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IDENTIFYING MEASURES
FOR STRENGTHENING
CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN
THE UNITED NATIONS AND YOUTH
AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS



UNITED NATIONS

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs

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UNITED NATIONS
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PREFACE

The present technical publication has been prepared in accordance with the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983, subprogramme element 7.2 "International Youth Year: channels of communication with youth for participation in development and peace". 1/ Partly based on the findings of an expert group meeting, held at Vienna from 9 to 13 January 1984, the publication reviews the efforts of the United Nations to improve channels of communication with youth and youth organizations and provides recommendations as to how United Nations bodies and agencies, Governments, and governmental or non-governmental bodies and organizations at the national, regional and international levels could improve communication between the United Nations and youth.

It is hoped that the publication will contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (1985).

Abbreviations

ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GIM	Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JUNIC	Joint United Nations Information Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has long recognized the vital importance of young people, both in their ability to embrace the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, and their potential to approach afresh the problems facing mankind. Young people represent the future, and the United Nations has a definite stake in the future. In order to maintain its relevance and achieve the goals of the Charter, the Organization takes an interest in communicating with young people and involving them in world affairs.

The important role of young people was first considered by the General Assembly in 1969, and is confirmed in such General Assembly resolutions as 2497 (XXIV):

"Recognizing the important role and contribution of youth in the promotion of world peace, justice, social and economic progress and human rights, and in the realization of the goals embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, and welcoming the views of youth on these subjects,"

and General Assembly resolution 3022 (XXVII):

"Welcoming the increasing and active awareness of young people of their potential contribution to the building of a better society, which requires that they be more fully integrated into the political, economic and social life of their countries,

"...

"...

"...

"...

"...

"... Endorses the conclusion ... that the United Nations should pay particular attention in the future to involving youth in programmes of national development and international co-operation, as well as in the activities of the United Nations;"

Experience indicates that a precondition for the effective participation of youth in the work of the United Nations is the existence of strong and efficient channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations.

General Assembly resolution 32/135 affirmed:

"the importance of the existence of the channels of communication and of practical and effective opportunities for youth and youth organizations to participate in the work of the United Nations at national, regional, interregional and international levels".

United Nations activities for young people have helped to develop the concept of youth as a distinct social group, which deserves the right to fully participate in society and in the wide variety of issues on which they have views, and to accrue a body of knowledge on youth.

The concept of youth as being a time of preparation for adulthood, a period of learning and growth, is, by and large, relatively recent. In pre-industrial societies, the vast majority of children were expected to be working, contributing members of the family unit as soon as possible; all hands were needed in the struggle for survival. The fact that today's masses of young people have the opportunity for further personal development, without having to shoulder responsibility for survival, is a result of national social and economic development, and the advancement of society. Throughout history, this privilege has gradually been extended to increasing numbers of young people around the world; that it is still denied to so many is a major challenge of development.

Young people have special problems in integrating into society, and while development processes benefit society, including youth, they introduce new difficulties requiring new solutions. Young adults may face such difficulties even before they have acquired roots in or links to a wider social fabric, a factor that has a bearing on the development of effective means to communicate with youth.

I. FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

The function of channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations has evolved over the years: channels of communication are a conduit for sending and receiving information about the goals and activities of the United Nations, and for encouraging youth participation in its work as well as feedback. Thus, as the body of knowledge extant within the United Nations system and elsewhere is increased, the possibilities to improve the situation of young people all over the world increase.

Channels of communication are distinct both from the information they are intended to convey and the target audiences the information is expected to reach. However, in order to determine the effectiveness of such channels, both the information itself and the target audience have to be identified.

At present, the information most often conveyed through existing channels concerns the work of the United Nations system such as General Assembly resolutions, reports of the Secretary-General, research studies and findings of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and information on field projects and other activities. This information stimulates individuals and groups to voice opinions and take action.

Usually, this information is targeted at Governments, and international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations interested in youth, who, in turn, disseminate it to their constituents through individual or collective networks. Generally, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies do not communicate directly with individuals but with Governments and/or organizations who then pass the information on to individuals. Information from the United Nations is channelled to individuals through press releases and other information materials, and through the activities of the United Nations information centres and other United Nations field offices.

Channels of communication, in turn, enable these same audiences to provide feedback to the United Nations system on its work, and to forward comments, ideas and suggestions. Through correspondence, newsletters or magazines, responses to inquiries or questionnaires from the United Nations, and participation in individual meetings or large conferences, Governments and intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations and, to a lesser extent, individuals, are able to communicate with the various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system.

A. Conceptual framework

Effective channels of communication are a means to an end, that of achieving the fullest participation of youth organizations and young people in the work of the United Nations system at every level. On the basis of discussions within the United Nations system, such participation should at least include:

- (a) Participation in policy formulation;
- (b) Participation in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of programmes and projects;
- (c) Participation in public information and education activities about the United Nations directed at young people;

These criteria should be continually promoted and put into practice at national, regional and international levels. Progress at the regional and international levels will largely depend on the existence of effective structures and their mobilization at the national level.

In developing youth participation,

"... nothing should be proposed or done that would tend to isolate young people from society as a whole. Rather, action should be taken to encourage and assist youth to consider themselves part of the total society and to take a greater role in the analysis and solution of problems that affect all people." 2/

If youth are to participate in policy formulation at national, regional and international levels, many factors must be taken into account. Needs, possibilities and obstacles will vary from one country to another and will differ again at the level of the legislative organs of the United Nations system. Forms of policy-making may diverge considerably, but there are certain basic prerequisites for involving youth, such as instituting effective arrangements for consultation among as broad a section of young people and youth organizations as possible. Also, policies formulated in collaboration with youth should not be limited to those specifically related to young people (for example, youth policy, youth services), but should encompass any issue on which young people express concern.

Similarly, the programmes or projects in which youth participate in the preparation, implementation and evaluation should cover all kinds of activities, at all levels, in which young people are involved, so that they become active rather than passive participants in economic, social and cultural life. Furthermore, youth should participate in research on the needs and aspirations of youth, in youth meetings or discussions on youth-related and other questions, and in specific programmes on development, education, culture, human rights, disarmament etc. Experience has shown that if the proper conditions for youth participation are created at all stages of such programmes, the results obtained will be far better than those obtained otherwise.

As for youth participation in public information and education activities, especially in the context of the International Youth Year, a major effort should be made to promote youth involvement, for instance through activities and materials prepared jointly by youth organizations and United Nations bodies. Useful experience, which might be applied more widely, has been gained by youth organizations and some parts of the United Nations system in meeting the specific information and educational needs of young people in different countries, and in preparing the sort of information materials that appeal to youth.

If the points outlined above are considered to be broad goals within the overall objective of maximizing youth participation, the channels of communication between youth organizations and the United Nations system will embody a number of elements. The essential ones are as follows:

(a) Structures that facilitate direct and representative consultation between youth organizations and the United Nations system (both between individual organizations and between their collectives, at national, regional and international levels);

(b) Publications issued by the United Nations system that facilitate a regular and two-way flow of information between the United Nations system and youth organizations;

(c) Public information and education materials concerning the work of the United Nations system, prepared specifically, in different media, for young people by youth organizations, by the United Nations system, or jointly.

B. Indicators and measures for evaluation

Indicators should be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of channels of communication in facilitating a two-way flow of information. Criteria to evaluate existing channels and to establish new channels should be developed so that a basis for maximizing communication results. This requires an awareness of the range of possibilities available within the present limited human and financial resources, and a knowledge of the type of information that is to be communicated as well as of the target audiences established to date.

The General Assembly has twice adopted resolutions 3/ containing guidelines for strengthening channels of communications. However, no specific provision has been made to evaluate compliance with, or implementation of, the guidelines. It is therefore difficult to measure their effectiveness or the progress achieved in information exchange as a result of their elaboration.

Problems have arisen because in implementing the guidelines, emphasis has too often been placed solely on the substantive aspects of policies and programmes, and not on improving communication per se, which is the crux of the issue.

In elaborating indicators, some general points should be considered, as follows:

- (a) To what extent do opportunities for youth participation exist?
- (b) What is the nature of those opportunities?
- (c) What mechanisms have been developed to inform youth of such opportunities?
- (d) What are the perceptions of youth concerning such opportunities and the further improvement of youth participation?
- (e) How do such mechanisms as there are affect those perceptions?

C. Inter-agency co-ordination

The United Nations and specialized agencies deal between them with nearly all issues confronting society today. Each organization or agency has been established to respond to certain needs and to develop expertise in specific fields. Many of them are making efforts to reach youth, as a defined population group, within the context of their mandates and their specific areas of competence.

The General Assembly, from its global perspective, is aware of the advantages of co-ordinating the actions of individual United Nations organizations and specialized agencies. In resolution 2497 (XXIV), the Assembly recognized the "importance of co-ordinating the activities and programmes relating to youth among the United Nations organs and the specialized agencies concerned".

Attempts to streamline communication, co-operation and co-ordination in the field of youth among United Nations bodies pre-date the designation of

1985 as the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace,* but much work remains to be done. In the context of the International Youth Year, a renewed effort is being made, as was discussed in the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council in 1983 (E/1983/36).

The main instrument for co-ordination is the informal inter-agency working group at the technical level for the International Youth Year, which held its first meeting from 18 to 19 March 1982 at Vienna, and which is co-ordinated by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. In its reply to the questionnaire that was distributed on this subject, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggested that the informal inter-agency working group might be strengthened if it was made a permanent channel of communication, going beyond the perspective of the International Youth Year.

The inter-agency working group has sought to encourage co-operation on activities for the International Youth Year among different United Nations bodies and agencies in the following four areas:

- (a) Information and promotional activities;
- (b) Meetings at regional and international levels;
- (c) Research and studies;
- (d) Technical co-operation.

The International Youth Year has focused attention on the necessity for programmes for youth within the United Nations system and this momentum, to which inter-agency co-ordination has contributed significantly, should be maintained and built upon. Although not all the expectations for inter-agency co-ordination have been met, inter-agency meetings have brought together representatives of different parts of the United Nations system to develop ideas and strategies for joint action on youth issues.

One of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Inter-agency Meeting, held at Vienna from 21 to 22 March 1985, was that the United Nations bodies and specialized agencies concerned should continue to meet annually, as an informal inter-agency working group at the technical level, to discuss programmes and activities, as well as to investigate possibilities for joint action in the field of youth. Because of the experience gained during preparations for the International Youth Year, it was decided that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs would be the most appropriate office to co-ordinate this inter-agency activity.

The co-ordination of youth-related activities by a specific unit within the United Nations system could lead to improved channels of communication because it would concentrate responsibility for the systematic collection and dissemination of information on such activities in one place. Furthermore, a co-ordinated system of communication, between Member States and youth organizations and relevant parts of the United Nations system, would increase the exchange of ideas and information, the potential for which has been unexploited because of the many sources from which the information originates.

*See General Assembly resolution 34/151 and 35/126.

Likewise, the ability of youth organizations to affect the activities of the United Nations system, and the General Assembly in particular, could be enhanced through their direct access to a single focal point.

D. Target audiences

The General Assembly has repeatedly recommended to all Member States that, in connection with the International Youth Year, national co-ordinating committees, or other forms of co-ordination, should be established at the national level.* The functions of such committees are multiple, namely:

- (a) To assess the national situation of youth;
- (b) To develop a national plan of action for youth;
- (c) To co-ordinate national activities and publicity in observance of the International Youth Year;
- (d) To bring together various governmental and non-governmental organizations in a common forum;
- (e) To liaise with the United Nations, and with other national committees or groups, and centralize and co-ordinate the flow of information.

In the past, measures to strengthen channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations concentrated on improving channels of communication with youth organizations. However, most young people do not actively participate in youth organizations and therefore have not been receiving information about the United Nations and its goals. Such "unorganized youth" should be a major new target audience of channels of communication, especially in the light of the emphasis being placed on participation by the theme of the International Youth Year.

E. New forms of communication

In order to reach new audiences, especially unorganized youth, the United Nations must take advantage of hitherto underutilized forms and methods of communication. The potential for exploiting the mass media and educational institutions as channels of communication should be explored, as should the feasibility of harnessing new communication technology within existing organizational capacity.

F. The International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace

The International Youth Year has provided an occasion for concerted action to improve the situation of youth everywhere. A main premise is that young people must be actively involved in planning and implementing programmes and activities in observance of the Year: the International Youth Year is about, by and for youth. For young people to be able to participate in the observance of their Year, at local, national, regional or international levels, they must first be aware of the Year and familiar with the work of the United Nations. This seems obvious, yet still today there are many young and old people who do not know that 1985 has been designated the International Youth Year, and who are therefore not capable of taking part in its observance or influencing its direction or follow-up.

*See General Assembly resolutions 37/48 and 38/22.

Strong channels of communication are essential to generate general public awareness and involvement. Traditional channels of communication have produced encouraging results, and many Member States, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, and youth organizations have taken action to publicize the Year and plan activities for its observance. But to reach the larger, unorganized audience, other methods are clearly called for. The optimum application of communication methods that expose as many people as possible to information about the International Youth Year, and that enable the Year to be more responsive to the needs of young people, is central to the success of the Year and its follow-up activities.

Many events in observance of the International Youth Year have been scheduled for 1985, including large meetings, artistic and musical events, sports and leisure activities, tree-planting schemes, to draw attention to the Year and its goals. Whatever their size or scope, these events are ideal opportunities for communication on the work of the United Nations and its interest in young people's concerns. The opportunity to develop the interest thus generated during such events into new or improved channels of communication should not be overlooked.

As said before, a major premise of the International Youth Year is that young people should be participants, a concept that extends beyond the work of the United Nations for the Year. If youth participation is to be meaningful, then that participation must be instituted on a permanent basis. The International Youth Year is thus a time to establish mechanisms for such participation and to influence public thinking about the role young people may be expected, and allowed, to play in society.

II. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND THE MEMBER STATES (1969-1983)

The issue of channels of communication with youth and youth organizations has been under constant review by the General Assembly since 1969 and the subject of numerous studies and reports. At each of its sessions since 1976, the General Assembly has adopted a resolution on the subject. 4/

In General Assembly resolution 2497 (XXIV) the Secretary-General was requested:

"to consider further ... the measures to be taken to establish channels of communication with youth and international youth organizations, and to report thereon to the General Assembly as early as possible."

The first specific report of the Secretary-General on this issue, prepared in 1972, analysed the existing channels of communication and stated, that:

"... there is increasing evidence that existing channels of communication with the United Nations are inadequate and that major changes are needed. Among the principal reservations expressed by young people and specialists concerned with the subject is that existing channels are primarily one-way channels, from the United Nations to young people, on issues regarding which the United Nations is concerned that youth interest be generated, rather than reciprocal channels on broad issues of mutual concern." 5/

A conclusion of the report was that:

"Unless communications with young people are improved, and their participation in United Nations activities increased, the United Nations, as a vehicle for the development of the international community, is in danger of losing the interest and commitment of the future generation." 6/

In reviewing the present arrangements within the United Nations system for communicating with youth, the annex of the report covered the following areas, which provided the conceptual basis for much of the subsequent discussion on channels of communication within the General Assembly:

- (a) Youth participation in policy formulation;
 - (i) Consultative status and other methods of consultation;
 - (ii) Youth participation in government delegations to United Nations meetings;
 - (iii) Youth participation on advisory bodies to the United Nations;
 - (iv) World Youth Assembly;
 - (v) Youth attendance at United Nations meetings;
 - (vi) Special arrangements for consultation with certain committees of the United Nations;
- (b) Associating young people with the programmes of the United Nations;
 - (i) Approaches adopted by the specialized agencies;

(ii) Missions of the Interregional Advisor on Youth Policies and Programmes, and of other United Nations youth officers;

(iii) Field programmes;

(iv) Fund-raising campaigns (e.g. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Freedom from Hunger/Action for Development");

(c) Learning and teaching about the United Nations (including the Youth Information Bulletin and the internship programmes of the United Nations and UNESCO);

(d) Young people at work in the United Nations (referring to efforts to increase the recruitment of young people for Headquarters and field programmes of the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO).

On this basis, the report made a range of recommendations in the following areas:

(a) Strengthening communication with youth and international youth organizations at local, national and regional levels;

(b) Increasing the availability of information on the United Nations and on the activities and interests of young people;

(c) Increasing the access of youth and international youth organizations to the formulation of United Nations policies;

(d) General principles for implementing recommendations (a)-(c) above;

(e) Co-ordinating youth programmes within the United Nations system.

The report was considered at the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly, which, in resolution 3022 (XXVII):

(a) Encouraged "the Secretary-General to continue to utilize existing channels of communication with youth and national and international youth organizations and to seek to establish new channels";

(b) Recommended "that the Secretary-General evaluate existing United Nations programmes and projects in order to enable youth to participate fully at appropriate levels of policy formulation and project implementation and evaluation";

(c) Approved the convening of an ad hoc advisory group on youth;

(d) Decided to re-examine "the question of channels of communication with youth and youth organizations" no later than at its thirtieth session (in 1975).

Three meetings of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Youth were convened in 1973, 1974 and 1975, and mainly involved young people from 20 countries, with diverse experience in national and international youth organizations of different orientations. The Group's mandate was to advise the Secretary-General on activities that should be undertaken by the United Nations to meet the needs and aspirations of youth. The Group also paid attention to questions relating to channels of communication. Detailed reports were issued on each of the three meetings (E/CN.5/508, E/CN.4/1240, E/CN.4/1241 respectively); the last

two were published specifically in connection with the thirty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights in 1977.

In 1975, the Secretary-General reported to the General Assembly on efforts undertaken since 1972 to strengthen channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations, including the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Youth. Among the recommendations made were the following:

"(3) In matters relating to communications with youth organizations:

"(a) The Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-governmental Organizations, in conjunction with the United Nations Headquarters Youth Caucus, should be recognized as a principal channel of communication between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and young people on issues of common concern to youth and the United Nations;

"(b) The Geneva Informal Meeting should be requested, following each of its meetings, and in conjunction with the United Nations Headquarters Youth Caucus, to communicate to the Secretary-General the principal issues raised at these meetings, and the views of the participants on these issues, together with any questions or requests for information or action that they may wish to make. The Secretary-General would endeavour to respond to these communications, and may bring them to the attention of the relevant policy-making bodies for their information and consideration. The Secretary-General would undertake to communicate with the Geneva Informal Meeting on issues of concern to the United Nations, requesting its views on those issues. Special attention should be given in the conduct of these communications to issues related to development, including in particular the strengthening of developmental capabilities and activities of youth organizations at the national level.

"(4) The regional commissions should be requested to give further serious consideration to the appointment of full-time youth development officers, as has already been done at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and is being considered by the Economic Commission for Africa. These officers should be responsible for increasing opportunities for youth to participate in developmental activities and for the strengthening of communications between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations in their regions. Special attention should be given in these efforts to the needs and aspirations of rural and organized youth.

"(5) The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme should be requested to continue exploring and implementing ways to involve non-governmental organizations in development activities of the United Nations at the national level, designating at least one of the pilot projects to be undertaken in this regard as specifically youth-oriented.

"(6) In the field of public information, further study should be made of ways to convey information on United Nations activities of interest to youth, particularly those in the developing countries, and appropriate programmes implemented within existing resources. In addition, programmes should be undertaken in the context of the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee to service the increasing interest of young people and youth organizations in the consideration of economic and social questions in the United Nations.

"(7) Efforts to recruit professional staff under the age of 30 to the United Nations Secretariat should be intensified." 7/

A. Adoption of guidelines

The 1975 report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/1241) was referred to the thirty-first session of the General Assembly which, in its resolution 31/132, invited:

"the Economic and Social Council to prepare through the Commission for Social Development at its twenty-fifth session appropriate recommendations concerning the best channels of communication between youth and youth organizations and the United Nations at the national, regional and interregional and international levels".

At its thirty-second session in 1977, eight years after the issue had first been raised, the General Assembly considered and adopted "Guidelines for the improvement of the channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations" in the annex to resolution 32/135.

In the same resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to transmit these guidelines to all Member States, regional commissions and regional and international youth organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and through Member States to national youth organizations and ask for their comments and suggestions and to report to the next General Assembly:

"... on comments and suggestions offered by Member States and regional commissions relating to the guidelines ... and on the progress achieved in their implementation, with specific action-oriented recommendations for the further development of the guidelines and of the co-operation between the United Nations system and national and international youth organizations."

B. Further work to develop channels of communication (1978-1983)

Only 13 Member States, the Holy See, three regional commissions and one non-governmental organization provided comments on the guidelines, and in the 1978 report of the Secretary-General it was suggested that the guidelines should be circulated again to Member States, regional commissions and youth organizations before recommendations were made.

In addition, the report of the Secretary-General made the following recommendations:

(a) More Governments could be encouraged to follow the example of the Netherlands in supporting the Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations (GIM) so as to enable it to increase its representativity of organized youth from all regions and systems;

(b) Governments and non-governmental organizations with youth programmes could be encouraged to contribute material for publication in the quarterly Youth Information Bulletin, issued in three languages, and also to identify channels through which copies of the Bulletin could be circulated to reach the maximum number of young people;

(c) The practice of providing internships for young people could be expanded to give young people from all regions of the world the opportunity of

serving the United Nations for short periods and thereby learning of its activities at firsthand. Internships might not be confined to United Nations Headquarters but extended in particular to Geneva and Vienna as well as the offices of the regional commissions, where programmes of direct concern to youth are organized;

(d) The Economic and Social Council could be requested through its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to review the situation of regional non-governmental organizations and their relationship to the regional commissions, as well as to the Economic and Social Council itself, in order to facilitate co-operation between the regional commissions and non-governmental organizations, especially those active with young people;

(e) The Joint United Nations Information Committee could be empowered to establish a small group of young people to advise it on the production and circulation of United Nations publications that would be of interest to youth, with special emphasis on the activities of the United Nations, rather than on its structures;

(f) The Inter-Agency Task Force on Youth could be requested to initiate and co-ordinate a system-wide programme of regional and national meetings (seminars, workshops, training courses) to ensure that the concerns and activities of the United Nations of immediate interest to young people become a reality to them and to youth organizations and so that young people themselves may actively participate in the planning and organization of such meetings. The programme could be planned on approximately a five-year cycle, bearing in mind the transitory nature of youth, and it should involve a wide range of offices within the United Nations system including the specialized agencies, as well as the Division of Human Rights, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Centre for Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Governments could be encouraged to support the programme by offering to act as host or otherwise support such meetings. 8/

In its resolution 33/6, the General Assembly:

(a) Invited Member States and regional commissions that had not yet done so to comment on the guidelines and to offer additional suggestions regarding their further development;

(b) Invited the Commission for Social Development to make appropriate recommendations for the further development of the guidelines and to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fourth session, through the Economic and Social Council;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fourth session on comments and suggestions offered by Member States and regional commissions relating to the guidelines and on the progress achieved in their implementation.

Comments and suggestions were received in response to this second request from only six more Member States, making a total of 21 replies. In his 1979 report (A/34/199), the Secretary-General summarized these replies and, for the first time in the context of the International Youth Year, he reiterated some recommendations of the previous year.

In its resolution 34/163, the General Assembly:

(a) Recognized that, for the successful implementation of the International Youth Year, greatly extended and improved communication with young people and youth organizations representative of all regions of the world would be important;

(b) Requested the Secretary-General to circulate the draft additional guidelines for the improvement of channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations, which were attached to the resolution;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to report at its thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly on comments received on the draft additional guidelines.

On the basis of comments received from Member States, regional commissions and other United Nations bodies, as well as regional and international youth organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General prepared his 1980 report, in which he reiterated the recommendations made in the 1978 and 1979 reports, and made further suggestions as follows:

"(a) With the support of and close co-operation with the Joint United Nations Information Committee, the practicality of establishing an advisory group of young people to advise on a publication of interest to youth should be explored. The publication could take the form of a "journal" expressing diverse views of youth and prominent social scientists in the field of youth;

"(b) Increased financial and technical support should be provided by Governments to the Geneva Informal Meeting of Youth Non-Governmental Organizations, following the example of the Governments of the Netherlands and Austria;

"(c) The practice of providing internships for young people for short periods, with a view to encouraging them to become more knowledgeable about the activities of the United Nations in New York, should be strengthened and broadened to include the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna as well as the offices of the regional commissions, where programmes of direct concern to youth are organized." 9/

In its resolution 35/139, the General Assembly:

(a) Expressed its conviction that the existence and proper functioning of channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations form a basic prerequisite for the successful preparation, celebration and follow-up of the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace;

(b) Reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to implement fully, at the world-wide level, the adopted guidelines for the improvement of the channels of communication and to assist Governments and the regional commissions to implement them at the national and regional levels;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to report on the progress achieved in the implementation of the adopted guidelines, and to submit to the Assembly at its thirty-sixth session, for adoption, proposals for additional guidelines.

In his 1981 report (A/36/427), the Secretary-General reviewed the progress achieved and drew attention to the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year (A/36/215), which included the text of the Specific Programme of Measures and Activities to be undertaken prior to and during the International Youth Year. The Programme outlined general guidelines, at the national, regional and international levels, for action prior to and during the Year, all of which naturally presupposed the existence and proper functioning of effective channels of communication between young people and youth organizations, and Governments, other national authorities and United Nations bodies and specialized agencies.

In his 1981 report also, the Secretary-General made proposals for additional guidelines, as follows:

"The channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations should be strengthened at the international, regional and national levels. The following additional guidelines are suggested in this regard:

"(a) At the national level, the co-ordinating committees for the International Youth Year should be established as soon as possible. Such committees, in addition to serving as the focal points of national action for the International Youth Year and maintaining liaison with the United Nations regarding the programme for the Year, should have the responsibility for strengthening the activities related to the channels of communication;

"(b) At the regional level, each regional commission should set up a regional co-ordinating committee for the International Youth Year to co-ordinate activities related to the Year and enhance channels of communication, at both the regional and national levels;

"(c) At the global level, co-operation between the United Nations system and international youth and youth-related organizations, as well as among those organizations, should be strengthened. In this connection, Governments should be encouraged to give voluntary assistance to the Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations. Other international non-governmental organizations should be urged to support the implementation of the programme of measures and activities for the International Youth Year and to take initiatives to this effect at national and regional levels;

"(d) Governments and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to provide material and identify channels of distribution for the Youth Information Bulletin;

"(e) The Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), in close co-operation with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, could establish contacts with young people to advise it on the production and circulation of United Nations publications which will be of interest to youth, with special emphasis on the activities relating to the International Youth Year." 10/

At its thirty-sixth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 36/17:

(a) Adopted "Additional guidelines for the improvement of the channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations" in an annex to that resolution;

(b) Requested Member States, specialized agencies and other inter-governmental organizations to implement those additional guidelines, together with the guidelines adopted in General Assembly resolution 32/135, in co-operation with youth organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and with other youth organizations concerned;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to report to the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the guidelines.

In his 1982 report (A/37/401), the Secretary-General discussed activities carried out in compliance with the guidelines by the United Nations, its specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and educational institutions. It was noted, however, that while there was an increase in the interest of young people and youth organizations in the work of the United Nations system, the desired two-way flow of information between the United Nations and youth needed to be developed further. Although young people were actively promoting United Nations activities, opportunities for their contribution to the conceptual stage of United Nations programmes should be explored further.

He concluded that:

"... information disseminated all over the world on the United Nations, three decades after its founding, does not seem to have fully achieved its target in terms of generating among young people awareness concerning the work of the Organization.

"An analysis of the present status of communication shows a lack of balance between endeavours of the United Nations to reach out to young people and the actual feedback from youth. The gap could be filled by encouraging young people to act as disseminators of and contributors to the formulation of United Nations policies and programmes directed to youth.

"... the International Youth Year ... also provides Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, and indirectly youth and youth organizations as well as the public at large, with an opportunity of strengthening and improving the existing channels of communication in order to bring about widespread awareness concerning youth issues." 11/

In its resolution 37/50, the General Assembly:

(a) Repeated its earlier calls for further implementation of the guidelines adopted in General Assembly resolution 32/135 and the additional guidelines adopted in its resolution 36/17;

(b) Requested the Secretary-General to give special attention to developing additional channels of communication through such means as the mass media and educational institutions;

(c) Invited youth and youth organizations to act as disseminators of and contributors to the formulation of United Nations policies and programmes directed to youth;

(d) Requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session on the implementation of the guidelines and additional guidelines and to include information on measures being taken to strengthen the channels of communication.

In his 1983 report (A/38/339), the Secretary-General reported that channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations had been strengthened as a result of the preparations for the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace. Of the many world-wide activities, the report placed particular emphasis on the role of the national co-ordinating committees for the International Youth Year:

"... Generally, these are high-level committees, composed of representatives of interested ministries and youth organizations. A few are of a non-governmental nature, but have been designated by the appropriate national authorities.

"These national mechanisms play an important role, inter alia, in publicizing the goals and objectives of the International Youth Year and the work of the United Nations among young people at the grass-roots level. This task is undertaken in co-operation with domestic information networks through a wide range of activities including radio and television programmes, newspaper articles, film presentations, exhibitions, lectures, conferences and public rallies. A number of national co-ordinating committees have started issuing newsletters that generate awareness of the work of the United Nations in the field of youth." 12/

He concluded that:

"(a) Governments and government agencies and organizations could assign higher priority to expediting the redistribution of or taking action on information or substantive materials received from the United Nations on the subject of youth. The political will of national authorities is therefore of paramount importance;

"(b) Non-governmental organizations interested in youth, including those at the national and local levels, could make increased efforts to bring information about United Nations youth activities to their membership at the grass-roots level. They should co-ordinate such activities with other interested parties to maximize the efficiency of this process;

"(c) Mass media representatives should be encouraged to devote greater attention to publicity on United Nations activities at all levels. Efforts should also be made to use mass media to improve the image of youth in society and to promote their positive contribution to the development of their countries;

"(d) The role of the family in the education of young people should be strengthened. Parents that are well-informed about the work of the United Nations can serve as disseminators of United Nations information among their young children. Governments and all concerned organizations may wish to consider developing appropriate programmes aimed at heightening public awareness of the crucial role that families have as the principal informal educators of young people; families can act as spokesmen for bringing forward the views and aspirations of their young members into the mainstream of social discussion." 13/

In its resolution 38/26, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary General, as well as of the inter-agency co-operative efforts to promote and strengthen channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations within the context of the International Youth Year, and:

(a) Requested the Secretary-General to continue to give full co-operation and support to inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination in promotional and information activities within the context of the International Youth Year;

(b) Called upon Member States, specialized agencies and other inter-governmental organizations, in co-operation with youth and with youth organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and other youth organizations concerned, to continue to promote actively the full and effective implementation of the guidelines and additional guidelines adopted by the General Assembly in its resolutions 32/135 and 36/17, in particular through informing young people of relevant policies and programmes and encouraging them to participate in the preparation and implementation of those policies and programmes;

(c) Requested the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year at its third session to monitor and evaluate the measures taken with respect to the implementation of the guidelines on the basis of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General and other relevant information provided to it, and to make recommendations for the full and effective implementation and the further elaboration of the guidelines as an integral part of the preparation for, celebration of and follow-up to the International Youth Year;

(d) Decided to review at its thirty-ninth session the question of the channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations on the basis of the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year.

Two specific considerations

Some observations are made below concerning (a) the scope of the channels of communication with youth and youth organizations; (b) the progress reports of the Secretary-General.

The scope of the channels of communication still has to be clarified to establish whether they are limited to the United Nations Secretariat, including subsidiary bodies and other bodies that are not autonomous, or whether they are intended to cover the United Nations system as a whole, including the specialized agencies. Strictly speaking, the involvement of the specialized agencies is a matter for their own decision, since they are largely autonomous bodies. In practice, some specialized agencies have been involved in communication channels. The General Assembly, in its resolutions on this issue has:

(a) Asked the Secretary-General "to co-ordinate activities of the United Nations system in which youth may participate" (resolution 3022 (XXVII));

(b) Invited the Secretary-General to report on progress achieved by the specialized agencies in the implementation of the guidelines with specific, action-oriented recommendations (resolution 33/6), with reference on occasion (resolution 36/17) to the contribution that a specific specialized agency (UNESCO) can make.

Furthermore, most young people and youth organizations see the United Nations system in monolithic terms, especially in the context of their aspirations to co-operate with its work. They have little knowledge of the precise operational responsibilities of a specific United Nations body, or of the different administrative or legislative procedures of each body, and when

they realize these are crucial in determining the real possibilities for participation and co-operation, such potential young partners of the United Nations system can be rapidly alienated. Young people seek effective channels of communication that operate throughout the United Nations system, or at least those major United Nations bodies handling issues of interest to them.

One of the results of the regular discussion of channels of communication by the General Assembly has been the progress reports of the Secretary-General. Initially, the reports covered the actions of the United Nations itself, especially the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the regional commissions, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), and the international youth organizations in New York and Geneva. Since 1980, however, the reports have covered the specialized agencies and many other United Nations bodies, as well as individual national, regional and international youth organizations, and research institutes on youth problems.

C. Evaluation of existing channels of communication

In 1983, within the framework of its preparations for the International Youth Year, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs undertook a study of on-going efforts to improve channels of communication. The main basis for this study was a questionnaire, which was sent to the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, as well as a range of national, regional and international youth organizations.

In addition, on 4 March 1983, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 37/50, a note verbale from the Secretary-General was addressed to all Member States, seeking their additional suggestions for the further development of the guidelines for channels of communication already adopted by the General Assembly. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs then sent a circular letter, dated 8 April 1983, to all resident representatives requesting their assistance in obtaining this information.

All communications received in response to the questionnaire and note verbale fully supported the need to strengthen and improve the channels of communication between the United Nations system and youth, especially in the context of the International Youth Year. The relationship between the full implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions on channels of communication and the success of the International Youth Year was stressed by several Governments and other respondents, in the hope that the International Youth Year would permit the development of long-term and representative channels of communication at national, regional and international levels.

A number of Governments emphasized the role of young people in relation to the themes of the International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace. The universal role of youth in questions of peace and development was underlined by one Government. Another Government cited the amazing ability of youth for understanding the situation of their contemporaries in other countries, and for taking a stand to support peace and measures to safeguard it, such as disarmament campaigns. Young people no longer wanted to participate by proxy, but were trying to play a constructive role in building a world that would match the ideals of the United Nations. Their increasing international awareness, their struggle against racial discrimination, their concern for the development of the third world and for the equality of the sexes were all

indicators of the necessity for young persons to be made active participants rather than passive observers in meetings convened to discuss their role in achieving the objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in the national development process of their respective countries.

A number of replies referred to the need for channels of communication to be genuinely reciprocal, affording possibilities for generating effective feedback on proposals before decisions were made.

Respondents from international youth organizations indicated that they made major efforts to consult their national affiliates on issues under discussion in different parts of the United Nations system. However, quite often, they were not given enough time to secure substantial inputs or to arrange for qualified representation, thus hindering meaningful participation in studies or consultations carried out by the United Nations.

It was also felt that the United Nations system needed to take more account of the fact that most youth organizations had very limited sources and that their priorities varied greatly.

Youth organizations often faced difficulties in effectively using the material issued by the United Nations system. One respondent stated that:

"... the flow of paper is excessive. Young people are turned off by the vast flood of minutes, press releases and summaries that emanate from the United Nations ... each time we have suggested anything to a United Nations agency, we get more paper in the mail. Some of the materials are good (we handle them on a selective basis), but it's heavy, too much and often not suitable to involve young people".

The need for specific information materials, which youth organizations could circulate directly or summarize and reproduce in their own publications, was felt to be a priority.

In specifying the contribution they made to the work of the United Nations system, youth organizations revealed a diversity of orientations, approaches and capacities. Their contributions included:

Promotion of the ideals of the United Nations through local and national actions;

Observance of United Nations days, weeks, years, decades;

Organization of non-formal information and education programmes about the work of the United Nations system, and about issues such as disarmament, environmental protection, human rights;

Provision of experts and other technical assistance to development projects, especially in developing countries;

Organization of seminars and conferences at local, national, regional and international levels on multiple United Nations-related themes;

Printing of occasional publications, as well as articles in their own periodicals, on United Nations-related themes;

Field-level co-operation with the United Nations system in many areas, such as literacy, youth leadership training, refugees, community development;

Participation in conferences and expert meetings organized by the United Nations system;

Fund-raising campaigns for development projects.

Different responses were received from national and international youth organizations regarding the steps undertaken by youth organizations to implement the guidelines for the improvement of channels of communication, especially in the context of the International Youth Year. Few of the national youth organizations that responded seemed to have much understanding of the issues involved, beyond their desire to be involved in the International Youth Year (some organizations had clearly not seen the guidelines). The international youth organizations referred to their efforts as follows:

(a) To strengthen their involvement in existing channels of communication, such as GIM and the UNESCO Collective Consultation;

(b) To co-operate with other non-governmental organizations, bilaterally and through groups of non-governmental organizations linked to different United Nations bodies;

(c) To intensify both communication and other activities in the context of the International Youth Year.

III. OVERVIEW

A. National channels of communication

As Member States recognized when they drew up the priorities for the International Youth Year, a clear priority should be given to developing youth participation, including effective channels of communication between young people and youth organizations and the United Nations system at the national and local level "... to address and deal with the specific needs and aspirations of youth wherever those needs and aspirations are expressed". 14/

Local and national levels are directly relevant to millions of young people, who constitute the majority of humanity, especially in developing countries. Being largely unorganized and often living in rural areas, young people at present have no access to decision-making processes at any level and, at best, only a minimal opportunity to participate meaningfully in national development or international co-operation. Even within certain existing limitations, the United Nations system can do much to advise Member States on appropriate measures to increase youth participation and to develop the necessary supporting conditions and structures.

For channels of communication between the United Nations system and youth and youth organizations at the national level to be effective, the diversity of conditions and situations in which those channels would function must be taken into account. These include:

- (a) The diversity of cultures and political systems;
- (b) The diversity of youth-related structures, or the complete lack of them, in countries with different levels of development or varying traditions of youth work and organization;
- (c) The variety of orientations, social as well as political, among youth organizations;
- (d) The varying operational capacities of youth organizations;
- (e) The different relations between youth organizations and governmental authorities.

All countries have a number of individual youth-run or youth-serving organizations, covering a range of political, religious, social and cultural interests. The ties of these organizations to their governmental authorities differ: they may be close and regular, occasional and ad hoc on specific issues, non-existent, or even oppositional. Some of these youth organizations may also have relations with the body or bodies of the United Nations system represented in their country. These relations, in turn, may be close and continual, particularly if the youth organization concerned is, for example, the executing agency for a United Nations project; more likely they remain ad hoc and concentrate on public information activities about the work of the United Nations. Few of these youth organizations have any direct relationship with the United Nations system at the international level except, possibly, for the occasional participation of a representative in a youth-related meeting organized by the United Nations or one of its bodies or agencies.

In some countries, youth-run or youth-serving organizations may be affiliated to regional or international youth organizations serving the same purpose, which may themselves have regular or ad hoc relations with the United

Nations system. In such cases, some communications may be passed on or filtered through the larger organization to reach the national level.

In an increasing number of countries, individual youth organizations are part of a single national youth structure (such as a national youth council), sometimes specifically in the field of international relations, which may have some specified relations with the Government, and other, more ad hoc relations with bodies of the United Nations system represented in the country. In some cases, these national youth structures are affiliated to a regional or international youth organization that has relations with the United Nations system.

In any event, the number and pattern of the institutional partners with which the United Nations has developed channels of communication at the national level is neither large nor complex.

In response to the note verbale of the Secretary-General, a number of Governments outlined their own preparations and plans for the International Youth Year, or reviewed their regular structures and on-going activities related to youth needs and programmes.

One Government recommended the increased participation of broadly representative youth delegates in governmental delegations to the General Assembly. Another Government felt that more direct and active participation could be achieved through regional seminars and conferences involving young people and organized under the auspices of the United Nations as well as through other local activities, such as exhibitions prepared by young people.

Several Governments raised questions about how the flow of information between national youth organizations and the United Nations system, as well as the access of young people to the work of the United Nations system at national and international levels, might be improved. Some felt that existing channels, such as the Youth Information Bulletin, should be improved, to make their content and format more relevant to the interests of a wider sector of young people. Other Governments considered it essential that national youth organizations should have as direct an access as possible to the United Nations system, at both national and international levels.

The question of co-ordination and centralization was also considered important. Some Governments believed that there should be a single channel through which the United Nations system might communicate with the community of youth organizations in any country, as well as a liaison officer or unit within the Government and within the local United Nations office, especially for the International Youth Year and follow-up youth work. One Government urged that there be more direct contacts, on a bilateral basis, between both youth organizations and Governments concerning plans and activities for the International Youth Year. Another Government, in regarding the General Assembly resolutions adopted so far as a first step in establishing adequate channels of communication, stressed the importance of enabling "all national, regional and international organizations concerned to co-operate on an equal footing with relevant departments in the United Nations system", thus providing "further democratization of the relationship between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations".

A number of United Nations bodies and agencies, in their replies, referred to their plans to involve young people to a larger extent in various field projects, such as literacy, nutrition, health care, and non-formal education, especially in the context of the International Youth Year. UNICEF,

in particular, has elaborated comprehensive guidelines for its field staff emphasizing youth participation in specific projects, including "youth-to-youth" and "youth-in-service-to-children" approaches. Regional commissions have also involved representatives of both Governments and national youth organizations in regional meetings to prepare plans of action for the International Youth Year, and some commissions are publishing evaluations and studies on youth movements and specific experience in youth participation.

On the basis of the replies of national youth organizations concerning the need for improved and strengthened links with the United Nations system, the basic problem seems to be that of access. Only if national youth organizations obtain the information they need about the work of the United Nations system in a useful form can they judge how they can co-operate with the programmes of the United Nations system and participate in policy formulation.

As for strengthening the existing channels of communication, the replies of national youth organizations stressed the need for:

More direct contacts;

Representative structures of youth at local and national levels;

More frequent participation in meetings organized by the United Nations system;

Publications that were more relevant and attractive to young people;

Financial assistance for national-level youth programmes, and for youth representatives attending regional or international meetings;

A regular newsletter.

B. Regional channels of communication

The role of youth organizations at the regional level and their relations with the United Nations system are largely an extension of their national role outlined above. Individual national youth organizations or the national youth structure may have relations with the regional commission through their respective Governments or the local United Nations office. In addition, some individual national youth organizations or structures are affiliated to a regional youth structure connected to a regional commission.

In recent years the United Nations system has tended to accord more importance and responsibilities to the regional commissions. While it is too early to assess the impact of this process on the involvement of the commissions in youth policy and programming, it is evident that the approaches and results differ in each region.

In particular, in the regions of Africa, Western Asia, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, there are few well-established and endogenous regional youth or student organizations. Many of those that do exist constantly have to confront various obstacles at the regional level or financial and practical constraints. As for North America and Europe, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has only economic and no social functions, and therefore is not involved in youth policy and programmes. However, the

numerous national and regional, or Pan-European youth and student organizations frequently collaborate with each other and with various regional inter-governmental bodies that have their own youth structures.

In response to the Secretary-General's note verbale of 4 March 1983, few Governments had much to report, although the question of channels of communication at the regional level is an important part of the guidelines for the improvement of channels of communication. Increased possibilities for youth representatives to participate in regional meetings on youth-related and other issues organized by the United Nations system were requested, as well as more frequent contacts and exchanges among regional youth organizations.

Three regional commissions reported on their activities. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) -- which, in many respects, has done the most to promote youth participation at the regional level and in close collaboration with regional youth organizations -- has organized in recent years several consultations on youth policies and programmes. ESCAP also convenes regional interagency meetings on youth concerns. Both ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have convened regional meetings of non-governmental organizations in connection with the International Youth Year. All regional commissions have organized regional meetings devoted to the International Youth Year, except for the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); the meeting for the European region was organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs.

C. International channels of communication

The role of youth organizations at the international level and their relations with the United Nations system are a further extension of their roles at the national and regional levels. Relationships are long established at this level, however, because the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations (Article 71), and similar provisions of other United Nations bodies and agencies, specify that arrangements for consultation should, for the most part, be made with international non-governmental organizations. As a result, a range of individual international youth and student organizations are in consultative status with the United Nations system at the global level. Many of these organizations also participate in GIM and the UNESCO Collective Consultation, each of which constitutes a collective channel of communication of a regular nature with some United Nations bodies, such as the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and UNESCO, and of an ad hoc nature with other United Nations bodies, such as ILO, UNICEF and UNV.

Since these interactions are conducted at the international level, their focus is primarily on policy formulation (communicating and commenting on proposals and developments within United Nations legislative bodies relating to youth) and organizing international seminars and conferences on themes related to the work of the United Nations. An ad hoc committee of international youth and student organizations assisted in the preparations for the World Assembly of Youth in 1970. A few international youth-related organizations with substantial operational capacities are also involved in field-level co-operation with the United Nations system.

Several Governments emphasized the importance of intensifying contacts and exchanges among youth organizations at the international level for developing international understanding and co-operation. The need for permanent consultative machinery at the international level between the United Nations and youth organizations re resentin all re ions of the world was

recognized, and several Governments referred specifically and positively to GIM, which has been officially recognized by the United Nations as a major channel of communication.

The importance of GIM was also referred to by several United Nations bodies, as was the UNESCO Collective Consultation. In order to strengthen existing channels of communication with the United Nations, UNESCO suggested that a regular, official channel of communication be instituted, similar to its own annual Collective Consultation.

Youth organizations, at all levels, offered various opinions concerning existing channels and suggestions for their improvement. Although some organizations were satisfied with the existing channels, most felt that there was room for improvement, especially as regards providing youth representatives with more direct and frequent access to the policy formulation and programme preparation processes within the United Nations system. The need was recognized for lively, attractive public information material, especially for the International Youth Year, that was geared to demand.

1. Consultative status

When the United Nations was founded, the only formal relationship available to non-governmental organizations was that of consultative status - later divided into three categories - with the Economic and Social Council. The specialized agencies and newer United Nations bodies initiated similar arrangements. Consultative status was normally reserved for international non-governmental organizations, and some agencies paid increasing attention to the geographical representativeness of non-governmental member organizations. Over time, however, ad hoc arrangements were instituted by some bodies (the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, established jointly by UNDP and the Division for Economic and Social Information), which have developed co-operation with national as well as international non-governmental organizations, including contractual arrangements for specific projects. Other United Nations bodies, like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), have been more flexible in their choice of non-governmental organization partners, and have selected probably as many national as international non-governmental organizations; and even the Economic and Social Council, over the years, has recognized some national non-governmental organizations.

Consultative status, in whatever form, provides a non-governmental organization with access to information from the United Nations system about its meetings, work, decisions etc. This includes access to the secretariats of the United Nations bodies, and with access to policy formulation and programme preparation processes, including the right to attend meetings as observers with the right to speak or to circulate a written text (these rights vary according to the body and are granted at the discretion of the meeting). Most important of all, and implicit in the above but only used effectively by a small number of non-governmental organizations, is their access to the government delegates who are full participants in United Nations meetings.

Currently there are some 50 youth-run or youth-related non-governmental organizations among those in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; among the community of non-governmental organizations at UNESCO, some 55 are youth-run or youth-serving non-governmental organizations. All these non-governmental organizations are regional or international.

In 1969, the Secretary-General, analysing the use of consultative status by non-governmental youth organizations, characterized the existing arrangement as "inadequate", "deficient", "largely formalistic", and "not ... used vigorously" by either the United Nations or by youth organizations. ^{15/} Another limitation of consultative status is that non-governmental organizations can only participate fully with the United Nations on issues within the purview of the Economic and Social Council. This excludes a number of important issues, such as decolonization, disarmament and security, action against apartheid, on which many non-governmental organizations have both views and programmes.

Consequently, the formal use of consultative relations within different bodies of the United Nations system by youth organizations is quite limited, and the main focus of attention at the international level is on channels such as GIM, which provides more specific access even if its mandate is almost exclusively limited to current youth issues. In the wider non-governmental organization community (through the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations) and in the United Nations itself, ways of improving the present arrangement are being discussed.

2. Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations

The Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations (GIM) was initiated in 1967 by the United Nations Inter-Agency Youth Liaison Officer in Geneva, under the auspices of the Division of Social Affairs, though it adopted its present name only in 1974. Meeting usually three times a year, GIM has become a regular and - since 1981 - formally-recognized channel of communication between the United Nations system and youth organizations at the international level, currently involving representatives of some 60 regional and international youth-run and youth-serving non-governmental organizations. In 1983 it obtained consultative status in its own right with the Economic and Social Council and attempted to limit formal procedures. Its meetings are attended by many agencies and bodies of the United Nations, especially when their concerns are reflected on the agenda. Since its inception GIM has been serviced by the Division of Social Affairs and, later, by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, without any substantial allocation of resources from the regular United Nations budget. On occasion, other United Nations agencies have either acted as host to or assisted specific meetings, and some Governments have funded the participation of representatives from regional youth and student organizations in developing countries.

The primary function of GIM is to serve as an international platform for youth organizations to share and exchange information and views and as a two-way channel for information exchange between the United Nations system and international non-governmental organizations. It has helped international non-governmental youth organizations to co-ordinate youth matters under discussion within United Nations bodies. GIM has also been involved in the organization of a number of major international youth or student meetings on themes related to the work of the United Nations.*

*1970, World Assembly of Youth; 1971, Consultation on Youth and the Human Environment; 1974, International Youth Population Conference; 1976, International Forum on Youth Unemployment; 1978, Workshop on Youth and Housing, delegation to the Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament; 1981, Seminar on channels of communication with the United Nations system; 1981, 1982, 1984, participation as observer in the three sessions of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year; Participation D

Furthermore, in connection with its regular meetings, GIM has organized smaller workshops on many issues of concern to its participating organizations, and has consistently followed and contributed to discussions in the United Nations on channels of communication between youth and the United Nations system. At present, GIM is carrying out a comprehensive survey among its participating organizations on the future direction of its collective work as well as reviewing its rules, procedures and constitution.

Over time, GIM has tried to ensure the participation of regional youth and student organizations in its work, especially those from the third world. The question of the participation of national youth and student organizations in its work is still unresolved. At its forty-sixth session, in May 1980, GIM adopted criteria stating that broadly composed national youth organizations without international affiliation were invited to contribute to the work of GIM relating to their specific interest in the United Nations system. In practice, representatives of specific national youth organizations that have expressed an interest in participating in a specific session of GIM (for example, to inform GIM about a recent discussion in the General Assembly on youth matters at which they were part of their Government delegation) and that have the means to do so, are invited to attend, but there is no regular procedure for their participation.

Finally, the contribution of GIM to the programmes of the United Nations system has been rather uneven, partly because GIM is dependent on external funding, which is usually, as in the case of the International Youth Population Conference in 1974, provided by certain Governments and that part of the United Nations system most affected by the activity proposed. Another limitation is the fact that however committed interested international non-governmental youth organizations may be in co-operation within the framework of the GIM, they do not have the staff, time or other resources to take on additional commitments.

D. Public information and education activities

A number of replies to the questionnaire that were received from both Governments and youth organizations referred to different public information and education activities concerning work of the United Nations system on subjects of interest to youth or directed to young people. It was generally recognized that:

(a) Public information and education were important areas of work, where much needed to be done, especially at the national level;

(b) The United Nations system, as well as youth organizations, needed to intensify and improve public information and education activities;

(c) The United Nations system should associate youth organizations more closely with the preparation of youth-related materials, especially during the International Youth Year.

Various youth organizations, at all levels, indicated that while they found some of the public information issued by the United Nations useful, the flow was often excessive (so that it was difficult to make a selection), or the information was too much oriented to a specific agency, or it was in a format or used a terminology that was inappropriate for young people. One youth organization stated:

"The feedback tells us that if the information is practical ... relevant, low-cost resource material, or [if it tells us] how to approach the local United Nations office, it is well received. If it is abstract and/or very expensive, it is ignored or even resented."

Other organizations referred to the need for the United Nations to assist in the translation of official texts, and other materials emanating from the United Nations, into languages other than the official languages of the United Nations.

It was noted that, increasingly, national youth organizations regularly conducted major informational and educational programmes on the work of the United Nations system, and not only on specifically youth-related issues.

IV. EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO IDENTIFY MEASURES FOR STRENGTHENING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND YOUTH AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

An Expert Group Meeting to Identify Measures for Strengthening Channels of Communication between the United Nations and Youth and Youth Organizations, organized by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, was held at Vienna from 9 to 13 January 1984. It was attended by nine experts in their personal capacity and by observers from non-governmental organizations, who were invited to participate in a one-day open discussion.

The experts exchanged views* and reviewed the existing guidelines on channels of communication, as established in General Assembly resolutions 32/135 and 36/17, annex, as well as the extent to which they had been implemented.

A. Policy context of channels of communication

The experts suggested areas in which they felt immediate action could be taken. In making their proposals, the experts recognized a certain policy context in which channels of communication would function, which is described below.

Channels of communication do not begin and end with the observance of the International Youth Year, but encompass the entire spectrum of youth policy in which the United Nations has an interest. Youth cannot be defined solely as agents of the future, or inheritors of the world, but must be identified as a strong and vital element of today's society. Thus, channels of communication are not merely tools for preparing young people for adult life, but instruments for ensuring the on-going involvement and participation of youth. Channels of communication are, therefore, not a goal in themselves, but a means.

The experts took into account the diversity of programmes and mechanisms within the United Nations system that were devoted to youth matters, as well as the complicated relationships existing between individual Governments and many non-governmental youth organizations.

Many different types of information had to be communicated between the United Nations and many different kinds of audiences. Effective channels must therefore first look at the question of what the users were trying to say, to whom, and for what purpose; secondly, they must be able to encourage a two-way flow of information.

Previous proposals for guidelines had paid insufficient attention to both formal and non-formal systems of education. Education was viewed as a life-long process, affected by various social and community institutions, that might be developed into an effective channel of communication. The experts recognized the role of the family or clan, in particular. In order to utilize effectively some of the potential channels, special measures, for example, to increase the levels of literacy, should be undertaken.

*Excerpts from the statements of individual experts are presented in an annex to the present document.

The experts agreed that channels of communication should be regularly evaluated but considered that this would require the collection of much more quantitative and qualitative information than had been the case so far. The Secretariat pointed out that no provision had been made in the General Assembly resolutions concerning guidelines for channels of communication for evaluating the extent of their implementation or of compliance with the guidelines. It was difficult, therefore, to measure the effectiveness of the guidelines, or the progress achieved as a result of their elaboration. The discussions of the expert group meeting, and the following recommendations it made or endorsed might, therefore, encourage such an evaluation.

B. Recommendations

1. Action for immediate implementation

The experts maintained that channels of communication should be focused on a limited number of specific areas of concern to young people, while appreciating that communications between the United Nations and youth were bound to be complex, because of the many structural intricacies involved. In exploiting different channels of communication various approaches should be employed for different categories of young people, especially disadvantaged young people, that were appropriate to their social situation. In order to achieve the maximum impact, those specific areas of concern would become the themes upon which communication could be concentrated. Priority areas of concern were as follows: peace and international understanding; development; employment; environment; culture and leisure.

As a matter of priority, tasks should be undertaken in the following areas: collective communication between the United Nations and groups of youth organizations; the Youth Information Bulletin; the use of mass media; and the expansion of youth representation and involvement in national delegations to the General Assembly and to other relevant United Nations meetings.

Throughout the meeting, the development of collective channels of communication between the United Nations and youth organizations was emphasized. In particular, consideration was given to improving collective channels of communication at both regional and international levels. In the light of the additional guidelines for improving channels of communication, as elaborated in General Assembly resolution 36/17, annex, and the findings of the experts, GIM was seen as a growing collective channel. At the same time, and despite recent improvements, its work in collectively representing the opinions of youth organizations to the United Nations and in channelling information from the United Nations to youth must be further encouraged. The following specific recommendations concerning GIM were made:

(a) Funding should be secured for the improvement of representation of youth organizations from developing countries;

(b) A satisfactory solution should be found to the technical problems of GIM;

(c) Channels of communication should be developed or strengthened between GIM and the various United Nations bodies and specialized agencies.

After considering the possibilities of printed communication between the United Nations and different users of information, the following proposals

were made concerning the immediate improvement of the Youth Information Bulletin: the development of a broader range of information from the point of view of geographical representation, subject-matter and sources of information.

Since an important means of improving knowledge about the United Nations among organized and unorganized youth was the increased use of the mass media and new communication technologies, the experts recommended that:

(a) Possibilities should be examined for better utilization, by the United Nations and by individual Governments, of the mass media (for example, the press, television and radio) for disseminating general information about the goals and work of the United Nations system, in particular in fields of interest to youth, including the International Youth Year;

(b) The United Nations should prepare audio-visual programmes, with special emphasis on films, video and cassettes, for use in formal and non-formal systems of education, as well as by youth organizations.

The experts recognized that youth representation in national delegations was part of an educational process. To increase its effect as a channel of communication, the following considerations should be taken into account:

(a) Governments should consult with youth organizations to ensure that their views were adequately reflected;

(b) Youth representatives should be trained, and briefed about the United Nations system and its youth policies, before they participated in the national delegation;

(c) Youth representatives should play an active role in the national delegation during the General Assembly and other meetings;

(d) The experiences of youth delegates should be communicated to young people nation-wide as part of an educational programme about the United Nations. Media reports, newspaper articles, radio programmes were additional ways of communicating experience and should be part of national educational programmes.

2. Action to meet long-term goals

The experts made recommendations on the guidelines for channels of communication, which they reviewed at national, regional and international levels. The present publication gives the recommendations of the participants for strengthening channels of communication at each level, followed by the recommendations of a consultant that were endorsed by the experts, but which do not fall within the subject areas established by the General Assembly in the guidelines.

At the national level the experts recommended that:

(a) The importance of focal points, or national co-ordinating committees, should be stressed, and their establishment or reinforcement encouraged. Efforts should be made to ensure strong and active youth involvement and that youth interests were represented;

(b) UNDP resident representatives should help to disseminate information about United Nations activities to national youth organizations and provide feedback from them to the United Nations system; resident representatives

should also provide assistance, where possible, in establishing or strengthening national co-ordinating committees for the International Youth Year;

(c) National co-ordinating committees should continue their work after 1985;

(d) UNDP should be encouraged to disseminate information about the existence of advisory services for youth, especially in connection with the International Youth Year;

(e) United Nations bodies and specialized agencies should review their experience of involving young people in national-level development projects with a view to increasing youth participation, encourage links with Governments and national youth organizations and identify liaison officers for youth;

(f) The Department of Public Information should encourage national-level communication with young people by:

- (i) Meeting with successful producers of youth publications to explore the possibilities of joint productions;
- (ii) Making publications more theme- or topic-oriented to appeal more to young people;
- (iii) Involving youth in all the production phases of United Nations materials;
- (iv) Emphasizing alternatives to print media, so that illiterate young people might also receive information;
- (v) Encouraging JUNIC to support young journalists and those working with youth-related media.

At the regional level, the experts recommended that:

(a) Units of the regional commissions responsible for youth policy and programming should be strengthened;

(b) Regional commissions should maintain active and continuous contacts with Governments, national and regional offices of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and with youth organizations to help Governments establish or strengthen national policies for youth;

(c) Regional commissions should develop and maintain a mechanism for consultation with national- and regional-level non-governmental youth organizations, as well as with international non-governmental youth organizations that have regional programmes;

(d) Regional commissions should encourage and support regional-level co-ordination among the various offices of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies.

At the international level, the experts recommended that:

(a) The Department of Public Information should publish a catalogue of films and media material, available through the United Nations system, that would be of interest to youth;

(b) The Department of Public Information should invite young people with skills and an interest in the media to take part in its activities, for example, through internships;

(c) Internships should be encouraged, and the financial aspects of sponsoring young interns should be investigated to diversify and broaden recruitment. Account should be taken of such factors as geographical representation;

(d) Consultative status for youth organizations should be reviewed and strengthened, and they should be encouraged to take a more active role in the work of the United Nations system. The necessity for an organization to obtain consultative status should not hinder communication with youth, however.

(e) In preparing textbooks and other materials for use in schools, each United Nations agency should collaborate closely with teachers' organizations, curriculum development institutes, and other bodies experienced in education. To increase the effectiveness of their international education activities, all United Nations agencies concerned should promote the development of techniques to evaluate the educational materials they produced.

The following recommendations of a consultant were endorsed by the experts. Most of the recommendations related to the International Youth Year and were already included in the Specific Programme of Measures and Activities to be undertaken prior to and during the International Youth Year (A/36/215, annex).

At the national level, the consultant had recommended that:

(a) Each Government not already doing so should give the highest priority to the suggestions contained in the Specific Programme of Measures and Activities to be undertaken prior to and during the International Youth Year, and especially to the preparation of an "Agenda for National Action" related to specific youth needs;

(b) Prior to and during the International Youth Year, consideration should be given at the national level to the following questions:

- (i) Improving the existing channels of communication so that such channels might be made more effective and more representative;
- (ii) Developing documentation centres focusing on youth needs and activities;
- (iii) Promoting the exchange of experience among young people, youth leaders and youth organizations, including the exchange of people as well as of information material;

(c) All United Nations agencies and bodies concerned should publish reports of specific examples of youth participation in development at the local and national levels, indicating the problems encountered as well as the results achieved.

At the regional level the consultant had recommended that:

(a) Regional commissions in their regions, and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs elsewhere, should make the proposals and the

results of the 1983 regional meetings on the International Youth Year as widely known as possible, especially among youth organizations;

(b) Regional directories of youth/student/youth-serving organizations in each country should be prepared (or updated) to facilitate contacts and exchanges both within and among regions.

At the international level the consultant had recommended that:

(a) The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs should resume publication, especially in the context of the International Youth Year of:

- (i) Regional and international directories of youth organizations;
- (ii) An annotated and updated list of programmes of youth research centres;
- (iii) An updated compilation of youth-related resolutions adopted by the legislative organs of the United Nations system.

(b) The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs should explore the possibility either of obtaining technical or financial assistance from other United Nations agencies or bodies, or of subcontracting or transferring the above tasks to a non-governmental organization or youth research institute. While generally encouraging the activities listed above, several experts questioned the need for a list of programmes of youth research centres, indicating that such information might already be readily available elsewhere, and stressing the need to keep in mind the requirements of the recipients. The importance of encouraging relations between researchers, youth organizations, and the programme of the European Centre for Social Welfare, Training and Research related to the International Youth Year was mentioned;

(c) In addition to regular public information activities, each United Nations agency should give priority, especially during the International Youth Year, to projects that technically or financially assisted youth organizations at all levels to produce their own materials and publications on work on youth-related issues being carried out within the United Nations. Materials produced in non-official languages of the United Nations would be one way of reaching more young people.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, vol. I, Supplement No. 6 (A/36/6).

2/ "Youth, its education in the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, its problems and needs, and its active participation in national development and international co-operation: channels of communication with youth and international youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/8743), para. 18.

3/ General Assembly resolutions 32/135 and 36/17.

4/ General Assembly resolutions 31/132, 32/135, 33/6, 34/163, 35/139, 36/17, 37/50, 38/26 and 39/24.

5/ "Youth, its education in the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, its problems and needs, and its active participation in national development and international co-operation: channels of communication with youth and international youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/8743), para. 12.

6/ Ibid., para. 16.

7/ "Policies and programmes relating to youth: channels of communication with youth and international youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/10275), pp. 18-19.

8/ "Policies and programmes relating to youth: channels of communication with youth and youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/33/261), para. 11(a)-(f).

9/ "Policies and programmes relating to youth: channels of communication with youth and youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/35/503), para. 20.

10/ "Policies and programmes relating to youth: channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/36/427), paras. 29(a)-(e).

11/ "Policies and programmes relating to youth: channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/37/401), paras. 47, 48 and 52.

12/ "Policies and programmes relating to youth: channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/38/339), paras. 4-5.

13/ Ibid., para. 67(a)-(d).

14/ "International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace: report of the Secretary-General" (A/36/215), annex, para. 26(a).

15/ "Youth, its education in the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, its problems and needs, and its active participation in national development and international co-operation: channels of communication with youth and international youth organizations: report of the Secretary-General" (A/8743), paras. 12 and 32.

Annex

EXCERPTS FROM STATEMENTS PRESENTED AT THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO IDENTIFY
MEASURES FOR STRENGTHENING CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN
THE UNITED NATIONS AND YOUTH AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

REGINA AALDERS (the Netherlands):

As a consequence of the economically and socially difficult situation, young people in general, like adults, tend to put more emphasis nowadays on their day-to-day needs, like food, work and education. They tend to be active within the group or association that is very close to them: the family, the school, sports clubs. Young people tend to be active in a different way if, beforehand, the potential results of their actions are clearly given. In discussions on the United Nations, we are confronted with questions like, how do I fit into the work of the United Nations? What does the United Nations do in order to promote world peace? Isn't it just a talk show between Governments? This tendency implies the necessity of making a concrete connection between the work of the United Nations and the day-to-day life, needs and aspirations of young people and youth organizations. Therefore, a more concrete, topic-oriented approach is necessary.

At the same time, the above-mentioned tendency is reflected in governmental policies. Governmental policies in different areas, whether at a bilateral, regional or multilateral level, are dominated by national points of view. This means that national policy gets more priority with respect to international work. International youth work and youth policy should be an integral part of national youth policies and programmes.

Of course, the very first dimension in channels of communication is at the local and national levels: the enhancement and acknowledgement of youth organizations and youth groups by national Governments. The educational system has been involved in setting up United Nations projects in the information field but, what is even more necessary, in areas that are of interest to young people, Governments and the United Nations. How do local and national initiatives fit in with the programmes of the United Nations (e.g. for young women, health services, crime prevention). How could they be set up, organized and seen with a view to the appropriate youth policy?

DAN KAROBIA (Kenya):

In most cases, the obstacles that prevent the easy flow of ideas to the target group (youth, youth organizations and Governments) through the established channels are man-made. At the national, regional and international levels, the human element is an essential factor for effective communication. Close relationship, understanding of the purposes of communication and the role to be played at each level of communication are, of necessity, priority considerations.

General dividends could be realized if the United Nations made more effort to motivate various agencies in its own system at all levels, and reach a common understanding on what role each agency was supposed to play at each level.

At the national level, it is important for the United Nations to recognize that the existing national structures are far from flexible. Political, cultural, personal prejudices and resentments regarding new

ideas, or extra loading of their operational processes, cause strain and, quite often, produce negative reactions. Persuasion and tolerance of the national structure could perhaps be the suitable attitude to adopt. Local initiatives on how to communicate with youth should be encouraged. The approach of the United Nations should be deliberate but not forceful. Possibilities should be explored of the United Nations using national-level agencies willing to penetrate the ranks of both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

PETER KUENSTLER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland):

The development of channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations can be analysed under the following headings:

(a) What message or messages should be communicated?

(b) By whom (i) within the United Nations system?

(ii) among youth and youth organizations?

(c) To whom (i) among youth and youth organizations?

(ii) within the United Nations?

(d) By what means (at which levels, utilizing which media, over which geographical scope)?

(e) How is the effectiveness of communications monitored and evaluated?

At a general level, it can be argued that everything discussed and undertaken by the United Nations should be included. However, for both practical and strategic reasons, it is necessary to be selective. In most cases, the areas and levels of information need to be adapted to different groups and sub-groups (by age, interest, level of literacy, language etc.). In the light of the known interests of youth organizations and young people, and the themes of the International Youth Year, priority could be given to: peace, development, human rights, environment, education, employment.

The question of what messages should be communicated to the United Nations from youth and youth organizations is even more difficult to determine precisely. For the most part the process has been one of reaction, that is, youth organizations have reacted, positively, negatively, or indecisively, to the proposals and decisions of the United Nations system. Young people and youth organizations among others send communications relating to human rights. More rarely, youth organizations have taken some initiative in a "pro-active" way, for example, at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972.

Bearing in mind the limitation of resources, it is all the more important that whatever facilities or services for communication are available should be as effective as possible. Regular monitoring and evaluation is therefore needed. It could best be done on a joint basis, i.e., it should be undertaken by a mixed group of persons from both the United Nations and youth organizations, possibly through GIM. As far as possible, it should be based on consumer surveys, rather than on the opinions of officers of organizations conversant with and active in international affairs: this implies both the collecting of uncensored opinions from young people exposed to United Nations communications and the random surveying of youth to determine to what extent

information about the United Nations reaches them, and to what extent any efforts they have made to communicate with the United Nations have been successful.

K. C. MATHEW (India):

The present two-way channels of communication are not sufficient. A third channel, between the local interested individuals, local youth organizations, state-level co-ordinating committees, national co-ordinating committees, and organizations at various levels has to be developed: this third channel could be called "horizontal communication".

Despite the efforts of the United Nations, the majority of youth and youth organizations in different countries have either not heard about the International Youth Year, or have little idea of its themes, aims and objectives, or its importance. It is the duty of non-governmental organizations and voluntary workers to give wide publicity to the International Youth Year programme throughout the world to all people.

ANDRAS SIMONYI (Hungary):

The notion of youth varies in each country, based on the inequalities in the level of development, historic background and social system. Therefore, the United Nations should not try to find the one and only definition: since there is no one and only definition.

At the same time it is important to define clearly major characteristics that are similar to all societies, disregarding the differences they might have, sometimes even the major ones.

Some of the universal characteristics are as follows:

- (a) Youth is not a separate class, but has important traits of its own;
- (b) Youth is differentiated in itself both in social terms, but also based on the growing differences in values of different age groups. Youth is not only a passive participant in society: in most countries youth is the major source of production, even in developed countries up to 40-50 per cent of the labour force is young;
- (c) It is in the youth age group that the most difficult events in a lifetime occur: choice of a profession, the start of a career, family life, housing problems etc.

Youth represents not only the future, but the present, both of which depend on how far the United Nations can integrate this fact into its everyday work. This is why the two-way channels of communication must be made effective.

Channels of communication between the United Nations and youth should be improved and developed as follows:

- (a) A proper forum should be created for representatives of youth organizations to meet the United Nations regularly. It is important that the United Nations should want the meetings to be a substantial element in formulating not only youth policies, but general policies as well;

(b) Individual international youth organizations related to the United Nations, and through them to national organizations, which serve as an important source of knowledge, should be supported. They are the real agents of information, and the means of establishing two-way communication;

(c) Participation of youth in delegations to United Nations meetings and assemblies is not general and, in most cases, only very formal. But this should not be the decisive question; the real question is whether at the national level real possibilities of representation of interests exist, and whether the views of youth are incorporated in government opinions on youth matters before the United Nations.

The dissemination of information to youth on the efforts of the United Nations cannot be left to the United Nations alone. The United Nations can identify directions and basic information, but the real channel should be the formal and informal media. What kind of efforts are Governments, and primarily, media, doing to make United Nations information available among youth? In most cases national television and news media concentrate on the daily affairs of world political problems. Little coverage is given to the manifold efforts of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in fields that affect many times over the very life of the individual, including youth. Information on youth efforts is even rarer.

The United Nations should make available more information on universal questions such as: peace, disarmament, environment, the effects of modern society, development, hunger. The United Nations should also be the real force behind communicating to younger generations general human values such as: respect, solidarity and knowledge. The most acceptable means to young people should be used, taking into account new and modern forms of communication, such as video.

An important resource of information from and for youth are the already existing possibilities for voluntary participation in the work of different United Nations agencies. These are, however, still very limited in number and the selection of volunteers is at times inappropriate. It is important to ensure the possibilities for participation by different segments of youth from different regions, social systems, political, economic and cultural backgrounds. It is also necessary to provide the necessary financial resources to guarantee the broadness of participation, making it independent of the financial resources of the volunteer.

ANURADHA VITTACHI (Sri Lanka):

Communication is always an important issue, but perhaps it is more important in 1985, the International Youth Year, than in any other year. For the chief issue concerning youth is that they need a voice, and a voice of their own; they are not the children of the International Year of the Child, to be spoken for and looked after as children are.

The question is how can the United Nations help young people find platforms from which they can speak about the concerns in their lives - especially as many of their major anxieties mirror those of the United Nations itself: their concern for peace and disarmament, for example, or for human rights, or for employment.

Positive feedback is vital for the International Youth Year to have real impact. Successful actions carried out in one part of the world (or even in

another part of one's region or country) should be publicized far and fast, so that they can have a multiplier effect. Such information is inspiring, not only because it suggests good ideas, but because it shows that ideas can and have been put into practice, they have touched reality. And, importantly also, they show young people that when they do act and speak, their voices are heard and their actions appreciated. Since young people feel unheard, their words need to be amplified.

One point to be stressed is that materials that are worthwhile need not be dull. Certainly, time, effort and creative energy are required to produce material that is both serious in its analysis and that has a freshness and immediacy of impact that will involve the reader and viewer emphatically. But it is better that the producers of the material should expend blood, sweat and tears on this, than that the audience should be expected to do the slaving in order to extract the message.

VASILE TRANDAFIR (Romania):

Among the most important channels of communication are: maintaining work relations with organizations with consultative status; setting up consultative ad hoc groups on youth; organizing meetings with youth participation; stimulating the exchange of information and documentary materials on youth.

The United Nations could use, to a greater extent, as a channel of communication with youth, several governmental youth organizations, including research centres and institutions, that have recently been expanded, and carried out important surveys and investigations on the situation and options of youth. At the same time, closer co-operation can be achieved with regional student and youth organizations that, during the last years, have contributed to stimulating the exchange of ideas and to the co-operation between youth on different continents in achieving and consolidating their unity of struggle and action for the removal of social anachronisms, for an independent economic development, for democracy and progress.

It would be useful to enlarge the circle of regional and international youth organizations to be consulted about different United Nations programmes; at the same time, the granting of consultative status (categories I and II) to the many regional and international organizations that contribute to promoting the principles of the United Nations could be an efficient way of consulting important categories of youth about their interests and problems. The Geneva Informal Meeting of International Youth Non-Governmental Organizations as well as the similar structure in New York are efficient channels of communication between the United Nations and the youth movement but they are far from exhausting the ways of co-operation, since they include, mostly, only international youth organizations.

Of course, the preparation and celebration of the International Youth Year represents an appropriate framework for identifying new and efficient modalities towards diversifying and enlarging channels of communication between the United Nations system and the youth movement. It would be necessary to convene periodically, under the auspices of the United Nations, a world reunion on youth, dedicated to the vital problems of our age - peace, security, disarmament, the new international economic order, the democratization of inter-states' relations - and taking into account the contribution by the younger generation and its organizations of different political orientations and international affiliations.

To increase the efficiency of the youth-related activities of the United Nations, all the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the field of youth should be co-ordinated after 1985, too, which is why the establishment of a United Nations body on youth issues is necessary. This would offer an institutionalized framework at a superior level for handling within the United Nations system the concerns of the younger generation and also eliminate overlap with other activities, cut down staff and allow a better use of funds currently disseminated among different United Nations agencies.

It would also be of interest to create an international centre for documentation and research on youth, by using, as a transitory measure, the infrastructure already existing within some national research centres.

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