



26th HRC Session
Geneva, June 24th 2014
Item 8 GD –Follow-up and Implementation
of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
Speaker: Ms. Maria D’Onofrio

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: A Human Rights Perspective

Statement submitted by
VIDES International
International volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, Development
And co-signed by
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Thank you, Mr. President.

VIDES International and IIMA welcome the cross-regional statement supported by several Member States that addresses the current situation of youth worldwide. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action has established the principle of the universality of human rights. However, we note with deep concern that youth are facing specific challenges with regards to full enjoyment of their rights, which have been recognized by the international community, *inter alia*, by the UN Secretary General and the 2012 ILO Resolution on the youth employment crisis.

The OHCHR Expert Meeting on the Human Rights of Youth, held in July 2013, recognized “*that young people do experience difficulties in the exercise of their rights by the virtue of being young and that there are gaps in the protection of the human rights of youth.*”

Inadequate political and social participation, unemployment, lack of decent work, and barriers to access to quality education have detrimental impacts on youth, but also on the society at large.

Youth have the potential to significantly contribute to sustainable development and the realization of human rights if they have access to conducive conditions to foster positive changes.

In compliance with the VDPA, we call on all Member States to:

1. **Take concrete action** at local and international levels to empower young people and promote their human rights.
2. **Systematically mainstream** the implementation of youth human rights into Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, and the Universal Periodic Review.

3. Establish, through a Human Rights Council resolution, a **Panel Discussion** to identify challenges and share best practices to ensure respect of youth rights.

Young people need an opportunity for their voices to be heard and to initiate positive societal changes. Youth are not just the future of our society – they are the present. Enable them to fulfill their potential.

Thank you, Mr. President.