This talkshow is a special International Youth Day (IYD) 2012 edition which was recorded live at the IYD celebration event at the United Nations in Bangkok. The event was organized by the Asia-Pacific UN Interagency Group on Youth. The theme of the IYD 2012 was “Building a better world, partnering with youth”. You can watch the show at: www.apyouthnet.ilo.org/podcast/iyd.

**Question 1: How is the UN partnering with youth?**

Ms Krairiksh explained that the UN System was placing great importance on youth and youth issues. The UN was commemorating the IYD since 1985 and had focused on the role of youth as agents of change for a long time. The UN ensured that the ideas of young women and men were included in national policy making and that youth were partners in all aspects of political and economic processes leading to sustainable development. This position had been confirmed at the recent Rio plus 20 Conference where leaders had emphasized the role that young people played towards sustainable development.

Ms Khan, who participated in the student debates at the morning session of the event, expressed that she found the event very informative and that she felt more engaged with the UN System through this and similar events. Mr Cognac said that it was absolutely essential to involve young people in the development of youth related policies. He said that the ILO had taken this position very strongly and was involving young people directly in decision-making processes. He mentioned the recent 101st International Labour Conference (ILC) where young women and men from all over the world had been invited to participate. Mr Cognac also said that the ILC had offered a ‘reality check’ for many of the conference’s participants as it was sometimes difficult to keep in touch with the real problems of young people, especially with those less fortunate and socially and economically marginalized. Ms Krairiksh added that it was of paramount importance to the work of the UN System to keep in touch with the real problems of young people. She cited the Special Session on Youth at the 2011 UN General Assembly as one of the many examples where the UN had established an interface between young people and political leaders. Ms Krairiksh stressed that the UN needed to hear from young people to formulate the right policies and programmes.

**Question 2: How do we ensure that young people get the right skills and education?**

Ms Krairiksh said that we needed better investments in quality education because if the focus was not on enhancing the quality of education, it would be very difficult for young people to make a successful transition from school to the world of work.
Mr Cognac highlighted that young people in Asia and the Pacific were three to six times more likely to be unemployed than adult workers and that investment in skills and education was crucial to prepare young people for the demands of the labour market. Moreover, young people needed to be exposed to the world of work at an early age, for instance, through internships and apprenticeship programmes. On the issue of internships, Mr Anas Akhtar Ali (student at Pan Asia International School) from the audience asked the panel whether internships could be expected to lead to future employment. Mr Cognac replied that internships were indeed sometimes abused as a source of free labour and that it was therefore critical that young people were aware of their rights at work. It was essential that young people joined trade unions and were engaged in social dialogue. Employers should also facilitate intergenerational dialogue at the workplace and capitalize on the energy and creativity which young people contributed at work. Ms Krairiksh suggested that young people and employers should see internships primarily as opportunities. Employers should recognize the opportunity provided by internships for bringing in ‘fresh blood’ and new ideas to the company or organization. However, it was important that employers focused on the right duties and responsibilities to maximize the full potential of their interns. Ms Krairiksh added that she herself had always benefitted greatly from her interns and stressed that she had ensured that the responsibilities matched the interns’ skills and qualifications so that the internship was a fulfilling experience for both parties involved. Ms Krairiksh noted that some of her former interns had later succeeded in obtaining very good positions with the UN System.

**Question 3: How can we create opportunities for rural youth?**
Ms Shan Ni (student at Johns Hopkins University) from the audience wanted to know from the panel how the UN addressed the inequality in opportunities that existed between rural and urban youth. Mr Cognac replied that there were many opportunities for social and economic development at the rural level and that policies and programmes needed to focus on local areas. Therefore, the ILO and other UN agencies pursued strategies of local economic development which sought to empower rural communities socially and economically by capitalizing on the communities' comparative advantages which led to economic growth and job opportunities. Ms Krairiksh stated that the inequality not only among countries but within countries was of great concern to the UN System. She explained that studies showed that urban areas benefited more from government services and that young people from lower income families had a harder time in terms of educational achievement. Further, we needed to invest in promoting access to quality education in remote areas because education was the key factor for social mobility and for closing the income and opportunities gap between rural and urban youth. Ms Khan agreed and said that her counterparts from rural Thailand had less access to quality education and had also less access to information about existing job and training opportunities.

**Question 4: How can we better inform young people about the labour market?**
Mr Mohamed Najib Laaziz (intern at UNESCO Bangkok) from the audience asked the panel about ways to ensure that young people made better informed choices about their education and careers. Ms Krairiksh said that it was important to make labour market information better available to youth to address the mismatch that existed between skills and available jobs. Further, partnerships between the private sector and educational institutions could play an important role in ensuring that skills matched the needs of the labour market. Mr Cognac added that the ILO had established employment service centres at provincial levels in many countries which connected youth with up to date labour market information and training opportunities. These centres also provided youth with training in soft skills and career skills, such as, job searching, CV writing and interviewing for jobs.