



**ECOSOC
YOUTH
FORUM**

#YOUTH2030

2024 ECOSOC Youth Forum
**"Youth shaping sustainable and innovative solutions:
Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of crises"**

IDENTIFICATION	
Session title	Engaging Youth in Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies
Session focus	SDG16 Peace, Justice, & Strong Institutions
Session leads	UNFPA, MGCY, UNOY Peacebuilders
Session organizers	UNDP, UNODC, UNAOC, UNODA and OHCHR
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	
<p>In today's turbulent global landscape, rife with conflicts, polarization and multiple crises, the pivotal role of youth in shaping sustainable and innovative solutions has never been more evident. As we confront the pressing challenges that threaten global stability and security, it is imperative to recognize and support the indispensable contributions of young people in advancing the 2030 Agenda and accelerating its implementation. The daring path towards sustainable development, peace and prosperity for all adopted by the Member States in 2015 outlined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including one (SDG 16) dedicated to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights is key to this process.</p> <p>In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS). This landmark resolution acknowledged the indispensable role of youth in maintaining and promoting peace and security worldwide. Despite bearing disproportionate impacts of conflicts and violence, young people possess immense potential to catalyze positive change and foster lasting peace, mutual understanding and social cohesion in their communities. Quality education for peace, which equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes, is essential for them to realize that potential. Their active engagement serves as a vital conduit bridging diverse peace efforts, amplifying their voices in decision-making processes and advocating for meaningful representation in political spheres.</p> <p>Aligned with the YPS agenda, SDG 16 serves as a cornerstone for fostering resilient communities where individuals can live free from fear and violence and where all human rights are valued and respected, irrespective of age,</p>	

ethnicity, religion, faith, gender, disability status, and/or sexual orientation. However, despite its noble aspirations, the pursuit of SDG 16 faces significant hurdles, as outlined in the United Nations' 2023 Global Progress Report on SDG 16. Challenges such as escalating violence, conflicts, human rights violations, discrimination, inequalities and institutional barriers hinder progress towards building peaceful and inclusive societies. Moreover, conflicts exacerbated by factors like climate change disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, particularly women, youth and children, amplifying their vulnerability to violence, trauma, and chronic health conditions.

The Secretary-General's policy brief "A New Agenda for Peace" outlines a new vision for individual and collective efforts to better understand and deal with challenges undermining global peace and security. Among the various recommendations for more effective multilateral action is the imperative to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to address underlying drivers of violence and insecurity. Furthermore, it also highlights the critical need for adequate financial resourcing, particularly through bolstering the implementation of SDG 17. In line with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, the New Agenda for Peace calls for action that is people-centred, with the full spectrum of human rights at its core. It also urges to reduce the human cost of weapons, recognising that at the heart of our peace and security engagements is a commitment to save human beings from armed violence, therefore saving lives and making resources available for social and economic development.

Evidence also underscores other persistent challenges such as the growing mistrust between youth and governments, and discriminatory laws and practices based on age that remain prevalent in many countries, hindering the meaningful participation of young people and the realization of their rights. The increase in digital threats and armed conflicts, coupled with the shrinking of civic space, also pose serious protection concerns for young people. These threats not only undermine their ability to engage actively in shaping their societies but also jeopardize their safety and physical and psychosocial well-being as they strive to contribute positively to their communities and the world at large. Addressing these protection concerns is essential to fostering an environment where young people can thrive and realize their full potential as agents of change and peacebuilders.

While the challenges may seem daunting, they also present opportunities for innovation and collaboration. Amidst the tumultuous backdrop of global insecurity, burgeoning debt, and widespread distrust in political institutions and the proliferation of disinformation and hate speech, 2024, marked to be the biggest election year in history, emerges as a pivotal year that will determine the success or failure of SDG implementation.

To address these issues effectively and chart a course towards sustainable development, it is imperative to prioritize the active, meaningful and full participation of young people in the day-to-day decisions that shape their lives as well as build their knowledge and skills to do so. Youth participation throughout the electoral cycle is not only important but essential. Creating a safe, gender-responsive, and empowering environment for young people to engage in electoral processes allows them to voice their concerns, contribute to decision-making, and promote peaceful elections.

In leveraging the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and the New Agenda for Peace in processes such as the 2025 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and throughout the multiple elections of 2024 presents a unique opportunity to enhance young people's participation in democratic governance and amplify their voices in shaping peace and development processes. As we navigate through this critical juncture, empowering young people to be agents of positive change, including through peace and human rights education, becomes increasingly imperative for realizing the transformative potential of the SDGs and fostering a more just and sustainable world for generations to come.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF SPOTLIGHT SEGMENT

Firstly, the initial 15 minutes are dedicated to the Spotlight session, featuring a young person sharing their personal journey in a storytelling/TEDx style. This narrative will illuminate the challenges faced by youth in fragile democracies, highlighting the risks encountered when speaking out and the impact of conflict and violence on their daily lives and rights. This segment provides a snapshot of the global context and challenges experienced by young people.

OBJECTIVES OF SESSION

The objective of this session is to underscore the crucial role of youth in shaping sustainable solutions amidst the current turbulent global landscape. In particular, it aims to highlight the imperative of supporting, building the capacity and amplifying the contributions of young people in advancing the 2030 Agenda and accelerating its implementation. Against the backdrop of escalating conflicts, pervasive polarization, and persistent crises, this session seeks to emphasize the pivotal role of youth in promoting peace, justice, human rights and inclusive development. By addressing the barriers to meaningful youth participation, including mistrust between youth and governments, discriminatory practices, and protection concerns, this session aims to foster an environment where young people can actively engage in shaping their societies. Furthermore, it endeavours to explore opportunities for innovation and collaboration, particularly in the context of the upcoming pivotal year of 2024, marked by historic elections and critical decision-making processes. By leveraging the frameworks of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda and the New Agenda for Peace, this session seeks to enhance young people's participation in democratic governance and peacebuilding efforts, thereby realizing the transformative potential of the SDGs and fostering a more just and sustainable world for generations to come.

- Explore effective strategies for promoting meaningful inclusion of youth in civic and political spheres, with a focus on their interlinkages with global governance, democracy, human rights and peacebuilding efforts.
- Discuss opportunities to integrate young people and mainstream the youth, peace, and security agenda in key initiatives such as the Summit and Pact of the Future, as well as the upcoming 2025 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture.
- Evaluate the systemic barriers hindering youth participation in political processes and explore avenues to enhance trust in institutions while ensuring the protection of young people engaged in civic and political activities.

OVERALL FORMAT/STRUCTURE

After the spotlight session, the remaining 1 hour and 15 minutes will be dedicated to an intergenerational panel discussion involving young people and other stakeholders. Each panelist will initially address a specific question, sharing good practices and examples to address the challenges outlined in the spotlight session, as well as proposing recommendations and solutions. The floor will then be opened for further engagement and discussion from participants.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **[Meaningful youth inclusion in public affairs, including in electoral processes]**

The largest election year in history is taking place in 2024. For elections to matter, countries must ensure an open and inclusive public sphere where young people can access quality information and engage in the governance of

their societies beyond elections. How can we build their capacities so that they can meaningfully participate in societies and in their political processes? How can we ensure that institutions are inclusive of young people, and that they can access services equally? How can we ensure that a human rights-based approach is applied by both the governance structure and young people who engage in the decision-making processes? Are there any concrete solutions to help rebuild trust in electoral and governmental processes?

2. **[Rebuilding trust in institutions]**

Trust in institutions is essential for fostering youth participation in peacebuilding efforts. This year, a series of elections are taking place against a backdrop of high levels of distrust in politicians and public institutions and a proliferation of disinformation and hate speech. How can we effectively bridge the gap between youth and policy makers and political/economic spheres to ensure meaningful youth inclusion in decision-making processes, particularly in the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace? Can you provide examples of successful initiatives?

3. **[Protection & Prevention]**

Threats and reprisals against youth actively engaged in civic space are increasing. A surge in polarization and violence has expedited the shrinking of civic space, offline and online. Armed violence perpetrated with small arms and light weapons continues to disproportionately affect youth, threatening their security and wellbeing. Young people lack adequate resources to address the wide spectrum of risks faced when implementing projects or participating in peacebuilding initiatives, ranging from physical and psychological to socio-cultural, financial, legal, and digital challenges. What strategies can be employed to rebuild trust, support violence and conflict prevention efforts, and ensure the protection of young people engaged in peacebuilding activities? How can young people be supported in their protection needs given the shrinking civic incl. digital space?

4. **[New Agenda for Peace & SDGs Acceleration]**

Last year, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented his Policy Brief on A New Agenda for Peace. The document outlines a vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security with key actions and recommendations, all grounded in the principles of trust, solidarity and universality. One of its key initiatives, the upcoming Summit of the Future, aims to provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance cooperation on critical challenges and address gaps in global governance to underscore with youth at the centre. As we look to the future, how can the New Agenda for Peace and Peacebuilding Architecture Review contribute to enhancing meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding efforts globally? How can we mitigate against the tokenistic involvement of young people? What are the priority gaps that need to be addressed to advance the implementation of the YPS Agenda at different levels?

What impact does it have on the implementation, and in particular financing, of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development? How can we get more funding into the hands of youth-led and youth-inclusive organisations working to implement the YPS agenda on the ground?

NAMES AND TITLES OF SESSION SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR(S)

Moderator

- **Ms. Andrea Carstensen** (*United States of America*) - GYC Member for SDG16 GFP, Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY).

Speakers

1. **Mr. Rolando Pelicot** (*Panama*) - Co-founder of Fipie and UNAOC Young Peacebuilder;
2. **Mr. Claude Mbuyi Kabamba** (*Democratic Republic of the Congo*) - Executive Secretary of the National Youth Council of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

3. **Mr. Mohamed Ibn Sory Diakit  (Mali)** - President of the Union of Youth for Sustainable Development;
4. **Ms. Bahia Gatti (Argentina)** - Comic Relief Youth Advisory Council Member, UNOY Peacebuilder Americas Regional Coordinator.

OVERVIEW OF PREPARATORY EVENT/CONSULTATION

We built on the online discussions part of the “Hear our Voices” consultation held on the Sparkblue.
<https://www.sparkblue.org/hear-our-voice/discussion/2-international-peace-and-security>

ADDITIONAL DETAILS, SUGGESTED READING, IF ANY

- [2023 Global Progress Report SDG16](#)
- [New Agenda for Peace](#)
- [DP/2022/8 Management response to the evaluation of UNDP support to youth economic empowerment](#)
- [S/RES/2250\(2015\)](#)
- [Youth Participation – Select \(sustainingpeace-select.org\)](#)
- <https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-peace-and-security-fostering-youth-inclusive-political-processes>
- Young people’s participation in political and civic spheres - <https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-peace-and-security-fostering-youth-inclusive-political-processes>
- Youth participation in electoral processes: [Youth Participation – Select \(sustainingpeace-select.org\)](#)
- [Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration](#)
- [World Programme for Human Rights Education, 4th phase \(2020-2024\) dedicated to youth](#)