

## United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### Positions for the General Assembly Plenary

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#### **I. Integrating Youth Employment Into an Evolving Workforce**

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland recognizes that youth unemployment is an ongoing issue. The eighth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. This remains a pressing issue for countries as youth make up over half of the total unemployed global workforce. Youth are at risk of higher levels of unemployment due to lesser-developed skills and lack of guidance as they transition into the workforce. 74.5 million youth are unemployed worldwide and 90% of them live in developing countries. According to United Nations Secretary-General Ki-moon, many youth “[f]ind that their schooling has not equipped them with the tools for today’s job market.” Furthermore, youth unemployment creates inequalities between communities and is linked to long-term reduction in wages and poorer health outcomes, which increases medical and welfare costs.

In the UK, youth unemployment has been an escalating problem since 2005. The House of Commons Library reports that 628,000 young people aged 16-24 were unemployed in September-November 2015, an unemployment rate of 13.7%. Of these 16-24 year olds, 20% had been unemployed for over 12 months. It is estimated that the cost of youth unemployment over the next decade will be around \$40 billion.

The UK strongly supports A/RES/62/126, which aims to promote youth participation in social and economic development. As the first Western country to join the Youth Employment Network, the UK is a leading figure in educating and motivating governments to provide improved employment opportunities for youth. This has influenced the UK’s involvement with the Lead Country Network, which is an organization of governments who have voluntarily committed themselves to prioritizing youth employment on their national policy agendas. The goal of the Lead Country Network is to identify benchmarks for successful youth employment initiatives that can be shared and replicated in peer Lead Countries. By engaging with other countries, the UK is able to share its concerns and successes. The UK continues to work with the International Labor Standards and supports the ratification of the C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), which states to provide “[w]ork for all who are available for and seeking work.” The UK also actively invites youth from the ages of 9-25 into the UK Youth organization, which provides opportunities for youth to transition into adulthood. The UK is making progress, but it recognizes that even within its own borders the youth unemployment rate remains higher than ideal.

The UK proposes a series of ideas to help combat the issue of youth unemployment. One specific focus ought to be the educational system. Schools need to better prepare students for the workforce by providing them with the practical skills that employers are searching for. Education curricula should be revised to incorporate proper skills training, enterprise development, as well as real-world experience such as internships and volunteer work. In effect, the UK urges nations to upgrade their educational infrastructure to match the requirements of the labor market. In order to achieve this, a more holistic approach to education should be taken wherein essential guidance and career counseling are provided. The UK urges more nations to consider following the Swedish Kunsapksskolan model, based on personalized learning, to help students be more independent and both motivate and prepare them for higher education and future careers. Additionally, the UK supports incorporating entrepreneurship into educational systems at all levels in order to improve economies while motivating youth to be productive and engaged in their communities.

Furthermore, the issue of income inequality and higher education must be addressed. The rising costs of higher education make it less accessible to lower-income students, who as a result often get caught at the lower levels of the labor market, or even below the poverty threshold. The UK believes in establishing a stronger support system for youth of low-income families in order to help them succeed educationally and find employment.

Aside from improving education, the UK urges other governments to increase focus on the mobilization of internal resources and increasing support for local businesses and products. As nations grow wealthier, they often find that consumers turn more towards popular brands and away from local products, hurting local businesses. Self-employed workers are greatly impacted by this, including youth who may be working on family farms or in family businesses. This is why the UK believes in sponsoring entrepreneurship. The UK also believes in supporting agriculture and attracting more youth to agribusiness. Especially in developing countries, youth are becoming more selective and reject unfulfilling job offers, resulting in higher youth unemployment rates. The agriculture sector has the potential of employing millions of youth, but in order to do so the UK believes that we must first develop models to make agriculture more attractive to such workers. Youth unemployment is one of the greatest issues facing the global community, as the next generations struggle to find meaningful and productive work lives.

## II. The Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson stated that, “[i]t is our shared responsibility to protect the voices that alert, warn and inform on situations threatening international peace and security.” Currently, journalists and other media personnel are threatened with imprisonment and, in extreme cases, even murdered. The UN is committed to ensuring a safe work environment for journalists around the world as they report on global issues. The UN is also committed to finding solutions to hold offenders accountable for their actions. Around 96% of victims are local reporters covering politics and corruption in their home countries. Threats often precede killings, but are rarely investigated by authorities. Due to the restriction on the freedom of the press in numerous countries, many reporters resort to freelance operations, which bring greater risks and minimal security. According to a recent article from *The Guardian*, at least 109 journalists died in targeted killings in 2015, yet over 90% of crimes against journalists went unprosecuted. Political groups tend to be the suspected perpetrators in 46% of murder cases, although in only 2% of cases are the masterminds ever apprehended. In hopes to achieve the cooperation of governments, nongovernment organizations, and other media outlets to provide protection to all journalists, the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity was endorsed, on April 12<sup>th</sup> of 2012. In May 2015, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2222, calling for states to take greater steps to protect journalists and ensure accountability for crimes against them.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland strongly supports the UN’s plan of action and resolution 2222. The 11<sup>th</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The UK is actively pursuing this SDG, as well as SDG #16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and provide access to justice for all. The UK National Commission for UNESCO hosted the first international event where multiple professional organizations, governments, and nongovernment organizations convened together to discuss potential solutions for the issue of journalist safety. One event held in London was called, “Stop the killing of journalists! Prevention and justice to end impunity.” Human rights activists, journalists, policymakers, and international lawyers attended the event and participated in a discussion regarding situations of impunity.

Additionally, the UK supports international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which held a conference on the protection of safety and integrity of journalists in March 2015. At the conference, the UK reaffirmed its commitment to freedom of expression and free media as “basic tenets of a democratic society”. While implementing resolution 2222, the UK also recognized that the very concept of “journalists” needed to be updated to include bloggers, social media activists, and other reporters of the online world. Lucie Morillon, Program Director of Reporters Without Borders, stated, “[a]t a time when freedom of information is facing threats not seen since the times of the Soviet Union, supporting journalists and bloggers is crucial”. The UK recognizes that the right to freedom of expression should extend to all types of journalists, regardless of the views expressed or the means used to communicate them.

The UK proposes a series of ideas and solutions to combat impunity and work for the safety of journalists. To provide safer environments for reporters the UK recommends the following four proposals for consideration: (1) Increased funding for hostile environmental training courses for journalists. These teach first-aid training skills which are vital in new, tumultuous environments. (2) International law must be strengthened and consistently enforced, particularly through the ICC, to bring those who threaten journalists to justice. According to the UN Chronicle, the ICC is well-suited to do this because it reduces the chances of “impunity not only by punishing perpetrators, but also by allowing victims to participate in the judicial proceedings and to apply for reparations.” Member States should promote and equip their national judiciary system with the necessary resources to increase the trials of impunity cases with specific efforts to engage lawyers and judges. (3) Member States should be encouraged to make attacks against journalists a federal crime domestically. In 2012 the Mexican government approved a constitutional amendment making attacks against a journalist a federal crime, which would allow federal authorities to intervene in state and local cases. This helped reduce the number of attacks against journalists in the country. (4) The UK encourages states to join the International Federation of Journalists, which promotes international action to defend press freedom and social justice through strong, free and independent trade unions of journalists. The United Kingdom recognizes that there is much still to be done to keep journalists safe.