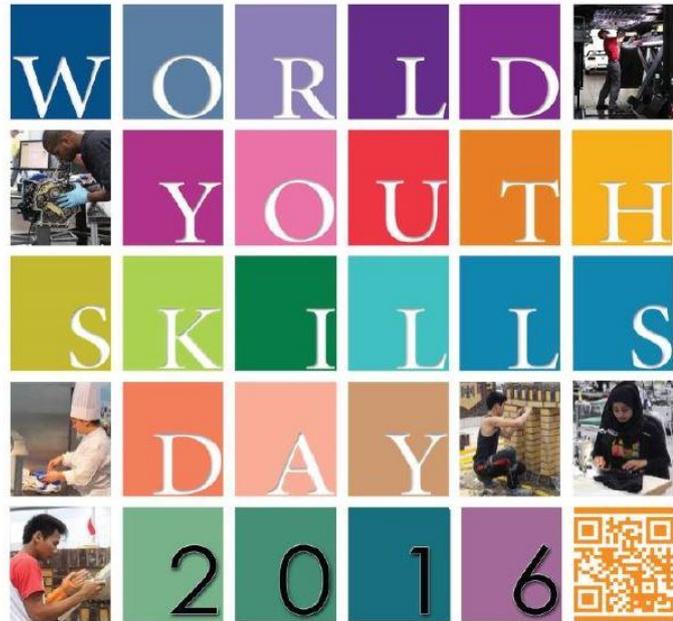


*****For Immediate Release*****

**“ON WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY, UN CALLS FOR BETTER SKILLS TRAINING TO
IMPROVE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT”**

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New York, 15 July, 2016 - Speaking at a high-level event at United Nations headquarters in New York on Friday, UN officials are urging world leaders to step up their efforts in providing skills training for young people as they get ready to enter the job market.

The world today is home to the largest generation of youth in its history, with 90% of young people living in developing countries and with estimates suggesting that labor markets will need to add 600 million new jobs by 2026 to accommodate changing global demographics.

In a statement issued to mark the day, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: *“Empowering young people through skills development strengthens their capacity to help address the many challenges facing society, including poverty, injustice and violent conflict. There is no better investment than helping a young person to develop their abilities. Successful skills programmes link young people with opportunities to gain experience and jobs.”*

Speaking at the opening of the high-level event at UN headquarters, the President of the UN General Assembly Mogens Lykketoft said: *“Far too often, the incredible potential in*

the world's youth population is wasted by extreme poverty, discrimination or lack of skills and information. Skills development is a primary means of enabling young people to make a smooth transition to work, and education and training can make the difference for youth between poverty and employment."

The UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth Ahmad Alhendawi said: *"Surveys are showing low levels of achievement in basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills among younger generations. If we really want to turn the 2030 Agenda into reality, our work has to start from the world's youth. And ensuring they experience a smooth transition into the job market will be one of the key factors to determine both their success and the achievement of the SDGs."*

Jorge Sequeira, Director of UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, said: *"We need a new focus on skills – we need new thinking about education – we need transformed training systems. With technical and vocational education and training standing at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO now is taking this forward and launching today a new Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, to support Governments in sharpening their training systems, to equip all youth and adults with skills for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning."*

The Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Gilbert Hounbo, said: *"We know education and training are key success factors in increasing youth's access to decent work. Schools and businesses, working together, can provide skills development and workplace-based learning for the future of work. In this regard, we are pleased to announce that the GE Foundation, with ILO's technical support, has launched a unique Global Youth Internship Programme today for 16 to 18 year olds to inspire a new generation of innovators for a better world."*

The event at UN headquarters is organized by the Permanent Missions of Sri Lanka and Portugal to the United Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO, and the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Skills and jobs for youth feature prominently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are explicitly mentioned in many of the 17 SDGs and their targets. In particular, SDG target 4.4 calls for a substantial increase in the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills—including technical and vocational skills—in order to encourage employment and entrepreneurship.

The event will feature youth representatives, members of government, international organizations and academia, who will offer their different perspectives on what is needed to ensure youth have the right set of skills to transition into the job market.

This is the second celebration of World Youth Skills Day since the adoption by the General Assembly in December 2014 of a resolution calling for the day. It is also the first celebration since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda last fall.

The event comes against a backdrop of increased activity at the UN-level aimed at improving employment conditions for youth. In February, the UN launched its Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The Initiative is a unique partnership among governments, the UN system, businesses, academic institutions, youth organizations and other groups to scale-up action to create new opportunities for quality employment in the global economy and assist young people in developing the skills they will need to succeed in today's job market. The initiative will coordinate employment and economic policies for job growth and social inclusion and protect labor rights to ensure that young people receive equal treatment.

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Notes to Editors

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Website: www.un.org/youthenvoy

<http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=Join+us+and+celebrate+World+Youth+Skills+Day+on+15+July+2016%21+>

<http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

About World Youth Skills Day

The draft resolution establishing World Youth Skills Day was proposed by Sri Lanka and was adopted by the 69th session of the General Assembly on 18 December 2014 (A/RES/69/145).

The resolution expressed concern at the high number of unemployed youth and recognised that fostering the acquisition of skills by youth would enhance their ability to make informed choices with regard to life and work and empower them to gain access to changing labour markets.

The resolution also invited all Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including youth-led organizations, to commemorate World Youth Skills Day in an appropriate manner, in accordance with national priorities, including through education, campaigns, volunteering and public awareness-raising activities.