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The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding

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Abstract

Humanity, throughout history, has disproportionately placed the burdens of war and violence on young people. The fact that today there are more young people alive than ever in history entails a deep reflection. The sheer numbers alone justify the inclusion and consideration of youth in policymaking and planning of peacebuilding processes. Beyond this, there are a number of reasons why it is essential to consider youth as distinct actors in conflict-affected societies.

Why focus on youth when talking about peace? This study will reply first to this specific question, putting forward both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Subsequently, it will introduce some definitions of youth, before investigating the evolution of the role of youth in the United Nations' approach to peacebuilding. In this context, the Resolution 2250 adopted by the UN Security Council on the 9th of December 2015 will be presented as a ground-breaking achievement, opening new horizons for the future of both practical peacebuilding and peace studies.

1. The rationale for enquiring into the role of Youth in peacebuilding

There are more young people alive today than ever in history. There were 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 years globally in 2015, accounting for one out of every six people worldwide. By 2030, the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[1], the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 per cent, to nearly 1.3 billion[2]. In Africa, children under age 15 account for 41 per cent of the population in 2015 and young persons aged 15 to 24 account for a further 19 per cent. Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia have smaller percentages of children (26 and 24 per cent, respectively) and similar percentages of youth (17 and 16 per cent, respectively). In total, these three regions, where many conflicts still are at work or are likely to take place, were home to 1.7 billion children and 1.1 billion young persons in 2015.[3]

Proportions of children in the populations of many countries of these regions are projected to decline further in the near-term future, while the size and the proportion of populations in the prime working ages can be expected to grow. Countries with a relatively high ratio of working to dependent populations have the possibility of benefitting from a "demographic dividend", provided that appropriate labour market and other policies allow for a productive absorption of the growing working-age population and for increased investments in the human capital of children and youth.[4]

While research has demonstrated an association between a high relative youth population and a higher statistical risk of armed conflict,[5] these findings are not a straightforward predictor of violence[6]. Even though they indicate which countries are likely to be at higher risk of violent conflict,[7] in fact, many countries with youth bulges have not recently suffered violence and are relatively stable.[8] Demography is not the only risk factor and other variables (e.g., economic stress and associated levels of un- and under-employment; lack of access to quality education; poor governance; high levels of inequality particularly between ethnic groups; resource scarcity) are all associated with the onset of violence.[9]

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[1] UNITED NATIONS, General Assembly, seventieth session, Resolution on *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, 25 September 2015.

[2] UNITED NATIONS, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *Youth Population Trends and Sustainable Development*, Population Facts, No. 2015/1, May 2015.

[3] UNITED NATIONS, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables,* New York, 2015, p. 7.

[4] Ibidem.

[5] See URDAL H., *A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence*, International Studies Quarterly, vol. 50, 2006, pp. 607-629. Urdal affirms that youth bulges increase the risk of low-intensity political violence (internal armed conflict, terrorism and rioting). See also MESQUIDA C. G., WIENER N., *Male age composition and the severity of conflicts*, Politics and the Life of Sciences, vol. 18, no. 2, 1999; and CINCOTTA R., *The security demographic: Population and civil conflict after the cold war*, Population Action International, Washington, D.C, 2003.

[6] See HENDRIXSON A., *Angry Young Men, Veiled Young Women - Constructing a New Population Threat*, Corner House Briefing 34 (2004).

[7] It also is important to note that most "youth bulge" studies are based on national level data, and disregard sub-populations that may be located in regions or neighbourhoods with high relative cohort sizes and thus, a higher risk of localized violence. See URDAL H., *Population, resources and violent conflict: A sub-national study of India 1956–2002*, Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 52, no. 4, 2008, pp. 590-617.

[8] MCLEAN HILKER L., *Violence, Peace and Stability: the "Youth Factor"*, UNICEF – Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, 2009.

[9] For example, research shows that the risk of violent conflict is higher when youth bulges coincide with periods of long-term economic decline and where there are low youth opportunities in the form of limited educational prospects, poor employment possibilities, and exclusion from political participation. See BARAKAT B., PAULSON J., URDAL H., *The Youth, Transition, and Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa*, Background paper for the WORLD BANK, World Development Report 2011.

Moreover, humanity, throughout history, has disproportionately placed the burdens of war and violence on young people.[10] Children and young people tend to be overrepresented among the direct and indirect victims of violence – whether of criminality, terrorism or armed conflict - in both conflict-affected and "non-conflict" contexts.[11] For example, for youth living in low-income settings, there is a 1 in 50 chance that they will be killed before they reach their 31st birthday.[12] The types and targets of violence suffered by young people are also highly gendered. Young men aged 15 to 29 are most at risk of homicide and are four to five times more likely to be killed than young women. Young women are most at risk of physical abuse and domestic and sexual violence, but contrary to popular perceptions, whilst some of this abuse involves the deliberate targeting by armed militia of young women for rape, the most common perpetrators even in conflict-affected contexts are intimate partners.[13]

Furthermore, in a conflict situation, youth are victims of indirect violence too: "the personal trauma of witnessing violence and of the loss of family, friendships and of community; a loss of education; the loss of livelihoods and the destruction of the social systems and support networks that give young people a sense of stability and belonging".[14] All of this can severely affect a young person's personal and social development, so that he/she can be stuck in "waithood"[15], unable to make the transition into adulthood.

In 1996 the United Nations General Assembly received a ground-breaking report on the "*Impact of armed conflict on children*". The report was written by Graça Machel, an expert of the Secretary-General and former Minister of Education of Mozambique, and described the devastating impact of war on girls and boys.[16] Recommended responses included the education of refugees and displaced persons, strategies to prevent the use of child soldiers, protection for girls against sex crimes, and the provision of landmine education and trauma counselling. From 1996 on, there has been an increasing recognition and documentation of these impacts. However, the *Global Monitoring Report 2011* highlighted how the effects of conflict continue to have a devastating impact on the education of children and youth.[17] It resulted that 28 million children, almost half of the children out of school, were in conflict affected countries. Other reports also indicate that children and schools are increasingly on the front line of armed conflicts, with classrooms, teachers, and pupils seen as legitimate targets.[18] Adding to the disadvantage, social systems and structures, including the labour market, are often seriously eroded by years of violence, and are less able to absorb and offer young people meaningful opportunities in life.[19]

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10 DANESH R., *Youth and Peacebuilding*, Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008.

11 While an estimated 526,000 people each year die from conflict, over 75 per cent of these deaths occur in "peace-time" and, in many cases, in affluent countries. In the Western Hemisphere alone, 37,000 people under 24 years of age were intentionally killed in 2010. See GENEVA DECLARATION SECRETARIAT, *Global Burden of Armed Violence*, Cambridge, 2011.

12 UNITED NATIONS, Synthesis report from *The Global Thematic Consultation on Conflict, Violence and Disaster and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, New York, 2013, p. 8.

13 KRUG E., DAHLBERG L., MERCY J., ZWI A., LOZANO R. (Ed.), *The World Report on Violence and Health*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2002, p. 89; GENEVA DECLARATION SECRETARIAT, *op. cit.*, p.128.

14 UNITED NATIONS, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (INAYD), Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, *Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note*, January 2016, p. 11.

15 SINGERMAN D., *The Economic imperatives of marriage: Emerging practices and identities among youth in the Middle East*, Middle East Initiative Working Paper 6, Washington and Dubai: Wolfensohn Centre for Development and Dubai School of Government, 2007.

16 UNITED NATIONS, General Assembly, fifty-first session, Note by the Secretary-General, Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children, *Impact of armed conflict on children*, A/51/306, 26 August 1996.

17 EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA), Global Monitoring Report 2011, *The hidden crisis: armed conflict and education*, UNESCO, 2011.

18 O'MALLEY, B., *Education under attack*, UNESCO, Paris, 2010.

19 SMITH A., SMITH ELLISON E., *Youth, Education, and Peacebuilding*, UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster IIEP Policy Forum Paris, 16–18 October 2012, p. 2.8.

While many reports on child soldiers have been published even recently, most conflict-related data simply omit youth, making analysis and targeted programming extremely difficult. Like other civil society actors, "they are less visible in analysis of peace processes than key elites".[20] Useful parallels can be drawn between the women's movements and the youth movement, as women's role has been further recognized and women's movements went through somehow similar processes to the ones that youth movements are undergoing now. In this respect, the efforts that led to Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council of October 31st 2000, which recognises the role of women in peacebuilding, are an example to follow. What women and youth have in common is that both demand participation using the argument that they constitute considerable percentages of the population and that both are affected by the decisions which were and are made without consulting them. In general, "most decisions are made by adult males, and thus they — women and youth — both work to deconstruct oppressive and violent structures".[21]

Youth are also likely to be "demonized by the media"[22], which refer to the "threat" posed by male youth who are thought to be easily mobilized by rebel leaders, reflecting the view that youth "provide much of the crucial energy and mass power to get wheels turning for divergent 'vehicles' of social and political change"[23].

The sheer numbers alone justify the inclusion and consideration of youth in policymaking and planning of peacebuilding processes. Beyond this, there are a number of reasons why it is essential to consider youth as distinct actors in conflict-affected societies. There are "situational reasons"[24], emphasizing that the social institutions inhabited by youth, such as schools, are fundamental to successful peacebuilding efforts. Through the education they receive and the overall experience they live at school, youth can emerge prepared to move beyond conflicts and transform them. Not only do youth regularly learn values and norms in such a key social institution, but education itself is an essential element of peacebuilding.

The quest of young people for social autonomy and their propensity towards gathering and forming group associations poses both threats and opportunities. On the one hand, youth may be easily mobilized to participate in conflict and violent actions, particularly in those contexts where unemployment rates are high and in post-conflict societies. Furthermore, since students often have more time to think, read, meet colleagues, develop ideas and engage different activists groups, they were often the ones to start and lead revolutions throughout history. On the other hand, it has been argued that youth are actually characterized by specific qualities and features that are particularly conducive to peacebuilding. In this view, young people represent an opportunity, as unique contributors and likely leaders of successful peacebuilding efforts.[25]

Authors highlighting the constructive role of youth in peacebuilding, add that young people are more open to change than adults: "they are eager to try new strategies and are not 'married' to any specific dogma".[26] As Johan Galtung said: "Young people are searching for new ideas and open to new challenges while adults have already formed their dogmatic discourses. I have seen this hundreds of times in my life. In peacebuilding processes, young people should meet, and even better, young women should meet."[27] Since they inherit the past from older generations and have more time ahead than adults, they are willing to try

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20 McEvoy-Levy S., *Youth as social and political agents: Issues in post-settlement peace building*, Occasional paper no. 21. San Diego, Calif., Kroc Institute of Peace Studies, p. 24-25, 2001.

21 Del Felice C., Wisler A., The *Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth as Peacebuilders,* Journal of Peace Conflict & Development Issue 11, November 2007, p. 22.

22 Hendrixen, A., *Angry young men, veiled young women: Constructing a new population threat*, Corner House Briefing 34, 2004.

23 Hamilton M., *Change you(th) can believe in? Theories of violent mobilization and lessons for youth peacebuilding in policy and practice*, Paper presented at the 51st Annual ISA Convention, New Orleans, USA, 2010, p. 4.

24 Chakraborty S., *Human Rights, Peace and Conflict Mobilization of Youth,* in Pandey C., Upadhyay P. (Ed.), *Promoting Global Peace and Civic Engagement through Education*, IGI Global, 2016, p. 159.

25 Ib., p. 160.

26 Del Felice C., Wisler A., *op. cit.*, p. 24.

27 Galtung J., Lecture on 11 May 2005 at the European University Centre for Peace Studies (EPU) in Austria.

alternatives and innovative ways and, especially in post-conflict societies, they are less prone to focus on the past than their parents, who were directly involved in a war or conflict. Furthermore, "in the longer-term, a peace agreement's endurance depends on whether the next generations accept or reject it, how they are socialized during the peace process, and their perceptions of what that peace process has achieved. Child and youth dimensions are central to the structural issues of peace building – such as inequality, poverty, and unemployment."[28] Courage is another feature of young people that can prove to be of use in peacebuilding processes. When combined with a belief in the cause of peace, the risk-taking nature of young people encourages them to push forward with their dreams, even when others believe that peace is impossible at that point. Finally, young people possess valuable knowledge of the needs, priorities and language of their peers, based on their own experiences and close contact in their age group.[29]

Some agencies are now beginning to prioritize youth analysis in both conflict and development situations. As an example, in 2012 USAID produced in a review of the latest research on youth education in crisis and conflict-affected settings.[30] In 2013, the General Direction of the European Commission devoted to the external cooperation for development, Europe Aid, issued a background paper on "Youth Employment in Developing Countries". While the EU paper highlighted that "meaningful employment opportunities for young people are crucial for social and political stability"[31], the USAID report concluded that "there needs to be more rigorous research"[32] in this field, echoing findings by many scholars.[33]

2. Defining Youth

It has been argued that the category of "youth" was invented by modern culture.[34] However, today youth are a concrete and globally accepted reality. Yet, the question is: who are youth? A core challenge in conceptualizing its role in peacebuilding is the complexity of defining this category. Regrettably, its varied definitions have acted as barriers to the emergence of youth as a focus of either research or program delivery. As one report notes, "in contrast to children, who are covered under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 'in-between' status of youth has been largely excluded from the agenda of international peace and development efforts".[35] Youth can be defined through formal, functional, or social-psychological criteria:

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28 McEvoy-Levy S., *op. cit.*, p. 5.

29 Del Felice, C.; Wisler, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

30 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *USAID Youth policy and learning project: Examining the evidence in youth education in crisis and conflict*, Washington DC: USAID, 2012. This paper is based on a literature review of 27 publicly available studies that were published between 2001 and 2012 on the following topics: youth education in crisis and conflict-affected environments; formal, non-formal, and informal education; school-to- work transition; peacebuilding and conflict resolution; youth engagement, participation, and empowerment; workforce development and livelihoods. The paper identifies 14 donors with 'youth in conflict and crisis settings' as a programmatic focus area. These comprise six bilateral agencies, one multilateral agency, three UN agencies, and four foundations. However, the paper draws attention to the lack of youth-focused research, with only five of the 14 organizations identifying this as a priority.

31 Pieters J., *Youth Employment in Developing Countries*, Background Paper prepared under Service. Contract DCI-EDUC/2012/310-255, European Commission, Development and Cooperation – Europe Aid, October 2013, p. 7.

32 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *op. cit.*, p. 19.

33 Del Felice, C.; Wisler, A., *op. cit.*, p. 11; McEvoy-Levy S., *op. cit*, p. 9, Hamilton M., *op. cit.*, 2010; Sommers M., *Youth and conflict: A brief review of available literature*, Washington DC: Education Development Centre and USAID, 2006.

34 Savage J., *Teenage. The creation of youth culture: 1875-1945*, Viking Books, 2007.

35 Kemper Y., *Youth in War-To-Peace Transitions: Approaches of International Organizations,* Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management, Berlin, 2005, p. 6.

- Formal definitions are those that classify every person who falls within a specific age range as a "youth".[36] On the one hand, these definitions are useful for programming and research purposes. On the other hand, researchers are finding difficult to reach a consensus. Most international bodies, including the United Nations, identify youths as individuals 15 – 24 years of age. However, lower-limit ages can be found below or over 15, and upper-limits can increase up to 35 years of age. In fact, these limits necessarily refer to the average life expectancy, which is constantly evolving through time. Globally, life expectancy at birth rose by 3 years between 2000-2005 and 2010-2015. More importantly, life expectancy at birth is expected to keep on growing in the future: globally, it is projected to rise from 70 years in 2010-2015 to 77 years in 2045-2050 and to 83 years in 2095-2100.[37]

- Functional definitions seek to define the age range as a reflection of the roles and responsibilities of youth. This perspective looks at the social norms marking the entry into, an expression of, or the exit out of the period of youth: e.g. the age of majority; voting age; and driving age. Differing from the strictly formal ones, functional definitions recognize that there are variations in when young people pass onto the roles and responsibilities of adulthood.[38]

- Social-Psychological definitions of youth suggest that phases of human growth and development, including the passage from youth to adulthood, are characterized by particular traits and patterns. Consequently, these definitions are based on indicators such as cultural context, political, economic, and social factors. According to this approach, understanding the dynamics of youth from a context-specific perspective is essential to addressing the challenge of definition.[39]

Many key stakeholders in the international community have adopted age-based parameters to define the concept, but even this approach lacks uniformity. Some of the international bodies define youth within the following age ranges:

- UNICEF: Children 0-18, Young Adolescents 10-14, Adolescent 10-24, Youth 15-24;[40]

- UNFPA/INEE: Adolescent 10–19, Young people 10–24, Youth 15–24;[41]

- WHO: Youth 10-29;[42]

- United Nations Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO Youth: 15-24;[43]

- Asia Pacific Youth Charter 2011-2015: 15-24;[44]

- European Commission: 15-29;[45]

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36 CHAKRABOTY S., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

37 UNITED NATIONS, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

38 CHAKRABOTY S., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

39 *Ibidem*. Generally, the fields of developmental psychology, adolescent psychology, and the sociology of adolescence provide insight into the traits and patterns that may form part of a definition of youth.

40 UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF), *Progress for Children. A Report Card on Adolescents*, Number 10, April 2012.

41 INTER-AGENCY NETWORK FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES (INEE), *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery*, 2nd Edition, New York, 2010, p. 123; UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA), *Strategy on Adolescents and Youth. Towards realizing the full potential of adolescents and youth*, 2013.

42 WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), *Preventing Youth Violence: an overview of the evidence*, Geneva, 2015.

43 A/RES/50/81 (1996).

44 INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION, *ITUC-Asia Pacific Youth Charter (2011-2015)*.

45 EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *2012 EU Youth Report*.

- The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007-2015: 15-29;[46]

- The World Bank: 16-30;[47]

- UN Habitat (Youth Fund): 15–32;[48]

- The African Charter: 15-35;[49]

- South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation: 20-35.[50]

Several UN entities, instruments and regional organizations have somewhat different definitions of youth, which the United Nations Secretariat recognizes. For statistical consistency across regions, the UN defines "youth" as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. In fact, all UN statistics on youth are based on this definition, as illustrated by the annual yearbooks of statistics published by the United Nations system on demography, education, employment and health. However, the most important and recent instrument of the UN in the field of "Youth, Peace and Security" defines youth as 18-29 years old.

The African Youth Charter defines youth up to age 35. In the Pacific, some countries consider youth up to age 40.[51] The USAID Youth in Development Policy also presents a strong case for not limiting the definition at age 25.[52] The diversity shows that there are many different ways to define youth given the programmatic and political priorities, which range from demographic to bio-psychosocial and sociological definitions.

Beyond the theoretical battleground around definitions of "youth", lie more empirical issues about the "social condition" and "social orientation" of young people: one crucial question, in this view, is whether to build foundations (for participation, education, vocational training, employable skills, healthy lifestyles, for example) or to address challenges (such as the democratic deficit or civil society capacity building, youth unemployment, youth violence, or drug misuse and mental health problems, for example).[53]

For all these reasons, when designing its Youth Strategy, UNDP organized extensive discussions on the age range to be adopted. Most opinions shared the view that UNDP should not just conform to the UN General Assembly definition and define youth by age, but to go beyond towards a functional definition that takes into account youth and society's perception and expectations. While the definition used by the United Nations is important for statistical purposes, UNDP, in its programming, chose to adapt to the realities of the national context. As an example, according to this approach it is important that UNDP country offices in Africa work within the age range adopted by the African Youth Charter.[54]

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46 THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT, *The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment* (2007-2015).

47 THE WORLD BANK, *Youth 2 Youth (Y2Y) Community*.

48 The UN Habitat, *Urban Youth Fund*.

49 AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION, *African Youth Charter*, adopted during the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of States and Government held on July 2nd 2006 in Banjul, The Gambia.

50 SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION, *SAARC Youth Awards*.

51 UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, *op. cit*., Annex 1. *Defining Youth*, p. 123.

52 USAID, Youth in Development Policy, *Youth in Development. Realizing the Demographic Opportunity,* October 2012.
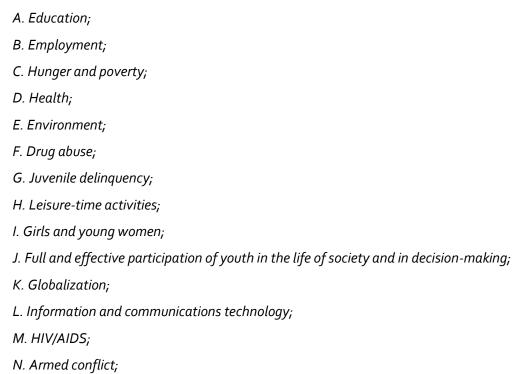
53 WILLIAMSON H., *Supporting Young People in Europe: Principles, Policy and Practice*, Council of Europe publishing, Strasbourg, France, 2002, pp. 31-48.

54 See UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, *op. cit.,* Annex 1.

3. The United Nations and the role of Youth in peacebuilding

The United Nations has long recognized that the imagination, ideals and energies of young people are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which they live.[55] The Member States of the United Nations acknowledged this in 1965, when they endorsed the *Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples*.[56] Two decades later, the United Nations General Assembly observed 1985 as the *International Youth Year: Participation, Development and Peace*.[57] It drew international attention to the important role young people play in the world, and, in particular, their potential contribution to development. In 1995, on the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, the United Nations strengthened its commitment to young people by directing the international community's response to the challenges to youth into the next millennium. It did this by adopting an international strategy: The *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*.

The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)[58] provided a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people. It contains proposals for action, aiming at fostering conditions and mechanisms to promote improved well-being and livelihoods among young people. The WPAY focuses in particular on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society. In its original form, the World Programme of Action for Youth outlined priority areas to be addressed; however, at the ten-year review of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, Member States agreed to the addition of five additional issue areas. These were expanded upon in a Supplement, which was adopted in 2007. Together these 15 issue areas and their related plans of action are what is understood to comprise the World Programme of Action for Youth:

A. Education;

B. Employment;

C. Hunger and poverty;

D. Health;

E. Environment;

F. Drug abuse;

G. Juvenile delinquency;

H. Leisure-time activities;

I. Girls and young women;

J. Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making;

K. Globalization;

L. Information and communications technology;

M. HIV/AIDS;

N. Armed conflict;

O. Intergenerational issues.

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55 UNITED NATIONS, *World Programme of Action for Youth*, Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolutions A/RES/50/81 and A/RES/62/126 on 14 December 1996 and 18 December 2007.

56 A/RES/20/2037, 7 December 1965.

57 A/RES/39/22, 23 November 1984.

58 A/RES/50/81, 14 December 1995, and A/RES/62/126, 5 February 2008.

In each of these Areas, the document also offered proposals for action. As for "Armed Conflict", the WPAY proposed the following actions:

1. Protecting youth under age 18 from direct involvement in armed conflict;

2. Providing for the reintegration of youth ex-combatants and protection of non-combatants;

3. Promoting active involvement of youth in maintaining peace and security.[59]

It is important to note that these three proposals were eventually included in the United Nations' Security Council Resolution 2250/2015, which is today the most important instrument ever taken by the United Nations in the field of "Youth, Peace and Security", and which serves as major reference for the present work on the role of youth in peacebuilding. We are now going to study the process that, after the outlining of the WPAY, led the UN towards the adoption of this important Resolution.

The United Nations Secretary-General highlighted, in his 2012 report on Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict, that "a successful peacebuilding process must be transformative and create space for a wider set of actors – including, but not limited to, representatives of women, young people, victims and marginalized communities; community and religious leaders; civil society actors; and refugees and internally displaced persons – to participate in public decision-making on all aspects of post-conflict governance and recovery."[60]

Thus, an inter-agency working group on youth and peacebuilding was established in 2012, under the umbrella of the wider United Nations Inter-Agency Network of Youth Development (UNIANYD), to help actors working in the field of youth and peacebuilding advocate for a paradigm shift in supporting young people as a force for peacebuilding. This group, co-chaired by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UNPBSO), the international non-governmental organization "Search for Common Ground" and United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) – a global network of youth peace organizations – includes over 40 member organizations from the United Nations (UN), NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and academia. In order to support improved strategies and policies on young men and women's contribution to peace and stability, this wide constituency of partners developed the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*.[61] The Principles were designed to inform participative, inclusive and intergenerational peacebuilding strategies and programmes that systematically promote and ensure participation and contributions of young people. The Principles are not listed in order of priority and are each of equal importance:

- *Promote Young People's Participation as an essential condition for successful Peacebuilding;*
- *Value and Build upon Young People's Diversity and Experiences;*
- *Be Sensitive to Gender Dynamics;*
- *Enable Young People's Ownership, Leadership and Accountability in Peacebuilding;*
- *Do No Harm;*
- *Involve Young People in all stages of Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Programming;*
- *Enhance the Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Competencies of Young People for Peacebuilding;*
- *Invest in Intergenerational Partnerships in Young People's Communities;*
- *Introduce and Support Policies That Address the Full Needs of Young People.*[62]

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59 UNITED NATIONS, *World Programme of Action for Youth*, New York, 2010, pp. 55-58.

60 UNITED NATIONS, Report of the Secretary-General on *Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict*, 8 October 2012, n. 36.

61 UNITED NATIONS, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (INAYD), Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, *op. cit.*, January 2016.

62 UNITED NATIONS, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (INAYD), Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding, *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*, April 2014.

The principle of "do no harm" is fundamental in all instances, and requires an awareness and active avoidance of the negative consequences that interventions can inadvertently create. In addition, all participation should be based on free will. The Principles were identified to offer guidance to key actors, including governments; United Nations entities, funds and programmes; local, national and international non-governmental organizations; civil society actors; and donors. According to the Principles, promoting the participation of young people in peacebuilding requires multiple approaches:

(1) A human rights-based approach, grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the World Programme of Action on Youth;

(2) An economic approach that identifies young people as central to the economic development of their country, and promotes their access to economic opportunities as essential for their own development;

(3) A socio-political approach that connects young people to civil society and the political arena, and provides them with opportunities, training and support for their active engagement and participation in public life; and

(4) A sociocultural approach that analyses the roles of young people in existing structures and supports dialogue – including intergenerational dialogue – about these structures.[63]

In 2014, the United Nations Development Programme adopted its first Youth Strategy (2014-2017). This strategy aims at engaging young people as a positive force for transformational change, seeking three specific outcomes: (1) increased economic empowerment of youth; (2) enhanced youth civic engagement and participation in decision-making and political processes and institutions; and (3) strengthened youth engagement in resilience building. In doing so, the UNDP declared it would follow these ten guiding principles: human rights, gender equality, sustainability, national ownership and leadership, participation, innovation, South-South cooperation, volunteerism, inter-generational knowledge- sharing and working by, with and for young people.[64] While the Strategy's focus was on young women and men aged 15–24, the range may extend to 30 and even up to 35 depending on national context, and would remain flexible to ensure that programming related to the implementation of the strategy is responsive to the diverse needs of youth in different country contexts. To carry out the many activities proposed, the strategy takes a four-pronged approach:

- *Support through capacity development of young people and youth organizations, including youth caucuses in government, parliament or other representative bodies;*

- *Engage through outreach, advocacy and mainstreaming of youth issues in all spheres of development planning;*

- *Influence through thought leadership, global policy debates and networks, that include the voices of marginalized youth, and build on improved data collection to monitor the post-2015 development process;*

- *Sustain through support to national policy, more effective strategies to protect young men and women from exploitation and neglect, and support their informed and active participation in all spheres of society.*[65]

In the meantime, several international initiatives generally focusing on youth were promoted around the world, such as the World Conference on Youth, held in Sri Lanka in May 2014, and the first Global Forum on Youth Policies, held in Azerbaijan in October 2014. Furthermore, in April 2015, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan decided to step-up global attention to young people's contribution to peace and stability

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63 Ibidem.

64 UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP), Youth Strategy 2014-2017: *Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future*, New York, 2014, p. 2.

65 The Strategy also mentions a "three lens approach". Cf. DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, *Youth Participation in Development*, United Kingdom, March 2010.

and held an open debate on "The Role of Young People in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace", during its presidency of the Security Council.

On 29th May 2015, the United Nations General Assembly held a high-level event to mark the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, which offered an important opportunity for Member States and other relevant stakeholders to take stock of progress made in its implementation, as well as to identify gaps and challenges and the way forward for its full, effective and accelerated implementation.

In August 2015, the "Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security" in Amman, Jordan, brought together more than 500 government officials, policy experts, youth-led organizations, and young peacebuilders from over 100 countries. Participants agreed on a common vision to partner with young people in preventing conflict, countering violent extremism and building lasting peace, leading to the adoption of the *Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security*.[66]

In September 2015, a "Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism", co-hosted by the United States Department of State in New York, gathered 300 stakeholders, including some 70 youth leaders and organizations from around the globe, who adopted a *Youth Action Agenda To Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace*.[67] This agenda highlighted the efforts that were being made by youth organizations around the world to prevent violent extremism and foster peace. Such efforts were resumed in four main points: 1) Preventing violence and recruitment into violent groups; 2) Facilitating young people's disengagement from violent groups; 3) Producing and amplifying new narratives; 4) Fostering effective and meaningful partnerships. This agenda also identified possible opportunities for partnerships in these fields between young people, on one side, and governments, civil society, businesses, the media and international and regional inter-governmental organizations, on the other side. [68]

Both the Amman Global Forum and the Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism signalled a shift in policy-makers' perceptions of young people's role in conflict and post-conflict settings. These efforts culminated in the adoption by the UN Security Council of Resolution 2250 on "Youth, Peace and Security" on 9 December 2015.[69] We are going to describe this Resolution in detail in the following Chapter.

Afterward, on 17 December 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution on "Policies and programmes involving youth"[70], not only reaffirming the WPAY[71], but also calling upon Member States to take concrete measures to further assist youth in armed conflict situations, in accordance with the WPAY, and to encourage the involvement of young people, where appropriate, in activities concerning the protection of children and youth affected by armed conflict situations, including in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict processes.[72]

Finally, on 20 December 2015, the UN Secretary General presented the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE). This plan "considers and addresses violent extremism as, and when, conducive to terrorism".[73] It calls for "the engagement of women, girls and young people or youth in preventing violent

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[66] Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, *Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security*, Adopted in Amman, Jordan on 22 August 2015.

[67] *Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace*, Produced at the Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism, New York City, September 28, 2015.

[68] UNITED NETWORK OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS (UNOY Peacebuilders), *Security Council Resolution 2250 Annotated and Explained*, 2016.

[69] S/RES/2250 (2015).

[70] UNITED NATIONS, General Assembly, Resolution 70/127, 17 December 2015.

[71] Ibidem, Preamble.

[72] Ibidem, n. 18.

[73] *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/674, 24 December 2015, n. 2.

extremism through integrating them in decision making at all levels, carrying out intergenerational dialogue and youth-adult confidence building training and activities".[74] The plan analyses the impact of violent extremism on peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, rule of law and humanitarian action. Then, after describing the conditions conducive to and the structural context of violent extremism, it provides recommendations for setting the policy framework and taking action at the national and regional level. The need for alignment of such national and regional policies with the Sustainable Development Goals is highlighted. The plan also encourages the involvement of hard-to-reach young people as laid out in the "Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding"[75] and concludes with an appeal for concerted action.

4. The UN Security Council Resolution 2250/2015

The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 marks a ground-breaking achievement. For the first time in its history, the Security Council has recognized that young women and men play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

UNSCR 2250 affirms the important role young women and men can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. It also recognizes that youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation and that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place.

On violent extremism, UNSCR 2250 acknowledges that the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism, especially amongst young women and men, threatens stability and development, and can often derail peacebuilding efforts and foment conflict, and stress the importance of addressing conditions and factors leading to the rise of radicalization to violence and violent extremism amongst youth. It also notes the important role young women and men can play as positive role models in preventing and countering violent extremism. A reference to the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to integrate youth's participation, leadership and empowerment as core to the United Nation's strategy and responses, is included.

Article 41 of the UN Charter states that the Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the UN to apply such measures. Examples of such measures include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.[76] The Security Council, in the Resolution 2250, highlights the attention it has been giving when considering the potential impact of such measures on the population, including youth.

One of the challenges when addressing youth is the age range that is used to define the term "youth". UNSCR 2250 defines youth as 18-29 years old, but notes the variations of definition of youth at national and international levels, also referencing the definition of youth in GA resolutions.[77]

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74 UNITED NETWORK OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS (UNOY Peacebuilders), *op. cit.*, 2016.

75 UNITED NATIONS, Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (INAYD), Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding, *op. cit.*, 2014.

76 UN Charter, Art. 41.

77 A/RES/50/81 and A/RES/56/117.

By recalling previous resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the Resolution 2250 reaffirms the commitments made in the past and references the content of these commitments.[78] One of the most important references in the preamble of UNSCR 2250 is the one to UNSCR 1325, adopted in 2000, which was a landmark for the inclusion of women in issues of peace and security. We have already mentioned the similarities between the history of women's and youth's inclusion in the UN processes on peace and security. Due to its longer experience, therefore, the Women Peace and Security agenda (which deals with the role of women in conflict, the impact of conflict on women's lives and security and women's participation in peacebuilding) has a lot to teach to the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.[79]

Likewise, the Security Council recalls in the Preamble of UNSCR 2250 its resolutions related to Countering Terrorism. Statements of the UNSC President are also recalled. For instance, the Statement mentioned in the first paragraph of the Resolution 2250's Preamble approaches the issue of "young foreign fighters" and "how Member States should try to counter it"[80]. In the two statements that deal with the issue of peacebuilding, the Security Council once again reiterates the importance of "inclusivity in advancing national peacebuilding processes and objectives in order to ensure that the needs of all segments of society are taken into account"[81]; as well as the importance of using existing civilian expertise and further developing them, and "investing in the economic capacities of women and youth for stable post-conflict recovery".[82] It also emphasizes the primary responsibility national governments bear in leading peacebuilding processes and local actors, including the civil society.[83] Reference is made also to the Statement of the UNSC President on Countering Terrorism[84], regarding the role of technology to recruit and support young people's involvement in terrorist activities. But it also emphasizes the responsibility of Member States to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms when drafting and implementing policies aimed at preventing and countering terrorism.

The Resolution's Preamble also recalls the UNSC Resolutions on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.[85] Over the last decades, civilians comprise the vast majority of the casualties in armed conflict.[86] Thus, the Security Council adopted two important resolutions explicitly dedicated to the protection of civilians, respectively in 1999 and 2009, confirming with the latter its willingness to remain seized of the issue.[87] Consequently, Resolution 2250 expresses concern that among civilians, youth account for many of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and that the disruption of youth's access to education and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on durable peace and reconciliation.

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[78] Resolutions 1325/2000, 1820/2008, 1889/2009, 1960/2010, 2106/2013, 2122/2013 and 2242/2015 on Women, Peace and Security and all relevant statements of its President, its resolutions on Countering Terrorism 2178/2014 and 2195/2014 and the Statement of its President S/PRST/2015/11, and the Statements of its President on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding S/PRST/2012/29 and S/PRST/2015/2.

[79] UNITED NETWORK OF YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS (UNOY Peacebuilders), *op. cit.*, 2016.

[80] S/PRST/2015/11, p. 4.

[81] S/PRST/2012/29, p. 1.

[82] Ibid. p. 3.

[83] S/PRST/2015/2, p.1.

[84] S/PRST/2015/11, p.4- 5.

[85] UNITED NATIONS, Security Council Resolutions 1265/1999 and 1894/2009.

[86] UNITED NATIONS, General Assembly, fifty-first session, Note by the Secretary-General, *Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children, Impact of armed conflict on children*, A/51/306, 26 August 1996, n. 24.

[87] UN Security Council Resolutions 1265/1999 and 1894/2009.

After concluding its Preamble with an appeal to Member States "to consider developing a UN common approach to inclusive development as a key for preventing conflict and enabling long-term stability and sustainable peace"[88], the Security Council Resolution 2250 specifically identifies five main pillars for action:

a) Participation;

b) Protection;

c) Prevention;

d) Partnership;

e) Disengagement and Reintegration.

Participation

According to the text of the Resolution, "Participation" means also representation of youth in decision-making, at all levels, but especially in mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict. The UNSC demonstrates that it is aware of the tendency by decision makers to talk about youth, rather than work with youth. Thus, the Resolution urges international institutions and governments to ensure meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding processes, primarily by giving them the opportunity to shape the future of their own countries.

Specific aspects are highlighted in the text, when calling Member States to take youth into consideration, such as: (a) The needs of youth during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local youth peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve youth in the implementation mechanisms of peace agreements; (c) Measures to empower youth in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Since the end of the Cold War and the adoption of the "Agenda for Peace", the UN Security Council has significantly increased the number of missions to conflict areas, in order to better assess the action to take and to evaluate the work of the UN and NGOs in the field.[89] The Resolution 2250, therefore, urges the Security Council to include consultations with local and international youth groups on the occasion of such missions.

As a first output of this Resolution 2250's first pillar, on 22 November 2016 the global campaign *Not Too Young To Run* was launched at the first United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law taking place at United Nations Geneva. The campaign, launched by a partnership consisting of the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the European Youth Forum (EYF) and the Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth & Advancement (YIAGA), aims to elevate the promotion of young people's right to run for public office and address the wide-spread issue of age discrimination. In a rapidly changing world where more than 50 percent of the population is under 30, but less than 2 percent of elected legislators are, the campaign highlights that the active participation of young people in electoral politics is essential to thriving and representative democracies worldwide. The campaign emphasizes young people's rights to engage fully in the democratic process, including the right of young people to run for office themselves.[90]

Protection

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88 UNITED NATIONS, Security Council Resolution on *Youth, Peace and Security*, 2250/2015, 9 December 2015, Preamble.

89 See UNITED NATIONS, *An Agenda for Peace. Preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peacekeeping*, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, n. 24 "Measures to build confidence", n. 25 "Fact-finding", n. 26 "Early warning".

90 UNITED NATIONS, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Not Too Young to Run. Promoting the rights of young people running for public office and leadership positions*. Concept Note For a side event at the United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law Human Rights Council, Geneva, 2016.

The main core of international humanitarian law, a set of rules that seek to limit the effects of armed conflict for humanitarian reasons, was shaped by the Four Geneva Conventions adopted in 1949 and their additional Protocols adopted in 1977.[91] While some of the norms established by these Conventions specifically relate to the protection and treatment of women and children, no specific mention is given to the youth. However, the Resolution 2250 asks all parties to armed conflict to consider youth (and specific measures in their favour) when complying with the obligations applicable to them under international law relevant to the protection of civilians.[92]

International humanitarian law's core purpose is to limit and prevent human suffering in armed conflicts. All parties to armed conflicts have to take the necessary and appropriate measures to protect and meet the basic needs of the conflict-affected population. Grave violations are committed against children and youth in war-affected countries around the world.[93] Children and youth are not only exposed to sexual and gender-based violence but are also, inter alia, killed, injured, orphaned, abducted, deprived of education and health care. Children and youth are also vulnerable to recruitment processes which have grave implications for their physical and psychological well-being. Much focus has been placed into the situation of children in war whereas less has been placed into also protecting the youth. This is the reason why the Resolution calls on all parties to armed conflict to take the necessary measure to protect civilians, including those who are youth, from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

The Resolution 2250 then reaffirms the responsibility of each State to protect its populations, as well as to ensure the human rights of all individuals, including youth, within their territory and subject to their jurisdiction as provided for by relevant international law.[94]

Prevention

In the phrasing of the Resolution 2250, "Prevention" does not mean only to facilitate an inclusive and enabling environment for youth to implement violence prevention activities, but also to create policies providing youth employment opportunities and vocational training, fostering their education, and promoting youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement.[95] Notably, a quality education for peace is urged, in order to equip youth with to peace education which have evolved over time. Broadly, "peace education" is a holistic, multidisciplinary and transformative process which develops competences that contribute to nonviolent conflict transformation, respect for human rights and active participation.[96] Furthermore, the Resolution explicitly urges the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

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91 Geneva Convention (I) on Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field; Geneva Convention (II) on Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked of Armed Forces at Sea; Geneva Convention (III) on Prisoners of War; Geneva Convention (IV) on Civilians, 12.08.1949; Additional Protocol (I) and Additional Protocol (II) to the Geneva Conventions, 08.06.1977.

92 Relevant obligations in this field are enshrined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, the Resolution 2250/2015 further calls on Member to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians, including youth.

93 UNITED NATIONS, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Fact Sheet on *Youth and Armed Conflict*, 2010.

94 On the evolution of the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" within the United Nations, see THAKUR R., *The United Nations, Peace and Security. From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

95 Cf. IANYD Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, *op. cit.*, January 2016. The main objective of this Practice Note is to inform policymakers and donors of key strategic and programming considerations for supporting young people's participation in peacebuilding.

96 Cf. EUROPEAN INTERCULTURAL FORUM, *Mainstreaming Peace Education. Methodologies, Approaches and Visions. A Practitioner's Manual*, July 2014. This is a manual which aims to provide a framework for peace education in lifelong learning. It focuses on presenting the overall framework for peace education, sets out a strategic approach to mainstreaming peace education and provides examples of projects and initiatives in peace education implemented by European civil society organisations.

Partnerships

The Security Council "urges Member States to increase, as appropriate, their political, financial, technical and logistical support, that take account of the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts, in conflict and post-conflict situations, including those undertaken by relevant entities, funds and programmes".[97] The UN Peacebuilding Commission is asked to include in its recommendations for peacebuilding strategies ways to engage youth meaningfully during and in the aftermath of armed conflict[98], while Member States are encouraged to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative, including by empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders.

Disengagement & Reintegration

Planners for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should recognize that youth must play a vital role in planning such processes.[99] The Resolution encourages to take into consideration the following specific aspects:

(a) evidence-based and gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies, national youth employment action plans in partnership with the private sector, developed in partnership with youth and recognising the interrelated role of education, employment and training in preventing the marginalisation of youth;

(b) investment in building young persons' capabilities and skills to meet labour demands through relevant education opportunities designed in a manner which promotes a culture of peace;

(c) support for youth-led and peacebuilding organisations as partners in youth employment and entrepreneurship programs.

5. Follow-up and further developments

In the final paragraphs of the Resolution 2250, the Security Council appoints the United Nations with some specific tasks. The Secretary General (SG) is requested to carry out a progress study on the youth's positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels. Furthermore, the SG is also asked to include in his/her future Reports the measures taken in the implementation of the Resolution. More generally, the UNSC invites all relevant entities of the United Nations, Rapporteurs and Special Envoys and Representatives of the Secretary-General, to improve the coordination and interaction regarding the needs of youth. In particular, the Envoy on Youth has the task of harmonizing the efforts of the UN on youth issues and bringing the voices of young people to the UN System.[100] The role of the Envoy on Youth is also described by the UN Secretary-

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97 UNITED NATIONS, Security Council Resolution on *Youth, Peace and Security*, 2250/2015, 9 December 2015, n. 14. Among the "relevant entities, funds and programmes", the Resolution explicitly mentions the following ones: The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations Peacebuilding fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women, and by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

98 The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an intergovernmental advisory body supporting peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission brings together all of the relevant actors, including international donors, the international financial institutions, national governments, troop contributing countries, gathers resources and advises and proposes integrated post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery strategies. See THAKUR R., *The United Nations, Peace and Security. From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 338-339.

99 See SCHNABEL E., *Escaping Victimhood. Children, Youth and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*, United Nations University Press, 2013.

100 See the *Work Plan- Office of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth* (UN-OSGEY) – 2016, based on the following four principles: Participation, Advocacy, Partnerships, and Harmonization.

General as a "harmonizer between all UN agencies" bringing them together to explore cooperation opportunities for working with and for young people.

In recognition of the fundamental linkages between the 2030 Agenda and the concept of "Sustaining Peace"[101], the President of the General Assembly convened a High-level Dialogue entitled *Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustaining Peace Agenda* on 24 January 2017 at UN Headquarters in New York, with the participation of the President of the Security Council, the President of the Economic and Social Council, and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. The overarching objective of the event was to discuss the mutually reinforcing linkages between Sustaining Peace and the 2030 Agenda, including at country level, and ways in which to leverage them optimally in an integrated framework that can assist Member States, United Nations bodies and entities, civil society and other stakeholders to coordinate and enhance their efforts in implementing the SDGs and achieving sustainable peace.[102]

In the meanwhile, other regional intergovernmental organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), are developing similar programmes.[103] Even within the networks of civil society, international congresses and conferences are studying the potential of youth in peacebuilding. For instance, the global meeting of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building, held in Stockholm in April 2016, further emphasized the need to promote the participation of young people.[104] Also the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), through the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) or its own members, promoted events and panel discussions on this emerging topic.[105]

As far as the United Nations are concerned, it is important to point out that this process is now developing in the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva too. In the report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee at its ninth session[106], it was highlighted that young people are an important human resource for development, and can be positive and fundamental actors in social change. Also, HRC Resolution 28/14 of 26 March 2015 establishing the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law decided that the theme of the first session of the Forum would be "*Widening the democratic space: the role of youth in public decision-making*". The Forum took place in Geneva on 21 and 22 November 2016 and provided a unique

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101 As outlined in Security Council resolution 2282/2016 and General Assembly resolution 70/262.

102 "*Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace*", High Level Dialogue of the President of the General Assembly for the 71st session, 24 January 2017, ECOSOC Chamber, Draft concept Paper.

103 ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE, Recommendations from Western European Youth on Preventing Violent Extremism, 24 October 2016; Recommendations from Western European Youth on Preventing Violent Extremism, 24 October 2016; Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach, 17 April 2014. See also other developments in OSCE Youth programmes, such as the creation of a Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office on Youth and Security.

104 The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding is the first forum for political dialogue to bring together countries affected by conflict and fragility, development partners, and civil society. The International Dialogue is composed of members of the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), the g7+group of fragile and conflict-affected states, and the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS). On 5 April 2016, at the end of their Fifth Global Meeting, these entities adopted the "*Stockholm Declaration. Addressing Fragility and Building Peace in a Changing World*".

105 The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policymakers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). See CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE NETWORK, Policy Meeting Report, *Youth in Conflicts: Agents for peace or recruits for armed groups?*, 11 December 2014; EPLO MEMBER ORGANISATION EVENT – *Promoting Young People as Peacebuilders: How Engaging Youth Can Prevent Violent Extremism?*, Brussels, Belgium, 16th June 2016; EPLO MEMBER ORGANISATION EVENT – *Global Youth Rising*, Romania, 10th July 2016 - 20th July 2016; EPLO MEMBER ORGANISATION EVENT – Panel Discussion: *Youth, Policy and Peace*, 22nd September 2016, The Hague, Netherlands.

106 Geneva, 6 to 10 August 2012.

opportunity to a variety of stakeholders to discuss best practices, opportunities and challenges for youth to meaningfully and effectively participate in public decision making at local, regional and international level.

Eventually, in its Resolution 32/1 of 30 June 2016 the HRC decided to convene at its thirty-third session a panel discussion on the theme, "*Youth and human rights*", the objective of which would be to identify challenges, best practices and lessons learned in the exercise of human rights by young people, as well as relevant opportunities for the empowerment of youth in the exercise of their rights, and requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to liaise with States and all stakeholders, including relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, national human rights institutions and civil society, including representatives of youth organizations, with a view to ensuring their participation in the panel discussion. It is relevant to note here that this HRC Resolution also underlines "the important role that youth can play in the promotion of peace, sustainable development and human rights, and the importance of active and wide participation of youth in decision-making".[107]

A Report of the above-mentioned First session of the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law was adopted by the Human Rights Council on the 31st of January 2017 and officially presented on the 15th of March 2017.[108] Key recommendations in the report include the need to promote youth participation without discrimination through the design, implementation and evaluation of laws, policies, programmes or strategies affecting their rights. They also include suggestions to ensure an enabling environment by, for instance, promoting human rights and global citizenship education in school curricula; and the special attention required to ensure gender sensitive approaches and a focus on most marginalized youth. The report also includes proposals for Member States to consider aligning minimum voting age and minimum age of eligibility to run for public office; and strengthening national and local institutions such as youth councils and other consultative mechanisms. With regards to suggestions for the UN-System and particularly the Human Rights Council itself, the report offers concrete recommendations on how to improve the participation of young people and the focus on their rights, such as in the context of the Universal Period Reviews; the establishment of youth consultative mechanisms in support of the Council's work; and the engagement of youth in the role of experts to the Council, as well as part of Member States' official delegations.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 has given new impetus also to UNDP's work in this area, a key part of which involves the effort to systematically include young people and their organizations in peacebuilding processes and by supporting them in playing a pivotal role in re-establishing relationships and a renewed social contract. [109]

In order to implement both its Youth Strategy 2014-2017, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNSC Resolution 2250, the UNDP recently adopted its first Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace – Youth-GPS (2016-2020). This is a 5-year global programmatic offer on youth empowerment, designed to sharpen the organization's response to the challenges young people face worldwide. Based on UNDP's careful context analysis, Youth-GPS' multi-dimensional approach focuses on four interdependent thematic areas of work where UNDP has developed an expertise:

• Civic engagement & political participation;
• Peacebuilding & resilience-building;
• Economic empowerment;
• Youth as partners in the 2030 Agenda implementation and monitoring.

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107 UNITED NATIONS, Human Rights Council, Resolution 32/1, 30 June 2016, Preamble.

108 UNITED NATIONS, Human Rights Council, First session of the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Report of the Co-Chairs, 31 January 2017.

109 UNDP, Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Youth-GPS), 8 July 2016, p. 27.

Through Youth-GPS, UNDP will engage in these four distinct but inter-related multi-level interventions to scale up its successful actions on youth empowerment, expand its work to fill current gaps at all levels and build on its successes, by offering:

• Technical, policy & programming support;
• Financial support / seed funding;
• Inclusive partnerships, coalitions & networks;
• Knowledge generation & exchange;
• Advocacy, research & data;
• Capacity development;
• Youth & gender mainstreaming.

UNDP's Youth-GPS seeks to offer a multi-level response to the needs of young people and their communities in each thematic area of work by supplying rigorous and cutting-edge guidance and tools, improving coordination systems on the ground, knowledge and experience sharing, encouraging innovative partnerships, piloting new solutions and scaling up successful initiatives, including those led by young people themselves. This strategy clearly looks at youth as partners in the 2030 Agenda. In particular, SDG 16, in combination with the UNSCR 2250, is described by the Youth-GPS as a critical opportunity to advance youth empowerment by guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, ensuring accountability and opening up decision-making processes to their participation.[110]

Conclusions

Not only has humankind to realize the consequences of the global demographic trends of the last decades, but it also has to understand them as an opportunity: "40 percent of the world population is under the age of twenty-four, meaning an even larger percentage has no personal memory of colonialism or the Cold War".[111] According to recent surveys, these "first globals" identify connectivity and sustainability as their prime values.[112] Young generations believe their destiny is not only to belong to political States, but also to connect across them, following what has been called "the world attraction".[113]

Although a global survey expressly focused on youth and peace is not available yet, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground, on behalf of the inter-agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding, are currently working on a similar project, in order to contribute to the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 2250.[114]

Young people's role in peacebuilding highly depends on adult generations, i.e. on the education and the opportunities they provide to the young ones.[115] The potential of young people can be formed and used for evil or good purposes. Quality education is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals described in the 2030 Agenda promoted by the United Nations. Peace education at all levels should be included and fostered in this process, intertwining SDG 4 on Quality Education with SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Goal 16 in particular represents a critical opportunity to advance youth empowerment by guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, ensuring accountability and opening up decision-making processes to

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110 Ibidem, p. 28.

111 KHANNA P., *Connectography. Mapping the Global Network Revolution*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2016, p. XXIV-XXV.

112 ZOGBY ANALYTICS, *They've Got the Whole World in Their Hands: Millennials Are Plugged in and Connected Worldwide*, 19 June 2014; see also ZOGBY J., KUHL J. S., *First Globals. Understanding, Managing, & Unleashing the Potential of Our Millennial Generation*, 2013.

113 RAMEL F., *L'attraction mondiale*, Presses de Sciences Po, Paris, 2012.

114 UNSCR 2250/2015, 9 December 2015, n. 20.

115 GIRO M., *Presbitocrazia: i giovani senza potere*, Limes – Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica, Vol. 2/2017, 1 Marzo 2017.

their participation.[116] "Peace Education" is here understood as "education to positive peace", where peace is more than the mere absence of violence or war.[117] Rather, positive peace includes the respect of human rights, cooperation, equity, equality, the promotion of a sustainable development and a human security. Further academic research on the factors and dimensions of positive peace should be supported, in order to provide the United Nations with meaningful instruments for their peacebuilding planning and evaluation.[118]

A new phase of the civilizing process, which is marked not only by non-violence and stronger commitments to eliminating unnecessary harm[119], but also by positive peace[120], is within reach. Today humankind, through effective partnerships between States and non-States actors[121], is called to welcome the all-time largest generation of young people: all the educative actors need to join their efforts to empower youth to dream and build a better future, a future of justice and peace.

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[116] INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS AND PEACE (IEP), *From now to 2030: What is needed to measure Goal 16.* See also INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS AND PEACE (IEP), Positive Peace Report 2016.

[117] For a detailed study on the concept of "peace" in international relations theories, see RICHMOND O. P., *Peace in International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2008.

[118] TURAN T., *Positive Peace in Theory and Practice. Strengthening the United Nations's Pre-Conflict Prevention Role*, Brill-Nijhoff, 2016.

[119] LINKLATER A., *The Problem of Harm in World Politics. Theoretical Investigations*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 231; see also LINKLATER A., *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[120] See GALTUNG J., *Peace by Peaceful Means*, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 1996.

[121] See MARCHETTI R., *Global Strategic Engagement. States and Non-States Actors in Global Governance*, Lexington Books, 2016.

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