

**Director-General's remarks for International Youth Day,
10 August 2018**

**Professor Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary for Public Service,
Youth and Gender Affairs of the Government of Kenya,
Honorable Kiraitu Murungi, Governor of Meru County,
Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive-Director of UN-Habitat,
Mr. Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UNEP,
Dear youth, Invited guests, Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to welcome you to the United Nations Office at Nairobi for this event to mark International Youth Day.

I would like to thank UN-Habitat and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs for organizing this celebration, as co-chairs of the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. Each year, as decided by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999, Youth Day is celebrated world-wide to bring youth issues to the attention of the international community, and to highlight the crucial role that young women and men play as partners of change.

-2-

With the largest generation of young people the world has ever known, youth today have much to contribute to advancing the UN's goals. This includes implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres attaches great importance to the issue of youth. This is illustrated, among other actions, by his appointment of an Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake.

-3-

The world is increasingly recognizing the critical role of youth. Just over two months ago, the President of the UN General Assembly convened a Youth Dialogue at UN HQ in New York, with high-level representatives, ambassadors and young change-makers.

The aim was to listen to young people, and to hear about their challenges and solutions to some of the most pressing problems facing youth – education, employment, and prevention of radicalization leading to violent extremism, to name a few.

-4-

In spite of the growing recognition of the challenges facing youth, much more needs to be done to address the problems of young people, and to more effectively tap into their power to create a better world for all.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Government of Kenya for its youth empowerment efforts. Examples of Kenya's commitment in this regard include the promotion of free quality education for children, and the

-5-

creation of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund aimed at increasing economic opportunities for, and participation by, Kenyan Youth in nation building.

I wish you, the youth participants, a very successful event focusing on a very important area, “safe spaces for youth”. You need the safe space because you are the future and the future is in your hands.

-6-

I now invite you to view the video message of the Secretary-General, together with his Envoy on Youth, on the occasion of this year's International Youth Day.

Thank you for your attention.

-7-