Briefing Paper – Youth Committee

**The Issue of Youth Unemployment and Subsequent Progression into Gangs**

Youth unemployment and its connection to the progression of young individuals into gangs is a critical global issue that requires immediate attention. The United Nations, as a beacon of international cooperation, must address this issue comprehensively to ensure a brighter future for our youth.

Background information:

The International Labour Organisation estimates there are 75 million 15-to-24-year-olds looking for work across the globe. The rate of worldwide youth unemployment steadily increased between 1991 and 2019, before undergoing an exponential rise in 2020 from 15.3% to 18.4%. Unemployed youth are susceptible to joining gangs due to the lack of legitimate economic opportunities, as gangs offer a sense of belonging, income and protection, which can be appealing to marginalised youths with little alternative options.

This increasingly worrying problem was exacerbated by the Covid19 pandemic, as young people faced more labour market challenges. Young people failed to enter the labour force altogether, and others dropped out, due to the increased difficulties in finding jobs during lockdowns. Six months of youth unemployment can reduce earnings by between 13 and 21% as much as 20 years later. This phenomenon is known as the ‘scarring effect’, which means that, through spells of unemployment early on in a person's life, they later suffer long-lasting negative effects on income and life satisfaction; global youth employment declined by 34 million between 2019 and 2020 as a result. Lack of employment was already particularly prevalent in African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa, but due to the pandemic one in five young people in Africa were not in employment, education or training in 2020.

These high levels of youth unemployment have a knock-on effect on increasing rates of youths in gangs. A gang is defined as a group involved in a pattern of criminal acts, with the highest recorded number of gangs located in Brazil, Colombia and the United States. (It is important to note that prison gangs, ideological gangs, hate groups, and motorcycle gangs are not included in this definition). People may join gangs for a wide range of reasons including the desire for protection and belonging, or as a result of poverty or boredom. Troubled home lives, a lack of familial role models and economic deprivation could also be contributing factors. Furthermore, educational factors such as academic failure and a lack of educational belonging and commitment could encourage progression into gangs. Influence from peers including interaction with delinquent peers could also persuade youngsters to commit crimes.

Other factors leading young people towards gangs include the socio-economic situation of a country, which could result in a lack of programmes providing entrepreneurship initiatives to young people. Furthermore, the absence of stability in the political situation of the country and the political party’s outlook towards this area can make or break the youth entrepreneurship’s growth.

Potential solutions:

* Side policies eg employment subsidies or public works programmes, education and training, job search assistance and labour market reforms
* Income support to reduce the consequence of youth unemployment
* Training for teachers and parents on how to manage disruptive students
* Providing interpersonal skills development for students to help resolve conflicts
* Establishing a centre for youth recreation and referrals for services

Questions to consider:

* What are the main factors affecting youth unemployment?
* What are the consequences of youth unemployment in the local community?
* How would your country mitigate and reduce youth unemployment?
* What encourages youth progression into gangs?
* What are the consequences of youth gang progression?
* How would your country prevent gangs from emerging?
* How would your country prevent gangs from enlisting young people?

Useful links:

* <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_853078/lang--en/index.html>
* <https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/28694#:~:text=Possible%20measures%20can%20include%20deman%20d,unemployment%20such%20as%20income%20support> <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/167249.pdf>
* <https://safeguarding.network/content/safeguarding-resources/gangs-youth-violence/>
* <https://youth.gov/feature-article/gang-prevention-overview-research-and-programs>