



73rd Session of the General Assembly

**Interactive Dialogue with the President
of the General Assembly on Youth,
Peace and Security**

**Informal Summary by the
President of the General Assembly**

**Tuesday, 9 April 2019
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Interactive Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security with the President of the General Assembly

Informal Summary

I. Introduction

The President of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly, H.E. Ms Maria Fernanda Espinosa, held an interactive dialogue on youth, peace and security with participants to the 8th ECOSOC Youth Forum. In line with the theme of the forum which was “Empowered, Included and Equal,” the dialogue discussed the importance of political, civic and economic inclusion of young people for sustained peace.

In her opening statement, the President of the GA emphasized her commitment to prioritize youth participation in peace and security processes and ensure an intergenerational approach to the work of the General Assembly. The President stressed the importance of ensuring that the youth, peace and security agenda is at the heart of the work of the General Assembly and is integrated within all pillars of work of the United Nations.

II. Opening Remarks, The President of Economic and Social Council:

In her opening remarks, **H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King** stated that in order to fulfil the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs), we must address the challenges that youth are currently facing: access to quality education, unemployment, inequality, social exclusion and climate change. The President of the Economic and Social Council emphasized the important role of youth contribution in the upcoming SDG Summit in September and the High-Level Political Forum in July.

III. Summary of Discussions

- Young women and men remain too often marginalized from mainstream political and civic participation, as a result of stereotypes and policy myths depicting young men as potentially violent. However, when given the opportunity – in spaces such as the ECOSOC Youth Forum – young women and men demonstrate a clear understanding of issues affecting them and innovative ideas to meaningfully contribute to peace and security in their communities.
- The multiple types of exclusions experienced by young people around the world is a form of structural and psychological violence, and an inter-generational injustice. There is a need to systematically address social, economic, political and civic exclusion of young people in order to achieve peace and development. This includes ensuring meaningful inclusion and participation of young people, for instance through quotas or other means, to ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

- Many young people are already active peacebuilders: they work within their communities as peace actors, fostering dialogue, advocating for peace and fighting social injustice. Most young people want to be part of solutions, and not considered as potential problems. Partnerships, funding and support are necessary to strengthen and nurture their work.
- Addressing the violence of exclusion also include fostering meaningful economic inclusion. Youth economic empowerment is critical to eradicate intergenerational poverty cycles and to achieve the SDGs.
- The media has a role to play in highlighting the positive contribution of young women and men to peacebuilding, by changing the negative narrative on youth as perpetrators of violence.

IV. Summary of Panel Presentations and Interactive session

Mridul Upadhyay (Moderator)

The Moderator, **Mridul Upadhyay** (United Network of Young Peacebuilders, Asia Coordinator, and Global Focal Point at UN Major Group on Children and Youth (MGCY), opened the panel presentations by expressing hope in the resilience, work and efforts of young people who continue to demonstrate their leadership in the peace building context, even with minimum support.

Mr. Upadhyay highlighted that only 2% of parliamentarians worldwide are young people and stressed the need for stronger youth participation in the political and civic spaces. He also indicated that there is evidence that relatively small amounts of well-placed investment in young people's agency and leadership can lead to significant outcomes in terms of peace and security.

Mr. Upadhyay signalled that the panel would be discussing how best to promote youth inclusion in the political, civic and economic spheres, in relation to the future of work and decent work for all, and the interlinkages with peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Ana Pirtskhalava, Secretary General of the International Union of Socialist Youth, focused her presentation on **the** political inclusion of youth in peace processes. Young people are underrepresented in political parties and activities because they are still considered as lacking the capacity to be involved in political organizations. However, when young people are given platforms, they demonstrate the skills and ability to make statements and generate change. "We don't need to be handled; we need to be engaged." She urged the participants to be the voice of the young people all over; the voice of the voiceless and the less privileged, and emphasized the need to take actions and speak up. In addition to necessary legal reforms and development of related policy and monitoring frameworks, effective decentralization and devolution of powers to local governments is key to hold local officials accountable. Having more young people in decision making will decrease inequalities and bring more opportunities.

Yazan Ghneim, founder of a civil society organization called Chapter 7 in Palestine, delivered a powerful statement on giving young people a chance. He emphasized the current situation in Palestine and the challenges faced by young people. Speaking for Palestinian youth, he said. “We want to have security, we want to smile, we want to have human rights.” Mr. Ghneim also outlined his efforts in designing an application, “chat7,” which promotes freedom to stand up against violations. He has dedicated his life to help people and the Palestinian youth.

Rosario Gravito, Founder of The Millennials Movement in Peru, stated that the Latin American region is the most unequal region, where youth are subjected to systematic violence. She noted the impact of climate change, among the core challenges to today’s generation of young people.

She highlighted the imperative to change biased gender norms and stereotypes, and promote civic inclusion through inter-generational dialogue, co-creation of engagement strategies with men, story-telling advocacy, roundtables, etc. Ensuring young people’s right to participate in politics is necessary for achieving integrational justice. Ms. Gravito concluded by saying that “if we make our democracies open, we can reduce violence and ensure security.”

Farai Mubaiwa, Founder of the Africa Matters Initiative in her presentation described economic exclusion as a form of violence. She called for policies that would change the narrative of economic marginalization and give way to youth driven and innovative solutions. She emphasized the importance of government - private sector collaboration to effectively address the challenges of economic exclusion and marginalization.

Following the panel presentations, some participants contributed to the dialogue as follows:

A participant called for a bold decision on youth quotas in all key decision-making bodies. He challenged young people to take a stand against xenophobia and ethnic cleansing and also to decline participating in adverse political activities. Some delegations shared the view that violence is more a consequence of inequality and marginalization than the causal factor. They stressed the need to address poverty and inequalities that reinforced vulnerabilities of sectors of society including young people.

Another speaker while acknowledging the relevance of the Peacebuilding Fund to peace processes emphasized the need for an increased approach in pacific settlement of conflict.

Recommendations were made for the UN to consider paying wages to young interns in support of their contribution to the work of the UN.

Another participant stressed the role of the media in fostering a positive narrative of youth involvement and activities in the area of peace and security. A seismic shift from the stereotypical characterization of young people as perpetrators and victims of violence to active peacebuilders must involve active engagement with the media.

In a message read on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict:

Young people are much more than victims, they are peacebuilding actors.

V. Closing Remarks of the President of the General Assembly

In her closing remarks, **H.E. Ms Maria Fernanda Espinosa** stated that youth participation in peace and security is important to the agenda of the General Assembly. The role of young people as architects of peace is intrinsically related to economic empowerment. The President of the General Assembly reiterated her commitment to ensure an intergenerational and gender balance approach to the work of the UN. She stressed that the UN must do *“Nothing about young people, without young people”*

VI. Closing Remarks, The President of Economic and Social Council:

In her closing remarks, **H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King**, the President of Economic and Social Council, stated that policy makers must invest more than ever in young people’s education and skills training in order to contribute to peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies. She called on Member States to engage young people in their meaningful inclusion in decision making.