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KEYNOTE ADDRESS  
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I am so impressed and, in fact, hugely inspired by the name of the new partnership that is being launched at this Forum – a Global Partnership for Youth **in** Development. And the most important word – a 2-letter word “in” ...I.N.

This is not a conference for government officials, philanthropic and business leaders in their 40's, 50's, 60's and some people in their 70's – to talk about youth as some distinct and maybe distant cohort – or as a development challenge – to be dealt with, to be treated, to be solved.

The nations of the world approved last year the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17 major goals. There are some 160 sub-goals. A critic – even just a reasonable or healthy skeptic – might say there are too many goals. Others would say there is a goal for every conceivable aspect of human, community, national and global development. And this is good – not bad.

But let me tell you, there will not be success or even substantial progress on any or all of these worthy 2030 goals if we do not tap the resources – the human resources, the spirit, the talent – of the teenagers and young adults of this world. A fifteen year old today will be 30 in 2030!

Too often we talk about young people as leaders of tomorrow. Well, many will be. But the fact is, there are thousands if not millions of young people – engaged today in civic and community activities – who are serious social entrepreneurs, founders and CEOs of social enterprises, movements, civic activities – and, indeed, many of them are in the room with us these 3 days. All to our collective benefit.

In my mind, these very young activists are not here to inform us about their realities and the challenges of youth development – then for us “professionals” and older people to march off and solve. Much to the contrary. They are here to work with us in solving a myriad of global challenges, some of which are about youth – but all of which need youth and the human resources of the younger generation tapped – and I mean seriously tapped – to engage them as assets, protagonists and activists in helping solve these global challenges.

The foundation I represent was founded 26 years ago to put youth at the very center of discussions and solutions for global development challenges. The so-called “youth bulge” was part of the motivation, clearly. This is the demographic reality that we all

know as the largest cohort of teenagers and young adults – as a percentage of global population – in the history of the world. To treat them as beneficiaries or subjects to be dealt with – like a doctor would operate on a patient – is to ignore the fact that young people must be listened to, dealt with – and, indeed, dealt in - to meet their and our global needs. We must tap them - their motivations, their aspirations, their skills and their muscles and power – to work collectively on solutions for their present condition, their futures and frankly the futures of our countries and the globe.

IYF created 16 years ago an initiative that has become a movement of young, social entrepreneurs. We call it YouthActionNet<sup>®</sup> and, in fact, it is exactly that, a global network of youth activists. We have many in the room this week. There are today 1,400 social entrepreneurs – all founders and CEO's – who created a movement, a for-profit business with a social cause – or a non-profit. We award fellowships to help them on their leadership journeys. I am delighted that the UN Secretary General's first ever Global Envoy for Youth - Ahmad Alhendawi - is an alumnus of this program. We will hear from Ahmad later in our sessions, as he is an example of 1000's – if not millions – of young people who have not waited for solutions to be offered by older people. To the contrary, they have picked up the tools – or created new tools themselves – to make change in their communities – and often at a national level, or trans-national activity.

Now, let me take you back almost 10 years when the World Bank published one of its annual World Development Reports – entitled “Development and the Next Generation.” It has been called by many the “youth report.” In fact, it is the most downloaded WDR in the history of these annual, seminal documents where the World Bank – in consultation with all sectors of society – delves into a global challenge with the intent to highlight the challenge – and offer up some of the most salient solutions or options that need to be tested and proven, then scaled to have an effect on that development priority.

Some people may think a report from 2007 is outdated today in 2016 – and especially as we look at goals as far off as 2030. I beg to differ. Seriously, the 2007 WDR today is still the most comprehensive set of discussions – with a solid framework and theory of change – as one can imagine to maximize the development of youth across the world. The WDR talks of youth as a phase between childhood and adulthood. And during that phase to adulthood, young people go through five transitions:

1. Schooling, education, training and life-long learning
2. Being healthy
3. Reproductive health and procreation
4. Citizenship and civic engagement
5. Employment and livelihoods

Let me put it another way. If youth is a transition – that might be from 12 or 14 to 24, 25, 29, or 35 – and definitions are abundant across cultures, across UN agencies, academics and think tanks. Let's just say that the outcome – and we are all into measurable metrics and outcomes these days when we talk development – then the

outcome of successful youth development strategies ought to be a healthy, civically engaged and income-earning ADULT.

And I like to say – when societies get this right and a 14-year old becomes a 25-year old who is healthy, well- educated and prepared for a life of work, and is an active neighbor, citizen and participant in the life of his and her community and nation – then society gets a 50-year “return on investment” from that successful adult. By that I mean the 20 something will live at least another 50 years, in which she or he will be parenting, voting, earning, volunteering and contributing back to society in many different ways. Paying into retirement systems – or creating their own retirement if they are working in the informal sector. And hopefully they are paying taxes, because societies themselves aren’t sustainable without a tax base to pay for a nation’s schools, health systems and pave their roads. Just as individual people are not sustainable developmentally if they cannot earn a steady income in the formal or informal economies.

Now, let me digress here for a minute. Economic growth is a subject we must keep central and at the highest priority. Without it, jobs, livelihoods and incomes for young people entering the workforce, starting out in life, or later retooling from a lost job or trying to change professions – none of this is possible without broad-based, inclusive economic growth.

There are one billion people in the world today who escaped poverty in the last 30 years. That’s the largest number of people that have joined the basic working or middle-classes in the history of the world. A great success story. And most of it comes from investment and private sector growth, although certainly nurtured by good public, philanthropic and foreign aid investments in education, health and other development needs. But let’s remember – there are 2 billion people left in the world – or I should say left out - who also aspire to the salaried classes. And a good third of them, roughly 700 million, are our youth cohort and demographic priority.

Eradicating extreme poverty by 2030’s, the cardinal goal of the SDGs! It will be impossible unfortunately – simply impossible – without wide spread growth, without today’s teenagers obtaining a place in the workforce, starting a business, getting a first job, moving up, losing a job, but obtaining another. If today’s teenagers are not decently employed in 2030 – when they are in their 30’s – then our SDG goal of eradicating extreme poverty will be but a dream.

As such, another initiative within the World Bank is vital to our discussions and related to all that we are talking about these 3 days. And I am delighted that Vice President Keith Hansen mentioned Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) in his opening remarks. Indeed, this is a multi-stakeholder, broad and global public-private alliance involving the World Bank, the ILO, global NGOs such as the International Youth Foundation, Youth Business International and Plan International – the RAND Corporation and some major companies and foundations. It is a unique alliance launched a year and a half ago. It must succeed. And it will coordinate and align with our discussions at this Forum.

We will discuss productive employment later this afternoon as one element or focus along with climate, gender, migration, violence, education and LGBT issues on the Forum's agenda.

We at IYF know that in their bones – and in their hearts and dreams – young people want to earn their futures. We know what sustainable development is for a country, a community, a major business. But for an individual – at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder – trying to figure out his or her own future – it is a job, salary or a livelihood. Maybe even “mixed livelihoods” as people are describing today the multiple ways that a young person may go about earning a stable income. Without such earning capacity, today's youth cannot plan, move forward in life, nor have a sense of stability and hope for the future.

We will not solve all these issues in these 3 days. While here to muse together, we must really plot together – in global and comprehensive ways – so that young people can reach their full potential, while societies reach their full potential – by tapping into the power of youth.

We must focus on scale. With 1.5 billion young people in the 14-25 age range – there are no easy solutions for, with and by these young people. There are no comprehensive outcomes for them and society – if we cannot deal with and deal in the 1.5 billion. Simply put – if we don't tap 1.5 billion potential assets, we all will fail.

So I am here to encourage us to tackle this agenda, to tackle the ways in which we engage young people in development – not in tokenism or listening modes, but engaging them as part of the solutions. As one person put it years back, “Young people aren't problems to be solved. Young people can and should be problem solvers.” Indeed, for themselves and their own futures, also for their families, communities and our nations. Let's together make this possible.