

UN-Habitat Youth Forum

3-4 April 2005 Nairobi, Kenya

Written by Sunday Chanda
Rapporteur for the Youth Forum.

This report is a synthesis of the great input from Sayida Vanenburg of the Dutch Youth Council, Netherlands, other members of the Forum and the rapporteur for the Youth Forum.

Introduction

The Youth constitute a very special component of civil society, whose participation and involvement need to be broad-based. But what then is civil society, noting that UN-Habitat places value on the involvement of civil society in its work? Well, civil society can be difficult to understand, but although there are a number of conflicting definitions, there is widespread agreement that *civil society is a public space between the state, the market and the ordinary household, in which people (including youth) can debate and tackle action.*

Therefore the need for participation of youth in the UN-Habitat's work cannot be over-emphasized. The delegates to the Youth Forum were allowed the adequate time to prepare themselves for the task that lay ahead of them and to ensure that each one of them was at par. This was also ensured by the interaction of Ms. Mutinta Munyati and Ms. Murugi Maina with the delegates before hand, where issues and expectations were clarified.

The saddening part was that most of the Government delegations did not include youth, a trend that must be advocated against and hopefully changed by our respective governments. The youth delegates, however, took time to lobby their respective government representatives to support the Youth Resolution by the Norwegian Government. Building on resolution 20/1 and prior resolutions are which give specific recognition to the role of youth as partners in the process.

The Habitat Youth Forum, GC 20 was held from 3-4 April 2005 at the United Nations Complex, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya. This was a working forum for youth to contribute to the Governing Council of the UN-Habitat as well as to inform and update youth on UN-Habitat's ongoing work. On this score it becomes important that the Executive Director of the UN-Habitat is given a "Big Thank You" for allowing and ensuring that this event becomes successful. It is worthwhile to say the same "Big Thank You" to the UN-Habitat Partners and Youth section, who ensured that the agenda and entire program was on course and that the voice of youth is heard in the Governing Council.

The process of engaging youth in this process was largely informed by the on-line discussions, which were taking on the Taking IT Global web page. Nominations were called for a committee to help advise UN-Habitat's Executive Director on the formation of a youth consultative mechanism (which was part of the

recommendations given by youth who were involved in discussing *UN-Habitat and Youth: Strategy for Youth Engagement*) and consolidating the youth agenda to GC-20 and these formed part of the agenda.

The Youth Forum which started a day prior to the main GC-20 Session was then engaged in deliberations which were centered on the following:

- Reaching consensus on working modalities for the youth consultative mechanism, which began with online discussions
- Drawing strategies for youth engagement in the Global Partnership for Urban Youth in Africa, to which several cities have already indicated their interest and commitment.
- Reaching consensus on the statement to be tabled at the main GC-20 session

Objectives of the Youth Forum

1. To create a forum for engagement for Youth to the GC-20
2. To consolidate the youth agenda to the GC-20 session
3. To orient youth about on-going UN-Habitat youth programmes
4. To encourage the participation of youth at the GC-20 Session
5. To contribute to the finalization process of outlining working modalities for the youth advisory mechanism
6. To update youth on progress made with regard to UN-Habitat's on-going work

The **expected outcomes** of the Youth Forum were as follows:

- Finalized working modalities for the youth consultative mechanism
- Outlined strategies for youth engagement in GC-20
- Youth position/message to GC-20
- Informed youth on UN-Habitat's work on youth

The Youth Forum

The Youth Forum was officially opened by Mr. D. Okpala, Acting Director of the Monitoring and Research Division (Urban Secretariat), who in his words apologized for the non-availability of the Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka (due to her extremely busy schedule at the time) and instead read a speech on her behalf. In her speech, the Executive Director confirmed the important role that youth play in the UN-Habitat Agenda as a partner. She further implored on the youth to engage with

their various Government representatives in order to have the youth agenda moving into the Governing Council.

After Mr. D. Okpala's speech, read on behalf of the Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka took time off her very busy schedule at the moment to come and welcome the youth delegates and took time to respond to a few questions from the delegates. It was very interesting to have had the Executive Director and it confirmed her commitment to the Agenda of Youth.

Thereafter, we had an overview of UN-Habitat work with regard to youth and the panel was comprised of Mr. S. Anantha Krishnan, Chief of the Youth and Partners Section, who elaborated in quite some depth on how UN-Habitat intends to engage youth in its work. Further Mr. Anantha Krishnan brought to the attention of the delegates the fact that in May 2003, the UN-Habitat Governing Council adopted a Resolution on the engagement of youth in the Work of UN-Habitat. Resolution GC19/13 directs the Executive Director to "ensure the active participation of UN-Habitat in the Secretary General's initiative on youth employment; as well as to develop a Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development in Africa, in partnership with other relevant United Nations agencies, multilateral institutions and private foundations in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

He indicated that the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) was important as it sought to integrate the Millennium Development Goals with development programmes at the city level focusing on and working with urban youth in Africa and is consistent with MDGs number 7 target 11 and Goal 8 target 16.

It is intended that by June 2006 and during the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada (when UN-Habitat celebrates its 30th Anniversary) the pilot phase would have shown progress in the following areas:

- a) *In Employment and Capacity Building:* Replicable systems for vocational training and apprenticeships should be in place with increased employment opportunities, gender mainstreaming, new employment ideas, and slum upgrading
- b) *In Crime Prevention:* There should be progress on crime and delinquency prevention, and information on HIV/AIDS

- c) *Urban Governance*: The young people should be participants in governance projects, and there should be local and national policies in place on youth empowerment with tangible results through arts and culture
- d) *In regional networking*: As a NEPAD system functioning to promote urban youth development

After Mr. Anantha Krishnan's presentation, questions and clarifications were welcomed from the delegates.

Mr. Nicholas You, Chief, Best Practices and Leadership Programme followed Mr. Anantha Krishnan's presentation. In his presentation, Mr. You described his Programme as a regional network of advocacy institutions dedicated to the identification and exchange of solutions for sustainable development. Among the major activities that this Programme is involved in, include the documentation and dissemination of lessons learned from best practices, participatory assessment of effective policies and model legislation.

The Best Practices and Leadership Programme is also spearheading the Messengers of Truth (MOT) to help meet the urban youth challenge through information and awareness building on MDGs, participation in decision making and learning from each others success stories. It is coordinated by UN-Habitat and owned by youth groups and their representatives. The MOT is determined to inform 300 million youth living in slums and inner cities of the MDGs through:

- Songs, performances and lyrics of socially committed Hip-Hop artists
- Mainstream media reporting on "underground" events
- "Underground " media reporting on mainstream issues (MDGs)
- In more than 70 languages world wide

The MOT also endeavors to provide platforms where the voices of urban youth can be heard; promote youth participation in decisions affecting their lives and recognizing outstanding youth leadership and entrepreneurship. The Programme is also involved in facilitating, documentation and dissemination of up to 50 youth projects worldwide demonstrating how youth organizations are solving critical social, economic and environmental problems.

The MOT involves Hip-Hop artists, Youth and their representatives, private sector and local authorities and has major events lined up for 2005 in the following

countries: Canada, Germany, Kenya, South Africa, Spain and Tanzania. This will be followed by the Africa tour and Miracle of Candeal film

Among the many speakers that discussed very critical issues with the Youth Forum also included Ms. Laura Petrella who discussed the UN-Habitat's Safer Cities Programme and how it is operating in the respective countries where it is being implemented. David Driskell discussed with the Forum the Growing Up in Cities Programme focusing on the challenges and responses to them as well as opportunities for youth engagement.

The Youth Forum dealt with various topical issues including the involvement of civil society in improving local governance- the youth perspective; Youth and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as best practices that contribute to the MDGs and received presentations from the Linda Widmark of the One Stop Youth Centre of Nairobi and a paper from Ms. Lucia Kiwali from the Gender Unit. The delegates discussed the options and obstacles existing in building bridges between citizens and local governments, with the UN-Habitat giving their perspective and challenges.

Realizing the Objectives

The six outlined objectives of the Youth Forum were met in the following ways:

Objective 1 & 2: To create a forum for engagement for Youth and consolidate the youth agenda to the GC-20 session

With the special theme at the GC-20 "involvement of civil society in improving local governance", youth engagement was at the forefront of the preparation of the Partner and Youth section of UN-Habitat towards the GC-20. It had been recognized by UN-Habitat that the numbers of youth able to participate at the GC-20 would be limited due to financial restrictions and the limited number of government delegations willing to include a youth delegate in their delegation to the UN-Habitat GC-20 as well as a pre-requisite of the ECOSOC status for youth organizations to be allowed participation in the GC-20 Session. In order to maximize and ensure wider consultation and participation of youth to the GC-20 an online consultation was initiated early February 2005 by the youth's in collaboration with UN-Habitat at <http://groups.takingitglobal.org/unhabitatyouthstrategy>.

Objective 3 & 4: To orient youth about on-going UN-Habitat youth programmes

The presentations by the respective UN-Habitat officers regarding the various ways in which UN-Habitat is working to incorporate youth was highly enlightening, with proactive feedback from the delegates after almost each presentation. These presentations also highlighted the existing opportunity space for youth involvement in the UN-Habitat agenda. As if that were not enough, the Governing Council of the UN-Habitat ensured that youth were mainstreamed in their agenda as they allocated time (very unusual for such a body to do) to the Youth Forum to present a Statement to the full session. Active participation of youth during a roundtable on involvement of civil society in improving local governance was limited, as no special seat was reserved for a youth representative and due to conflicts of interests with the program of the second day of the Youth Forum. As a result, the opportunities for youth to fully participate at the 20th Governing Council were not optimized.

Objective 5: To contribute to the finalization process of outlining working modalities for the youth advisory mechanism

UN-Habitat had been requested by the Governing Council at the 19th session to establish an interim youth consultative mechanism to contribute to the work of UN-HABITAT. The process has been on going for the last two years between the UN-Habitat and the Youth Organizations. However, this youth advisory mechanism was not established before the GC-20. Hence, the Youth Forum discussed the following three proposed methodologies that came out of the online discussions around the composing the Youth Consultative Mechanism to the Executive Director of the UN-Habitat, as follows:

1. *Proposal One:*

Two representatives from each continent, a male and a female, and an additional three chosen on an affirmative basis (youth living in slums/unemployed youth/youth living with physical challenges/ indigenous youth etc)

2. *Proposal Two:*

That the youth be from youth be drawn from youth works that the UN-Habitat directly supports, for example derived from the two major campaigns: Global Campaign on Good Governance and Global Campaign of Security of Tenure. Representation should be by region on gender basis, with a maximum of 10 members.

3. *Proposal Three*

That the youth mechanism be an open-ended network of youth organizations directly involved in the UN-Habitat work

The points to note under these are:

- *Main meetings of the above should be held before the Governing Council Sessions and World Urban Forums*
- *The above should put into consideration gender, regional balance and vulnerable youth (such as those living in slums)*

In order to facilitate the forward discussion on the consultative mechanism the Youth Forum was provided with information from different UN agencies on their youth consultative bodies.

After extensive deliberations around how the Youth Advisory Mechanism should be constituted, it was resolved that a more open and broad consultative process be adopted, giving the rise to a letter by the delegates to the Executive Director, which is attached to this report and awaiting response from the Executive Director. As to whether the members to the Youth Consultative Mechanism will be elected online or the Executive Director will go with the submissions that were made after a call for nominations, we are yet to be informed after the Executive Director has made a response to the letter that was presented to her by the Youth Forum.

Objective 6: To update youth on progress made with regard to UN-Habitat's on-going work

UN-Habitat programmes such as the Best Practices and Leadership Programme, the Safer Cities Programme and the Partner and Youth section need to continuously provide the young people with information on their current activities and how young people can participate and be involved in these activities on local, national and international level. The Youth Forum was exposed to ample information around UN-Habitat and what they are doing. Of course, crucial initiatives such as the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) need to be taken off the ground to an extent that the youth in Africa and their counterparts from the entire global begin to contribute and build bridges in Africa's urban areas. The representative from the Millennium Campaign informed the Youth Forum about the different roles that youth from the South and North could play in achieving the MDG's.

Conclusion

The engagement and consolidation of the youth agenda were finalized through collective dialogue, which was evidenced by the drafting of the youth statement and a feedback session on the Youth resolution prepared by the Norwegian youth delegates. It would not be an exaggeration to announce that the youth delegates to the Youth Forum exchanged a lot of deep insight, which was mixed with humorous discussions after a busy-day's work. It was also evident that youth gained a lot of knowledge and insight regarding the UN-Habitat's on-going work and the existing opportunities.

The Canadian counterparts must be commended for organizing the World Urban Café as a build-up process towards the World Urban Forum 2006, Vancouver, Canada next year.

However, it should be noted that youth at the Youth Forum was very content with this extensive knowledge sharing. At the same time, young people questioned the format in which the information was presented and the time that the orientation and up-date took from the limited hours of the Youth Forum.”

It still remains a huge challenge to determine the best way how for the delegates to effectively disseminate the knowledge and experiences gained to various forums at international, national and local levels.

We await the response from the Executive Director regarding issues as contained in her letter attached to this report.

Recommendations:

In order to maximize the participation and involvement of youth in this process, the following suggestions, amongst many others, could be taken to the fore by the UN-Habitat:

- Future Youth Forums be allocated as much time to allow for maximum interaction between the different UN-Habitat programmes and the young people. This could result in a two-way learning process and more needs-based approach in the dissemination of the information of the UN-Habitat programmes.
- To facilitate the dissemination of the shared information at the youth Forum;

- (Web-based) fact sheets, containing contact information for young people and youth organizations, should be prepared.
- If possible, the UN-Habitat, through their respective partners could look at pre-Youth Forum activities that would also allow youths with limited (or lack of) access to the Internet to participate in the deliberations.

You may wish to get more information directly from the presenters listed below:

Nicholas You- UN-HABITAT- nicholas.you@unhabitat.org

Anantha Krishnan-UN-HABITAT- anantha.krishnan@unhabitat.org

Laura Petrella- UN-HABITAT - laura.petrella@unhabitat.org

Ruf.tufts-UN-HABITAT ruf.tufts@unhabitat.org

Robert Njoroge and Linda Biersmark - One Stop Youth Information Center-
youthforhabitatkenya@planetmail.com

Reychad Abdool- UNODC-Reychad ABDOOL@UNOV.org

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Sayida Vanenburg Dutch Youth Council sayidasd@yahoo.com

Jonah Josiah- International Youth Development Network- iydnkenya@yahoo.com

Kevina Power- Environmental Youth Alliance Canada-kevinapower@shaw.ca

Doug Ragan- EYA-doug_ragan@hotmail.com

Sajaia Behgam- Afghanistan Youth and Children's Development Programme

Annex 1

Youth Statement to the Governing Council

(Kindly note that the Youth Statement to the Governing Council had a preamble in the form of a pencil analogy, which basically emphasized the need for the scribe to sharpen the pencil, if it is to be useful. The pencil in this case represented the youth and the scribe was the present-day stakeholder).

The Youth Statement presented by Sunday Chanda on behalf of the Youth Forum:

“ Mr. President, Chairperson, the Executive Director of the UN-Habitat, respective heads of Governments and cooperating partners, members of the Civil Society, ladies and gentlemen.

May I convey gratitude from the Youth Forum to the Governing Council for according us this grand opportunity to present the Youth Statement?

The Youth Forum would also want to take this opportunity to thank the Norwegian Government and its delegation, which includes the representatives of youth from the Norwegian Youth Council, for consulting with youth and presenting the Youth Resolution to the Governing Council.

Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka in her message to the UN-Habitat GYF 2005 called the Global Urban situation “ a social time bomb”. With a 0.7% growth in slum populous each year between 1992 and 1997 and predictions that Africa’s urban population will double to 590 million by the year 2020, this becomes a desperate situation when one considers the state of many developing urban areas and one that we have that we have had far too little success in curbing. This is probably because, until recently, youth have been a non-entity in all levels of governance and community empowerment. Even now, many countries have failed to give young people the power to invoke change! To confirm that, one would be interested to find out how many youth delegates are forming part of their national delegations here?

Mr. President, in our modern day context, with over 50% of the world’s population under 25 and thus 30% of the global population over 15 years, who are classified as youth, we are faced with a reality where youth empowerment is not a luxury but a necessity. As HIV/AIDS and civil wars continue to lower the life expectancy of many

African countries, the world will have to either deal with the youth or deal with the dead.

However, the world in general has slowly, but surely, began to recognize the youth as real stakeholders particularly in urban areas- the UN Youth Initiative acknowledges that the young need to be considered as equal partners in policy making and implementation processes. Yet, all too often, these promises have in reality meant little more than “consultation” and the resulting policy has been a perceived notion of “what is best for young people”. This has led to the consistent failure no one can deny; a failure we are hoping that this Governing Council will begin to help rectify- with this youth statement and the Norwegian Youth Resolution as initial steps in much larger campaign: to create a mandate that youth concerns be addressed adequately.

Mr. President, the youth have proved to be a remarkable force to be reckoned with in the 21st Century. They have, in many cases, single-handedly organized themselves into groups, networks and caucuses and have done amazing things. These range from football clubs in Nairobi slums that organize clean ups for their areas to ICT Training Centres in Palestine training over 300 disadvantaged young people. The youth boast of thousands of such examples; a group that knows what it needs and how and when it needs it. We are asking the Governing Council to help give it to us and we will match the given opportunities with the required levels of responsibility and obligation.

Thank you very much for the opportunity”.

Annex 2 Resolution 20/1 Youth and Habitat Presented to the Governing Council by the Norwegian Delegation.

The Governing Council,

Recalling the Habitat Agenda¹, specifically those paragraphs relating to youth and participation and most notably among them, those paragraphs² which stress the importance of partnership and involvement,

Recalling also its resolutions 17/19 of 14 May 1999, 18/3 of 16 February 2001 and 18/8 of 16 February 2001 on partnership with youth and 19/13 of 9 May 2003 on enhancing the engagement of youth in the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme,

Acknowledging the importance for children and youth of participating in the shaping of their environment and of freedom of association, bearing in mind applicable human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

Recognizing that young people are key agents for sustainable human settlements development and a vital resource in achieving the development goals related to the United Nations Millennium Declaration³,

Concerned that social exclusion and poverty limit young people's involvement and participation in society and hamper them in realizing their potential as agents of social change,

Especially concerned that girls and young women and indigenous young people are particularly at risk of exclusion and discrimination, and that gender inequalities also negatively affect boys and young men,

Recognizing that young people are in an important transitional period of their lives, during which habits and attitudes necessary for good citizenship are established,

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3–14 June 1996*

(United Nations publication, Sales No.E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II

² Paragraphs 13, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32 and 33.

³ General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000. HSP/GC/20/14

Noting the experiences from youth information and resource centres aiming to provide free, impartial and low-threshold information services to all young people,

Convinced that comprehensive policy approaches implemented at national and local levels aimed at increased community participation by young people will make important contributions to accelerating the processes towards sustainable human settlements development,

Noting with appreciation the efforts made in the framework of the Youth Employment Network to increase the employability of young people,

Taking note of the Global Campaign on Urban Governance, which promotes the involvement of young people in local governance, the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in support of vulnerable young people within the framework of the Safer Cities Programme and of the Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development in Africa,

Taking note also of the draft strategy on enhancing the engagement of youth and youth organizations in the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme,

Noting with appreciation that some countries have taken steps to include youth representatives in their delegations,

1. *Requests* the Executive Director to finalize the Youth Strategy for Enhanced Engagement, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and to develop an action plan for implementation, including an internal evaluation which takes into consideration inputs from youth organizations,

2. *Also requests* the Executive Director to continue to strengthen and mainstream the work of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in collaboration with other United Nations agencies where necessary, on the engagement of young people in human settlements development and in addressing the problems of young people at risk, especially girls and young women;

3. *Encourages* the Executive Director and local and central governments to draw on the experiences of other stakeholders working in the area of youth participation and youth information;
4. *Invites* Governments and other partners to assist in capacity-building by providing resources to young people and their organizations, in order to promote inclusiveness, responsiveness and transparency in local governance and community development, and to enable young people to participate in international, national and local activities related to sustainable environmental and human settlements development;
5. *Encourages* Governments and youth organizations to support the creation of representative and democratic national youth councils;
6. *Also encourages* Governments, local authorities and civil society to support and implement enabling strategies in cooperation with relevant youth organizations and youth movements, by among other things, providing young people, especially those living in urban areas, with education and training to enhance their vocational and entrepreneurial skills so that they may secure their own employment;
7. *Encourages* local and central governments to support forms of cultural and recreational expression to enable young people living in slums and inner cities to play an active role in support of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;
8. *Recommends* the Executive Director to initiate a study, subject to availability of funds, in collaboration with relevant Habitat Agenda partners, on the effects of social and economic conditions related to urbanization on the inter-generational transfer of values conducive to good citizenship and on the manner in which national and local governments can assist this process where necessary;
9. *Urges* Governments, local authorities, Habitat Agenda partners and youth-serving organizations to establish youth information and resource centres, where feasible, with the aim of reaching all young people, including vulnerable youth groups;
10. *Invites* local authorities to establish city-to-city partnerships for developing, exchanging and improving best practices on youth participation in decision-making processes, in close partnership with local formal and informal youth movements;

11. *Requests* the Executive Director, within the framework of the Habitat Agenda, to support local, regional, national and international youth organizations in developing partnerships with other youth organizations in their own regions, and also in other regions;

12. *Also requests* the Executive Director to facilitate the participation of representative youth organizations and of youth movements at important meetings of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and to make arrangements for youth caucuses before and during meetings at future sessions of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and of the World Urban Forum;

13. *Urges* Governments to include young people drawn from representative youth organizations and youth movements in their national delegations to sessions of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and of the World Urban Forum;

14. *Also urges* Governments in a position to do so and other partners to provide the United Nations Human Settlements Programme with resources for youth activities, particularly in the least developed countries, through available mechanisms, and to increase development assistance to those countries aimed at youth activities;

15. *Requests* the Executive Director to report on the implementation of the present resolution, including on the youth strategy and action plan, at the twenty-first session of the Governing Council.

Annex 3 Letter to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat

To the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT

We, the participants of the Youth Forum at GC 20, want to make the following proposals in regard to the UN-HABITAT Youth Strategy:

1. We would like to see the youth Forums at GCs and WUFs turned into youth caucuses on equal terms with the existing women caucuses. We request the Executive Director to facilitate for these caucuses.
2. The Youth Consultative Mechanism:

We favor a mechanism where the Executive Director selects the members of the youth consultative mechanism based on prior nominations. The Executive Director should collect nominations from the following:

- All member governments of the UN
- All youth organizations accredited by ECOSOC, including national and regional youth councils.
- UNHABITAT youth partners

The youth consultative mechanism should consist of youth from representative youth organizations. The members should be representatives from all continents, where both genders are represented from each region and where the number of representatives from the various continents is determined on a proportional basis. In addition to the regional representatives, we also propose that the youth consultative mechanism should have members from specific interest groups relevant to the work of the UN-HABITAT. These could be youth living in slums, unemployed youth, youth living with physical challenges, indigenous youth etc.

The youth should be selected to serve for a two-year term, where half of the members are selected every year.

The youth consultative mechanism should be part of a comprehensive approach to participation, i.e. by establishing linkages to youth involved in UNHABITAT projects on the ground and coordinating with the youth caucuses envisioned in point 1.

This letter has been adopted by the Youth Forum as a whole, with the reservations of Mr. Duosson G. Christophe and Mr. Matou Abubaker.

Sincerely,

The Youth Forum of GC20,
5 April 2005

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Rapporteur of the Youth Forum
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