



United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS)

UN Special Representative for Somalia Dr Augustine P. Mahiga's message on International Youth Day

Today, on International Youth Day, we pause to reflect on a sizeable portion of the world's population, to acknowledge their achievements, recognize their potential, and contemplate ways in which we can support and encourage them on a path to becoming productive citizens in our communities.

We want and expect a successful and peaceful future for our youth. But for many of the world's youth, it is only a distant possibility, far removed from their day to day reality.

In Somalia, where 73 percent of the population is under 30 years of age, just growing up has meant enduring a crisis of devastating proportions—violence, insecurity, famine and death. They have come of age without the rule of law, respect for human rights, or had the experience of living in a democracy that makes room for the fundamentals of freedom. Due to circumstances beyond their control, opportunities for Somali youth have been rare. A generation of children without hope is terrible to contemplate.

But I hope that is about to change. We have had some encouraging political and security developments recently in Somalia and it is our hope that, with genuine commitment and support from all Somali stakeholders, we can work together to translate these gains into tangible opportunities for the nation's youth.

On this day, I appeal to the Somali leadership and business community and the international community to remember that the youth are our future. I call on the international community and all those with the means at home and abroad to create employment opportunities to realize their productive potential. Likewise, I call on youth who are bearing arms and engage in piracy to abandon this course of destruction for a more constructive approach and join in building a future for their country.

This is a critical moment for Somalia. There are great opportunities to capitalize on momentum and progress, but also tremendous risks if we fail. If we are to collectively succeed, we will all need to work together. In this struggle, the energy, enthusiasm and creative ideas of our youth will be crucial. Let us move forward, together.