



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Biennial Panel on Youth and Human Rights

#HRC60 • 16 September 2025



BACKGROUND

In its resolution 57/30, the Human Rights Council decided to dedicate the theme of the 2025 biennial panel discussion to the **role of youth in fostering peaceful societies** and creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all. This panel provides an opportunity to explore the leading role youth play in fostering peaceful societies and creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all, and highlight the main barriers and challenges young people face to active, meaningful, safe and inclusive youth participation. It will identify lessons learned and promising practices in supporting and empowering young people to build peaceful, inclusive and rights-respecting societies. It will set out how the global youth rights framework such as **Youth 2030** and the **Pact for the Future** must be leveraged to promote and ensure active, meaningful, safe and inclusive youth participation in fostering peaceful societies and creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all.

OPENING REMARKS

Ms. Nada AL-NASHIF, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Every two years, the UNHRC hears directly the voiced of world's youth - those who hold the keys to our future and are already shaping our present. Over the past week, the UNHRC has heard



about escalating crises, suffering, and human rights violations, alongside calls to strengthen the human rights ecosystem. Youth are essential partners in this task.

Today, there are **1.9 billion young people** in the world – an immense resource of ideas, energy, and values. Yet, year after year, their voices go unheard. From the Occupied Palestinian Territory to Sudan to Ukraine, young lives are being cut short by conflict, and opportunities erased. In 2024, attacks on learning facilities rose by an estimated 44%, leaving millions of children and youth out of the classroom.

Attacks on young people who **defend democracy** and human rights are growing, and we must not turn away. From the young protesters in Nepal to the Serbian students holding firm in the face of crackdowns and violence, to the student movement that led last year's protests in Bangladesh, we must stand with those who are speaking out for justice. There is a global pushback on **freedom of expression** for young people. In some countries, students are being subjected to surveillance, suspended, expelled, and even deported for their legitimate political activity. Young people's compassion and urge to fight for change are not threats; they **are our best hope**.

Technology plays a complex role. When unregulated and misused, it fuels cyberbullying and loneliness. Many young people are feeling hopeless and frustrated by their perceived powerlessness in the face of today's challenges. For the first time, they are reporting poorer mental health than any other age group. We must ensure young people are safe online, while benefiting from the extraordinary opportunities digital tools provide. And we must extend these opportunities to the estimated one in five young people who remain offline.

These challenges weigh heaviest on **marginalized youth** - migrants, refugees, young persons with disabilities, and those living in poverty. Young women in many countries are still held back by discriminatory laws and social norms. How can young people create an enabling environment for human rights if their own rights are not upheld? With more than half of the world's population under 30, there are only **2.8% of young parliamentarians**. This is indefensible.

Especially as, time and again, we see **youth leading movements**, advancing humanitarian response, and championing change. In Gaza, where international media are banned, young people climb over the rubble to find a phone signal - determined to tell their truth to the world. Students at the University of the South Pacific initiated the legal case that led to the historic ruling by the International Court of Justice on climate change.

Some Governments are also taking **promising steps** - from quotas for youth participation in state bodies, to youth councils and youth-led policy platforms. Norway, for example, places young people's contributions at the center of climate policy-making by including them in both domestic discussions and international climate negotiations. In Armenia, India, and Lesotho, governments have pioneered new strategies and policies on youth development, participation, and skills, aiming to create a supportive environment and a future-ready generation.

Youth inclusion is a UN-wide priority. Ten years ago, UN Security Council resolution 2250 recognized the central role of youth in building and sustaining peace. Since then, the UN Youth Strategy, the Call to Action for Human Rights, Our Common Agenda, and the Pact for the Future have all highlighted the transformative power of youth and called for their meaningful inclusion.



OHCHR is fully committed to supporting these efforts. With our partners, Education Above All, we launched a project, called YES - Youth Empowerment System, to build youth capacity in Colombia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Palestine, Senegal, and South Africa. The **Youth Rights Academy** is working to strengthen youth human rights activism globally. OHCHR is engaging with young human rights defenders in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, in Serbia, and beyond to amplify their voices and support them in their fight for peace, equality, and justice.

The paradox of our time is that we are trying to solve novel challenges with outdated approaches. To move forward, we need tools and frameworks fit for today - based on inclusive and meaningful dialogue. Youth can help devise them. OHCHR urges all Governments to work with - not against - their youth. All youth - regardless of nationality, gender, ability, or sexual orientation - must be able to participate in decisions that define their future. We must **invest in youth leadership** by creating safe and enabling environments, reforming laws and institutions, and removing financial and knowledge barriers. We must also invest in human rights education.

With **international law under strain**, youth can mobilize to ensure that justice and respect for rules are back at the core of the international system. As communities descend into polarization, youth can build bridges to chart a path out. As conflicts, climate change, and new technologies challenge human rights, youth can innovate to safeguard our common future. Let us give them the space, trust, and tools to lead.

Mr. Felipe PAULLIER OLIVERA, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs

Gathering at a moment of extraordinary significance, not only on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda this year, but most and foremost because the world witnessing something profound. Young people worldwide are not waiting for permission to build the peaceful and just societies they deserve. From the streets of their cities to the halls of power, and from digital spaces to community centres - 1.9 billion young people are already leading. They are defending human rights. They are bridging divides. They are creating solutions that governments and institutions are still catching up to.

But we must honestly confront the fact that young leaders and human rights defenders are facing **significant barriers** in their daily work and activism. Young people in marginalized communities - especially young women, those with disabilities, and those in conflict zones - are systematically excluded from the very decisions that shape their futures. This is not just unfair. It is dangerous. Because when we neglect to hear young people, we not only deny their right to shape the future. We also deny ourselves the best chance at a safer, more sustainable, and more just world.

Discussions such as this one matter so much. In these discussions we do not talk about youth, but we **listen to them, learn from them, and commit to real change**. We already have the frameworks. Security Council resolution 2250 gave us the blueprint, with meaningful youth participation at its very core. The Pact for the Future, adopted just last year, renewed our commitment to systematically listening to and working with young people. Our Common Agenda and Youth 2030 show us the way forward.



But foundations mean nothing without action. Therefore, we shall move beyond recognition to real partnership. We shall move beyond consultation to **genuine power-sharing**. We shall move beyond tokenism and ensure that meaningful youth participation becomes not just a promise we make, but a practice we live. Because the young people in this room - and the millions they represent - are not just our future. They are our present. They are our partners. They are our hope for creating the peaceful, inclusive world, which is possible when we truly work together.

STATEMENTS BY PANELLISTS

Ms. Nelly MONZÓN, Coordinator of the Nab'il Project and Secretary, Young Artists for Social Justice

As the spokesperson of the youth of Guatemala and the American continent, Ms. Nelly MONZÓN introduces the activities of youth networks and associations at formal and informal level who work on a daily basis to improve societies and promote human rights. These young people are often building trust networks, transforming tangible realities. Their work shows that young people are not just beneficiaries of policies but also active stakeholders, drivers of human rights.

Youth in Guatemala represent 32% of the population, some 5.7 million young people. Six out of ten people are aged under 30. This makes the country eminently young. There are good demographic trends with 63% of the population of working age - a unique opportunity. Young people are not only the future but also the present. They can transform society on the ground.

Yet youth face significant challenges. Firstly, **adult-centric behaviours**, namely measures that affect daily life are mostly taken by adults, making youth perspectives invisible. Secondly, **historical exclusion**, meaning that young people from the original peoples, young women, persons with disabilities and rural young people face additional barriers to be heard. Thirdly, **limited implementation of human rights**. While Guatemala has ratified a number of international treaties - their implementation remains inadequate.

These barriers limit youth participation and make it difficult to build peaceful cohesive societies. Given these challenges, Guatemala's youth has taken an active transformative role. A tangible example is the **Nab'il project**, financed by the Peacebuilding Fund, implemented by UNFPA, IOM and UNHCR. This initiative seeks to promote significant non-symbolic youth participation, building enabling conditions so that young people can have an effective impact on decision-making at community and municipal level.

The project has the goal of strengthening participation of **Indigenous youth and mestizo youth** through training, joint activities and dialogue platforms with local authorities, ensuring that young people's proposals are effectively incorporated in local governments, programmes and plans of action. Young people can have an impact. People in the west of Guatemala are showing their leadership on human rights, peace and social well-being.

The project made it possible for young people who had never before participated to be identified and learn and act. Young people who are now joined in networks, making it possible for them to cooperate, join forces and have more of a local impact. **Transforming narratives, negative perceptions** of youth who were often seen as a problem and as a generation without a direction have become positive. They now have inclusive dialogue mechanisms with local authorities who



not only recognise the project's contribution, but have also shown readiness to continue within their public policies.

Progress on inclusion and the intercultural approach with a high level of participation by young women and greater awareness of cultural equity, strengthening diversity and plurality in leadership and a catalyzer effect institutionally, creating synergies between the UN system, local authorities and young people, leading to political and financial commitments and those at the public and community level, building social cohesion beyond the project itself.

This project can be replicated. It has a territorial approach, **psychosocial and rights-based approach**, building good practise which can be replicated and expanded. Young people have established dialogues with the human rights officer of the Ombudsman, presenting proposals and good practise. The most valuable input is that speaking of human rights has become part of daily life, in daily language, in conversations with the community.

Human rights are not just a far away concept reserved for international forum. It does not matter if somebody lives on the most remote mountain or in a busy city. Human rights are present in their world, in their voice, in their way of seeing life. It is a compass for them. Furthermore, mental health is part of the process. Young people were trained to recognise that emotional well-being is crucial because to live with other people, one has to be able to live comfortably with oneself. Thanks to these actions, young people are not only calling for rights but exercising them and promoting them, becoming **active agents for peace** and social transformation.

Youth call on states and the international community to give priority to young people and projects that strengthen their participation and promotion of human rights, recognise and support successful models such as the Nab'il project, multiplying good practise and ensuring sustainability and real participation, where young people can have an impact on local and national decisions, ensuring that youth voices are heard and have a tangible impact.

When young people have a place at the **decision-making table**, there is a real sustainable transformative impact. The youth of Guatemala shows that peace is built from the grassroots up and that promoting human rights is crucial for fair societies. When persons are aware of their rights, they can speak out and act differently. Knowing your rights is not just an end in itself. It is the start of a movement, a chain of actions that can change whole communities. Human rights, when they are part of life, become a **transformative force**.

Mr. Hamish NOTT, Member, Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

Mr. Hamish NOTT shares with the UNHRC the role young people in the Scottish Youth Parliament play in fostering peaceful societies and creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all. The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is a national organisation representing all young people who live in Scotland.

SYP exists to raise the voices of Scotland's young people, to make sure decision makers listen to and involve youth in decisions that affect their lives. Their vision for Scotland is of a nation that actively listens and values the meaningful participation of young people, to ensure young people grow up loved, safe and respected, and able to reach their full potential. SYP is made up of around **160 members** of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs). MSYPs are 14 to 25-year-olds from every



part of Scotland who are democratically elected by young people every two years. There are two MSYPs per Scottish Parliament constituency, which enables them to work in partnership with Parliamentary counterparts, and with the Scottish Parliament directly.

SYP is a **very diverse parliament**. For example, over half of the members identify as young women. Nearly one quarter have a visible or invisible disability, and around one third of MSYPs belong to a minority ethnic group. As an organisation which puts young people's human rights at the centre, MSYPs are passionate about raising young people's awareness of their rights, and ensuring decision-makers uphold them. In particular, all of their work is underpinned by young people's right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them.

With just a small team of dedicated staff to support their work, **SYP is entirely youth-led**, which means all the major decisions about what they do are made by young people. For example, all MSYPs are involved in deciding which issues SYP takes a position on and what happens in their campaigns. MSYPs plan and lead consultations to find out young people's views, facilitate workshops, and meet with elected representatives and other decision-makers across Scotland. Eight MSYPs are elected each year to make up the Board of Trustees, which is responsible for strategic decisions about what SYP does. Since it was established in 1999, SYP has influenced major changes in Scotland. One of the mechanisms through which youth do this is through their relationship with the Scottish Government.

Every year, MSYPs and Members of the Children's Parliament meet with Scotland's First Minister and their Cabinet, for the [Annual Cabinet Meeting with Children and Young People](#). Alongside this, MSYPs also attend an [Annual Executive Meeting with the Scottish Government's Permanent Secretary and Directors-General](#). These annual meetings give them the opportunity to tell the most senior politicians and civil servants in Scotland about issues affecting the young people they represent.

The annual Cabinet Meeting is the only one of its kind anywhere in the world. These annual meetings lead to real and meaningful change. Commitments made by the **Scottish Government** as a result of these meetings have led to more opportunities for young people's participation in decision-making, the banning of anti-loitering devices in public places, the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scottish legislation, and the introduction of free bus and ferry travel for all people under the age of 22.

For instance, the **introduction of free bus travel** demonstrates the ways youth-led organizations such as SYP can have an impact. In 2018, MSYPs carried out a Scotland-wide consultation to understand young people's experiences of public transport. 1,329 young people shared their views through a survey and focus groups. The results of this consultation were published in our [All Aboard report](#), which made ten recommendations for improvements. MSYPs shared the report on social media, wrote letters and gave presentations, and met with the Scottish Government, public transport providers, and other decision-makers to highlight young people's views and experiences. One of the recommendations called on Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government to review and expand concessionary fares to include all young people across all public transport networks. A group of MSYPs raised this recommendation with the Scottish



Government's Cabinet, where they agreed to carry out a review to look at extending discounts on public transport.

MSYPs and other young people helped with this review by taking part in workshops with Transport Scotland to make sure young people's views were at the centre of the decisions made around this issue. They also wrote blogs and letters, gave presentations, and held meetings with transport providers to increase support for extending concessionary fares. Following their campaign, the Scottish Government introduced the Young Persons' (Under 22s) **Free Bus Travel Scheme**, which began in January 2022. Since then, [Transport Scotland has reported](#) that in the three years since its introduction, nearly 219 million journeys have been taken through the Free Bus Travel Scheme. This scheme has been shown to contribute towards efforts to reduce child poverty, widening young people's access to education and employment, enabling them to build and maintain relationships with friends and family members, and develop independence.

Drawing to a close, Mr. Hamish NOTT makes three recommendations for consideration by UNHRC members. Firstly, **national youth voice mechanisms**, such as youth parliaments, should be embedded within national decision-making structures, and should be supported to connect young people in local geographical and demographic communities with those national structures. Secondly, ensure young people play a meaningful role in **fostering peaceful societies** and creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all, youth must be meaningfully involved in all decisions which affect them, from the start of the process and throughout.

Finally, policymakers and organisations must make a concerted effort to ensure young people who are marginalised and those who are furthest from their rights are listened to and involved in decisions. Meaningful inclusion of young people in **decision-making** leads to more inclusive and effective policies that better serve the needs of young people.

Ms. Palak RAO, Global Advocacy and Programs Advisor, Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH)

Throughout history and across every continent, young people have been at the heart of **movements that shaped societies**. From the struggles against colonialism in Africa and Asia, the defence of democracy in Latin America, standing up to oppression during the Arab Spring, to the civil rights and social justice movements across North America and Europe, young people have consistently stood on the frontlines, raising their voices to build more inclusive, just and rights-based communities.

Today, this spirit continues. Around the world, student movements rise in countless ways. Some formal - as student unions, councils, and organizations that engage and influence institutions. Others informal such as grassroots collectives and movements that emerge from classrooms, digital spaces and within communities themselves. Whether expressed through protest, art, or quiet acts of solidarity, such movements share a common spirit - the **refusal to accept injustice** as inevitable. These movements are **boldly intersectional** - weaving together struggles for the right to education, gender equality, racial justice, caste abolition, Indigenous rights, LGBTQI+ rights, workers' rights, disability rights and climate action, amongst others. Young people are



showing us that human rights and social justice must be understood in all their interconnected dimensions.

One of the most recent and powerful examples of this decade is the **global movement for Gaza**, which has mobilized thousands of students worldwide in sit-ins and divestment campaigns, demanding an end to complicity in occupation, apartheid and genocide. Similarly, the student-led **Fridays for Future** global movement demands urgent action to address the triple planetary crisis. Students in different parts of the world are also pushing back against soaring tuition fees, deepening inequality, and the privatization of higher education.

These movements are inspirational, but they also come with a **sobering reality**. Defending human rights as a young person often puts one's safety and freedom at serious risk. Just last week, a young queer activist stood in court in Türkiye after being arrested in early August. A dear friend and colleague of mine, Enes Hocaogullari, was charged in the aftermath of giving a speech on human rights as a youth delegate at the Council of Europe. Enes's story is not the only one.

Through longstanding engagements, the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) has seen that **students defending human rights** are too often met with harassment, surveillance, academic reprisals, arbitrary and long-term arrests and even killings. Their research shows that in many countries, general efforts to shrink civic space such as restrictive laws on assembly and association, bureaucratic harassment and weaponizing funding regulations, disproportionately target student movements because of limited resources and networks. Women, LGBTQI+ youth, and marginalized groups within activist communities face particular risks, as their identities intersect with the causes they defend. Too often, young defenders are labelled as troublemakers rather than recognized as social agents protecting and advancing human rights.

The SAIH has worked not only to respond to such threats, but also to actively challenge and counter them. Over the past decade, the SAIH has helped establish protection mechanisms for **student activists at risk** and contributed to similar efforts across multiple regions. In parallel, it has advanced efforts to strengthen **global norms on academic freedom**, including students' right to academic freedom at all levels of education. This work led to the development of the *Principles for Implementing the Right to Academic Freedom*, which has gained significant traction within the UN system and some regional human rights mechanisms.

The SAIH also helped develop practical tools, most recently, contributing to the *Guidelines for Universities to Host Human Rights Defenders*, led by the UNESCO Chair on Protection of Human Rights Defenders. This initiative aims to make universities safer and more supportive spaces for defenders, including students, in exile or at risk. These are a few examples from the work youth do at SAIH, but protection of human rights defenders should not, and cannot, rest solely on the shoulder of civil society. The international community also bears responsibility.

First, we need **stronger legal protections** for young human rights defenders and student activists. Governments must review and repeal restrictive laws that criminalize peaceful protest and association. Second, we must **ensure education equity and protect educational spaces** as safe arenas for free thought and civic engagement. Universities must be sites of protection for young people to debate, organize, and challenge power without fear of reprisal. Third, we need



meaningful inclusion of youth voices in decision-making processes. Too often, young people are invited into policy spaces symbolically or aren't heard at all. Fourth, it requires **financial support and resources**. Youth movements, especially informal and grassroots ones, often operate with little to no funding or institutional support. If we are serious about empowering youth, we must support them, on their own terms. Finally, it means **international solidarity**. The attacks on young activists are not isolated incidents. They are part of a global pattern. The international community must stand united in condemning these attacks and in building systems of protection and accountability.

In closing, Ms. Palak RAO stresses that the story of human rights is, and has always been, a **story of youth**. Their citizenship is not granted; it is claimed through lived experience, resistance, and a vision for a more just world. Supporting young people is not about the future, it's about defending rights and advancing justice now.

**Mr. Bakary D. SONKO, Co-Founder and National Programmes Coordinator of Peace Hub
The Gambia**

Gathering on the critical topic of the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda through the lens of human right, Mr. Bakary D. SONKO highlights the pivotal role that young people play in shaping a just, peaceful and prosperous world. The **Youth Peace and Security agenda** has emerged as a crucial framework for promoting sustainable peace and development. By recognizing the meaningful participation of young people in peace processes, we can harness their energy, creativity, and idealism to drive positive change. Young people are not merely beneficiaries of peace and security; they are also key agents of change.

In **The Gambia**, young people like Bakary are leading initiatives that promote the Youth, Peace and Security agenda through programs and activities that inspire meaningful participation of their peers in peace, promotion of the human rights of all and overall, solidify community solidarity. One such initiative is mentoring young men and women as active agents in the implementation of the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security.

Mr. Bakary D. SONKO played an integral role in the development of the **first National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security** by raising awareness across the country, build the capacity of key stakeholders and build alliance among development partners to ensure a progressive policy documents that projects the aspiration of young people in the National Action Plan process. Another initiative he has led is the establishment of a **network of community mediators** through a Youth, Peace and Security-sensitive programme. The latter ensures alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, providing a platform for young people to resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively. By empowering young people with mediation skills, we can reduce the risk of violence and promote social cohesion.

Furthermore, Mr. Bakary D. SONKO has worked closely with stakeholders to build the capacity of Members of Parliament, Local Government Councils, youth, women, and persons with disabilities. This has enabled them to participate effectively in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion. They have also developed **Peacebuilding Training Manual**, which helps build the capacity of young people to understand the peace and security realities of the country and ensure active engagement among the stakeholders.



At the regional level, young people are mobilizing their peers and inspiring courage and determination. The **African Youth perspective** on the New Agenda for Peace is a testament to their contributions in promoting human rights, rule of law, and peace. West Africa is leading the way in implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, with three countries already adopting their National Action Plans on Youth, Peace and Security.

However, recent trends suggest that young people are **increasingly sceptical of their governments**. Protests have become a common means for young people to express their demands and hold their governments accountable. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in building trust between young people and their governments. To ensure the relevance and impact of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, governments and other stakeholders must prioritize building trust with young people and creating enabling environments for their participation. This can be achieved through increasing transparency and accountability, fostering inclusive decision-making, and promoting youth-led initiatives.

In conclusion, Mr. Bakary D. SONKO urges the UNHRC to recognize the critical role that young people play in promoting peace and development. By investing in young people and empowering them to participate in decision-making processes, we can build a more peaceful and prosperous world for all. Urging continued efforts to ensure that the **Youth, Peace and Security agenda remains relevant and effective** in promoting sustainable peace and development, he calls on the UNHRC to work together to create a brighter future for all, where young people are empowered to shape their own destinies and contribute to the peace and prosperity of their communities. By doing so, we can unlock the full potential of young people and harness their energy, creativity and idealism to drive positive change. Together, we can make a difference and create a peaceful and prosperous world for all.

REPLIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms. Palak RAO believes on the importance of states and other relevant actors to engage with formal student groups, but more importantly, engagements with grassroots social movements led by or including of young people is really important and should be consciously and consistently prioritized. Supporting their initiatives and voices alongside respecting, promoting and protecting their rights is vital. **Social media** are deeply important to many youth and student movements, especially in their campaigns and communication work, but regrettably cyber bullying and doxing amongst other challenges are common experiences of young people in many parts of the world. Moreover, Internet shutdowns also impact young people in different parts of the world. States, tech companies and other actors must do better in protecting and promoting digital rights of the wider civil society, including young people working to defend human rights.

Turning to **good practices**, her organization's model can be one which is useful to look at. They are a democratically elected student led movement that conducts research and does advocacy to protect and promote higher education, academic freedom and the rights of students and academics at risk globally. About how to **engage with young people**, there are several strategies to do so, such as making path for young people to hold positions of power and the authority to shape policies and agendas, engaging with their movements and organizations and funding



protection mechanisms and educational opportunities for young people. It is our collective responsibility to counter the global backlash on human rights and civic space, especially with growing authoritarian tendencies around the world.

As a final message, she stresses **that young people are not just the future of human rights, they are the present**. From universities to the streets, from digital platforms to community spaces, students around the world are leading bold intersectional movements for justice. But too often it comes at a cost. Arrests, reprisals and repression are not exceptions. They are becoming the norm. SAIH shows what is possible when young people and students are supported and protected. Under international law, states have a very clear obligation to respect, protect and fulfill human rights of all. This extends to young people who are exercising their rights as active citizens, shaping society to protest participation and public voice. States, together with institutions like the United Nations, national human rights bodies, universities and others, must move beyond symbolic recognition. What is needed are concrete legal protections, actual inclusion and not just meaningful inclusion, and sustained support for youth-led movements, recognizing youth not just as future leaders but as rights holders and citizens of today.

Mr. Hamish NOTT stresses that national youth organizations such as the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) can play an important role in fostering peaceful societies and creating an enabling environment for the **enjoyment of human rights by all**, especially at a national level. For over 25 years, SYP has successfully represented the issues concerning young people through our positive relationships with decision makers, strong campaigns and the wide diversity of our politically impartial membership. In a world where the challenges affecting young people are constantly changing, especially with the rise of social media and online misinformation, as mentioned by their representative for Thailand, it is more important than ever that youth structures at all levels in society continue to continue the difficult conversations and advocate for change on behalf of young people.

While **adapting to the new challenges**, it remains imperative that youth organizations such as SYP continue their efforts to reach young people who are furthest from their rights. As a representative for the rural Scottish Highlands, he appreciates the importance of ensuring young people in more isolated communities are given an opportunity to voice their views, especially with the disparity of basic infrastructure in comparison with urban areas. Despite this, SYP remains committed to ensuring every young person's view is heard and respected regardless of geographical boundaries and are proud to have members from every area of the country championing their local communities. Finally, since being elected in 2021, he has been fortunate to experience different interpretations of youth participation. From speaking to UN Human Rights Council today to talking with young people in a classroom or community centre - his message is simple. It does not matter how we engage with young people, rather that they are in an **environment where they feel safe** and which allows them to engage the most and that they feel they are being meaningfully involved in the decision-making process.

Ms. Nelly MONZÓN emphasizes that guaranteeing youth participation requires sustainable and measurable focuses. It is fundamental to **institutionalize the participation of young people** as a right, integrating this at local framework level, ensuring public policies which guarantee their effective participation at all decision-making levels and avoiding a mere fig leaf consultation. It is



essential to continue and broaden programs around leadership and political participation as well as intergenerational dialogue and peaceful dispute settlement, adapting methodologies to local context. Furthermore, formalizing partnerships between local governments and international agencies as well as civil society and the private sector will ensure the sustainability of the spaces of participation we have set up. In the same way, **facilitating interinstitutional models** for the participation of youth and human rights as well as fostering their ability to self-protect is essential for continuity in community leadership.

These spaces do not only strengthen the voice of young people. They generate **tangible and sustainable outcome** in peace-building and community development. The experience of the Nab'il project in Guatemala demonstrates that when interagency efforts are joined up regulating and joining up local authorities and civil society, there is a greater impact and a more sustainable result. This coordinated work allows youth to strengthen young leaders to work towards effective human rights and build volunteer work and focus its impact. This can have psychosocial benefits and inclusive initiatives. This has led to tangible benefits in youth participation demonstrating that the results are maximized when efforts are concerted in a strategic and collaborative fashion.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Regional and Cross-Regional Groups

Algeria on behalf of the Arab group draws the Council's attention to the fact that in 2024, the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports launched the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security (2023-2028), which constitutes a regional roadmap for implementing the UN Security Council's agenda. It is based on participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and reintegration. One cannot discuss youth rights without addressing the suffering of the Palestinian people. Palestinian youth in Gaza and the West Bank are being denied their rights under occupation. They are facing the war on Gaza and the resulting destruction and human losses, along with grave violations in the West Bank, including restrictions on movement, home demolitions, and settlement expansion. The Arab Group affirms that halting the aggression, lifting restrictions, and ending repressive practices are essential conditions for enabling Palestinian youth to live in dignity and exercise their full rights. The Arab group further stresses that youth participation is essential. To achieve sustainable development and promote peace and security, it believes that the implementation of the Charter for the Future, adopted by the General Assembly in 2024, provides an opportunity to enhance their national participation.

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Francophone group** emphasizes that youth lies at the heart of their concerns. Youth represent our future but also our present. Youth are a lever for a fairer world, one that has greater solidarity and is respectful of human rights. Nonetheless, too many young people are deprived of full enjoyment of their fundamental rights, which prevents their active participation in democratic and social life. Access to education, training, digital inclusion, employment and security remains limited, despite the legal obligations of states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This situation should be a wake-up call because, according to the UN, 15- to 24-year-olds currently represent 1.2 billion people, and by 2030, this number will reach 1.3 billion. In some countries, those under 25 represent more



than half of the population. In Africa, 15- to 24-year-olds represent approximately 60% of the population. While progress on the SDGs is slowing, young people are innovating and proposing solutions to major challenges. The inclusion of young people in the design of public policies must be a priority. To ignore it would be to turn our backs on hundreds of millions of people who are the bearers of our future. By valuing the vitality of young people and their innovative spirit, we will build a common future, rooted in solidarity and founded on respect for rights.

Dominica behalf of the CARICOM group stresses that in the Caribbean Community, where over 60% of the population is under the age of 30, youth are regarded as assets to a region whose energy, creativity and innovation are essential to collective progress. Guided by the Declaration of Paramaribo and the Future of Youth, the CARICOM group continues to place emphasis on policies and programmes that empower youth through education, skills development, entrepreneurship and opportunities for meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making. A key example is the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme, a 32-year-old initiative that has fostered generations of leaders who continue to contribute to national and regional development and advocate for human rights and champion climate justice. However, at the same time, the CARICOM group recognises that barriers and bottlenecks to youth participation persist. In this regard, the group emphasises the importance of ensuring that young people are provided with access to quality education, meaningful employment, digital connectivity, safe spaces for civic engagement and support for entrepreneurship. These investments are essential to ensure that young people are fully equipped to drive sustainable peace and advance the enjoyment of human rights for all.

The **European Union**, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, stresses that the meaningful participation and inclusion of young persons is key in all endeavors aimed at promoting peaceful societies and human rights. Their role and potential are clearly reflected in the UN Youth Strategy, the Call to Action for Human Rights, Our Common Agenda and, most recently, in the Pact for the Future. Young persons, through their unique perspectives and innovative approaches, are at the forefront of addressing today's most pressing global challenges. It is the responsibility of States to safeguard and expand their civic space, which is an integral element of healthy and resilient democracies. Today's discussion provides a valuable opportunity to deepen our understanding of how to address the persistent challenges hindering inclusive representation and meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes, namely, poor education, lack of opportunities, harassment or reprisals. The EU has developed practical efforts to enhance youth participation. In this respect, the delegation highlights the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027; the creation of a youth sounding board and the appointment of Youth Advisors for EU international partnerships; as well as the creation of youth consultation structures at country level facilitated by EU Delegations around the world. Recently, the Commission President has launched a Youth Advisory Board, putting young persons at the heart of EU policymaking. Finally, it highlights the EU Youth, Peace and Security conference, which will take place in November 2025, in Brussels.

Ghana on behalf of the African group states that Africa has the youngest population of any continent, with a median age of just 19. More than 60% of Africans are under the age of 25. This reality is not abated by the powerful demographic dividend that, if harnessed, can drive innovation, inclusive growth and sustainable development. To unlock this potential, we must



actualise the right to development for young people if they are to be real drivers of peace and sustainable societies. This means three priorities. First, quality education and skills for the 21st century. Second, meaningful participation of youth in decision-making. Third, enabling environments for entrepreneurship, digital innovation and decent work. Peace and development are mutually reinforcing. By investing in youth, we invest in stability, prosperity and conflict prevention. When young people enjoy their rights and opportunities, they become agents of peace, tolerance and inclusive growth. The African group reaffirms its commitment to harnessing the demographic dividend guided by African Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The African group calls on the international community to strengthen cooperation, solidarity and financing so that African youth can realise their full potential. Yes, we can. Yes, we ought to invest in young people.

Iceland on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic countries gives the floor to a representative of the youth of the region, united in commitment to human rights and peace. Young people are not merely beneficiaries of human rights. Youth are activators of change and defenders of dignity. Yet many face barriers, limited access to decision-making, safety threats and tokenistic involvement. In conflict zones around the world, from Ukraine to Gaza, these challenges only intensify. Youth are the first to be sent to wars but the last to be invited to the tables discussing peace. This must change. The youth from the Nordic-Baltic countries call on states to fulfil their obligations by ensuring youth access to information, participation and justice, adequate investment in youth-led initiatives, education, mental health, climate activism is essential. Leaders should not only welcome youth voices and listen sincerely but move beyond consultation to genuine co-creation. Without their equal partnership, a peaceful, just and sustainable future cannot exist. In this spirit, they ask how can states ensure that youth are not just heard but also given real power to shape policies and decisions.

Slovenia on behalf of MED9¹ recognizes that empowering youth is a strategic imperative for stability, sustainable development, and the enjoyment of human rights for all. In line with MED9's joint contributions to the preparation of the new Pact for the Mediterranean and the new vision of the Union for the Mediterranean, the nine Mediterranean countries are focussing on tangible steps for youth empowerment. They are supporting regional centres of excellence, vocational trainings, youth strategies, quality employment and peer learning platforms. They are placing special emphasis on developing frameworks for cooperation in educational issues and scholarship mechanisms throughout the Mediterranean region. These investment initiatives will foster inclusive growth by keeping youth with practical skills. They will build long-term resilience for local needs and will create meaningful participation by establishing platforms for dialogue. The group wants to learn from the panellists' experience which would be the most effective strategy to ensure that initiatives like those mentioned are not just created for youth, but are also co-designed and owned by them to ensure truly meaningful participation.

State Delegations

Albania stresses that when youth are included as equal partners, societies benefit from their innovation, energy and vision for a more just and sustainable future. Guaranteeing the full

¹ Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.



enjoyment of human rights for all is a foundation for peace, stability and development. Yet too often youth face barriers to participation, education, employment, limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully into societies. It is our responsibility to create enabling environment where young people can engage fully in civic life, champion tolerance and prevent violence. Through its national youth strategy, Albania has empowered youth, young people to participate in decision-making, intercultural dialogue and community initiatives. The establishment of youth centre and local youth action plans provides safe space for engagement. It is important to deepen our collective understanding and strengthen international cooperation and assistance to ensure the active, meaningful, safe and inclusive participation of young people. By working together across borders, sharing good practices and providing resources and protection, we create an enabling environment where young people can contribute fully and without fear. Such cooperation is essential not only to promote the enjoyment of human rights by all but also to build societies based on trust, justice and lasting peace.

Armenia welcomes the topic of the discussion and thanks the panellists for the comprehensive presentation. Young people are not only beneficiaries of rights, but they are essential players in building inclusive, resilient and right-respecting societies. In Armenia, youth are engaged in peace-building through various initiatives such as the Women and Youth Agents of Peace programme and provide Armenian youth with the skills to lead dialogue, promote reconciliation and counter misinformation in fragile contexts. In March 2025, Armenia adopted the first law on youth policy, creating a comprehensive framework for youth participation in decision-making and establishing youth centres and institutional mechanisms to support their initiatives and to ensure that young people are recognised as equal partners in shaping policies that affect their lives. International cooperation in advancing youth rights is a key priority for Armenia. In partnership with the Council of Europe and UNICEF, Armenia has expanded youth awareness of healthcare rights, digital literacy and climate justice among other issues. These efforts contribute to the vision set out on Youth 2030, the Call to Action for Human Rights and the Pact for the Future. Armenia stands ready to further contribute to international efforts for empowering the role of the young people and to create enabling environments where young people can thrive as human rights defenders and speed builders.

Burkina Faso recognizes that development can only be effective, sustainable, and inclusive if youth are actively involved and their major concerns, particularly employment and training issues, are taken into account in development programs. Taking these concerns into account is essential to promoting peace and the enjoyment of human rights. In this spirit, Burkina Faso has implemented initiatives aimed at promoting youth employment and skills development through the establishment of the Employment Promotion Support Fund and the Youth Initiatives Support Fund. Finally, Burkina Faso recommends that the United Nations Youth Strategy consider the programming of actions aimed at combating the recruitment of young people into terrorist groups and strengthening youth participation in activities to combat terrorism and violent extremism.

The **Dominican Republic**, whose President Luis Abinader has pointed out, youth are a pillar of democracy, peace, and prosperity, and as its Foreign Minister Roberto Álvarez affirms, no development or peace process is sustainable without our active and secure participation. In a country where more than 60% of the population is under 35 years old, talking about youth is talking about the present. Youth are protagonists in innovation, diplomacy, politics, the defense



of human rights, and in responding to global challenges such as climate change and inequalities. The Dominican Republic reiterates the importance of creating safe and inclusive environments that guarantee youth full participation. The Dominican Republic reaffirms its commitment to the youth, peace, and security agenda, the Youth 2030 Strategy, and the Pact for the Future, convinced that empowering young people ensures a future of peace and human rights for all.

Ecuador agrees with the panellists on the fact that young people still face significant structural barriers that limit their full, safe, and inclusive participation in building peaceful and democratic societies and in defending human rights. In this regard, Ecuador has demonstrated a firm commitment to youth and inclusive economic development, promoting a series of policies and programs that seek to transform youth aspirations into tangible realities. This commitment is reflected in initiatives that mutually reinforce each other to build a cohesive youth policy. For example, the ‘Human Development Credits’ allow young people to undertake sustainable projects and generate employment, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency. Likewise, the ‘Vivo Joven’ programme is an inclusive strategy that motivates young people to actively participate in community action, supported by the opening of ‘Youth Houses’ meeting spaces where young people can promote social, environmental, and innovative projects. Agreements with universities and institutes have also been promoted to expand opportunities for technical and higher education. Initiatives such as ‘*Jóvenes en Acción*’ offer direct financial support and opportunities for economic and environmental recovery projects, reaffirming the government’s commitment to strengthening economic recovery and the leading role of young people in the country’s social transformation.

El Salvador, as co-sponsor of the UNHRC resolution on Youth and Human Rights, greets the holding of this panel and reaffirms its commitment to this agenda and generally for fostering spaces strengthening the voice of young people in multilateral debates. El Salvador echoes the words of the UN Secretary-General in that for the multilateral system to be able to offer a present and future that works well for all, significant participation of young people must become the norm and not the exception. From our its own national experience, El Salvador has fostered a social development model based on the culture of integration, which has allowed the country to transform its reality and base work on youth participation, generating a fostering environment and the empowerment of communities are key parts of this. El Salvador will continue to work actively on promoting our youth and human rights agenda, convinced that it is only through their leadership and an active role played by youth that we will build more inclusive and resilient societies.

Ethiopia firmly believes that empowering young people is key to fostering peaceful inclusive and rights respecting society. Youth bring innovation, courage and community leadership to the forefront, especially in times of crisis. Ethiopia has seen this firsthand through youth-led peace building, climate resilience effort and civic engagement across regions. The national youth policy emphasizes inclusive participation, human rights education and economic empowerment while investing in programs that promote intergenerational dialogue, build life skills and create safe space for youth voice, particularly for girls and youth people with disabilities. However, significant challenges remain. Youth continues to face barriers in accessing decision making, education, employment and safe civic space. Addressing this requires greater international cooperation financing and political will. Finally, Ethiopia supports the full implementation of Youth 2030, the



Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and the Pact for the Future. Lastly, Ethiopia echoes the call for structure, meaningful and safe participation of youth at all levels, local to global.

Italy takes the floor through its youth delegates to the United Nations who cannot ignore the heavy price that conflicts impose on their own generation. Too often young people experience the denial of their right to education, displacement, loss of family members and even life itself. Yet youth remain a cornerstone of sustainable peace. Youth act as human rights sentinels raising early warnings when tensions escalate, advocating for dialogue and standing for justice when rights are violated. In this role, young people are not only victims but also active agents of change and guardians of intergenerational justice. Yet for youth participation to be truly transformative, persistent barriers must be removed, limited education and awareness on human rights, lack of resources and the marginalization of the most vulnerable groups and the need to protect young activists and human rights defenders. As Italy develops its first National Action Plan on the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, the country commits to ensuring meaningful youth participation in advancing peace and safeguarding rights in situations of conflict, while fostering a culture of dialogue and mediation. The question is not whether young people are ready to lead, but how institutions can best support and amplify their voices.

The **Maldives** recognizes youth as one of the nation's most valuable assets. Safeguarding young people and empowering them to lead is a key national priority. The Maldives' whole-of-society approach ensures youth voices are not only heard but also meaningfully integrated into decision making processes at all levels. In this regard, the government has established the Presidential Youth Advisory Board designed to provide young people a direct role in shaping national progress by integrating youth policies into broader development plans reflecting government's steadfast commitment to youth empowerment. The Maldives is also advancing youth skills through the national apprenticeship programs and community upskilling program enhancing employability and self-reliance. Further, 10% of the national budget is dedicated to youth related activities guided by Youth 2030, UNSC Resolution 2250 and the Pact for the Future, and the country aims to ensure youth participation is meaningful and inclusive.

The **Marshall Islands** gives the floor to a Marshallese youth advocate who is part of a generation that refuses to inherit silence. Around the world, young people are fostering peaceful societies, not through hope, but through active resistance, creativity, compassion, and solidarity. Youth are not just peacemakers and participants in human rights discourse. Youth are architects of the future. The role of youth in the ICJ's advisory opinion on climate change is a testament to this. Youth coalitions from the Pacific and beyond mobilise international momentum, demanding clarity on states' obligations to protect our planet, including for future generations. This is intergenerational equity in action. Likewise, the Marshall Islands are confronted with the nuclear legacy, not as distant history, but as a lived reality. Both as a tribute and a duty to their elders, the Marshallese youth have to educate themselves about the darkest chapter of their history and the 67 known nuclear weapons that were tested on their islands. Youth are amplifying survivor voices, advocating for accountability, and ensuring that the scars of nuclear testing are neither forgotten nor repeated. The Marshall Islands calls on member states to move beyond tokenism, investing in youth-led peacebuilding, protecting civic space, and recognising that meaningful youth participation is not charity. It is necessity.



Moldova, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 10th anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution 2250, reaffirms its unwavering commitment to promoting and ensuring the full realisation of all human rights of young persons. Empowering youth and fostering their meaningful participation in the decision-making process are key drivers of economic growth, resilient democracies and more inclusive peaceful societies. In recent years, Moldova has made significant progress in aligning its youth policies with European and international standards. For instance, Moldova has enhanced the Youth Law; it has adopted the Youth Sector Development Strategy Youth 2030; it has established National Agency for Youth, tasked with developing, implementing and monitoring youth policies. Additionally, several national programmes have been launched to encourage youth engagement, such as Youth Centre Network, Youth Grants Programme and Youth Capital Programme. Moldova is making sure that adults are taking youth seriously in the country. While recognising the progress made, Moldova remains mindful of the challenges that persist and the emergence of new threats. Moldova is fully committed to continuing its efforts to develop coherent, forward-looking youth policies for the benefit of the entire society. Lastly, Moldova asks how to make sure that in the framework of the UN80 process, youth policies at the international level, youth cooperation, and international cooperation are not overlooked.

Mongolia, characterized by over one-third of the population under the age of 45, young people are a vital source in shaping peaceful, inclusive and democratic society. Youth-led organizations and student movements across Mongolia have been active in promoting democratic governance, transparency and access to education, health care and information. The engagement strengthens Mongolia's democratic resilience and contributes to the realization of the SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. In this vein, empowering and fully harnessing the potential of youth people are agents of future has been at the heart of the governance policy. In 2016, the parliament of Mongolia adopted the law on promoting youth development. Following the 2024 elections, an independent ministry responsible for youth issues was established for the first time in Mongolia. It is an important step towards ensuring the substantive participation of youth in development policy and programs. The government of Mongolia has also declared 2025 as the year of youth support. Furthermore, in May this year, the Ministry approved the medium-term policy document, the Youth Development Support Strategy 2026-2030 based on extensive discussions and research among young people in collaboration with civil society organizations and development partner. Mongolia asks which are the main challenges youth face in promoting human rights and how can government support youth involvement in peace-building.

Portugal recognizes that young persons continue to face significant challenges which demand coordinated responses from states, the United Nations system and all relevant stakeholders. Supporting the mental health and well-being of young persons is also critical to sustaining peace. In an increasingly digital world, it is vital to equip youth with the skills to navigate new forms of participation and to safeguard human rights in both physical and online spaces. Human rights education plays a central role in this effort, enabling youth to translate human rights principles into meaningful change. Portugal has a long-standing commitment to the youth agenda from hosting the first and second World Conferences of ministers responsible for youth to actively supporting the establishment of a fully-fledged UN youth office and to presenting resolutions in several multilateral fora on the role of youth. We must, therefore, ensure that youth perspectives



are not only heard but systematically embedded into conflict prevention frameworks and human rights policies at all levels. Portugal would like to know from the panellists what concrete steps could be taken to ensure that digital inclusion becomes an integral part of our efforts to create enabling environments for youth participation.

Qatar emphasizes the pivotal importance of youth in achieving development and stability. It considers their enjoyment of human rights and the provision of adequate opportunities for active participation in various aspects of life to be the fundamental guarantee for enhancing and developing their role. Qatar's youth empowerment policies are based on Qatar National Vision 2030. The state has paid great attention to youth by providing education and training and expanding their leadership and knowledge horizons. In this context, in 2023, the State of Qatar adopted the National Youth Policy, which represents a comprehensive strategy and vision to identify youth needs and priorities and enhance their participation in various aspects of cultural, social, economic, and political life. In April 2025, the Qatar Youth Delegates to the United Nations Training Program was launched. This program represents a qualitative step to prepare a select group of Qatari youth to represent their country in international organizations and provides them with the opportunity to build relationships and exchange experiences with their counterparts around the world. The State of Qatar has provided continuous support to numerous regional and international initiatives in the field of youth empowerment, most notably Silatech's efforts to empower youth economically and socially by connecting them with employment opportunities. The Qatar Debate Centre also continues its efforts to promote dialogue and support youth to become key players in global issues and prepare a generation capable of facing future challenges. In conclusion, Qatar affirms its unwavering commitment to continuing to support and empower youth, believing that they are the cornerstone of building the bright future to which all peoples aspire.

Romania gives the floor to a Romanian youth delegate who explains that across Romania and the entire world, secondary and tertiary education institutions remain the main site where youth civic engagement, professional networking and advocacy development intersect. As such, barriers that affect students, such as economic insecurity or precarious funding, particularly limit the capacity of youth to participate in public life. Additionally, some youth groups are particularly stalled in their pursuit of impactful output. For example, young artists and researchers like a single, visible global forum or network where best practises, funding routes and accountability tools are routinely shared. However, out of all groups, the youth in rural and remote places often fare especially badly. Because they are harder to reach, they are frequently excluded from mainstream inclusion strategies, thus being particularly isolated from civic involvement, resources and funding. Existing platforms, such as student bodies, arts residency networks, researcher portals and rural youth organisations provide some help, but are fragmented and often difficult to find for someone dealing with a concrete, place-based challenge. Social media helps bridge contacts, but studies warn that it rarely substitutes for structured dialogue. There is still a lot to do to ensure that young people across all sectors have access to what they need to fulfil their role in building peaceful and resilient societies. To face this challenge, the Romanian youth is ready to contribute to sustainable policies for the world's 1.9 billion young people.

Saudi Arabia has been keen to care for and empower youth, providing them with more opportunities in various fields. Saudi Arabia is working to create supportive and stimulating



environments that enable them to participate comprehensively and effectively and enhance their contribution to facing global challenges. The Kingdom's Vision 2030 has been an incentive for youth, as they are always at the forefront of national programs and initiatives aimed at achieving their goals. This is achieved through their involvement in development projects and initiatives. Saudi Arabia has also launched multiple programs and projects to empower youth, including job support programs, training and qualification programs in the tourism, sports, and entertainment sectors. This is in addition to financing and entrepreneurship initiatives, as well as modern work models such as freelancing, flexible work, and remote work, all of which have provided ample opportunities for youth. In conclusion, the Kingdom affirms that, despite the satisfactory tangible achievements, it is making steady strides towards promoting and protecting human rights and empowering youth to be at the heart of development and building a more peaceful and sustainable future.

Thailand reaffirms that youth participation is vital to peaceful, democratic and inclusive societies. Thailand supports youth leadership at both local and international levels. The Bangkok Youth Council engages young people directly with city authorities to propose policies and promote inclusivity in governance. At the international level, the Thai Youth Delegate Programme to the UNGA equips young Thais to represent their peers globally and advocate for peace, multilateral cooperation. These initiatives reflect Thailand's beliefs that empowering youth strengthens social cohesion and peaceful societies. Yet Thailand is concerned by the fact that worldwide, many young people are drawn into conflict or exposed to violence. In particular, the digital sphere poses growing risks where youth can be misled and manipulated as tools in disinformation campaigns, hate speech or incitement to violence. Thailand believes that it is the duty of governments to equip young people with the knowledge and protections that they need so they are empowered to participate in democratic life without being exploited or exposed to harm. In this regard, Thailand would like to know from the panellists how can social media empower youth in peaceful civic participation without being misused to incite division or violence.

The **United Arab Emirates** emphasizes that youth represent a fundamental pillar of sustainable development and a driving force toward a more just and peaceful future. From this perspective, the UAE has adopted a set of national programs aimed at empowering youth to be ambassadors of tolerance, forgiveness, and peace, enhancing their active participation in policy formulation, and encouraging constructive dialogue between generations and cultures. In this context, the UAE launched the fourth edition of the Arab Youth Pioneers Initiative, with the participation of forty pioneers from thirteen Arab countries, across ten development tracks. The initiative provides opportunities for direct interaction with leaders, decision-makers, experts, and investors, in addition to advanced training workshops and quality support programs. This contributes to empowering youth and investing in their capabilities to become effective partners in building a thriving knowledge economy with a global impact. In conclusion, and based on the Emirati belief in the importance of working together with the international community to invest in the energy of youth, the UAE asks the panellists how can international cooperation be enhanced to share best practices in empowering youth and supporting their role in building peaceful and inclusive societies.



Viet Nam stresses that youth play a critical and multifaceted role in achieving sustainable development goals and promotion and protection of human rights. However, they are facing many challenges such as poverty, lack of access to education, job opportunities, digital technologies, et cetera, to fully realize this potential. Vietnamese youth has contributed significantly to protect our peace and get in socioeconomic development, poverty reduction and promotion and protection of human rights. There are currently 47 young Delegates under the age of 40 in the National Assembly accounting for 42% of the total Delegates. The government of Vietnam always prioritizes youth in designing and implementing important policies. From Viet Nam's perspective, the role of youth in this regard can be further enhanced to encourage and empower youth to actively engage in the promotion and protection of human rights, enhance participation of youth in international fora and global initiatives and strengthen human rights education for youth.

UN Entities

FAO welcomes the focus on youth as agents of peaceful, inclusive societies and champions of human rights. FAO's 2025 report on *The Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems* highlights that 85 % of the 1.3 billion youth live in lower-income countries, where agrifood systems are vital for livelihoods. Yet, youth, especially in rural areas - and this is aggravated for many young women - face persistent barriers to engaging productively and benefiting from agrifood systems. Limited access to resources, education, training and decision-making restricts their ability to secure decent jobs and food security, affecting both current well-being and future prospects. Youth are central to the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Alarmingly, food insecurity among youth has risen from 16.7% to 24.4% over the past decade, demanding urgent action. We must amplify youth voices in policy, invest in youth-led solutions, and create enabling environments for youth leadership in agrifood systems. FAO remains fully committed to partnering with youth as equal stakeholders. Transforming agrifood systems with and for youth is essential to sustainably achieving the right to food for all.

UNDP is proud to stand with young people as key partners in advancing human rights and building inclusive and peaceful societies guided by a new strategic plan and youth 2030. UNDP recognizes youth not only as future leaders but as change makers today. Across regions, young people are building trust across divides, preventing violence and advancing justice in their communities. Yet young people continue to face civic space restrictions, threats and barriers to participation. UNDP supports their efforts by creating safe spaces and infrastructures for meaningful participation online and offline. These include youth Parliaments, youth councils, civic platforms and digital assemblies and intergenerational dialogues that actually enable young people to shape decision making. In countries like the Gambia, UNDP has supported the development of the national action plan on youth, peace and security, institutionalizing youth participation in governance and peace building. In Ukraine, with UNDP's support, young people lead reconstruction efforts, establish youth councils and contribute to community cohesion and local planning. To create an environment where everyone can fully enjoy their human rights, it is essential to prioritize youth empowerment, investment and leadership. UNDP calls upon the international community to reinforce our collective commitment to ensure that young people's voices are heard, their rights upheld and that no young person is left behind in shaping a just and sustainable future.



UNFPA jointly with UNICEF and UN Women stand united today to highlight the transformative power of adolescents and youth, in building peaceful, human rights-respecting societies. Young people are not just the future; they are our most powerful asset for peace today. In every corner of the world, youth-led movements are challenging harmful social norms, dismantling discrimination, and holding leaders accountable. However, gender inequality and discrimination remain significant barriers. Despite their immense potential, too many young people are excluded from the very decisions that shape their lives and communities. Too many, especially girls and young women, are still unable to make free and informed decisions about their bodies, health, relationships, and futures. This exclusion denies them their fundamental rights including free, active and meaningful participation, fueling instability. To create an enabling environment for human rights, we must move beyond simply acknowledging young people and invest meaningfully in adolescents and youth. This means:

- Supporting them to develop their skills and creating platforms for them to be part of policymaking.
- Strengthening gender equality and addressing the intersecting forms of discrimination that affect marginalized youth.
- Supporting independent, youth-led organizations that are the engines of change, especially for marginalized adolescents.
- Supporting young peacebuilders, including girls and young women peacebuilders, who are at the forefront of efforts in promoting peace

By empowering young people to be active participants and leaders, we are not just investing in their future; we are investing in a more peaceful, just, and equitable world for everyone. Similarly, this panel shows the importance of youth participation also at the Human Rights Council. UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women will continue to advocate for more systematic forms of youth engagement on all human rights issues.

National Human Rights Institutions

The **National Human Rights Commission of Cameroon** points out that young people in the country have organized awareness campaigns and actions aimed at promoting peace and combating hate speech, cybercrime, cyberbullying, and tribalism, such as the national march against hate speech organized by the National Youth Council of Cameroon across ten regions between May and June 2024. Another notable example of this commitment among young people is the mobilization against sexual harassment in universities. Following a student association's alert, the Commission contacted the relevant authorities, leading to consultations, notably at the University of Yaoundé II in 2024. To strengthen the role of Cameroonian youth in consolidating peaceful societies and ensuring an environment conducive to the exercise of human rights, the Commission recommends strengthening institutional mechanisms for participation by strengthening human rights clubs in secondary schools and universities, and decentralizing existing youth parliaments at the national, municipal, and regional levels.

The **National Human Rights Council of Morocco** attaches great importance on youth rights and constantly strives to build their capacities and promote their empowerment and active participation in political, economic, cultural, and social life. The Moroccan NHRI's support for



young people is demonstrated in particular through partnerships with youth associations. In terms of capacity-building, the Moroccan NHRI has provided various training sessions, notably in partnership with OHCHR and other UN agencies, for young people from Morocco's 12 regions, as well as from across the MENA region and Africa. For example, these training sessions focused on their role in defending economic, social, and cultural rights, building tolerant societies, interacting with the United Nations system, and combating climate change. To support them, the Moroccan NHRI also supported youth participation in the COP, their submission of parallel reports to treaty bodies, and the UPR. In 2025, Morocco will have an internet penetration rate of 108%, with a predominantly young population present in the digital space. This space allows young people to exercise and claim their rights and freedoms. However, this same space presents numerous challenges, including risks related to hate speech, invasions of privacy, and digital harassment. Hence the importance of taking these issues into account when developing laws and public policies. Finally, the Moroccan NHRI encourages Morocco to continue strengthening its public policies targeting young people and strengthening spaces for participation at the national and international levels, in order to promote the role of young people as essential actors in building the rule of law, consolidating democracy, and promoting and protecting human rights.

The **National Human Rights Committee of Qatar** believes in the importance of the roles of youth in promoting peace and creating an enabling environment for the effective enjoyment of human rights. Within the framework of its follow-up to national and international efforts in this regard, it welcomes the progress achieved, and expresses its deep concern over the persistence of challenges that hinder the effective and full participation of youth. In this context, the Qatari Committee calls upon the UNHRC to urge states to adopt legislation that supports the participation of youth in various fields; to encourage states to adopt national plans for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2250, with the aim of enhancing their participation in peace and security efforts; to encourage international cooperation in supporting economic and social development projects; and to strengthen the measures and policies taken to address violent extremism. Lastly, the Committee further recommends the UNHRC to urge states to adopt national policies based on a human rights-based approach, involving national institutions, civil society, and various stakeholders, while emphasizing the participation of youth, including young women, in the processes of drafting, implementing, and reviewing policies and decisions related to their future.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) on behalf of the Indonesian Civil Society Coalition of Anti-Sexual Violence declares that since August 2025, young Indonesians have been protesting against injustice and the corruption that led to the poor living conditions in the country. Unfortunately, the government has taken a disproportionate response. The police force and the military led to the death of 10 people, most of whom were young. A 28-year-old woman was burned alive inside the Regional Parliament Building in Makassar while a 21-year-old taxi driver was crushed to death by the police in Jakarta. Instead of responding to the concerns raised by the youth, the government has accused the protests as an act of terrorism and treason. Police have been arresting youth activists, including young leaders of civil society organisations that share their concerns and solidarity with protesters, ban live features on social media and continue using violence in responding to the protests. The Indonesian government must fulfil the



young people's demands, investigate the death of 10 people and provide justice to the victims and their families, stop using the police force and the army to inflict violence on protesters, stop criminalising young people that have been using their voices and ensure the protection of marginalised groups, including women and children. Protests are the key to defend human rights to all and the Indonesian government has the responsibility to listen and to fulfil the rights of the people, not to criminalise them.

Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA) emphasizes that youth are vital partners in building a just and peaceful society, yet they are often excluded from decisions that affect them, denying communities the energy, innovation and leadership they offer in promoting human rights and peace. Education empowers them to engage fully and drives social transformation, whereas its absence undermines their potential as active peace builders. Young people, particularly those in contexts of poverty, conflict, displacement and discrimination, face barriers in their access to human rights, with girls and young women disproportionately affected. It is impossible to achieve sustainable peace without educating and empowering youth to strive for it. On this premise, ensuring youth access to rights is a strategic investment in the resilience and stability of societies, as empowered youth will certainly challenge injustice, resolve conflict peacefully and advocate for inclusive societies. IIMA urges member states to remove barriers to youth participation in all decision-making processes; guarantee quality education and human rights education for all young people, as means to unlock their potential as peace builders; and protect and systematically mainstream youth rights through existing UN human rights mechanisms, especially the UPR and the treaty bodies.

Plan International gives the floor to Esther, a girl speaking on behalf of young women and youth advocates from all around the world. While recognising the commitment under the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and UNHRC resolutions 51/17 and 57/30, yet young people - especially young women, poor youth and youth with disabilities - are still under-represented in peace-building, governance and human rights discussions, even though they are among the most affected by conflict and rights violations. Many young people face gaps in quality education, digital skills and safe online spaces. These barriers silence youth voices and weaken efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies. Young women and youth advocates urge member states to ensure meaningful youth participation in all decision-making levels; invest in youth-led initiatives; and protect young human rights defenders and peace advocates. Young people must not only be mentioned in resolutions, but they must also be present, resourced and protected as equal partners in creating peaceful and just societies.

Beijing Guangming Charity Foundation explains that Chinese social organizations are practicing the protection of autistic youth's development rights through 'full-chain support' and the Foundation's 'Stars Project', a public welfare initiative aiding autistic groups, is a typical example. They have collaborated with Beijing Yanyangtian Public Welfare Classroom and Hunan Xingyulin Rehabilitation Center to build a 'Capacity Improvement-Social Integration-Employment Support' system. For a decade, Yanyangtian has been providing music therapy, intangible cultural heritage experience and other courses for mentally challenged youth aged 16-30, and organizing integration activities with Olympic champions, enabling 24 students to perform on stage. Xingyulin has established the 'Xingyuhui' Bakery, helping autistic youth acquire professional skills and realize social value. These practices prove that the collaboration of social organizations



under government guidance can light up hope for autistic youth. The Foundation stands ready to share its experience to jointly build an inclusive world.

Iranian Thalassemia Society notes with utmost concern that in Gaza, countless children suffer from war injuries and more than 21,000 have been left permanently disabled in less than two years. Those who survive live under endless siege struggling each day with hunger, thirst and displacement. Young women in Gaza see no future ahead with over 90% of schools damaged or destroyed. Universities turn into shelters and families waiting in dangerous lines simply to find food. Instead of experiencing growth and hope this generation lives each day with death, injury and the grief of losing loved ones. Children in Gaza go to sleep in fear and young people awaken in despair. This stark reality directly contradicts the commitments outlined in this Council's Resolution 57/30 on use and human rights. Without the most basic rights to life, health, food and water no other rights can be meaningfully realized. The Society calls on the international community and this Council to ensure urgent humanitarian food and medical access to Gaza, condemn and stop military attacks on civilians, schools and hospitals, expand psychosocial support and rehabilitation for children and families. Today, in Gaza, childhood does not become use and use is destroyed before it can ever flourish.

The **Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Center for Women (ARROW)** stresses that peace and human rights cannot be realized without the active participation of youth. Millions of young people aspire to shape inclusive and peaceful communities, yet their contributions are too often overlooked. Despite their contribution, young people continue to face shrinking space and systematic barriers that limit their ability to participate meaningfully and safely. ARROW urges states to recognize youth as equal partners in peace building in line with the youth peace and security agenda and its five pillars of participation, protection, prevention, partnership and reintegration. This means ensuring that young people's voices are not merely heard but acted upon. Guaranteeing safe civic space and meaningful participation is essential to breaking the cycles of conflict and promoting lasting peace. Youth has the strength of the mind while old age has the wisdom of the mind. By combining the energy of the youth with the wisdom of the experience, societies can flourish. Only through such commitment can we build peaceful, inclusive and sustainable futures where the rights of the young people are fully realized.

The **Association of Iranian Short-Statured Adults** states that youth are meant to be the architects of peaceful futures yet in recent months across parts of the Middle East in both Iran and Palestine they are denied even the right to live. In Iran, years of unlawful unilateral sanctions have crushed opportunities for young people restricting education, health care and employment and have placed unbearable burdens on future generations. The recent aggression by Israel killed over 1,000 Iranians, most of them young. Their voices and dreams were silenced before they could contribute to peace. In Palestine, youth face systematic deprivation. They are denied from exercising the most basic freedoms every human being should enjoy. UNHRC resolution 57/30 highlights these rights, education, digital inclusion and online safety, mental health and meaningful participation for Palestinian youth each of these rights is under siege. The Association urges the UNHRC to end sanctions that punish youth and mortgage their future to ensure accountability for attacks that kill young civilians and to guarantee safe education, digital access, online safety and above all the right to life and food.



Christian Council International (CCI) and many faith-based young people who feel left out of global human rights discussions state that, despite being often told that youth are the future, yet many youth are excluded because their faith convictions are labelled as anti-rights. This is not true. Faith traditions uphold the dignity of every person, defend life from conception to natural death and affirm the vital role of the family. These beliefs are at the root of social order and strengthen human rights, not weaken them. Across Africa, young volunteers support faith-based organizations as they run hospitals, schools and community programs that bring hope and dignity to countless lives. They advance human rights every day, just their voices remain absent from the tables where decisions are made. This was evident in the summit of the future and ICPD+25 where faith-based youth perspectives were largely excluded. CCI urges the UNHRC to be intentional about including all youth perspectives in implementing the pact for the future and other youth-based global frameworks. Decisions should reflect the values and experiences of every voice in society.

Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI) is surprised to have heard no mention of conscientious objection to military service in this debate on the role of youth in fostering peaceful societies and creating an enabling environment for the enjoyment of human rights by all. As the UN75 Youth Declaration recognizes, this right is particularly relevant to youth. In too many countries, their first adult experience is conscription into obligatory military service, not always with an opportunity to exercise the right. This right is also explicitly included as paragraph 12 of the American Convention on Youth Rights. To take the example which has been quoted repeatedly of opposition to the conflict in Gaza, the role must be mentioned of the 18-year-old Israeli men and women, one of whom spoke at a side event yesterday, who have refused call up to take part in military action and who have consequently suffered repeated terms of imprisonment in military prisons. We should not just consider them victims. We should celebrate their direct action against war and the example they set to all of us. To quote the old question, what if they gave a war and nobody came?

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

7 Regional and Cross-Regional Groups

19 State Delegations

3 UN Entities

3 National Human Rights Institutions

9 Non-Governmental Organizations