

Welcome Message at the Kabataan (Youth) Jobs and Alternatives to Migration

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Greetings:

- Secretary Baldoz of the Department of Labor and Employment
 - Chairperson Flores of the National Youth Commission
 - Director-General Villanueva of the Technical Vocational Skills Development Authority
 - Ambassador Domecq of the Embassy of Spain
 - Officials and partners of the MDG F Joint Programme on Youth Employment and Migration
 - Representatives from the government, employers and workers' organizations, civil society, the international community and the media
 - My colleagues from the United Nations Country Team
 - Youth leaders, students and advocates
 - Ladies and gentlemen,
- Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat!

It is a delight to be with you today. All of you are young leaders but you are also important agents of change!

Kabataan: Jobs and Alternatives to Migration, is the International Youth Day celebration in the Philippines.

More than a celebration, this day is an opportunity to encourage all of you, the young people of the Philippines to speak up and take action. You can help address the many challenges faced by the Government and its partners in delivering basic services to everyone and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In fact, many young people are already making great contributions but you can all help to do more.

The United Nations in the Philippines supports the country in keeping the promise of achieving the MDGs by 2015. The clock is on the countdown – we have only 4 years to go!

Everyone including all of you deserves full access – amongst other things - to:

- Decent and productive employment

- Education
- Adequate healthcare including information on HIV
- Financial services, and
- Participation in public life

However, young people are so often among the most vulnerable and get left out. Without being inclusive and ensuring equity the MDGs will not be met.

Whether it is poverty, hunger, lack of access to decent and productive work, poor education, maternal mortality, environmental degradation, or HIV, the impact on young people can also be far greater than on your older counterparts.

The sad truth is poverty affects young people in striking ways. A few weeks ago, I had the chance to meet young people in Bukidnon in Mindanao. Previously, high school students were forced to drop-out of school to work in menial jobs and help support their family. Earnings of their parents were not enough to feed their family or send them to school.

Some did not even have the money to pay for transportation to school.

Kabataan “Alternatives to Migration, Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth”, reached out to these young people. It is a joint programme funded by the Government of Spain and implemented by the Philippine Government and the agencies of the UN Country Team.

The programme supports the country’s initiatives to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

Specifically, it aims to end extreme poverty and hunger and achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.

The young people I met in Bukidnon, told me how the programme had supported their families and the community to keep them in school so that they could learn skills to eventually have much better work opportunities. We need to keep as many young people in school for as long as possible so everyone can enjoy this opportunity.

In his message for the International Youth, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon said, “The international community must continue to work together to expand the horizons of opportunity for young women and men, and answer their legitimate demands for dignity, development and decent work. Failing to invest in our youth is a false economy. Investments in young people will pay great dividends in a better future for all.”

Partnering and investing in the Filipino youth is a key to addressing present challenges. We stand ready to work as one in the UN to support young people.

To the Filipino youth, I challenge you to do your part to help achieve the MDGs and to be the generation that can end poverty!

Maraming Salamat! Mabuhay!