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Statement by Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General, UNCTAD

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Youth Forum. Music is a particularly well chosen theme for an event which aims to address the concerns of young people and the economic challenges facing the least developed countries (LDCs).

Most LDCs are young societies; on average 70 per cent of their population is under 30 years of age. Many are rapidly becoming urban societies: in 1975 only 14 per cent of the population of LDCs were urban, whereas today that figure has already almost doubled to over 25 per cent. I am sure that the economic and social problems facing a young urban population in a developing country are familiar to many of you here – the difficulty of finding work, the search for decent accommodation, fears of loneliness and concerns (particularly among women) about violent crime, the rising incidence of drug abuse and the threat of AIDS.

We should not fool ourselves into thinking that there are easy policy recipes for tackling such problems. They are, in part, linked to the wider economic policy challenges of growth and development, but similar problems are also familiar even to the richest communities in the industrialized world. Unfortunately, the challenges facing young people are all too often compounded because they feel excluded from the larger political processes on which their own futures ultimately rest. And almost everywhere, young people have looked to popular musical idioms to give expression to their anxieties, their discontent and their aspirations.

We have all lived through those days, and I am sure that everybody here connects important moments in their own lives, whether of a personal nature or the larger political and social events of their day, with a piece of music. Globalization does not change that. But advances in audio-visual technologies now mean that popular music has an almost instantaneous global audience, providing a lingua franca for young people, one which transcends national, racial and religious divisions.

It is true, of course, that this lingua franca has a pronounced Anglo-Saxon flavour. But there is also a remarkable richness and variety to popular music that afford it a special place in today's globalizing world. That place has been long in the making. Musicians have been carrying their local musical traditions across geographical boundaries for centuries. Much of what we believe to be "our" music is a product of borrowing, imitation and fusion across many cultures. Today, that process has taken on a truly global dimension. The beat of Africa, the dance styles of Latin America, the rhythmic beat of the Caribbean islands and the chants of the Indian subcontinent can all now be heard intermingling with the rasping blues of the American South, the folk traditions of Ireland and the breezy pop tunes of the United Kingdom. In this respect, it seems fair to describe popular musicians as the true "ambassadors of globalization", constantly crossing borders, literally and metaphorically, in the search for a sense of harmony among the world's rich patchwork of local cultures and traditions.

But popular music is more than a matter of cultural expression or personal entertainment. It is also a dynamic business. Although not traditionally part of the economic policy agenda of LDCs, musical talent can along with other cultural assets provide new production and trading opportunities for these countries. Indeed, because music is very closely linked to new digital technologies such as the Internet, it looks like carrying even greater weight in today's rapidly globalizing world economy. In this respect, the music industry feeds into a wider policy discussion about how to diversify economic activity in LDCs, about the role of intellectual

property in the development process and about human resource development and capacity building. These are, of course, some of the key issues that have been discussed in this conference during the past week. I hope today's workshop can provide real shape and form to these discussions.

The opportunities in music are sizeable. Recorded music products worldwide are part of a \$50 billion market. This far exceeds markets for traditional primary products – for example, coffee \$17 billion, cotton \$20 billion, tobacco \$21 billion and bananas \$27 billion – where many LDCs continue to look for production and export opportunities.

Developed countries have been successfully exploiting the export potential of their musical talent for some time. And, of course, the major players in the industry are multinational firms based in these countries. But many LDCs have world-class musical talent too. Wycliffe Jean, Youssu N'Dour, Salif Keita, Cesaria Evora and Angelique Kidjo are just some of the musicians from LDCs with a strong presence in Western markets. These artists carry an important message in their own right: that success and recognition on global markets are not beyond the reach of LDCs.

The question is whether the world's poorest countries can convert excellence in musical expression into export-oriented business opportunities. There are positive signs. Youssu N'Dour, from Senegal, records and exports directly from Dakar, and has set up his own music company that records young musicians from all over Africa. Salif Keita, from Mali, also has set up his own music business in Bamako.

But as with any infant industry in a developing country, the barriers to building up a viable music sector should not be underestimated. Ongoing work by UNCTAD has shown that many developing countries, particularly LDCs, despite their strong cultural assets, lack the domestic enterprises and business skills to bring musical products to global markets. The absence of entrepreneurial and exporting skills poses a serious barrier to entry and access to high-income markets. This situation is made even more onerous by the financial strength of the large international firms which dominate this industry. Finding ways to build domestic capacity in this kind of industry will require new and innovative thinking by policy makers.

One possible point of departure is the copyright system. Copyright has an important place in all creative industries. The need to strengthen domestic copyright legislation and institutions has been emphasized by joint UNCTAD/WIPO research on the Caribbean music industry. However, this is no longer a strictly domestic matter. Indeed, the international dimension of copyright legislation in the form of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property

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