



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

PRESS RELEASE

UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Nicol David Spotlights Role of Youths in Development

Kuala Lumpur, Aug 13 –National Goodwill Ambassador and World No. 1 player for Women’s Squash Nicol David has called on the youths in the country to play a bigger role in finding solutions to today’s pressing problems.

Addressing Help University College students on International Youth Day (IYD) 2007 themed “*Be Seen, Be Heard: Youth Participation for Development*”, David cautioned that serious development gaps and challenges lie ahead for the world’s population. She also urged the youth to educate themselves about issues and decision affecting their lives.

“In order for us to become positive agents for change, we must first empower ourselves with the knowledge on issues that are affecting not just us at the individual level, but the often lesser-told stories of our brothers and sisters around the world who are living in abject poverty or in zones of conflict,” she said.

Highlighting the importance of youth participation in healthy activities, David said, “This generation not only holds the key to the future, but we are, in our own right, incredibly important resources to our communities. By volunteering or joining an association or group, you are on your way to doing something to improve your community, while building life skills, boosting your future employability and networking with other young people.”

This year marks the midpoint of a 15-year effort by the international community to implement the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight key development objectives that world leaders have pledged to achieve by 2015. Ranging from poverty eradication to environment sustainability and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, the MDGs have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest.

According to UN statistics, 200 million youth still live on less than US\$1 a day while 130 million are illiterate. Further, the demand of illicit substances among youth in developing countries has increased to levels typically found in industrialized countries while there are ten million young people currently living with HIV/AIDS, mostly in Africa and Asia.

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"If there was ever time for us to "Be Seen, Be Heard" it is now. We have already witnessed the sharp rise in extreme weather conditions this year due to climate change - inaction is not a choice. It is time for young people to realize our full potential as a positive force for development, peace, and democracy," David said.

David, who was appointed the first Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malaysia in 2002 for her outstanding qualities as a youth role model, was on a short visit to Kuala Lumpur where she toured the campus and talked to representatives of the student council and UN Club of the college.

To commemorate the occasion, David and students also filmed a short video clip to be submitted for the UN Global Youth Wave, a conglomeration of footages of youth celebrations around the world.

International Youth Day is an annual opportunity to recognize the world's 1.2 billion young people, to celebrate their achievements, and to push for their participation in all areas of society. It is celebrated on August 12 each year.

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About UNDP

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. Its current priority is to help all countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

To read more about the work of UNDP in Malaysia, please visit the organization's website at <http://www.undp.org.my/>

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