



**Message of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and  
United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq  
Christine McNab on International Youth Day**

**Baghdad, 12 August 2010**

This year's commemoration of International Youth Day is a particularly important day for youth around the world as it marks the launch of the International Year of Youth, which was proclaimed by the United General-Assembly in December 2009 under the theme "**Dialogue and Mutual Understanding**". The choice of the theme reflects the United Nations' commitment to encouraging dialogue and understanding across generations, cultures and religions as well as its recognition of the need to ensure that the voices of youth around the world are heard for they are the leaders of the future and they must be involved in its shaping.

This is particularly important in countries like Iraq where nearly half of the population is less than 19 years old and where youth represents a tremendous wealth that could be a driving force towards a better future, provided that the country invests in its young people and prepares them to take up their role as its future leaders.

However, this will require intensive efforts. From unemployment, lack of education, exclusion and limited opportunities, the challenges that face Iraqi youth who were born under sanctions and raised in violence, are many.

The United Nations in Iraq is committed to supporting the country's efforts toward empowering its youth. Several United Nations agencies operating in Iraq have already carried out various projects to aid and assist youth in multiple areas. Moreover, the United Nations is currently working with the Government of Iraq to develop a national strategy to integrate youth issues into the national development agenda.

Keeping Iraqi youth in school, creating more jobs and engaging them in cultural and social activities will enable Iraqi youth to be a driving force towards the achieving of the Millennium Development Goals and the promotion and protection of the values of dialogue and tolerance, a stepping stone for a healthy, stable and prosperous society.

As Iraq celebrates its youth this year, the United Nations reiterates its readiness to assist in helping Iraqi youth build a safer, prosperous and stable Iraq and in all Iraqi efforts aimed at including young people in policies, programmes and decision-making processes that benefit the country's future.

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