**Draft Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

**High Level Event of the United Nations General Assembly Marking the 20th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth to Highlight Youth Priorities in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

**New York, 29 May 2015**

Mister Chairman, Excellences, Distinguished delegates, Distinguished Youth Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2015 is also a crucial year for development at the global level. The post-2015 agenda should be agreed in September, with a new set of Sustainable Development Goals for the next generation. We all expect a successful and an ambitious outcome of the ongoing negotiations. We owe this to our planet and to our youth.

We are all well aware of the challenges faced by young people. Today's generation of young people is the largest in history. Close to 90% of the world's youth live in developing countries. And in Africa, 60% of the population is under 35 years.

Many young people face discrimination, constant violations of fundamental human rights or live in a state of permanent conflict. Many are forced to migrate in search of opportunities and to escape poverty and violence. Moreover, radicalisation and extremism among youth presents an existential threat. This is unacceptable.

There is a great risk of creating a lost generation unless measures are taken to stop the rising inequalities and to increase youth inclusion and participation.

We need policy changes in favour of broad-based, inclusive and sustainable growth to create opportunities for young people. Youth should be encouraged to participate in decision-making processes, to assume the ownership of transformation and become true actors in development.

At the European level, we have various national and regional consultations with youth organisations. For example, the European Youth Forum convened a Task Force of their members to guide their engagement in the post-2015 discussions. The Task force produced a "Position Paper on the New Global Agenda (post-2015/SDGs)", which prioritised four areas - quality education, quality jobs, governance & participation and equality & non-discrimination – including youth-specific targets and a set of indicators for youth development.

It is encouraging to see that in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, several address the concerns of youth: youth employment, quality education and adequate skills development, health, youth participation. It is necessary that this is also reflected in other goals.

The post-2015 agenda is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to effectively address issues that are a priority for the youth. It should be a universal agenda, so that every person in the world can benefit from it. The EU supports an agenda that leaves no one behind, in particular children and youth, who are our future and our inspiration.

Thank you.