

During August 10 – 12, 2005 more than 150 young entrepreneurs, agencies, and organizations met in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in the “Young Entrepreneurs of the Americas: Forum for the Participation of Civil Society in the Process of the Summit of the Americas.” This event was organized by the Young Americas Business Trust with support from the OAS Summit of the Americas Secretariat, the Government of Argentina, and other national and international organizations. The following statement reflects the ideals and goals of the young people present at the Forum to continue to work to create employment opportunities in their countries and communities.

Declaration of Buenos Aires

Adopted August 12, 2005

The Forum Delegates Present at the Young Entrepreneurs of the Americas: Forum for the Participation of Civil Society in the Process of the Summit of the Americas

RECALLING that the Inter-American Democratic Charter commits to “the development of programs and activities for the education of children and youth as a means of ensuring the continuance of democratic values, including liberty and social justice”;

RECALLING also that in the Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas held in Quebec City, Canada in 2001, the Heads of State and Government made a Hemispheric pledge to “increase access to opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurship, productivity and employment among young people,” which is crucial in resolving the dilemma of persistent poverty;

RECALLING further that in the Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government committed to creating “legislation, policies and regulations that reduce startup costs, support the creation of new financial products for lower-income groups and youth, [and] foster the development of credit unions, community finance institutions and supporting institutions” to foster entrepreneurship in the Americas;

BEARING IN MIND that in the Declaration of Nuevo León of the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterey, Mexico in 2004, the Heads of State and Government acknowledged civil society’s role in youth development and encouraged civil society’s input in the effort to “forge new partnerships that will enable constructive ties to be built” between the public, private, and academic sectors;

NOTING that the eighth goal of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, “Develop a Global Partnership for Development,” has as one of its objectives to “develop decent and productive work for youth”;

NOTING also that August 12, 2005, is the Youth at the United Nations’ International Youth Day, which was created to promote youth development, to strengthen the economic and public resources available to youth, to highlight the importance of youth contributions to community development, and to further the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth;

CONSIDERING that poverty in the Americas represents the greatest challenge of youth today and that overcoming it is central to increasing young people’s contributions to society;

CONSIDERING also that entrepreneurial knowledge and self-employment skills significantly increase the opportunities available to young people as well as their potential to become contributing members to their countries' economic growth;

EMPHASIZING that development and sustainable economic growth in Latin America and the Caribbean are of paramount importance to the stability of democracy in the Western Hemisphere;

RECOGNIZING that young people under the age of thirty compose a significant percentage of the population in the Western Hemisphere, up to sixty percent in some countries, and that their future holds the prospects for social and economic development in their countries;

TAKING NOTE that the Governments of the Americas have made considerable progress in developing and implementing successful programs focusing on the development of entrepreneurship skills and business training for young people and that the General Secretariat of the OAS has supported this progress through its cooperation with the Young Americas Business Trust and other projects and initiatives through the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development;

TAKING NOTE of the important role and achievements of the Young Americas Business Trust in promoting the social and economic development of young people in the Americas by raising self-esteem, developing leadership and business citizenship, providing business training, and increasing access to technology and resources to improve the quality of life of youth and young adults in the Americas;

Resolve:

1. To encourage all Member States of the OAS to develop and implement visionary policies and programs aimed at mobilizing the talents and energies of young people in the Americas by developing entrepreneurship programs and business training for young people;
2. In accordance with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the purpose of the International Youth Day, to strive to create decent employment for youth; to mobilize, network and encourage youth and organizations devoted to young people; and to educate and foster youth in order to combat poverty and unemployment;
3. To give special focus to excluded groups, especially disabled youth, minority populations, and women; to ensure their participation in the planning and execution of programs relevant to them; and to actively involve them in decision-making processes that affect their future;
4. To urge Member States of the OAS to review their regulations for starting a new business to ensure these are geared toward stimulating innovation and the entrepreneurial process, to remove unnecessary regulatory delays and requirements, and to evaluate their tax structures in terms of their ability to enable micro-, small- and medium-sized firms to compete in globalized markets;
5. To strengthen the network of civil society and governmental organizations in the Hemisphere working to provide youth with essential business and technological skills, to educate youth in creativity and entrepreneurship in elementary and secondary schools, and to build young people's confidence and potential for contributing to social and economic development;
6. To work with public and private organizations to increase access to information and communication technologies, especially the internet, in an effort to build the information infrastructure, stability and resource pool necessary for successful entrepreneurship;
7. To engage the private sector in efforts to train and educate young entrepreneurs by providing experienced, long-term mentors who can help youth become leaders of their communities and countries;

8. To link with and support the efforts and goals of the “YES Campaign 2002-2012,” which seeks to cultivate the entrepreneurial spirit, to create employment and to empower youth to become self-sustaining and committed members of society;
9. To encourage international bodies, such as the International Labor Organization at the United Nations through its Young Entrepreneur Network and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, to collaborate and coordinate in order to maximize the benefits of their programs designed for young people;
10. To urge international financial institutions, OAS Member and Observer States, and other potential donors to create and contribute to an international Youth Fund, proposed by the Inter-American Development Bank Youth Development and Outreach Program, to fund youth-related projects, specifically business training programs, to encourage youth participation, to disseminate information, and to provide seed capital to new businesses;
11. To encourage all OAS Member and Observer States, international financial institutions, and the business community to contribute financially and technically to organizations that promote the development of regional and national networks of young entrepreneurs as a way to create employment, and to request the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS to take appropriate actions to encourage such contributions; and
12. To call on the donor community to join an “Alliance for Young Entrepreneurs” to build a resource base for training youth in entrepreneurial skills and to follow-up and support government and private sector actions fulfilling the pledges of the IV Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in November 2005.