

The first thematic session for the Commonwealth Youth Forum included a discussion on Youth and the Post 2015 development agenda. The panel consisted of Mr. Ravi Karkara (UNHABITAT, UMNC and Advisor to the World Conference on Youth 2014), Mr. Lloyd Russell Moyle (Vice President of the European Youth Forum), Ms. Esther Eshiet (Youth representative for the High-level Panel on Post 2015) and Dr. Saman Kalegama (Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka). The session was moderated by Ms. Katherine Ellis, Director of Youth Affairs at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Delivering the keynote speech, Mr. Ravi Karkara highlighted the importance and the need of youth participation, deliberating that the 'time is now'. Reflecting on the MYWORLD survey that is currently being conducted by the United Nations, he talked with appreciation as to how young people have actively contributed towards the survey, raising their voices and making sure that what matters to them are heard. He further mentioned the importance of a solid goal on youth devel-

opment and the importance of proper structures and mechanism to ensure youth participation in matters of national, regional and international interest. These structures should not be kept at only the formulation level, but should truly be implemented.

Ravi Karkara also spoke on the World Conference on Youth, which is to be held in Sri Lanka in 2014, highlighting its importance and relevance to youth participation. He claimed that this is indeed the 'best time' for such a Conference due to many reasons, one being the Synthesis Reports that is produced by the United Nations Secretary General in the year 2014. He was of the view that the World Conference on Youth 2014 will be an ideal platform for youth all over the world to come together and to be included in a truly inter-generational and an inclusive dialogue as to what they want to see in the future.

Mr. Lloyd Russel-Moyle then took the stage and focused on how important it is to have a universal development agenda, so that no one is left behind. He further elaborated on how the to-be-formed Commonwealth Youth

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Youth in Post 2015



Council should take the responsibility of being the voice of the entire youth population of the Commonwealth and encouraged them to take part in more discussions not as individuals, but as the Commonwealth. He also encouraged the young participants to come and take part in the World Conference on Youth 2014.

Ms. Esther Eshiet delivered a practical and passionate expression of youth participations. She highlighted that no process towards youth empowerment can go forward if the youth themselves are not truly interested and engaged in the process. Further, she also discussed how important it is that this process be collaborative, inclusive and useful to all young persons in general.

Dr. Kalegama presented a careful analysis on how Sri Lanka has progressed in the Millennium Development

Goals. As was discussed by him, Sri Lanka has customized the conventional MDGs to suit the youth and their needs, and has tried to ensure that youth of the country are benefitted through the progression. He strongly stated that all Nations must take utmost efforts to mainstream youth in to their respective development agendas at all times.

The first plenary session came to an end with a Question and Answer Session, wherein the young delegates were given an opportunity to clarify any doubts and gain further information.