



Press Release

Youth Envoy encouraged by resilient young women and calls for strong interventions to protect and provide them with services and information

9 February 2018 – Accra, Ghana

The United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy on Youth continued her maiden multi-nation visit in Africa with a one day stop in Accra, Ghana. The visit was an important opportunity for her to leverage support for vulnerable young girls and women. Encouraged by the call by His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the President of the Republic of Ghana at the recently concluded Global Partnership on Education Conference in Dakar for African countries to fully finance the education of its people, the visit sought to further elevate the discussion and push for greater empowerment of young girls.

Audience with the Minister of Youth

As part of the visit, the Youth Envoy, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake called on the Minister of Youth and Sports and had bilateral discussions. The two officials were delighted to meet again after the ECOSOC Youth Forum in January 2018. The Minister of Youth, Hon. Isaac Asiamah, welcomed Ms. Wickramanayake to Ghana and noted that the visit was a demonstration of her commitment to young people in Africa. He further added that the African continent faces challenges of poverty and unemployment, with young people impacted most and was confident the Envoy can help the continent confront the challenges. "I am particularly proud of your appointment" the Hon. Minister added, noting that the Youth Envoy is young, articulate and shares strong views on fostering youth development.

The Youth Envoy thanked the Minister of Youth for receiving her delegation at the Ministry, and conveyed her support for the work Ghana was carrying out

to unlock the potential of its young people. The Envoy further added that "...it is great to be in Ghana to learn about the work on the ground and challenges young people face". Welcoming the call by the President of Ghana to other African Heads of States to fully finance their people's education, the Youth Envoy pledged her full support to the Government of Ghana in providing free high school education for all young people in the country. To the Envoy, Ghana's position demonstrates a lasting commitment to ensure young people are given the skills, tools and resources to make a positive contribution to transform their society.

Interaction With Young Porter Girls at Agbogbloshie Market

Encouraged by the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and partners to support innovative interventions to empower young women and girls, the Youth Envoy dedicated a substantial part of her visit to interact with young girls who make a living as porters at the famous Agbogbloshie market in Accra, Ghana. The young girls showed a great resilience in their lives despite the challenges of a small income and working in a hostile environment where they are vulnerable and at risk. Even with these challenges, the young girls are able to work hard to provide for their children. With the support of UNFPA and other partners through their association, the young girls have established a pre-school to ensure their children are well catered for and receive an education while they are at work. The association also provides skills training, which the young girls are using to run other income generating activities at the market. According to UNFPA Representative Niyi Ojuolape, UNFPA's state of the World Population Report 2013, entitled "Motherhood in Childhood" is what embolden them to ensure that the children of the girl-mothers receive education while their mothers go about their daily activities. Plans are well advanced to collaborate with the informal education sector to equip the girl-mothers themselves with literacy skills.

Meeting with the United Nations Country Team

As part of the visit in Ghana, the Youth Envoy also convened with the United Nations Country Team in Ghana to share experience and learn about the work being done in Ghana. Delivering the Secretary General's greetings, the Envoy thanked the team for taking the time to meet and commended their strong work and coordination in delivering towards the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. On their part, the UN team, led the Resident Coordinator, Ms. Christine Evans-Klock, shared experiences in their work and congratulated the Youth Envoy on her appointment.

Courtesy Call to the Canadian High Commissioner

Noting the strong support Canada has and continues to provide for youth development at the global level, and the leadership its Prime Minister, His Excellency Justin Trudeau, has displayed in championing investments in young people, the Youth Envoy paid a courtesy call on the Canadian High Commission. The Envoy met with the Canadian High Commissioner, Ms. Heather Anne Cameron, who welcomed the visit and was delighted to meet with the Envoy. She noted that Canada remains committed to the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals and supports the mandate of the Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Youth. The Youth Envoy reaffirmed her offices commitment to work with the Government of Canada and was inspired particularly by the Prime Minister's commitment to youth development by also taking up the role of Minister of Youth.

The UN Youth Envoy continues her mission with visits to Nigeria and South Africa in the coming week.

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