

Distinguished Guests !

Dear Participants !

Ladies and Gentlemen !

It gives me great pleasure to be amongst you this after-noon to deliver a speech at the closing ceremony of the Seventh Session of the Ethiopian Youth Forum, organized to address the problems of youth unemployment.

Youth is the period of transition from dependency upon adult direction and protection to self dependency and self protection. It is the period of vocational adjustment as well as the strive for independence. This challenging situation is further intensified by rapid social changes and other factors which make the world complex, unpredictable and ambiguous to youth.

Unemployment is the most serious socio-economic problem confronted by youth in Africa, particularly those residing in sub Saharan region. The major underlying factor of youth unemployment is the serious imbalance between population growth and economic development.

Absence of labour market information is the other factor which results in considerable discrepancy between supply and demand of labour power. The impact of the preference for white collar jobs is no less felt in aggravating the problem of youth unemployment.

As one of the sub Sahara African country, Ethiopia faces the challenge of youth unemployment. Today with an estimated population of 71 million, it is the third most populous country in Africa, of which population between 19-24years of age accounts for 20.3% of the total population.

In addition to this the country's low level of economic development cannot meet the needs of the rapidly growing population. Particularly the youth, who constitute the major labour force of the country's economy, is the most affected segment of the society as a consequence of rapid population growth.

The former educational system also used to hold a large responsibility for failing to equip young people with appropriate skills, which satisfy the demand of the country's

labour power. Generally the causes of youth unemployment are deep rooted and complex.

Dear Participants!

Ladies and Gentlemen !

In its effort to preserve the rights of youth and to address the problem of unemployment, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has taken different measures.

The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has enshrined an article which stipulates the need to create conducive environment for the all round development of youth.

The Government has also put in place a policy, which plays a pivotal role in further escalating the efforts geared towards safeguarding the rights of youth.

Furthermore the Agriculture Led Industrialization, Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Education Policy and other pertinent policies were formulated giving due attention to the wellbeing of youth.

Distinguished Guests !

Ladies and Gentlemen !

I would like at this juncture to bring to your kind attention that we cannot curb the problem of youth unemployment, unless we are able to tackle the root cause of poverty and bring about speedy and sustainable economic development. To this end Government, Nongovernmental and International Organizations and the community at large, particularly the youth, are duty bound to discharge their responsibilities in achieving the goals designed to speed up economic development.

In this regard, the initiative taken by the Ethiopian Youth Forum to identify the causes of youth unemployment and come up with some recommendations is so gratifying. Hence, it is my firm belief that you will keep up your efforts in the future. I would also like to assure you that the Government of Ethiopia is desirous and committed to support your future endeavors in addressing the problem in focus.

Finally, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ethiopian Youth Forum for taking this initiative to organize such a timely conference.

Expressing my deep gratitude to UNICEF for the all round support it has given to make this conference a reality, I officially declare the conference close.

Thank you!