

STATEMENT BY MR AJAY MAKEN, MINISTER FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS,
AT THE PLENARY OF THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON YOUTH
AT THE 65th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY JULY 26, 2011

Mr. President,

Let me begin by complimenting you for organizing this High Level Meeting on Youth. This meeting is a fitting tribute to the culmination of the “International Year of the Youth” at the United Nations.



Mr. President,

Last time when the United Nations commemorated the International Year of the Youth in 1985, we had the good fortune for having late Mr Rajiv Gandhi, as our youngest Prime Minister. He was instrumental in capitalizing the international momentum for the development of youth and setting up of the Ministry for Human Resource Development for the holistic development of youth. Under his able leadership, the Parliament also took a historic decision to lower the voting age to 18 years to enable the youth to participate in the democratic processes of our country. He went on to announce the first National Youth Policy in 1988.

In order to further enhance the involvement of youth in the democratic process of governance, the minimum age for elected representatives in around 300,000 local bodies was lowered to 21 years.

I am glad that today, my delegation has three of India's young elected representatives, representing both Parliament and State Legislature, including the youngest Member of Parliament.

Mr. President,

The youth constitute the vibrant and dynamic segment of any society. They are also the most valuable human resource in any country. Our Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, has rightly referred to the youth as "the building blocks of the nation".

Mr. President,

840 million, which is nearly 70% of India's population of around 1.2 billion is under 35 years of age. India is, therefore, the country with the largest young population in the world.

Our special efforts are to ensure a high degree of skills development. The Prime Minister heads a National Skills Development Mission which aims at reaching out to nearly 500 million people in the country by 2022. We have also launched a Youth Employability Skills Development Programme, YES. In its first phase we will carry out a mapping of skills gap assessment district-wise and then marry the aspirations of the youth with the needs of the community.

The two field arms of my Ministry are National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS). They have been entrusted with the job of carrying on youth related development activities. NYKS operate through 125,000

voluntary youth clubs spread all over the country and NSS has a membership of more than 3.2 million students spread over 251 Universities covering 15,000 colleges and 8000 higher secondary schools.

We are also in the process of revising our National Youth Policy. A draft of which has already been put up in the public domain for comments and feedback.

Mr President,

The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development is our professional resource agency and acts as a think-tank of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. On the occasion of this International Year of the Youth, we are upgrading its status to that of an institution of national importance. Legislation to this effect is being moved in Parliament in the coming weeks itself.

Mr. President,

We are eagerly awaiting the deliberations and outcome of this High Level Meeting on Youth. This will help us to enhance our national initiatives in the empowerment of youth.

In conclusion I would like to reaffirm India's strong commitment to developing mutual understanding and dialogue and extend our support to the Declaration to be adopted shortly.

Thank you.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)