

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Organizational Committee
“The Role of Young People in Sustaining Peace”
23 November 2015

Chairperson’s Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 23 November 2015, the Peacebuilding Commission convened an informal meeting at the Ambassadorial-level chaired by the Permanent Representative of Sweden, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, to address “The Role of Young People in Sustaining Peace”. During the meeting, members of the Peacebuilding Commission recognized the important role played by young people in sustaining peace, and expressed their support for the peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by young women and young men in challenging environments, often with limited funding, assistance and recognition by national and international actors alike.

1. In his introductory remarks, the Chair welcomed the discussion and paid special tribute to the young peacebuilder who had travelled to New York to meet with the Peacebuilding Commission. He thanked the Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the relevant UN departments, for advancing this agenda. He stressed the importance of a shift away from seeing youth either as victims of violence or as perpetrators of such and a risk to stability, but rather to see youth as peacebuilders who constitute a unique resource for their countries. He welcomed “The Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security”, adopted during the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security hosted by Jordan in August 2015, as a clear roadmap for action and highlighted its recommendations on further steps for the international community on the issue.
2. Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, noted that a number of discussions and initiatives on the topic of Youth, Peace and Security were on going, in the wake of the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security held in Amman. He noted that the coordination of efforts was timely and that the direction forward included three different levels: the policy level, with the need for a stronger international framework, possibly a Security Council Resolution that recognizes young people as peacebuilders; the programming level, with the need to support more youth-led organizations through improved funding; and the advocacy level, with the need to reinforce a different narrative which does not label young people as part of the problem but rather as the solution. Mr. Alhendawi also stressed the importance of targeting and supporting the group of young people starting at the age of 16 left aside by the so-called “black hole” of peacebuilding efforts and emergency response. He highlighted that young women and young men are also at the frontlines of preventing and countering violent extremism, and that inclusive and preventative approaches that build on community-level efforts should be prioritized over militaristic action.

3. Ms. Gwendolyn S. Myers, Founder of Messengers of Peace Liberia, shared with the Peacebuilding Commission her experience as a young peacebuilder in Africa. In her remarks, Ms. Myers underlined the need to institutionalize partnerships with youth-led peacebuilding organizations, which are often seen as mere contractors and implementing agents rather than as genuine partners. She further noted that that youth organizations should be given the opportunity to take ownership, leadership and accountability in both formal and informal peace processes. Ms. Myers moreover pointed to the urgent need for adequate policy frameworks to address the needs and rights of young people in peacebuilding, and to provide accessible funding for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives as well as for empowerment and capacity building programmes to engage young people in sustaining and building peace. Speaking on behalf of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY), Ms. Myers closed her remarks by reiterating the importance of strengthening youth organizations' efforts in promoting peace.
4. A number of delegations took the floor and expressed support for the issue of Youth, Peace and Security and welcomed the timely discussion. They stressed the importance of strategic and meaningful support of youth-led initiatives and highlighted the need for inclusion of young voices especially in regard to the current refugee crisis. Some delegations shared their experiences on the inclusion of youth and the fight against extremism and acknowledged the important role young people can play as peacebuilders. They also stressed the importance of development and economic opportunities in this regard.
5. Answering to some of the remarks made by Member States, Mr. Alhendawi stressed the importance of funding and inclusion of young people on all levels. Ms. Myers highlighted the importance of a more flexible approach of engagement with local youth-led initiatives.
6. Mr. John Mosoti, Chief of the Multilateral Affairs Branch, addressed the Peacebuilding Commission on behalf of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). In his remarks, Mr. Mosoti emphasised that youthful populations represent an untapped positive force for peace and prosperity. However, according to Mr. Mosoti, there had not been a targeted focus on the specific needs of young women and men in times of crisis. He further highlighted that deliberate efforts to increase investments that would empower and support youth-led initiatives were urgently needed. Finally, Mr. Mosoti added that the 2030 Agenda provided the best opportunity to invest in young people by building a new international agenda for peace and security that reframes, refocuses and prioritizes the rights, interests and contributions of young people.
7. Ms. Noëlla Richard, Youth Policy Specialist, addressed the Commission on behalf of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). In her remarks, Ms. Richard highlighted that young people were too often portrayed as a threat to security, as a vulnerable group or as victims while their contribution to sustaining peace was not valued or recognized. Ms. Richard noted that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda represented a timely opportunity to promote and scale-up support to the participation of youth in decision-making at all levels. Ms. Richard assured the PBC that UNDP supports all efforts to strengthen youth participation in national dialogues and strategies, policy and legislative reforms, capacity building, and advocacy.

8. Ms. Mari Yamashita, Director of the Peacebuilding Support Office, underscored that the role young people do play for building peace and could play on a much wider scale in sustaining peace was increasingly being recognized. However much remained to be done for the work of young peacebuilders to be truly acknowledged, supported and to reach its full potential. Various initiatives including the Amman Youth Declaration, the [Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding](#) and the Practice Note on Youth and Peacebuilding aimed at enabling participative, inclusive and inter-generational peacebuilding strategies and programmes that systematically promote and ensure participation and contributions of young people. Yet, to date and in the context of peace and security, Member States were paying insufficient attention to their youth populations. Ms. Yamashita concluded her statement by highlighting that the PBC could play a unique role in filling the policy gap in recognizing the role of young people for building peace by using its political leverage to engage national counterparts on the importance of working with young people.
9. The Chair welcomed the strong support from PBC members to help advance the agenda for a meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding and thanked the guest speakers for their substantive contribution. He stressed the importance of funding for youth-led initiatives and announced the circulation of a draft statement after the meeting.

Other matters

10. The Chair reminded Member States about the next meeting of the Organizational Committee on the 16 December on the development of the PBC Gender Strategy and the informal adoption of the annual report of the PBC.
