



Statement by incoming UN Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake

22 June 2017, Colombo: On 20th of June, 2017, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, appointed me as his next Envoy on Youth. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for entrusting me with this important responsibility, which I accept with humility and determination.

I also want to take this opportunity to appreciate Mr. Ahmed Alhendawi's remarkable service as the former Envoy on Youth, and thank him for his continued guidance and support.

Having represented Sri Lankan youth as a UN youth delegate and a member of the Youth Parliament as well as a youth negotiator in the post-2015 process that led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and having contributed to the post-conflict reconciliation process in Sri Lanka, I take great pride in this new important role as the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. Today I am grateful to all who have worked with me over the years supporting a rights-based approach to youth development and to those who gave me the inspiration to come this far.

As a young woman from a small island in the Indian Ocean, with a developing economy and deeply rooted conservative norms and traditions, armed with nothing but my passion for youth empowerment, it is fair to say that I am here today against all the odds.

I thank all those who conveyed their sincere greetings on this occasion and would like to reaffirm my commitment to working together for a better world for young people. To achieve this requires a truly global partnership that will ensure the participation of young people worldwide. This must include the most vulnerable youth and address issues of participation and conflict prevention. I believe that my background in working with communities from former conflict regions of Sri Lanka will give me the ability to understand these issues well.

I have always believed in the simple yet powerful phrase: "nothing about us, without us". In an era where the world is quickly moving to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is of utmost importance that the voices of young people are heard, valued and acted upon.

I hope that together we can work towards the goal of making our common future more youth friendly by prioritizing youth rights and ensuring political empowerment, especially of those who are most marginalized and vulnerable.

I look forward to arriving in New York to serve in my role as Envoy on Youth and to working with young people around the world to help realize the Secretary-General's vision on youth.

Jayathma Wickramanayake
22 06 2017, Colombo