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Initial Remarks

Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states the right to start a family as a result of those transitions, and yet so many people find growing difficulties for it. That is why we need to analyse how the family environment influences youth career and employment decisions; how family structures and processes influence career development; how family support affects job search dynamics; and what policies can help to reinforce the family's role for it.

We know that parents and families are the single most important influence in the lives of young people. Good parenting is crucial to children and young people's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. Those who grow up in a loving and nurturing environment are more likely to develop into healthy and happy teenagers with high aspirations and a good chance of realising their full potential.

But we also know that parenting teenagers requires a fine balancing act of encouraging independence whilst maintaining authority. The teenage years can represent a complex transition period and parents may need to adapt to new challenges as their relationship with their children changes. Most young people feel that they are well supported by their parents and most parents are confident in their parenting. Many parents of teenagers, however, say that they find it harder to cope during these years and would welcome additional assistance, including advice on issues which arise in the teenage years such as alcohol and substance use and misuse, sexual health and relationships.

Moreover, problems associated with poverty, poor parenting and/or disadvantage can be exacerbated during the teenage years in some families. These experiences can lead to negative outcomes such as involvement in crime and teenage parenthood as well as low educational attainment. Some families may require more intensive support, particularly those families that suffer from multiple disadvantages.

In addition, specialist support may be appropriate in some cases for parents of particular groups of teenagers with specific issues or difficulties that become more acute during adolescence. This can include parents of teenagers with special educational needs and disabilities, mental health difficulties or teenagers from black and minority ethnic groups.

A growing body of research has shown that taking part in parenting programmes can result in measurable reductions in youth crime, antisocial and delinquent behaviour, child maltreatment, school failure and child and adolescent mental health problems. This is also the evidence we get from our courses in 70 countries, intended not only as an efficient way to prevent all those negative effects, but also to try parenting as an enjoyable and rewarding task.

I am convinced that many young people can benefit from the results of this meeting, if we succeed to produce final recommendations to lawmakers and practitioners that really go in this direction too. That way we will be able to help not only families, but the whole society to benefit for it and be in a much better position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2010 Agenda.