them with an additional useful forum for pooling ideas, sharing best practices and improving their activities.²⁸

The UNAI needs stronger support from ASEAN countries and universities. Some ASEAN countries have no university on the initial list of founders of the UNAI, but this situation can be improved in the future. The UNAI principles are universal and in harmony with the ASEAN Charter which is the most important legal instrument binding the ten ASEAN countries for their general cooperation, including the cardinal field of higher education.

While dealing with current and new potential trends in the process of cooperation in the field of youth, it is necessary to acknowledge that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains a relevant ethical compass in addressing the challenges young people face today. From this starting point, we may associate with the final assessment contained in the 2010 Joint Statement by

Heads of UN Entities for the Launch of the International Year of Youth. It says: “Let’s hope that in twenty-five years from now, the young people of today will look back at this International Year of Youth and recognize that it has laid the foundations for making the world a better place for themselves and for succeeding generations of young women and men in every region, country and community around the world”.²⁹

Finally, after having scrutinized the most recent international documents on youth issues and their possible solutions, with special emphasis on youth rights and aspirations, there are no reasons to be overoptimistic. A clear-cut note of caution is necessary. Indeed, as cogently recognized in academic studies, “All human rights victories are partial, since the perfectly rights-protective society has yet to appear”. Moreover, as pointed out in the same context, “universalism easily declines into sentimentalism... we recognize rights, but often we do not act to protect them”.³⁰

The United Nations and UNESCO’s meetings and activities in 2011 and in the years to come as well as national realities will offer persuasive evidence about the validity of today’s efforts to better organize international cooperation for finding appropriate solutions to the numerous, complex and challenging youth problems at the global level. An anticipated outcome might be a more visible and catalytic effect of such actions in positively reshaping the participation of the younger generation on all continents in the decision-making processes affecting its future, in harmony with its true potential.

Endnotes

¹The most comprehensive book on youth issues is William Angel (Editor), *The International Law of Youth Rights: Source Documents and Commentary*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1995, 1164 p. This book traces the origin, growth and basic features of the international law of youth rights. It concludes with a topical call for a new international instrument and monitoring machinery to better promote and protect the rights of youth on a global basis.

²Source: <http://www.bt.com.bn/opinion/2010/08/14/jobless-youth-still-waiting-better-times>

³All relevant documents about the International Year of Youth quoted in this article are available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/youthday/>. It should be noted that informal consultations for the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Youth were scheduled in February 2011, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. See *Journal of the United Nations* dated February 10, 2011.

⁴The full text of the resolution and related documents of the Commission for Social Development are available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/> accessed in February 2011.

⁵For the full text of the article see Public affairs: Crime's growing zone of opportunity, *Jamaica Gleaner Online*, February 27, 2011.

⁶For the summary of the statement see <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/gashc3962.doc.htm>

⁷For the full text of the Bangkok Declaration on Synergies and Responses see <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/>.

⁸The report in full version as well as in a summarized form is available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/youthday/>.

⁹For the final version of the Guanajuato Declaration see <http://www.youth2010.org/site/content.php?page=declara-desc#cont>

¹⁰Article from *Christian Today*: <http://in.christiantoday.com/article/6043.htm> accessed in February 2011.

¹¹For the full article see *The Independent*, online version, dated February 26, 2011.

¹²See the document mentioned in note 9 supra.

¹³Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange* was published in 1962. The book was an examination of free will and morality. The young anti-hero, Alex, captured after a career of violence and mayhem, undergoes a course of aversion therapy treatment to curb his violent tendencies. This results in making him defenseless against other people. The quotation is from the 2011 edition available at <http://www.filestube.com/a/anthony+burgess+a+clockwork+orange> accessed on February 28, 2011.

¹⁴Details about the Gandhian programme may be found at www.mkgandhi.org.

¹⁵For the full text of the Manifesto see www.unesco.org/bpi/eng/unescopress/1999/99-38e.shtml. The most recent academic study about violence seems to be: Guadalupe Abrego, *Eradicating Violence in the collective volume Experiments with Peace: A Book Celebrating Peace on Johan Galtung's 80th Birthday*, 384p., Pambazuka Press, London, 2011. The study was consulted on the web at the following address: http://fahamubooks.org/book/?GCOI=90638100065280&fa=author&person_id=276#content. A synopsis of relevant findings on violence can be found in "Youth and violent conflict: a toolkit for intervention", Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2005). A more specific article is Henrik Urdal, "A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence". *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 50, No. 3 (2006), pp.607-629.

¹⁶See the documents of 14th International Anti-Corruption Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 10-13 November 2010 at <http://14iacc.org> accessed in February 2011. An older but very useful book is Pasuk Phongpaichit and Sunsidh Piriyaarangsarn, *Corruption and democracy in Thailand*, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1994, 179p. The official full text of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003) is available at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/index.html> consulted in February 2011.

¹⁷See *The Brunei Times*, February 28, 2011, p.B17; Source URL: <http://www.bt.com.bn/letters->

editor/2011/02/28/such-favouritism-corruption.

¹⁸See the full version of the article *Youth And The War Against Corruption In Africa: Roles And Policy Options* at www.gamji.com/article5000/NEWS5075.htm.

¹⁹For the summary of the relevant report see <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/7309336.html>.

²⁰For the full text of the article see *The Japan Times*, on line edition, March 6, 2011 at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion.html>.

²¹See the document quoted in note 9 *supra*.

²²All documents of the European Conference are available in the html version of the file <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=264751&SecMode=1&DocId=1234810&Usage=2>.

²³For the full text of the resolution see <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/>.

²⁴The full text of the message from Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, is available at http://www.un.org/en/events/youthday/dg_unesco.shtml.

²⁵See the document quoted in note 9 *supra*. On the history of the initiative of elaborating an international instrument on youth see William Angel, *op.cit.* in note 1 *supra*.

²⁶The full text of the United Nations Millennium Declaration is available at <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/>.

²⁷For ASEAN and youth issues see <http://www.aseansec.org/19608.htm> accessed in February 2011.

²⁸The formal launch of the United Nations Academic Impact took place at a conference in New York City, on November 18-19, 2010. Available online are the lists of founding members, including Assumption University of Thailand. See <http://academicimpact.org/index.php> accessed in February 2011.

²⁹The Joint Statement is available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/youthday/>. It should be noted that during the February 2011 session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development it was pointed out that governments should use the platform of the International Year of Youth to fully implement the World Programme of Action for Youth by mainstreaming its recom-

mendations into national poverty eradication strategies. See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/soc4771.doc.htm>.

³⁰See David P.Forsythe, *Human Rights in International Relations*, second edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp.251-252 and p.272. Universality means the fact or quality of being universal. As an adjective it means including, affecting, done, made, etc., by all people or things, or all individuals in a particular (specified or implied) group or class. It also means applicable in all cases, intended to be used or understood everywhere. See *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, volume 2, pp.3492-3493. In a more specific sense, universality means that certain moral and ethical values are considered to be common or shared in all regions of the world; governments and communities should recognize and uphold them. See in this respect the definition suggested at <http://www.hrusa.org/thisismyhome/project/glossary.shtml>.