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Youth and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report highlights advancements in institutionalizing the youth and peace and security agenda, with many Member States and regional organizations developing new strategies and initiatives to promote the inclusion and meaningful participation of young people in peace and security affairs. Furthermore, increased efforts have been made to foster youth engagement in political processes through impactful youth-led mobilizations. However, persistent challenges remain, such as the growing mistrust between young people and governments, and discriminatory laws and practices based on age, which remain prevalent in many countries and hinder the meaningful participation of young people. The increase in digital threats and armed conflicts and the shrinking of civic space also pose serious protection concerns for young people. Despite growing political momentum for the youth and peace and security agenda, a decrease in the number of references to young people in resolutions and in the number of young people briefing the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission is noted in the report. Political commitment has not yet translated into increased investment in youth-led peacebuilding. The widespread deficit in age-disaggregated data represents a major obstacle to analysing progress in the implementation of the agenda. The report contains a series of recommendations to the Security Council, Member States and regional organizations, and the United Nations aimed at ensuring continued momentum in the area of youth and peace and security, against the backdrop of a challenging global outlook and numerous setbacks.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#), in which the Security Council requested a biennial report on the implementation of resolutions [2535 \(2020\)](#), [2419 \(2018\)](#) and [2250 \(2015\)](#).

2. The second report of the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security ([S/2022/220](#)) was issued in March 2022, during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which had systematic and profound effects on young people. Since then, in many countries, armed conflicts, economic and climate crises, and the shrinking of civic space have worsened. The surge in the number of armed conflicts in the past decade reversed a 20-year decline. Since 2022, the number of conflict-related deaths has surpassed a 28-year high. This has had catastrophic consequences for people and societies and led to unprecedented levels of displacement. There has been a significant rise in unconstitutional changes of government, representing a setback for democratic governance and threatening regional stability, economic development and human rights protection.

3. The 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit proposed key actions for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially in conflict-affected countries, such as committing to engage with youth, recognizing their importance for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The full and effective inclusion of young people¹ without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status is crucial for advancing development, alleviating poverty and mitigating the risks of conflict and violence rooted in inequality, marginalization and exclusion.

4. According to the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](#)), young people should champion the universal application of the United Nations principles and foster trust within and among States. They should actively contribute to building intergenerational solidarity, trust in governments and inclusive institutions. Institutionalizing and adequately resourcing the youth and peace and security agenda is crucial to achieving this goal. The contribution of young people to identifying innovative solutions to global challenges and enhancing the legitimacy of peace and security initiatives is also recognized in the Secretary-General’s policy brief on meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes ([A/77/CRP.1/Add.2](#)).

5. The present report covers the progress made in implementing the youth and peace and security agenda between January 2022 and December 2023. While efforts are growing to integrate the agenda into national and regional frameworks, strategies and policies, there is a need to enhance government initiatives and enact special measures to increase youth representation in decision-making spaces. The report addresses trends and challenges across the five pillars outlined in Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#): participation, protection, prevention, disengagement and reintegration, and partnerships. It is informed by analysis and data provided by United Nations entities, Member States, regional organizations and civil society organizations, including youth-focused and youth-led organizations.

¹ In Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), young people are defined as those between 18 and 29 years old. References to “youth” or “young people” acknowledge their diverse backgrounds, identities and experiences.

II. Trends across the youth and peace and security agenda

A. Participation

Participation in politics, governance and elections

6. The youth and peace and security agenda provides an opportunity to address the violence of exclusion that young people experience, by increasing participation and enhancing the inclusivity and accountability of democratic governance. Young people can positively contribute to peace in their communities, although their formal political participation remains limited in many societies. The exclusion of young people from governance is often rooted in laws and practices that discriminate based on age. Such institutional barriers include age restrictions for voting, joining political parties and standing for office. Furthermore, high financial costs frequently hinder the participation of young people in political and electoral processes and confine them to informal or alternative spaces.

7. Young people's growing mistrust in governance institutions and electoral processes is an important factor that affects their political participation. Across 26 countries, 76 per cent of young people believe that politicians do not listen to them.² Research has found that unfavourable perceptions of young people harboured by institutions, decision makers and governments further deter progress.³ The "Be seen, be heard" campaign led by the United Nations Youth Office and The Body Shop seeks to amplify the voices of young people and promote their political participation. It has contributed to policy debates aimed at lowering the voting age and the age required to run for public office in India and New Zealand.

8. In a recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study involving over 1,000 young people in 65 countries and territories, 82 per cent of the young people surveyed stated that electoral violence hinders their participation in elections. However, when given the opportunity, young people can play an important role in contributing to mitigating electoral violence by monitoring initiatives, dialogues and mediation, countering hate speech and misinformation, and providing training on peaceful coexistence. During the 2023 electoral process, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo conducted social cohesion activities for over 1,200 young people and provided them with a platform for meaningful dialogue among youth leaders and provincial and national parliamentarians on misinformation, hate speech and political manipulation. The Peacebuilding Fund continued to provide critical funding for youth-inclusive electoral processes. In Madagascar, 33 United Nations Volunteers are supporting a joint initiative by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to amplify the voices of young people from 18 ethnic groups across the country during electoral periods. That initiative created a peer support system for youth from marginalized communities. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Peacebuilding Fund supported dialogue among key political actors and stakeholders with a focus on building trust and facilitating rapprochement between youth constituencies from public, private and Indigenous universities from different regions. In Guinea, 3,000 young peacebuilders were engaged at the local, national and regional levels through the National Youth Council, which was established during the country's transition to address social division and foster active participation in decision-making in matters relating to citizenship, peace and social cohesion.

² United Nations Youth Office and The Body Shop, "Be seen, be heard: understanding young people's political participation", 2022. Available at <https://beseenbeheardcampaign.com/>.

³ Ibid.

9. There is a growing number of initiatives aimed at building young people's capacities to participate in and lead political and policy initiatives. For example, in Chad, the National Transitional Council reserved five seats for young people, including two for young women, following advocacy led by young people and supported by the United Nations and the African Union. In Somalia, the political participation of young people and their representation in district council elections increased owing to intergenerational political forums hosted by UNFPA and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. In Colombia, UNFPA and UNDP delivered training to 17 public servants, 22 local youth counsellors and 65 youth organizations with a view to enhancing intergenerational collaboration in two conflict-ridden territories. The joint initiative also facilitated 26 youth-led social innovation actions to address conflict prevention and gender-based violence. In Kenya, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs worked on strengthening the capacities of youth organizations and officials to review and reformulate social policies at the municipal and county levels.

Participation in peace processes

10. In 2023, an international steering group was established to coordinate and advance the implementation of the global five-year strategic action plan on youth-inclusive peace processes. Co-chaired by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Youth Office and Search for Common Ground, the international steering group comprises 23 expert members, translates the strategic action plan into concrete actions and guides the roll-out of the plan. In addition, the University of Glasgow, a member of the international steering group, launched an initial data set entitled "References to youth in peace agreements, 1990–2022". The data set identified 208 peace agreements that explicitly mention "youth" or "young people", which represent 12 per cent of all peace agreements during the period in question and create a baseline for monitoring progress on references to young people in peace agreements. While youth representation remains limited, research shows that the engagement of young people in formal and informal monitoring bodies, constitution-making committees and electoral monitoring contributes to more inclusive peace agreements. The European Union revisited its peace mediation guidelines using a youth-inclusive and consultative process and proactively facilitated youth engagement in peace processes, for example in Libya.

11. When young people are involved in peacebuilding efforts, peace processes can be more durable. During the reporting period, the Youth Mediation Support Team in Yemen continued to strengthen youth inclusion in local peace mediation efforts by providing mediators with technical and logistical support. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and its partners are developing a ceasefire mechanism to support local security priorities, emphasizing the inclusion of civil society, young people and women. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has also supported the Group of Nine Plus One coalition to improve the coordination and inclusion of Yemeni women-led and youth-led civil society organizations in multitrack peace processes. In Colombia, young people are represented on the National Participation Committee, a mechanism established to facilitate the inclusive participation of Colombian society in the ongoing peace process. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic proactively engaged young people and youth organizations to participate in local peace processes, including in four local peace agreements in 2022 and 2023.

12. During the reporting period, there was a significant increase in capacity-building initiatives designed to strengthen young people's meaningful engagement in peace processes, including United Nations initiatives in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad,

Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Togo and Yemen. In Somalia, the United Nations System Staff College and UNDP delivered a peer learning programme on conflict mapping, conflict analysis, and planning for peacebuilding, which addressed the underrepresentation of young people in peace and reconciliation processes. In the Horn of Africa, the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs engaged with young people to bridge intergenerational gaps in mediation. UN-Women conducted capacity-building initiatives for youth organizations to participate in peace processes in Georgia and transitional justice initiatives in Lebanon. In Yemen, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, UNFPA and the Youth without Borders Organization for Development hosted tailored digital training to enhance existing youth-led contributions to the peace process. In Myanmar, UNFPA and Search for Common Ground continued to build the capacities of young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds to engage in peace processes.

Participation in climate action

13. Together with other groups, young people bear a disproportionate burden of the adverse effects of climate change, which intensify vulnerabilities and inequalities, threaten hard-earned development gains and contribute to displacement and heightened risks, including gender-based violence, poverty and resource scarcity. At the same time, young people are the driving force in mobilizing and engaging in climate action worldwide. Some young climate activists are pursuing climate justice through legal action, for example in Brazil, Canada, Portugal and the United States of America.

14. In 2022, the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, which remains the primary global platform for coordinating multi-stakeholder efforts to advance the youth and peace and security agenda, established a working group on youth, peace and climate security to coordinate youth-led and climate-responsive peacebuilding advocacy efforts at all levels. In 2023, the presidency of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, YOUNGO and the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security partnered to advance strategic discussions on the intersection of youth, peace and climate security and engaged in a high-level intergenerational dialogue at the session. The event served as a catalyst for developing a global framework for integrating youth and peace and security principles into climate action, fostering a unified approach towards climate-responsive peace and security.

15. United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions increasingly support youth engagement in environmental peacebuilding initiatives. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus helped young people to prepare joint positions for the United Nations climate conferences. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo⁴ delivered climate awareness-raising activities aimed at increasing social cohesion among young people from different communities, and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq fostered collaboration between young people and the Government through consultations, which resulted in policy papers addressing climate change and key social and political concerns that affect young people. To implement the Dakar Call to Action on Climate Change, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the African Union convened young advocates from

⁴ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

the region to share good practices of youth-led climate action and conflict prevention. The climate security mechanism continues to bolster the capacity of the United Nations system and its partners to more systematically analyse and address linkages between climate, peace and security, including with regard to young people. At the request of Member States, the Peacebuilding Fund addresses the intersection of climate change and conflict, as well as the effects of heightened competition over natural resources. In Mali, the Fund financed locally led initiatives in which almost 2,500 representatives of mostly youth associations received certificates of customary allocation for farming and grazing lands in areas where limited land access constitutes a source of conflict and violence.

16. To improve youth-responsive climate action and decision-making, UNDP developed the “On equal terms” checklist, which provides officials and other stakeholders with a comprehensive guide for establishing a process that includes young people in the design, implementation and monitoring of nationally determined contributions.

Participation in humanitarian contexts

17. Throughout the reporting period, numerous humanitarian response and recovery initiatives and strategies actively engaged young people in youth-responsive humanitarian and protection interventions.

18. The Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, a global multi-stakeholder platform co-chaired by UNFPA and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, continues to unite stakeholders and champion the pivotal role of young people in humanitarian response. During the reporting period, its 64 member organizations provided technical support to strengthen youth responsiveness in humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, Ukraine and the occupied Palestinian territory. In collaboration with the Youth2030 Disability Task Team, the Compact developed guidance on ensuring the meaningful participation of young people with disabilities in local humanitarian responses. During the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the Compact launched a multi-stakeholder pledge to mobilize commitments for supporting work with, for and by young people affected by displacement.

19. In a cross-border initiative across Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia, the World Organization of the Scout Movement and UNICEF mobilized 35,000 young volunteers between April 2022 and February 2023 to assist 1 million Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons affected by conflict.

20. The humanitarian country team in Afghanistan established an adolescents and youth working group as part of the protection cluster, under the leadership of UNFPA, to bolster information-sharing and enhance youth-responsive humanitarian programming in hard-to-reach communities.

B. Protection

21. During the reporting period, threats faced by young people ranged from physical and psychological to sociocultural, financial, legal and digital. Armed conflicts, in particular in the Sudan, Ukraine and Gaza, continued to increase the vulnerability of civilians, including young people. The destruction of civilian and critical infrastructure disrupted their access to essential services such as health and education and contributed to internal and cross-border displacement. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024* reported that, within three months of heavy fighting in the Sudan, the number of women and girls at risk of gender-based violence had increased by a

staggering 40 per cent. In Haiti, gangs continue to systematically use sexual violence against women and girls to consolidate control over populations. Survivors of gender-based violence frequently face challenges in obtaining access to justice. To address these challenges, in 2022 UNFPA established 642 youth-friendly safe spaces in 32 countries and territories, providing psychological support, legal services, recreation, vocational training and community outreach.

22. Armed conflicts also have a disproportionate impact on the well-being and mental health of young people and marginalized youth groups. In Ukraine, 82 per cent of surveyed youth have experienced psychological trauma resulting from the war. In 2023, the World Health Organization trained more than 3,100 health-care staff, teachers, community workers, caregivers and peers on programmes to protect young people's mental health, including in areas of armed conflict in Colombia.

23. Digital threats have continued, facilitated by the growing use of social media. There is an increase in the online dissemination of hate speech, misinformation, racism, violence, bullying, political persecution and unwanted sexual advances. Young women and girls face a higher likelihood of violence if they have a disability, belong to marginalized communities, identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex, are socioeconomically disadvantaged or are politically outspoken.

24. Young people's mental health, well-being, security and development also continue to be disproportionately affected by armed violence linked to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Worldwide, more than 176,000 young people (aged 15–29 years) are victims of homicide, representing 37 per cent of the total number of homicides globally each year.⁵

25. Although data on threats are not disaggregated by age, a shrinking civic space, both offline and online, has been observed. In his 2023 report on cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights ([A/HRC/54/61](#)), the Secretary-General noted a high number of incidents of reprisals and intimidation by State and non-State actors against human rights defenders, civil society organizations and individuals cooperating with the United Nations. United Nations entities took steps to incorporate gender and youth perspectives into their approaches to prevent intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations. For example, the United Nations Youth Office developed a youth-sensitive online training module on engaging safely at the United Nations, addressing abuse of authority, discrimination, online and offline harassment, including sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation and abuse following young people's engagement with the United Nations. Recognizing potential protection concerns associated with briefing the Security Council, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNFPA, the Youth Office and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights are developing internal guidance to support and safeguard the meaningful and safe participation of young briefers in the Council.

26. United Nations entities also implemented country-specific measures to protect young people, including risk assessments and security training in Iraq and the creation of protection protocols, particularly for Indigenous youth groups, in Colombia and Peru. To address increasing threats targeting young people, United Nations peace operations are taking steps to integrate youth protection into their work. For example, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic proactively addressed the escalating risks of sexual violence from armed groups in the country by implementing sensitization activities for various stakeholders, including religious and community leaders, local authorities, youth and women's organizations and local protection actors. Civil society organizations are

⁵ World Health Organization, "Youth violence", fact sheet, 11 October 2023.

also strengthening protection measures for young people and youth-led organizations. In 2023, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders developed two country-specific protection protocols for young peacebuilders in Bangladesh and Myanmar. The United Network of Young Peacebuilders piloted peer support group sessions for young peacebuilders and continues to strengthen and monitor its protection protocols.

27. There is currently no global protection mechanism offering emergency funding to address the urgent and specific protection needs of young people worldwide. Existing mechanisms are often underresourced and lack the flexibility to provide timely emergency support. Initial efforts to address these challenges include the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund funding window for women human rights defenders, through which over 160 young women from 14 conflict and crisis-affected countries and territories were supported in 2022 and 2023.

C. Prevention

28. In his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace ([A/77/CRP.1/Add.8](#)), the Secretary-General called for whole-of-government and whole-of-society national prevention strategies to leave no one behind and address all forms of violence. Exclusionary practices and experiences of injustice worsen grievances, including among young people, and can contribute to escalating tensions. Effective prevention relies on inclusive approaches, including ensuring youth participation across political and socioeconomic dimensions.

29. When equipped with the appropriate knowledge and tools, young people can contribute positively to transforming societies and to peace and conflict prevention. Since 2022, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations has trained 60 young peacebuilders from the Middle East, North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean on peace education and intercultural dialogue. In 2023, over 9 million individuals learned about the protection of children from association with terrorist groups in Borno State, Nigeria, through awareness-raising campaigns over radio and social media led by 16 youth peace champions trained by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

30. While advancements in technological platforms have increased access to information, State and non-State actors can use online platforms and surveillance to amplify hate speech and disinformation, as well as target, silence, harass and radicalize individuals. Media and information literacy is pivotal in mitigating the impact of these threats. Over 900 young people from 65 countries and territories benefited from “hackathons” organized by UNESCO with the aim of increasing young people's capacities to effectively combat disinformation, hate speech, discrimination and racism and fostering a culture of peace and tolerance. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan enhanced young people's risk mitigation capacities by providing information on digital security and safety. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo partnered with a local youth-led organization to train 40 youth trainers on countering online hate speech, cyberbullying and discrimination, promoting cross-community cooperation and multiculturalism in Kosovo.

31. Peace education equips young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to address conflict peacefully. The “Peace4Youth” programme enhanced the capacities of disadvantaged, excluded or marginalized youth (aged 14–24) in Northern Ireland and six border counties. The programme serves to tackle inequalities and address the legacy of division and violence, with a view to building a cohesive society founded on respect for all identities and traditions. In South Sudan, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNESCO engaged at-risk youth

and members of criminal groups through training and psychosocial and vocational support with the aim of transforming community perceptions of young people, reducing stigmatization and enhancing security. In 2023, a pilot initiative by UN-Women, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, UNFPA and UNICEF gathered young women peacebuilders from 20 conflict- or crisis-affected countries and territories and resulted in the establishment of a peer support network to foster enhanced leadership and peacebuilding skills.

32. Access to decent jobs is a powerful prevention tool for reducing inequalities and helping to integrate young people into society. In the Sahel, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is improving young people's livelihoods and increasing their access to decent employment in the agrifood sector. The International Labour Organization created decent jobs among marginalized youth in the Central African Republic by investing in small and medium-sized enterprises to rebuild deteriorated infrastructure. An African Development Bank initiative in Liberia is aimed at generating entrepreneurship opportunities by investing in youth-led micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and creating 120,000 direct and indirect jobs.

33. Sports and games continue to contribute to fostering inclusion and social cohesion. Between June and December 2023, UNDP, UNFPA and the Special Olympics organized a regional 3x3 basketball tournament uniting 1,137 young persons with and without disabilities, their mentors, parents and supporters from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Kosovo. Across the Western Balkans, multi-ethnic, multi-abled and gender-balanced sport teams competed in their country and territory; this culminated in a regional finale in Tirana, which combined competition with team building and recreational activities. The initiative was aimed at promoting trust, equality and collaboration by creating a safe space for exchanges among young people in their diversity. In Somalia, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and IOM use the innovative, game-based peacebuilding mobile app to engage young people from different communities.

D. Disengagement and reintegration

34. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes can restore peace and security in post-conflict societies and promote social cohesion and reconciliation. Young people are among the main beneficiaries of community violence reduction programmes implemented by peacekeeping operations, such as those led by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support communities in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces in reducing violence, building local resilience and improving livelihoods. In South Sudan, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission developed a community violence reduction project, with support from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, that reinserts and reintegrates ex-combatants, with a focus on preventing and reducing violence within and among communities, primarily targeting at-risk youth.

35. Prioritizing educational and vocational opportunities enables young people to rebuild their lives and reclaim their role in post-conflict societies. In 2023, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan partnered with a local organization in the country to develop a community violence reduction pilot project, providing vocational skills and conflict resolution training to at-risk youth and specifically focusing on combating gender-based violence. Similarly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees trained displaced youth to strengthen their leadership capacity, contributing to peaceful coexistence and a regional network of South Sudanese peacebuilders.

36. Involving young people enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. Prior to its withdrawal in December 2023, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali conducted training sessions on security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. By providing vocational skills that create financial stability, IOM and UNICEF supported the reintegration of young people formerly associated with Al-Shabaab in Somalia, enhancing social well-being and trust among them and marginalized youth in receiving communities.

37. In Colombia, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization actively promotes comprehensive, gender-responsive reintegration approaches to political, economic and environmental initiatives. With support from the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the Agency provided training on gender-responsive conflict resolution to young people and security forces, to ensure youth-inclusive territorial development programmes. Together with UNICEF and UN-Women, the Agency reached 298 young people in 2023, 59 per cent of whom were young women and youth with disabilities, in 10 prioritized former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

E. Partnerships

38. A growing number of actors are joining multi-stakeholder efforts to collectively champion the youth and peace and security agenda at all levels. The Dominican Republic and France, in collaboration with the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and UNFPA, convened in 2023 the first ever Member States' retreat on youth and peace and security, enabling the United Nations, civil society partners and 25 attending Member States to recommit to the agenda and accelerate its implementation. It concluded with an action-oriented outcome document on reinvigorating leadership to advance financing and implementation of the youth and peace and security agenda. New regional platforms emerged in the European Union, the Great Lakes region, the Nordic region, the Sahel and West Africa. Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Guinea, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied Palestinian territory established similar platforms to strengthen cooperation and trust, leveraging partnerships to advance and localize the agenda. At the subregional level, the development of strategic frameworks on youth and peace and security for Kaduna and Katsina States, in line with the Nigeria national action plan on resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), and with support from UNDP, UN-Women and IOM, is an example of how Governments can reinforce non-military responses to conflict and insecurity through inclusive dialogue and participation.

39. International financial institutions have an essential role to play in redressing existing inequalities in the global financial system. In its Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence 2020–2025, the World Bank pledged to increase assistance to young people in conflict-affected regions. The World Bank has strengthened engagement in fragile contexts through collaborative ventures with United Nations entities by prioritizing the economic inclusion of young people in vulnerable areas in the framework of conflict prevention initiatives in Benin, the Gambia and Iraq.

III. Institutionalization of the youth and peace and security agenda

40. The institutionalization of the agenda has gained notable momentum since the issuance of the second report of the Secretary-General, marking substantive advancements at the national, regional and global levels. However, notwithstanding the significant strides, more remains to be done to fully institutionalize the agenda, including allocating adequate resources and capacities at all levels. In his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General calls for the youth and peace and security agenda to be institutionalized and funded.

A. National efforts

41. Two new youth and peace and security national action plans were launched, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2022) and the Philippines (2023). Finland is developing the first midterm report on the implementation of its 2021–2024 national action plan. In addition, Albania, Morocco, Serbia, South Sudan and the occupied Palestinian territory integrated youth and peace and security into their strategies. The youth and peace and security agenda was also incorporated into national policies and laws in Lebanon and Somalia. Burundi, Chad, Georgia, Ireland and Sri Lanka refer to the youth and peace and security agenda in their national action plans on women and peace and security. Dedicated youth and peace and security capacity was established across government entities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya and Nigeria.

42. Multi-stakeholder efforts are under way for the development of national frameworks on youth and peace and security in Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, the Gambia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Mali, Rwanda, Togo, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Yemen, Zimbabwe and the occupied Palestinian territory. There are ongoing subnational efforts to localize the youth and peace and security agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and the Philippines.

43. Finland partnered with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground to create a community of practice with youth, government officials and practitioners from 29 countries to develop youth and peace and security frameworks. Furthermore, Cameroon and UNFPA organized a training of trainers for representatives of governments, United Nations entities and youth-led organizations from 11 countries, establishing a cohort of trainers to support the development of national frameworks for youth and peace and security in West and Central Africa.

B. Regional level

44. The African Union and UNDP co-hosted the Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security in Burundi in 2022, producing the Bujumbura Declaration, endorsed by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on 25 April 2022, and launching a community of practice connecting young peacebuilders, Governments and regional mechanisms involved in developing or initiating national action plans on youth and peace and security. In 2023, the African Union introduced the inaugural Youth and Peace and Security Award, recognizing three youth-led organizations from Central, Southern and East Africa. Since 2022, the Peace and Security Council has held three briefings on the implementation of the agenda in the region, led by its Ambassadors for Peace. The President of Burundi, Évariste

Ndayishimiye, was appointed as the first African Union Champion for youth and peace and security.

45. In 2022, the European Union adopted the Youth Action Plan (2022–2027), the first ever policy framework for a strategic partnership with young people globally. Created after extensive consultations with over 220 stakeholders globally, including youth organizations, the Plan is aimed at ensuring meaningful, inclusive and effective youth participation and introduces a youth-sensitive approach to conflicts and crises. In 2023, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe created the Scholarship for Peace and Security, providing 130 young people in the region with the opportunity to expand their knowledge on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The Regional Youth Cooperation Office continues to facilitate dialogue and capacity strengthening for youth and youth-led organizations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo, contributing to peace and reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

46. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the United Nations convened youth experts and officials from ASEAN member States, the United Nations and regional partners to deliberate on young people's crucial role in peacebuilding and to advance the youth and peace and security agenda. The meeting included the launch of the development of a study by the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation on youth and peace and security, offering valuable insights to regional policymakers.

47. The League of Arab States developed the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security (2023–2028) through extensive consultations with young people, diverse stakeholders, and expert groups. The Arab Youth and Sports Ministers Council endorsed the Strategy in September 2023, and it is expected to be launched in early 2024 under the patronage of Jordan.

48. The International Youth Organization for Ibero-America, Colombia and the United Nations co-hosted a regional intergenerational meeting, exploring opportunities to advance the youth and peace and security agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean. Representatives from governments, United Nations entities, young peacebuilders and youth networks from 10 countries agreed on a consolidated regional narrative and a road map for operationalizing the agenda.

49. In 2022, a joint United Nations-Folke Bernadotte Academy learning forum on youth and peace and security brought together 31 staff from nine United Nations entities working at the global and regional levels to identify priorities for operationalizing the agenda at the regional level. As a follow-up, in 2023 the Folke Bernadotte Academy and the United Nations organized a regional learning forum in the Arab States. The regional forum brought together 30 professionals from United Nations entities and civil society to discuss the Arab Strategy for Youth, Peace and Security and identify opportunities to advance the implementation of the agenda through strategic engagement with national counterparts in the region.

C. Global efforts

United Nations system

50. The United Nations network of youth and peace and security focal points, encouraged by Security Council resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#), continues to serve as a crucial platform for information-sharing and coordination at headquarters and in the field under the leadership of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-UNFPA inter-agency secretariat on youth and peace and security. During the reporting

period, five additional United Nations entities designated youth and peace and security focal points. Currently, the system comprises focal points in 11 peacekeeping operations, 17 special political missions and 25 United Nations entities.

51. In 2022, the United Nations Youth Office was established by the General Assembly as a dedicated office for youth affairs, leading engagement and advocacy for the advancement of youth issues across the United Nations in the areas of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. Five years after the launch of Youth 2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth in 2018, 55 United Nations entities and 131 United Nations country teams reported working towards implementing the Strategy. In 2023, 27 United Nations entities reported working towards implementing the fifth priority, focused on peace and resilience building, and 39 United Nations country teams reported engaging with youth networks in conflict-affected areas.

52. UNFPA and UNICEF co-led an inter-agency meta-synthesis review of 120 project evaluations under the fifth priority, generating lessons learned or best practices to support the meaningful participation of young people in peacebuilding and humanitarian and climate action. Such initiatives provide essential evidence-based data to improve peacebuilding efforts. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Impact Hub, led by the Peacebuilding Support Office within the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, presents an opportunity to elevate these endeavours, creating a United Nations-based, practice-oriented collaborative hub to further support innovative and evidence-based peacebuilding.

53. At the global level, there are ongoing efforts to better measure United Nations contributions to advancing the youth and peace and security agenda, for example through specific indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 16 on youth-sensitive peace and security-related programming. UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women adopted a common output indicator on their support for developing youth and peace and security national frameworks, demonstrating United Nations commitment to scaling up country-level implementation of the agenda. During the reporting period, the integration of the youth and peace and security agenda into the strategic plans within the United Nations increased, from 9 entities to 22, comprising 14 United Nations entities, 1 peacekeeping operation and 7 special political missions.

54. Inter-agency capacity-building initiatives on youth and peace and security increased during the reporting period. In 2022, UNFPA and the Peacebuilding Fund, in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women, organized in-person inter-agency training sessions for 100 United Nations staff working in 20 Peacebuilding Fund-eligible countries and territories, strengthening field capacities to deliver better youth- and gender-responsive peacebuilding programming. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the United Nations System Staff College incorporated youth perspectives into United Nations staff training on electoral violence prevention. In 2023, aiming to strengthen regional capacities to implement the agenda at the State level, UNFPA hosted an inter-agency training on youth and peace and security programming for the United Nations system in the Western Balkans and Central Asia. UNFPA also partnered with the Folke Bernadotte Academy and the United Nations System Staff College to organize a regional training of trainers on youth and peace and security for United Nations and civil society organizations from Ukraine, Central Asia, South Caucasus and the Western Balkans.

55. In 2022–2023, the Office of Internal Oversight Services evaluated the efforts of the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, peacekeeping operations and special political missions in expanding meaningful youth participation in line with the youth and peace and security agenda. The evaluation provided evidence of the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of efforts from 2018 to 2022. At the same time, noting slow progress and

some inconsistencies in establishing strategies for youth participation and assessing and responding to youth needs, the Office made several recommendations. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs youth and peace and security strategy for 2024–2026 was finalized in December 2023 in response to one of the recommendations.

56. Growing momentum for youth advocacy on disarmament and non-proliferation contributed to the issuance of the first ever report of the Secretary-General on youth, disarmament and non-proliferation. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to facilitate active youth participation in intergovernmental processes, such as the 2023 Conference on Disarmament and the International Days against Nuclear Tests and for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Intergovernmental bodies

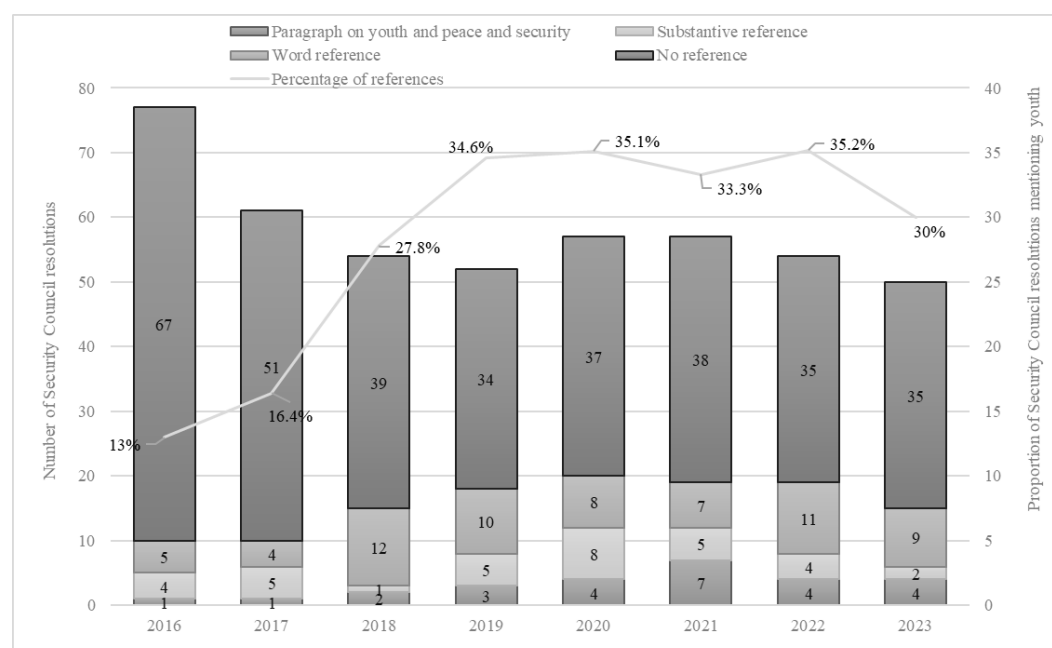
Security Council

57. During the reporting period, the Security Council convened two Arria-formula meetings dedicated to youth and peace and security. The meetings were organized in December 2022 by Ireland to commemorate the seventh anniversary of resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) and in August 2023 by Ghana to reinforce the implementation of the youth and peace and security agenda for a peaceful and stable Africa. In December 2023, Albania, France and Germany organized a side event focused on the role of young people in shaping reconciliation, peace and stability.

58. In 2022–2023, 34 out of 104 Security Council resolutions contained references to young people. The percentage of references to young people in Council resolutions consistently increased from 2016 (13 per cent) to 2020 (35.1 per cent). Afterwards it stagnated, with 2023 having the lowest proportion of references to youth since 2018. The proportion of meaningful youth references in resolutions increased until 2021 but decreased during the reporting period (see figure I). The mandates of 6 out of 12 peacekeeping operations and 13 out of 24 special political missions contain references to youth and peace and security or youth engagement.

Figure I

References to young people in Security Council resolutions

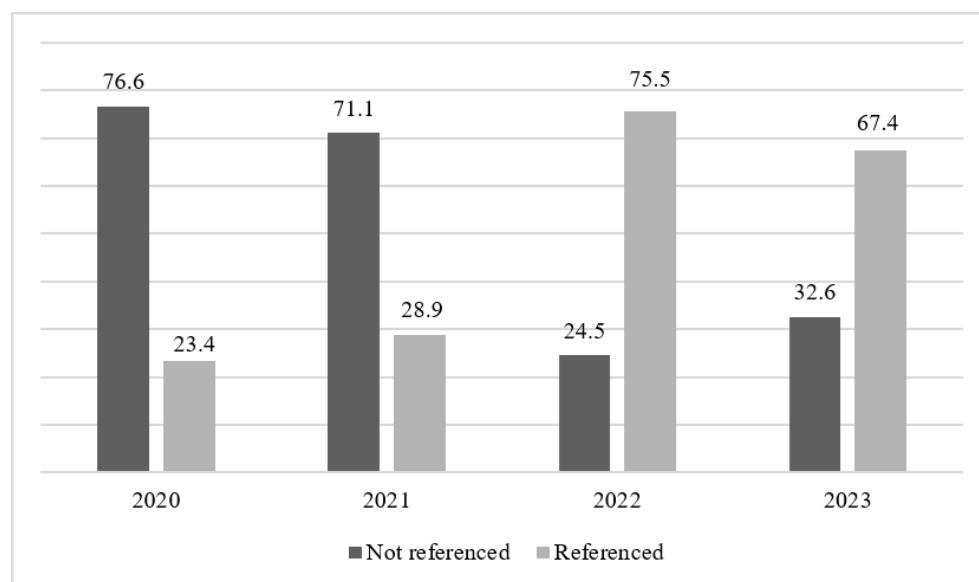


59. During the reporting period, “youth” or “young people” were referenced in Security Council meetings coverage 306 times out of 548. In addition, reference was made to “youth” in 4 out of 24 Council press conferences and “youth” or “young people” in 9 out of 244 Council press releases.

60. In 8 out of 13 statements by the President of the Security Council, “youth” or “young [people]” were specifically mentioned in relation to peace and security. The issues highlighted in 2022 included the importance of creating policies to enable young people to positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the Arab region; the recognition of youth needs in demobilization, disarmament and reintegration processes; the need for youth-inclusive dialogue for the protection of civilians at the grass-roots level; the need to strengthen the participation, cooperation and capacity-building of all relevant stakeholders; and the meaningful participation of young people in countering terrorism and violent extremism. In the 2023 statements, the importance of youth-inclusive participatory and representative processes was emphasized; the critical role of young people in electoral processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was reaffirmed; and the importance of civil society, including young people, in increasing awareness about the threats of terrorism to more effectively tackle them was recognized.

61. During the reporting period, coverage of the situation of young people increased in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Security Council compared with previous years. In 2022, 71 out of 94 reports had at least one word reference. Notably, 20 had substantive youth references and 28 had dedicated youth and peace and security paragraphs. In 2023, 62 out of 92 reports contained a mention of youth, 39 being substantive references or paragraphs dedicated to youth and peace and security, compared with only 33 total youth references out of 114 in 2021 (see figure II).

Figure II
Reports of the Secretary-General referencing youth
(Percentage)



62. Three young people briefed the Security Council in 2022 and four in 2023, compared with nine in 2020 and six in 2021,⁶ yet individuals under 30 may not consistently be recognized in official Security Council records as a “youth briefer”.

⁶ Briefers with the word “youth” or “young” in their official title.

The increase in the number of young briefers in 2020 and 2021 can be attributed in part to the higher number of online meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Resource and visa limitations associated with in-person meetings and growing geopolitical tensions have contributed to reducing opportunities for young people to brief the Council in recent years.

Peacebuilding Commission

63. In line with its strategic action plan on youth and peacebuilding, the Peacebuilding Commission continues to support the role of young people and youth-led organizations in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. At the Commission's 2022 annual ambassadorial-level meeting on youth and peace and security, participants explored avenues to further the agenda, with young briefers from El Salvador, Indonesia, Kenya and Liberia in attendance. In 2023, participants at the ambassadorial-level meeting discussed opportunities and linkages between regional, national and local efforts to advance the agenda's implementation. The meeting featured representatives from the African Union, the League of Arab States and a youth-led civil society organization from South-East Asia.

64. Informed by interactions with young peacebuilders during meetings and country visits, the Peacebuilding Commission continues to provide policy and operational recommendations on youth and peace and security. At the Security Council open debate on integrating effective resilience-building in peace operations for sustainable peace, the Commission encouraged the Council to consider youth perspectives in its deliberations and encouraged United Nations peace operations to develop and implement context-specific strategies on youth and peace and security, in line with Council resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#).

65. Since 2022, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs has conducted two written assessments of the implementation of the strategic action plan on youth and peacebuilding. During the assessments, it was found that the Commission had made progress in highlighting youth-related issues and advocating the full, effective and meaningful participation of young people in peacebuilding. In response to the 2022 assessment, the Department and the Folke Bernadotte Academy co-organized an expert-level capacity-building workshop on youth and peace and security in April 2023, bringing together over 20 Member State delegations.

66. The number of young peacebuilders who briefed the Peacebuilding Commission declined from 12 in 2021 and 9 in 2022 to 2 in 2023, which is similar to the 2020 numbers. This underscores the importance of continued advocacy with the States members of the Commission on institutionalizing youth participation as provided for in the strategic action plan on youth and peacebuilding of the Commission.

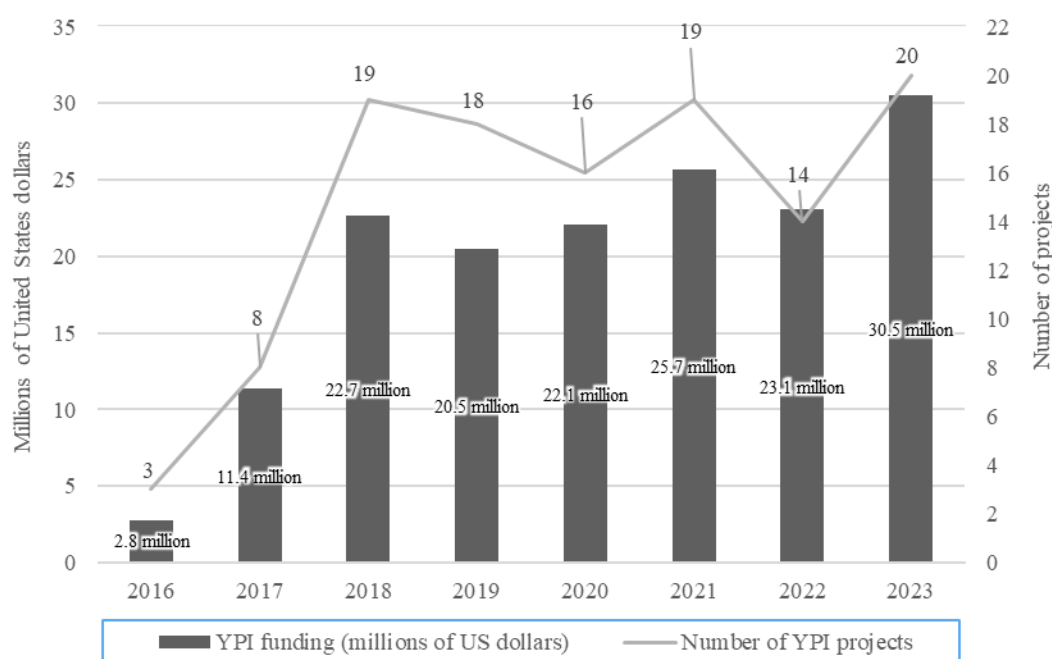
IV. Financing youth and peace and security

67. The General Assembly, in its resolution [76/305](#) on financing for peacebuilding, urged efforts to address existing financing gaps for youth-led initiatives and youth organizations to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of youth in peacebuilding at all levels. However, the growing political commitment has yet to translate into increased investment. Limited and inflexible resources can limit meaningful participation, particularly for marginalized youth. The need for adequate, predictable and sustained financing remains, specifically for youth-led peacebuilding organizations. Stakeholders should improve coordination and collaboration with young people on financing national priorities.

68. The Peacebuilding Fund remains the largest funding window supporting gender- and youth-responsive peacebuilding programming, including through its annual Youth Promotion Initiative. In 2022 and 2023, the Fund invested \$53.6 million in 34 projects through the Initiative. By comparison, in 2020 and 2021, it invested \$47.8 million in 35 projects through the Initiative (see figure III).

Figure III

Funding trends under the Youth Promotion Initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund



Abbreviation: YPI, Youth Promotion Initiative.

69. The overall increase in funding allocated to peacebuilding initiatives has not triggered more direct investments in youth organizations in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In most cases, the operating budgets of youth-led organizations do not exceed \$5,000 annually, with funding restricted to project-based, short-term and inflexible opportunities. This hinders the sustainability of youth-led civil society efforts and limits the agenda's impact. Youth-led and youth-focused organizations have consistently advocated for more flexible financing modalities, including alleviating stringent eligibility criteria, streamlining lengthy application processes and reducing reporting and fiduciary requirements. Initial progress was made, with the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund supporting 43 youth-focused or young women-led organizations from 17 countries with an average grant size of \$149,529 in 2022–2023.

70. The cross-cutting nature of the agenda leads to funding being diluted into larger funding streams dispersed across ministries and agencies, making it challenging to address youth-specific peacebuilding needs. Funding earmarked for youth and peace and security can help to address this challenge. Furthermore, the lack of standardized data collection on youth and peace and security investments remains a challenge, making it difficult to analyse how official development assistance benefits programmes for and by young people.

71. Search for Common Ground, in collaboration with the University of Southern California, conducted a proof of concept to evaluate the social value of youth-led

peace and security efforts in Kenya, using the social return on investment model. The study demonstrated a substantial return of \$5 to \$10 on each \$1 invested, yielding benefits for young people, the private sector and Governments, and underscoring the impact of investing in youth-led peacebuilding and its contribution to societal and economic progress.⁷

72. The Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security financing task force established a working group to enhance coordination and knowledge management on financing for youth-led peacebuilding. In 2023, the group launched “Investing and partnering for youth and peace”, identifying potential private sector partners to make the case to invest and partner with young peacebuilders.

V. Recommendations

Actions to be taken by the Security Council

73. While acknowledging the progress made thus far, I invite the Security Council to consider taking the following actions:

(a) Continue to integrate and strengthen youth and peace and security elements as part of mandate renewals of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, and call upon missions to integrate youth in all relevant mandated areas;

(b) Hold an annual Security Council open debate on youth and peace and security to ensure sustained engagement and momentum for the advancement of the agenda;

(c) Increase opportunities for young people to participate in Security Council deliberations and country visits, including by reviewing the working methods of the Council and its relevant subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to strengthen youth engagement; and strengthen protection protocols to ensure the safe and meaningful participation of young briefers, recognizing and addressing the unique risks they may face.

Actions to be taken by Member States and regional organizations

74. Recognizing that the youth and peace and security agenda is the responsibility of all Member States, I invite them to consider taking the following actions:

(a) Ensure the safe and meaningful participation of young people and commit to strengthening the youth and peace and security agenda through its integration into the Summit of the Future and its outcome document and in the 2025 United Nations peacebuilding architecture review;

(b) Promote and enable youth participation and inclusion in all phases and tracks of peace processes, including as signatories to peace agreements and as members of transition or implementation bodies;

(c) Increase the participation of young people in decision-making and electoral processes as candidates, voters, electoral officials, party agents, observers and human rights monitors, including by respecting, promoting and fulfilling young people’s rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association, opinion and expression, and participation in public affairs;

⁷ Shubha Kumar and others, “Building evidence for peacebuilding investments: a snapshot of youth-led and youth-supporting peacebuilding programmes in Kenya yields five to ten-fold social returns on investment (SROI)”, February 2023. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZZ8J.pdf.

(d) Urge political leaders and parties to consider ways to cultivate young leaders and to include appropriate mechanisms in internal party regulations to that end;

(e) Ensure that national mechanisms are in place to investigate reports of human rights violations targeting young people, including threats, attacks, acts of intimidation, incitement to hatred and other human rights violations offline and online, including sexual and gender-based violations and conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure accountability and put in place remedies and protection measures for victims;

(f) Include quality human rights and peace education at schools and equip young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage in and shape peace processes, conflict prevention, climate justice and peacebuilding initiatives; and foster networks that connect young people with peacebuilding initiatives and decision-making processes, as a means to build capacity on their safe and informed participation, both offline and online;

(g) Expand investments in human capital, and foster inclusive economic and employment opportunities for young people through targeted policies and programmes, recognizing the importance of equality, access to justice and economic opportunities;

(h) Expand efforts to institutionalize the youth and peace and security agenda at all levels, including:

(i) Develop and resource dedicated, inclusive local, national and regional road maps and frameworks on youth and peace and security, including national action plans on youth and peace and security, in partnership with youth organizations, movements and networks;

(ii) Allocate sustainable human and financial capacities to lead the implementation of youth and peace and security agendas, including in conflict, post-conflict and fragile settings;

(iii) Document and exchange good practices on the implementation of the agenda to increase accountability and accelerate its implementation at all levels;

(i) Increase investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives focused on and led by young people, ensuring flexibility, long-term sustainability and direct accessibility to resources for formal and informal youth-led organizations; Member States should also consider dedicating minimum allocations in their official development assistance towards youth-centred and youth-sensitive peacebuilding efforts.

Actions to be taken by the United Nations

75. To accelerate the efforts of Member States, the United Nations will explore taking the following actions:

(a) Enhance United Nations efforts to support national Governments in integrating a youth and peace and security agenda into national plans and with strategies to accelerate implementation;

(b) Reflect commitments, in senior compacts, terms of reference and directives for senior leadership at headquarters, in field missions and in country offices, including heads of entities, special envoys, special representatives, resident coordinators, resident and non-resident representatives and humanitarian coordinators, on meaningful youth participation, paying particular attention to the participation of young women and the youth and peace and security agenda;

(c) Step up efforts to promote the participation and improve the protection of young people in line with the United Nations Guidance Note on the Protection and Promotion of Civic Space; fully include at-risk young peacebuilders and human rights defenders in efforts to deliver rapid protection responses tailored to their specific needs; collaborate with donors and partners to ensure the availability and accessibility of rapid response funds for the immediate protection of young human rights defenders, including activists, peacebuilders, humanitarians and volunteers, including relocation and other protection measures whenever necessary;

(d) Document and share innovative good practices and lessons learned from efforts to involve young people in peacebuilding and prevention efforts, including by integrating youth and peace and security in the work of the Peacebuilding Impact Hub and facilitating youth-driven research and disaggregated data collection;

(e) Integrate the tracking of progress and investments on youth and peace and security in the upcoming Youth 2030 marker system; this entails tracking age- and gender-disaggregated data for beneficiaries and implementing partners;

(f) Enhance efforts to support the Peacebuilding Commission in implementing its strategic action plan on youth and peacebuilding;

(g) Seek voluntary contributions to strengthen youth and peace and security capacities at headquarters, in field missions, at the regional and country levels, co-located across a range of offices within the peace and security pillar and within offices, agencies, funds and programmes working on youth and peace and security, and for the coordination function of the inter-agency secretariat on youth and peace and security.
