# Finland – 2004

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**UN Youth Delegate Programme**

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68. **Mr. Heikura** (Finland), speaking under agenda item 94 (a) and as a youth representative of Finland, noted that there were more than a billion children and adolescents and that within ten years they would join the planet's working-age population. They were the best educated generation ever and had a tremendous potential for economic and social development. However, to a large extent, especially in developing countries, only underpaid and insecure jobs with small possibilities for advancement were available to young generations. If young people could not move into productive jobs that enabled them to pay taxes and support public services, there was a substantial risk that the economic investment of governments in education and training would be wasted. Young women and men who found themselves alienated from society, [*11*] frustrated by lack of opportunity and without means to take care of themselves were more vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.

69. The activities of the Youth Employment Network, created by the Secretary-General, had been strengthened by two General Assembly resolutions, encouraging countries to prepare national action plans on youth employment and specifically involve young people in that process. Ten countries, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal and Sri Lanka, had stepped forward to be lead countries in that process and showcase national plans that others could learn from.

70. The Youth Employment Network tried to ensure that youth were actively involved in those plans. In Azerbaijan, a grouping of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs), led by the National Assembly of Youth Organisations, had formed a National Coalition on Youth Employment, which would work closely with the Government and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to develop the National Action Plan on Youth Employment. In Namibia, the Minister of Higher Education had asked the Namibian National Youth Council to assist the Government in forming a multi-stakeholder task team that would work on developing the Action Plan. As a youth representative, the speaker supported that type of activity and hoped that all Member States could learn from the results so far achieved by the Youth Employment Network, and especially from the example of the ten lead countries.

71. Rather than being seen as a target group for which employment must be found, young people should be accepted as partners for development. Just as they wished

to be partners in national employment issues, they also wanted to participate in the important work carried out by the United Nations.

72. Although resolution 36/17 adopted by the General Assembly in 1981 had called upon "governments to consider the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly" and although that call had been reconfirmed by resolutions in 1996, 2001 and 2003, almost 180 Member States had still not included Youth Representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly. It was a matter of concern that currently the Youth Representatives to the General Assembly were far from reflecting the world's cultural diversity. The contribution of youth from developing countries and countries with economies in transition would be of especially important.

73. Lastly, the speaker emphasized that 2005 would be particularly interesting in view of youth's participation in the United Nations system, since the evaluation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond would be debated then by the General Assembly in plenary. Accordingly, he urged Member States to make all possible efforts to include Youth Representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly.

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