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UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	VENUE
2 October	International Day of Non-Violence	Melaka, Malaysia
16-18 October	Policy Forum "Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation"	Paris, France
17 October	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	Melaka, Malaysia

KENYA: EMPOWERING THE YOUTH WILL UNLOCK GREAT POTENTIAL

Nairobi, 13th September - IT has always been said, and rightfully so, that young people are an important segment of society. They are not only the basis for future development but also an indispensable element for the current well-being of the society. We therefore do not have to wait for the future to shape our destiny, it's important that we start now.

For the issues afflicting youth in society to be amicably addressed, we need to have young people (not the so called young-at-heart) in positions of leadership. Young people are social actors of change and have for long served as pressure groups to lobby governments in defining their priorities. They have participated in campaigning for politicians every election season but things have not improved much. There is therefore a need to have young people play a starring role in politics and governance.

On its part, the constitution has provisions for young people to be involved in governance by setting aside special seats for youth to be nominated to the national assembly and the senate but that is not enough. We should vote more young people in elective posts from president to the county assembly representative since they are more energetic and able come up with innovative ways of doing things.

The more youthful leaders we have the faster the implementation of policies.

The argument here is that, as a country, we have lagged behind in development due to lack of vigour and interest on the part of our leaders. We have time and again developed impressive blue prints which end up as just documents since they mean nothing to those in authority and those charged with the responsibility of driving change.

We respect elders and will heavily rely on them for guidance but we deserve a generation of leaders who are adaptable to change and can easily embrace technology for efficient service delivery. We look forward to a time, for instance, when an MP will not necessarily need to be on the floor of the house to participate in parliamentary debates but can do so from a remote location through teleconferencing.

The youth are better placed to handle critical issues affecting our country at this moment in time. These problems cut across the generational divide but youth are the most affected since they are the majority. If these issues are addressed well or seen to be addressed, Kenya will be a better place for all age groups. Job opportunities, for instance, will free up dependence on the older generation, significantly reduce incidences of crime and alleviate poverty by providing youth with a source of income.

But for youth to rise to the occasion, they first need to be empowered and that is

where the challenge lies. Gross socio-economic disparities have for long impacted highly on the youth in Kenya leaving them disenfranchised, desperate and hopeless. Majority have trashed dreams of an impressive future since they don't have a stable present on which to lay a firm foundation. This has led to a significant increase in social ills such as crime, illicit sex and drug abuse among the youth.

Empowering Kenyan youth requires simultaneous efforts on multiple fronts including social, technological, environmental, economic and political aspects. They should be encouraged to work together across ethnic, social, and political lines to advance their common interests and participate in the political and economic life of the country.

It's not that the Kenyan youth are less educated, less talented or less innovative but there is no enabling environment and opportunities for them to explore. The typical Kenyan politician likes it this way so that the youth are easy to exploit and manipulate for their own selfish interests. But if youthful politicians are in power, this will definitely not be the case.

Empowerment of youth means not only giving them equal education opportunities but also life skills, involving them in civic affairs and making them understand the importance of appreciating diversity from a tender age. It also includes

availing mentoring programs, financial, legal, marketing and other advice, and establishing a level playing field in terms of access to jobs, markets and to capital.

We should foster, develop and support youth initiatives as well as a strong representational youth voice in the service and decision-making life of our community. We should also engage youth as resources on a grass root, national and international basis.

However, if the society's attitude is not changed, we may remain with the same leaders who have no regard for alleviating poverty, unemployment and other issues afflicting the youth.

It is not that we want to do away with the older generation of leaders but we come up as youth and be the majority in positions of authority. In any case, youth are said to constitute over 75 per cent of the population in Kenya.

[The Star]

LIBERIA: YOUTH WASH COALITION ESTABLISHED, AS THREE CIVIL SOCIETY YOUTH GROUPS SIGNED MOU

Monrovia, 9th September- THE Consolidated Youth for Peace & Development (COYPED), Youth Exploring Solutions (YES), and Youth Campaigners International (YCI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at establishing the Liberia Youth WASH Coalition (LYWC).

According to the National Coordinator of the Coalition, Stephen B. Lavalah of YES, LYWC is geared towards campaigning for youth recognition and participation in minimizing water sanitation and hygiene-related challenges by increasing access to safe water supply, fostering proper sanitation facility and promoting proper hygienic practices.

He further stressed that the Coalition mission is to contribute to the development of the nation by supporting the poor and marginalized groups to access safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene as a human rights, engage government and other stakeholders to ensure that these services are delivered effectively to all.

LYWC's head also stressed that the Coalition will partner with communities and institutions in addressing the critical barriers in achieving universal access to portable drinking water and sustainable sanitation for all in schools and communities across Liberia through

making communities with related challenges realize their present situation and work towards taking action.

For his part, the Administrative and Intersectional Coordinator of the Coalition, James Koryor of COYPED indicated that such establishment is important at this critical time in the country. He asserted that the coalition was established to network with youth professionals and ideologists to inspire them to support the service for WASH program.

Koryor also stated that the Coalition aims at promoting youth participation and involvement at all levels, which includes inspiring and motivating joint youth actions and learning initiative so as to enable youth address water, sanitation and hygiene issues in Liberia. The youth advocate further revealed that the Coalition would provide Youth WASH policy options that will adequately represent the interest and demands of the marginalized communities in relation to sanitation and water resources.

The resident Director of Youth Campaigners International, Brezhnev D. Paasawe, who is the head of programs of the Coalition, stressed the need for the involvement of young people in the WASH sector as it is cardinal to the implementation of the Liberia WASH Compact and encouraged other civil society youth

organizations to join the coalition.

Paasawe pointed out that the Coalition will engage into advocacy, research, awareness and sensitization in the WASH sector in Liberia.

LYWC's head of programs also emphasized that the recent reports on Liberia WASH sector needs prompt action to be taken to remedy the situation as 1.2 million Liberians (32% of the population) lack access to safe drinking water. The report also stated that 3.2 million (83% of the population) do not have access to sanitation, while World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 11,900 people die every year due to poor water and sanitation in Liberia.

To even worsen this situation, UNICEF estimated that 2,600 children under the age of five die every year from diarrhoea in the country due to poor water and sanitation Mr Paasawe noted.

Paasawe affirmed that the significance of civil society actors in the WASH sector cannot be overemphasized and call for consolidated effort to ensuring access to safe drinking water and proper sanitary facilities. Meanwhile, LYWC is advocating for adequate budgetary allocation and source for funding to the WASH sector, which as an integral component of ensuring adequate WASH for all; thus reminding the Government and its

international partners for consistent support.

[Daily Observer]

RWANDA: SINGAPOREAN YOUTH BUILD TIES WITH RWANDAN COUNTERPARTS

Kigali, 9th September - YOUTH from Singapore are set to harness ties with their peers in Rwanda, a move seen to bolster bilateral relations of the two countries as well as promote economic development.

Michael Raditya, the representative of SINGAFRICA, a Singaporean youth organization comprising of friends of Africa, is optimistic that through partnership, the two countries can foster growth and development.

"If youth from Singapore and Rwanda strengthen their bond and use it to share experience, we can promote socio economic development of our countries," he said during a

cultural night held in Singapore.

The night organised by Rwanda High Commission in Singapore, attracted over 400 participants including a host of foreign heads of missions and diplomats.

Other delegates included Singaporean government officials, members of the private sector, the African community in Singapore, church leaders as well as many other friends of Rwanda.

The High Commissioner of Rwanda to Singapore, Jeanine Kambanda, said Rwanda banked on culture which has significantly contributed to many of its achievements.

"The organization of this Rwandan cultural night is a great opportunity to continue to enhance people-to-people's relationship between both countries," she said.

The Rwandan High Commission in Singapore organized the Rwandan Cultural Night in collaboration with members of the Rwandan community in Singapore and Malaysia and SINGAFRICA.

Kambanda urged Singaporean youth to visit Rwanda to have firsthand experience of the country's prosperity and also share their experiences with the Rwandan youth as one way of helping them to spur growth.

The event is expected to be held annually and will serve to sensitize more Singaporeans and foreigners living in Singapore, a city of international cultural exchanges, in order to promote the Rwanda's development through culture and art.

[The New Times]

SOUTH SUDAN: 'SOUTH SUDAN CABINET SHOULD DISCUSS YOUTH PROBLEMS, NOT PERSONALITIES' - GROUP

Juba, 2nd September — THE South Sudan Council of Ministers on Sunday came under attack from youth leaders, who accused members of the country's cabinet of discussing personalities, while "ignoring" the real problems of young people.

Addressing journalists shortly after their Friday meeting, Information minister, Benjamin Marial, said the council, during its regular sitting, mainly discussed the recent achievements by prominent South Sudanese.

Guor Marial, a South Sudanese marathon runner competed in the London

2012 Games last month. He was not able to compete in South Sudanese colours as the young nation does not yet have an Olympic Committee but his story as refugee who sought asylum in the United States and was running under the Olympic flag captured the Imagination of the Games.

Also in August, Atong Demach, came fourth at the year's Miss World, picking up the award for "African Continental Queen of Beauty" at the contest held in China.

Marial said that the Council applauded the duo for having put the young nation on the world map hardly

two months after it marked its first independence anniversary. Members of the cabinet, the minister added, resolved to reward Atong in recognition of her outstanding achievement.

But in an interview with Sudan Tribune on Sunday, Angelo Ding Dhel, a member of South Sudan Forum for Peace and Development (SSFPD), expressed dismay at what he said was cabinet's diversion from the real issues affecting the young people by debating individual success.

"There are very many youth, ranging from artists, journalists, activists and

people in other professions who made immense contribution to this country. Why are they not being recognized by the Council of Ministers?" Dhel asked.

According to Dhel, South Sudanese youth, who account for more than 70% of the population, currently face enormous challenges, including unemployment, illiteracy, crime, and poverty.

"We expected the cabinet to deliberate on the real problems facing today's youth, many of whom are idle and could end up engaging in violence-related activities," said the SSFPD Secretary for Mobilization.

Samuel Okomi, the Director of South Sudan Youth Participation Agency (SSYPA) said he was equally disappointed with the agenda that dominated Friday's ministerial meeting in Juba, the South Sudan capital.

"I think we our ministers missed the point. What was the essence of discussing two personalities, yet there are very many youth who contributed to the struggle that brought us where we

are today? Our youth expect more than this," said Okomi.

Last month, Cirino Hiteng, South Sudan's youth and sports minister unveiled a plan to initiate a national youth service as a remedy to the rampant youth unemployment.

The much-hyped plan will reportedly target at least 10,000 youth drawn from all over the 10 states of South Sudan.

The national youth initiative, Hiteng emphasized, is a one-year compulsory program that will be done in partnership with the defense ministry to teach young people nation-building skills.

However, Both Dhel and Okomi, who also represent the youth on the United Nations advisory board for South Sudan, openly criticized the planned national youth service, which they said will not

resolve the current problems affecting young people.

The two youth activists instead agitated for the creation of a South Sudan National Youth Federation (SSNYF), as an umbrella entity that brings together various youth from all over the country to deliberate on issues affecting them.

[Sudan Tribune]

ZIMBABWE: NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY FAILS TO PRODUCE

Harare, 18th September -

WHEN the cabinet approved the National Youth Policy in June, young people across the country anticipated a helping hand from the government to enable them to secure employment and plan for the future. However, the reality has been somewhat different.

According to Lovemore Machingura, a councilor in Manicaland, young people in the rural areas continue to be sidelined in all the policies that cover youth issues.

"While there is a hullabaloo about economic indigenisation and empowerment and the national youth policy, very little has been done to help the young people here. Very few of them have even heard about the policy, but the politicians continue to talk about how much good it has done," he said.

The Hauna Growth Point is a popular skulking ground for the youth as several major companies have

packed up and left.

"Big retail outlets like OK and Spar have moved out of the area and all of the youths who had been employed there are now jobless. It's something that we as traditional leaders are worried about as we see a surge in criminal activity in the area," said Headman Zuva Samanga.

Grace Chirenje of the Women Coalition of Zimbabwe said although they were consulted in the drafting of the policy, she had received no communication since its approval.

"It's shocking that after we contributed towards the crafting of the national youth policy we have not heard anything from the relevant authorities on how the policy will be implemented," said Chirenje. Tenford Chitanana, the Zimbabwe Youth Festival Director slammed the National Youth Policy for continuing to discourage active youth participation in politics.

"The Zimbabwe government continue to see our young people as immature. Our youth are being used in political violence while decision-making continues to rest in the hands of the older generation," said Chitanana.

National Association of Youth Organisation national chairperson Misheck Gondo said although the policy was sound, there was a need for an institutional framework in order for it to achieve its goals.

"While we talk about poverty reduction among youths, especially in the rural areas, there is a need to ensure that sound mechanisms in terms of administration and political set-ups are put in place," said Gondo.

The Zimbabwe Youth Council has established a 2010-2012 strategic plan for the youths' affairs. It identified several key objectives that include facilitating the active participation of youths in

district, provincial and national development programmes, conducting research related to youth development issues and enhancing the capacity of youth organisations, among other things.

The relevance of the ZYC is measured in terms of the soundness of its programming. In order for the ZYC to play its stated leadership role in youth development, it is important that it not only contributes to national policies, but it must be the champion of youths on various issues. However, the Youth Council has been blamed for ignoring youth issues by being partisan in their approach, a fact that they have vehemently denied.

[The Zimbabwean]

INDIA: GOVERNMENT MAY OFFER SOPS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Mumbai, 9th September - IN order to encourage youths to take up social work, the state is mulling linking it to getting admission for educational courses, loans and job interviews. Those who take up social work could get priority over others in these areas, a senior state official said.

A recently unveiled youth policy defines those in the 13-35 age group as youth. A seven-member expert group, appointed by the government earlier this week, has been asked to work out modalities for the incentive plan. To recognize contribution of young social workers.

The government is also planning to grant social prestige to social workers through special invitations at important state festivals and award programmes, the official said.

Led by Dr R Krishnakumar, vice-chancellor of Yeshwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, the panel has been asked to evolve a framework for a social credit system. - Sandeep Ashar. Introduction of a social credit system is one of the highlights of the youth policy, which came into force last month and will be applicable for a ten-year period.

"By appointing the panel and deciding its terms of reference, the first step in this direction has been taken," another official said. Social work could soon win you an admission in a college of your choice. It could be the difference between you securing a job interview or missing out.

In order to sensitise the youth towards social work, the state government is thinking of linking it to

admission to educational courses, educational loans and job interviews. Those taking up social work could get priority over others in these areas, a senior state official said.

A recently unveiled youth policy for the state defines those in the 13-35 age group as youth. A seven-member expert group, appointed by the government earlier this week, has been asked to work out modalities for the incentive plan.

To recognise contribution of young social workers, the government also has plans to grant them social prestige through special invitations in important state festivals and award programs, the official further added.

Led by the Dr R Krishnakumar, who is the vice Chancellor of the Yeshwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open

University, the expert panel has been asked to evolve a framework for a social credit system. An official said that its scope of work includes recommending measures to increase participation of youth in social work. It will also fix parameters for an audit of the work. The government has also asked the panel to suggest ways to publicize social work carried out by youth using the internet.

The panel is expected to submit its findings within six months. Introduction of a social credit system is one of the highlights of the youth policy, which came into force last month and will be applicable for a ten-year period. "By appointing the panel and deciding its terms of reference, the first step in this direction has been taken," another official said.

[The Times of India]

NEPAL: UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH GETTING WORSE - ILO REPORT

Kathmandu 5th September - THE jobless rate among young people will get even worse globally as the spill over of the euro crisis spreads from the advanced to the emerging economies, according to the 'Global Employment Outlook: Bleak Labour Market Prospects for Youth'.

In South Asia, youth unemployment rates are forecast to rise from 9.6 per cent this year to 9.8 per cent in 2017, said the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s report launched today.

The ILO called on governments and social partners for action on youth employment to foster pro-employment growth and decent job creation through macroeconomic policies, employability, labour market policies, youth entrepreneurship, and rights to tackle the social consequences of the crisis, while ensuring financial and fiscal sustainability.

It has also asked to promote macroeconomic policies and fiscal incentives that support employment and stronger aggregate demand, improve access to finance

and increase productive investment — taking account of different economic situations in countries.

The ILO has also asked governments to adopt fiscally sustainable and targeted measures like countercyclical policies and demand-side interventions, public employment programmes, employment guarantee schemes, labour-intensive infrastructure programmes, wage and training subsidies, and other specific youth employment interventions ensuring equal treatment to young workers.

Even in countries with early signs of a jobs recovery and where new vacancies are opening up, many unemployed youth still find it difficult to land a job.

"It leads to discouragement and rising NEET rates ('neither in employment, education or training') among young people," said lead author and chief of ILO's Employment Trends Unit Ekkehard Ernst.

"Schemes using employment guarantees and an emphasis on training could help get job seekers off the street and into useful

activities, providing a safeguard against further economic stress,” he added.

The new forecasts revealed the youth unemployment rate in developed economies dropping gradually, from 17.5 per cent this year to 15.6 per cent in 2017. It is still far higher than the rate of 12.5 per cent registered in 2007, before the crisis struck.

“Ironically, only in developed economies are youth unemployment rates expected to fall in the coming years but it follows the largest increase in youth

unemployment among all regions since the start of the crisis,” said Ernst.

Much of the decline in the jobless rate is not due to improvements in the labour market but rather to large numbers of young people dropping out of the labour force altogether due to discouragement. The discouraged youth are not counted among the unemployed.

The ILO’s report stated that the projected decline in youth unemployment in the developed economies is not expected to be enough to

pull the global rate downwards as the global youth unemployment rate will reach 12.9 per cent by 2017 — up by 0.2 percentage points from the forecasts for 2012.

Similarly, the impact of the euro crisis is expected to expand well beyond Europe, affecting economies in East Asia and Latin America as exports to advanced economies have faltered.

In North Africa and the Middle East, youth unemployment rates are projected to remain above

25 per cent over the next few years and might even rise further in some parts of these regions, the report said.

The report added youth unemployment rates are set to rise from 9.5 per cent this year to 10.4 per cent in 2017 in East Asia, while little change is projected in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

[The Himalayan]

OMAN: NATIONAL YOUTH COMMITTEE INAUGURATED

Muscat, 9th September - THE National Committee for Youths was launched yesterday at the State Council's headquarters. The Committee was set up following the issuing of Royal Decree No. 117/2011.

The launch function was held under the patronage of Dr Yahya bin Mahfoudh Al Manthri, Chairman of the

State Council, in the presence of the Secretary General of the State Council and the Chairman of the National Committee for Youths.

In his inaugural speech to the members of the committee, Dr. Al Manthri said, "The youth sector has been the focus of various national development programmes, thanks to the

Royal attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.- •

Dr Hamad bin Hamoud Al Ghafri, Chairman of the National Committee for Youths said that the youth are the most important human force for any society, and are the mainstay of the future.

[Times of Oman]

PAKISTAN: YOUTH RAISE VOICE FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

Islamabad, 8th September— HUNDREDS of youth turn up to raise their voice for universal education and intensive literacy initiatives for out of school youth and children.

The occasion was a ‘Literacy and Peace Walk’, organized by the Islamabad Crescent Lions (ICLC) and the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) Friday, to mark the International Literacy Day. Syed Mustafain Kazmi, Joint Secretary Capital Administration & Development Division (CADD), was the chief guest. Among others who spoke on the occasion included Sibtain Raza Lodhi, president ICLC,

Munir Ahmed, Director DEVCOM-Pakistan, and Jamil Asghar Bhatti.

The students of different colleges and schools carrying placards and banners assembled in front of the National Press Club along with their teachers and general public. They chanted slogans for the adequate educational facilities across the country for all youth, and active literacy centres for the illiterate adults.

Later, the participants marched from the National Press Club to the Islamabad College for Girls, F-6/2, where the walk was terminated.

Speaking on the occasion, Syed Mustafain Kazmi said education is a pathway to tolerance and peace in the society besides social development and economic growth.

He said government was making efforts to engage all stakeholders to take every step to provide best possible facilities in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) educational institutions, both in the urban and rural areas.

Kazmi said we have no option but to seriously plan outreaching the marginalised and under privileged communities.

The immensely rising inflation has badly affected the education of children from rural and suburban communities that need our immediate attention.

President ICLC Sibtain Raza Lodhi said that more than 1.6 million members of the Lions Clubs would take up new initiatives to engage youth in special educational programme and classroom libraries. The ICLC has also chalked out a programme to support the ICT urban and rural educational institutions to establish classroom libraries that would be completed in collaboration with the FDE and the CADD, he said.

[Pakistan Observer]

TAIWAN: TAIPEI FILM FEST REFLECTS ON YOUTH ISSUES

Taipei, 18th September— YOUNG people’s public awareness and exercise of citizenship will be featured at the annual CNEX Documentary Film Festival Sept. 29 to Oct. 6 in Taipei City, according to organizer CNEX Foundation.

Under the theme “Youth and Citizenship,” 45 films from Asia, Europe and North America will present the concerns and struggles of youth of different generations, according to Ben Tsiang, CEO of CNEX.

CNEX is a nonprofit foundation devoted to the production and promotion of documentaries on people of Chinese ethnicity, their lives and societies. It has operated

the film festival since 2008. Its name is short for “Chinese Next” and “See Next.”

“Go Grandriders,” which records the round-island journey of a group of Taiwanese octogenarians riding scooters, will open the program. Several of the riders were ill, but still completed the 1,178-kilometer trip, including the treacherous Suao-Hualian highway along Taiwan’s east coast.

“Taiwanese director Hua Tien-hau, who was barely 30 when he made this film, followed the events of their 13-day journey and redefined youth in the process,” Tsiang said at a promotional event.

In the section “Youth and Politics,” a documentary

about the French student movement of 1968 will screen alongside “Burma VJ,” a Denmark-Norway collaboration showing how undercover video journalists circumvented military suppression to keep news flowing out from their closed Southeast Asian country in 2007. The U.K. production “How Facebook Changed the World: the Arab Spring” will round out this part of the festival.

In “High Tech, Low Life,” from the section on public issues, American director Stephen Maing follows two of mainland China’s first citizen reporters as they use the latest technology to chronicle social issues banned from the news and learn to get around

government censorship.

Feature sections include five films by American-born Chinese director Arthur Dong, who became famous for his films on homosexuals; music documentaries on Bob Dylan, punk and rock music in mainland China; as well as animated documentaries on Chernobyl, immigration, terrorism and Taiwan’s history. The foundation will also hold the third CNEX Chinese Documentary Forum Sept. 29 to Oct. 2. According to Tsiang, the forum is a platform for helping Chinese-speaking documentary filmmakers locate funding and introducing them to international producers. (THN)

[Taiwan Today]

BAHAMAS: CARIBBEAN YOUTH DAY CELEBRATION

Nassau, 27th September - SEPTEMBER 30th has been recognized annually as Caribbean Youth Day, and at this juncture, youth leaders and agencies across the region, take the opportunity to recognize the achievements of our youth as well as the issues, successes and desirables of our times.

On this occasion, youth of the Caribbean take this opportunity to speak to the beckoning reality of integration and corporate development as a region, and are proud to reaffirm the commitment of all Caribbean youth leaders

toward the formation of a regional youth entity to be known as the Regional Youth Council (RYC).

Our beloved Caribbean has often been described as a patchwork of countries with varying histories, linguistic traditions, cultures and identities. Fragmentation and separation have often characterised us more so than unity and togetherness, and divisions within local territories have often been widened by divisions across territories.

Across the Caribbean outstanding examples of young people working hard

and maximising their potential can be seen. From the likes of our golden knights of Chris Brown, Ramon Miller, Demetrius Pinder, Michael Matthieu, Usain Bolt, Kirani James, not forgetting our successful entrepreneurs, writers, models and other music artists. Caribbean young people have risen from a place of obscurity to place of renowned global recognition. They have brought us pride and joy and continue to add significant value to our social and economic landscape.

Therefore, the BNYC takes

this opportunity to employ our fellow Bahamians to join us in celebrating the youth of our great region.

We must encourage each other for further growth and development of the Caribbean. We would like to make special mention of our sponsors in these celebrations, Royal Bank of Canada, The Bahamas Telecommunications Company Ltd. (BTC), US Embassy Nassau and all our member youth organizations.

[BNYC Press]

BARBADOS: REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL IN HANDS OF BYDC HEAD

Bridgetown, 2nd September -The establishment of a unified Regional Youth Council has been discussed by Caribbean youth leaders eager to see youth in the Commonwealth Caribbean represented as a collective unit and President of the Barbados Youth Development Council (BYDC) Jason Francis has been elected as Chairman of the Steering Committee, responsible for seeing the project through.

This decision was reiterated last month in Kingston, Jamaica at the Commonwealth Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit, which marked the second phase of a process initiated in March 2011 by the Caribbean Youth Programme (CYP) Caribbean Centre. The Summit provided the

opportunity for Caribbean youth leaders to come together to determine a strategy and plan to achieve wider and sustained participation of young people in democracy, leadership and advocacy.

Summit deliberations were led by a youth team under the Chairmanship of Jason Francis, President of the Barbados Youth Development Council, who was elected in 2011 to advance a programme for cross-council support, capacity building, advocacy and strengthened democratic youth structures. The CYP Caribbean Centre has noted that the Commonwealth-sponsored process was inclusive in practice, as it welcomed leaders from key youth platforms, such as the CARICOM Youth

Ambassador Corps, the UNDP Caribbean Youth Think Tank and the UWI Guild of Graduates.

The delegates agreed on a three year strategy aimed at achieving a strong and unified Regional Youth Council for the Caribbean, beginning with the English-speaking countries and extending to embrace a Pan Caribbean demographic.

Speaking with the Barbados Advocate recently about the mammoth task of getting a Regional Youth Council up and running, Francis remarked that he is happy to see Barbados leading out in such an initiative, but he remains humble, as the task will not be easy. He is, however, up to the challenge, having pushed for other Caribbean

countries to have National Youth Councils while in his leadership capacity over the last four years as head of the local Youth Council (BYDC). Having a Regional Youth Council (RYC) would be an asset for the region Francis noted, since the Caribbean would now have a bigger voice at global summits dealing with critical issues affecting youth.

Francis noted that at present, there are several committees appointed to work on the RYC, inclusive of a Constitutional Committee and others dedicated to Marketing and Public Relations, Monitoring and Evaluation and Strategic Planning. Each of these committees will have a timeline and terms of reference to ensure success.

Americas News

“The deadline for the establishment of the Regional Youth Council is September 30th 2013 and basically, some of the things we looked at in terms of that council and what its objectives would be, for example, is to have a united voice at the regional level [and] to lobby on the behalf of young people to various agencies at the CARICOM level. Also, to be able to attract resources and pool those resources together, where they can, for example, be disbursed to the various youth councils to work with various development agencies, whether it be the United

Nations, the Commonwealth, the USA, the European Union and as well as interact at the international level,” Francis explained.

“My role as Chairman of the Steering Committee is to ensure that the Constitution is in place, the strategic plan is in place, as well as adequate monitoring and evaluation systems, marketing and public relations, so that we can get the recognition for the body, which it would need to be able to function at the level it needs to be functioning at,” he added.

“A lot of this is being pushed by the Commonwealth Youth Programme and we cannot waste this opportunity to aid young people, since they are investing resources to bring together different youth leaders from across the English-speaking Caribbean and eventually the Dutch, French and Spanish,” he also stated.

“Barbados has also played a very important role in this through the BYDC. I guess our hard work has been recognised by the other youth councils and our seriousness of purpose. It is more work, but having been

a proponent for regional integration, especially at the youth level, I have a vision for where I would like to see the Regional Youth Council go,” Francis said.

[Barbados Advocate]

CANADA: OBESITY IN YOUTH: A GROWING CONCERN

Waterloo, 26th September - OBESITY has become an increasingly critical issue in Canada, especially for children and young adults. Obesity, a medical condition in which a person is grossly overweight, has affected 11.7 per cent of Canadian children ages five to 17, according to a recent Statistics Canada study. An additional 19.8 per cent of youth in this age group are considered overweight.

Weight gain occurs when the energy ingested is more than the energy burned from physical activity. The use of television and computer games has contributed to the lack of physical activity, resulting in a sedentary lifestyle.

“A lot of it is just overeating and inactivity,” said Gwen Rogers, children’s dietician for Grand River Hospital. “I personally feel that the

junk food in schools and advertising is the root cause; they’ve always been there. We just need to educate kids that they have junk food in moderation.”

Rogers had recommended that kids who are obese need to eat more foods with whole grains and whole wheat.

She also recommended that kids have more foods in their more natural and less processed state, and to avoid foods that are high in sugar and fat.

“A lot of it is we have to get the kids active, because we’re seeing that they are a lot less active, and I think parents need to be better educated,” Rogers said. “Kids need to be better educated because there are lots of healthy choices that they can make, they’re just not making them.”

Obesity in childhood can lead into adulthood unless drastic lifestyle changes are made. Karen Ostrander, manager of Health Services at Wilfrid Laurier University, spoke about the effects on the body if childhood obesity carries into adulthood.

Aside from low self-esteem and distorted body image, there are a plethora of health risks.

“If you’re overweight in childhood, that is more likely to carry on into adulthood and when you get to be about 40 your metabolism slows down and you’ll gain a lot more weight,” Ostrander said. More weight gain is not the only worry that is faced with childhood obesity leading into adulthood. Type-two diabetes is another major health scare that overweight children may face if their lifestyle as

an adult continues to reflect their lifestyles now.

Sleep apnea, and bone and joint problems are also issues that can be faced by an obese child as they get older and are not becoming more health conscious.

Ostrander also believes that young adults gain a significant amount of weight once they come to university, as their change in lifestyle alters their eating patterns.

No longer having prepared healthy meals at home, most students choose to eat out, as it is easier access.

This contributes to the stereotype of the “freshman 15”.

“When you look at the offerings, there are ongoing debates about why we even have hamburgers and fries as an option.

Well, it can be healthy, everything can fit, but people need to take ownership of what they put into their bodies,” Ostrander said.

“We have a dietician on staff who encourages

students to think about how they will plan their meals effectively and healthily and helps educate university students about portion sizes,” Ostrander added.

[The Cord]

JAMAICA: HANNA STRESSES DEDICATION TO YOUTH

Kingston, 19th September - MINISTER of Youth and Culture, Hon. Lisa Hanna, has reiterated the Government’s strong commitment to addressing the problems affecting the youth cohort.

She said the focus must be on creating economic opportunities for young people; fashioning lasting solutions to the social phenomena that affect them; ensuring the protection of children and at-risk youth; and to culturally reverse the mindset that 'nutten nah gwaan'.

"As a government, we are determined to help young Jamaicans fashion the vision and develop the conviction to chart a course for their own personal empowerment," she stated on September 17 at a youth forum hosted by the United Theological College (UTC) of the West Indies at its Papine campus in St. Andrew.

Ms. Hanna stated that the recently held Digital Jam 2.0, through which young people were able to access opportunities in the virtual economy, was an important step in providing economic empowerment, noting that other initiatives will be pursued.

These include: identifying employment prospects in information communication technology (ICT); establishing training and micro work centres in the virtual economy; and creating incubating centres and promoting entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, Minister Hanna stated that the review of the National Youth Policy, currently underway, will be completed shortly.

The policy will be informed by, among other things, the results of a qualitative survey on the situation of youth in Jamaica, undertaken earlier this year.

"I must have empirical data on the problems and opportunities and resources that exist in order to lead an effective, sustained and sustainable effort to address the challenges," she pointed out.

The Youth and Culture Minister said that the youth forum, held under the theme: ‘Mek We Set Di Ting,’ was important as it “presents an opportunity to hear firsthand and feel what some of our young people, particularly at-risk young people are thinking about their presence in this society and (how) they feel they can make a difference."

She lauded the organisers for including the input of all stakeholders “in the search for solutions to the challenges that confront the nation.”

"I believe that this ability for constructive engagement, debate and action is one of the absolute benefits of our preferred democratic system of political, social and economic organisation of our society," Ms. Hanna added.

The forum involved youth groups and representatives from government, opposition, church, academia, the business community, civil society, among others.

[Jamaica Information Service]

USA: AMERICAN YOUTH OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE DESPITE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Ohio 1st September— HE'S 30, between jobs, with \$50,000 in student debt and no clear sense what the future holds. But Erik Santamaria, Ohio-born son of Salvadorans, has a pretty awesome attitude about his country, his life and the world of possibilities.

"Maybe things won't work out the way I want," he says. "But, boy, I sure can't complain about how things have worked out so far."

This is the sweet spot of American optimism, a trait that looms large in the nation's history and imagination. To find it these days, talk to an immigrant, the child of one or, failing that, a young person of any background. That's where the torch seems most likely to burn brightly.

With anyone else, it's hit or miss. For many, these times are a slog.

That "shining city on a hill" from political mythology looks more like a huffing climb up a field filled with ticks. Public opinion researchers find handwringing at almost every turn, over a glum and nervous decade defined by terrorism, then war, then recession, then paltry economic recovery.

Still, you aren't seeing pessimism in the season of the political conventions. The Democrats, convening Tuesday in Charlotte, N.C., want to corner the franchise on happier tomorrows, just as the Republicans wanted at their convention this past

week. The notion that America's best days are ahead comes packaged and polished from the stage, cheered by delegates in goofy hats.

But such platitudes probably won't go far with Marie Holly, 54.

On her lunch break in a mall just north of Columbus, Holly recounts a struggle to get by as a temporary floor designer at a department store, making one-third of the salary she once earned at a graphics-design firm that cut hours and wages before she quit in January to freelance. She firmly believes in the American Dream, but in the sense of dreaming it, not grasping it. "I'm not seeing anything to strive for, I guess," she said. "I'm settling."

Polls sing the blues:

Nearly two-thirds lack confidence that life for today's children will be better than it has been for today's adults, according to an NBC-Wall Street Journal survey in May.

Half of registered voters do not see the U.S. as the shining city on a hill, meaning the example for other countries, though 45 percent do, according to a Fox News poll in June.

In April 2011, a USA Today-Gallup poll found that optimism that the next generation's lives will be better than parents' dropped to its lowest level since the question was asked in 1983. Only 42 percent thought so.

Before then, majorities always believed their children would have a better life.

In a dramatic drop from the late 1990s and early 2000s, just over one-third were satisfied with the U.S. position in the world in a February Gallup poll, down from at least two-thirds in the months before and after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Younger people, though, typically see a rosier future than older generations. As long as that holds, optimism stays woven in the nation's fabric.

In an August Associated Press-Gfk poll, only about half said it's likely that today's youth will have a better standard of living than their parents. But optimism was the greatest among those who have the farthest to climb — those of modest to low income, and the young themselves.

In the poll, 55 percent of those earning under \$50,000 said it's likely the next generation will do better; 58 percent of those under 35 expect to have a better life than their parents.

So it seems to be with Santamaria. He possesses both the idealism of his recently completed college years and the belief, perhaps stirred by his immigrant parents, that this is a land of options.

"Their dream for me would be picking the tallest building out here and making the most money,"

he said, sitting on a picnic table outside a downtown Columbus market with friends, and gesturing to the cityscape.

Before getting his English literature degree in June, he worked at the Limited Brands in Columbus, where he was responsible for communicating with managers and customs officers to make sure paperwork for overseas Bath & Body Works stores was properly handled.

"I know people are really struggling out there," he says. "But I looked for a few months and I ended up at the world headquarters of the Limited Brands, and I didn't even have my degree yet. I mean, months. And yeah, they were stressful but when I look back, I mean, a few months and I ended up there and I didn't even want to be there. I mean that's unreal. That's unreal opportunity."

Santamaria left that job and won't be seeking work at the city's tallest building, 41 stories housing state employees. He set his sights since growing up in Toledo on "being able to do something you really loved to do," more than raking in riches.

So he is moving to Pittsburgh to set up a nondenominational Christian church on the University of Pittsburgh campus.

He won't be getting paid but hopes to get a foot in the door at a counselor's office and someday become an academic adviser and preacher.

Kayla Ruffin, 17, from Sylvania, Ohio, gives voice, too, to the idea that it's the young and restless who are sunny side up.

"It's really hard to get me in a bad mood," she said during orientation for new students at Ohio State University, where she is a freshman. "I'm usually pretty excited to learn new things and meet new people."

She's free of the burdens of college debt and likely to stay that way, not typical for many students. "My dad, he has it all figured out," she said. "He's been planning my tuition since I was like born. So he's made it easy for me."

Ruffin will be studying aeronautical engineering and wants to design spaceships. "I just love

everything that NASA does." And if that doesn't work, she said she'll tap into the same design skills to make golf clubs.

The February Gallup poll found that pessimism about life for the next generation deepened with age. Also, that the poor were more optimistic about tomorrow than the rich.

However down Americans get about the country's direction and what the future might hold, they tend to be more satisfied with their own lives.

Carl Adler, 69, is one of those. A retired Lutheran minister, he said his family learned to live on modest means and, with Social Security benefits and his wife's pension from years of teaching, "I'm wealthier now than I've ever been in my life."

Still, he said, "I think people my age are finding it difficult to be optimistic." Does he believe the American dream is alive?

"Oh boy, I don't know. I think it will be possible for fewer people."

"I'm not sure what the American dream is, to be honest, anymore. ... It seems like the middle class is disappearing."

This is more than an abstract thought for him. He's giving part of his retirement income to his son, who is married with two young kids and hasn't seen a raise in three years at the public college where he works in information technology. His daughter-in-law is in nursing school.

Ohio is a battleground state, so the political opinions of people who are out and about in Columbus no doubt matter more to the Barack Obama and Mitt Romney campaigns than voters' attitudes in the most dependable Democratic and Republican states.

But do people here think actions in Washington affect their lives? The capital seems awfully far

away. Optimism, or pessimism, may have roots closer to home.

Adler's sense of wealth comes not just from retirement money but from family gatherings that carry on a life-long musical tradition: "If all the family is together, we have 28 people playing horns," he says.

For Santamaria, too, joy isn't derived from what happens inside the Washington Beltway. He says, "I don't depend on any president for my happiness."

[Huff Post]

BELGIUM: RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION TAKES A LEAP FORWARD

Brussels, 24th September - TODAY the Education Committee of the Council of the European Union will meet to discuss the European Commission's proposal on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, released on 5th September.

The discussions are scheduled throughout October and are expected to lead to an adoption of a

Council Recommendation on the establishment of national systems of validation for learning gained outside formal education on 24th November.

A handful of EU member states have such systems in place, so further efforts are required to ensure that all citizens across the Union can gain the competences they acquire through

non-formal education (NFE) activities, such as those provided by youth organisations, valued and recognised transnationally.

The European Youth Forum has high expectations for the upcoming Council Recommendation, as it represents a first step forward in the recognition of the complementarity of NFE to formal education, as well as recognising the

specific place of NFE in lifelong learning policy. The European Youth Forum's Reaction document presents key points for consideration by the Council of the European Union with the aim of enhancing the potential of the proposal.

[EYF]

CYPRUS: LITERACY SKILLS ESSENTIAL FOR IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVES

Nicosia, September 6 - THE effective combating of illiteracy and improving literacy levels in the European Union could have positive consequences for people, their societies and economies. According to the report of the High Level Committee presented and discussed at the two-day conference "Literacy for All", good literacy skills are essential for improving the lives of people and the advancement of knowledge, innovation and development.

The conference was organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus and the European Commission within the frame of the Cyprus EU Presidency, on September 5 and 6, at the 'Filoxenia' Conference Centre in Nicosia.

EU Education Ministers have set a common goal to reduce the percentage of 15 year olds with low reading skills from the current level of 20% to 15% by 2020.

Studies show that if Europe meets its target for 2020 on basic skills in literacy, mathematics and science, this could have a 21 trillion euro benefit in GDP in the lives of children born after 2010.

To address this problem and to achieve the above goal, the European Commission established an independent High Level Group which included 11 special experts, chaired by Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, in order to analyse the available data and evaluate the most effective policies, in order to identify ways to achieve the common goal of improving literacy levels.

The report of the High Level Group on Literacy was presented and discussed during the two-day conference, which was attended by the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou, the President and members of

the HLG and distinguished experts from abroad.

The 80-page report includes a series of recommendations, such as advice for parents on creating a culture of reading for pleasure to their children, the construction of libraries in atypical settings and specific advice for boys, who read less than girls on the whole. The report makes age-specific recommendations and provides examples of good practices already in place in Member States. Among the positive examples of policy that contribute to improving literacy levels, the report includes two examples from Cyprus: the New Curriculum for Language and the programme for schools in disadvantaged areas which aims to tackle school underachievement, called 'Zones of Educational Priorities'.

The Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. George Demosthenous, emphasised the importance of tackling illiteracy and

promote literacy.

"In a rapidly changing world in which lifelong learning is now seen as the key to employment for economic success and full participation in society, lack of basic literacy may prove to be extremely problematic", said Mr. Demosthenous.

Recognising that effectively combating illiteracy could have positive consequences on individuals, their societies and economies, Mr. Demosthenous noted that "the Cyprus Presidency has made the fight against illiteracy and the promotion of 'Literacy for All' as one of its main priorities.

"He added that "the recommendations of the High Level Group will provide very useful material for those responsible throughout Europe for the prevention and combating illiteracy."

Commissioner Vassiliou said:

"We are witnessing a paradox: while reading and writing is more necessary than ever in the context of our digital world, literacy skills are inadequate. We urgently need to reverse this alarming situation.

Investment in improving literacy among citizens of all ages is cost effective as it produces tangible benefits for individuals and society, which in the long run could reach billions of euros."

In turn, Princess Laurentien added that reading and writing is much more a technique than a skill.

"Literacy is related to people's self-esteem and their ability to operate and flourish as individuals in society, as active citizens, as workers or parents. We need clear, coordinated strategies, and much better awareness across Europe, not only in circles of politics and education, but

also in hospitals, workplaces, and especially the families. It is time for Europe to increase its level of ambition and to ensure literacy for all", she said.

Based on the recommendations of the Group and the conclusions of the conference, the Cyprus Presidency will hold a discussion during the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Education in October 2012 and

subsequently will promote the adoption of Council Conclusions in November on this issue, seeking to tackle illiteracy through the provision of qualitative education and training.

[CY2012EU]

IRELAND: SCHEME HELPS YOUTH TO INNOVATE

Dublin, 4th September - IT IS vital that we educate and empower young people to become leaders on social issues, said Sr Stanislaus Kennedy, co-founder and chairwoman of Young Social Innovators. She was speaking at the launch yesterday of a new three-year education programme to encourage innovation in young people.

The partnership between Young Social Innovators Ireland and Vodafone Ireland Foundation aims to provide young people with the tools and knowledge to become engaged in social change.

The current programme is open to 15-18 year olds and aims to empower young people in schools and youth groups across the country to identify and create solutions to social problems in their communities. This year Vodafone Ireland Foundation will invest over €400,000 in the programme.

"It's currently in half the secondary schools in Ireland

through TY year and kids doing it get into teams of about 10, decide the issue they want to get involved in and work together to tackle it over the school year," said Niamh Hodgess of the foundation. The joint venture aims to engage over 100,000 young social entrepreneurs and be available to all young people from the ages of 15-24 by 2015.

Sr Stanislaus said, "I think young people are the ones who will pull us out of this situation and, if they get educated at a young age and if you learn at a young age about social issues of concern in society, you'll carry that all your life."

A Navan-based Youth Reach programme where early school leavers can access education ran the Young Social Innovators model last year.

"Our campaign was to do with negative teenage image which was important to our guys because they weren't happy the way people

looked at them and the fact they're not in mainstream school meant they can feel more excluded," said facilitator Paula Burns.

"One charity we fundraised for was Meath Fire Rescue and we bag-packed which raised €1,000 and then people from the charity came in and talked about the work they do."

[Irish Times]

FIJI: YOUTHS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Suva, 24th September -
TWO-YEAR-OLD Tanishi Kumar, an active member of the Vunivau Paras Point Youth Club spent yesterday afternoon giving clothes and food items to the less fortunate in her community.

Families visited by the youths could not help but

smile as the outspoken young girl turned her head to say bula with a signature innocent smile.

The club which is made up of youths in the area are making a change in the lives of the sick, the poor and single parent families in the Vunivau area.

Paras Point Youth Club co-ordinator Preetika Nandran said the club was established five months ago and consisted 20 youths from the Paras Point area. "Our club membership is growing every day as members come in from the community hearing about the small activities that we

organise at Paras Point," she said.

"This is an opportunity to involve our youths to know and appreciate the less fortunate people that we have here in Vunivau."

[Fiji Times]

NEW ZEALAND: LARGE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR PRIME MINISTER'S PACIFIC YOUTH AWARDS

Wellington, 26th September - PACIFIC Island Affairs Minister Hekia Parata is delighted by the number of applications for the 2012 Prime Minister's Pacific Youth Awards and says it confirms a wealth of talent among this population.

"Applications for these awards closed at the end of August and I'm delighted that young Pacific people continue to strive high in

their aspirations and goals," says Ms Parata.

The Prime Minister's Pacific Youth Awards were inaugurated in 2010 in three categories: Leadership, sponsored by the University of Auckland; Creativity, sponsored by Weta Workshop; and Inspiration sponsored by Cogita Business Systems.

This year the Vodafone NZ Foundation supported a

new award, Mobiles4Good, joining last year's new entrant, Air New Zealand's Innovation Award, to bring the total on offer to five. A total of 105 entries were received.

"These awards are a wonderful opportunity to recognise outstanding young Pacific people, and to bring them to the attention of all New Zealanders. It aligns with our Pacific Island Affairs

priorities in education; youth, skills and employment; Pacific languages and culture; and enterprising communities.

"Young Pacific people play an important role in New Zealand and they continue to aim for excellence," says Ms Parata.

[SCOOP]

SOLOMON ISLANDS: YOUTH, WOMEN'S ISSUES EXPLORED IN ROYAL COUPLE'S VISIT

Honiara, 17th September - World Vision volunteer Ellison Maitafiri was one of the lucky few to meet the royal couple, as a youth leader at Burns Creek community who is also the treasurer for the World Vision project the Youth Alliance for Change.

He explains what it was like to tell Prince William and his wife about his work encouraging young Solomon Islanders to save.

"They asked me to explain what it was all about. I was nervous, but proud too. They were very interested in how it (the project) changed the community," he said.

Mr Maitafiri said it was a big privilege and honour to meet the royal couple and talk about the savings program.

"They asked me a lot of questions. They were very nice," he said.

The University of Toronto's Carolyn Harris is a historian based in Toronto Canada, who has done extensive research on the perception of female members of royal families. She says one of the significant parts of the trip is that the young royal couple won't be together all of the time.

"We see in the Solomon Islands that the Duke and Dutches of Cambridge will be undertaking separate engagements. When they

were in Canada in 2011 they did all their engagements together," Dr Harris explains.

"So the Duke of Cambridge for one afternoon in the Solomon Islands will be dispensing Duke of Edinburgh awards for worthy students, while the Dutches of Cambridge attends a reception for women's groups in Solomon Islands so we're seeing opportunities for separate engagements in this trip."

Pacific News

Dr Harris says this reflects a long history of royal women being able to draw attention to the rights of women and the status of women.

"So the Dutchess of Cambridge's attendance at this reception will draw attention to efforts to improve the status of women in Solomon Islands," she says.

She says the trip is a chance to highlight the causes that mean a lot to the couple.

"We saw the Dutchess of Cambridge's first speech abroad, in Malaysia, at a palliative care centre for children. In her speech she stressed how important it is that there be palliative care for terminally ill children. So these charitable causes

are receiving a lot of attention as part of the press coverage of their visit."

The Pacific region has only received two royal visits in the recent past - in 1974 and 1982.

[Radio Australia]

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