

PRESS RELEASE

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Office Of The United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth Launches New Youth-Led Policy Paper on Youth’s Positive Contribution To Peace Processes

[United Nations Headquarters, New York City, USA] | [17 July 2019] - United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth today releases the first Global Policy Paper on Youth Participation in Peace Processes, “[WE ARE HERE: An Integrated Approach to Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes](#).” The independent policy paper highlights the diverse and positive ways that young people have contributed to, and participated in, past and current peace processes around the world and calls for greater investment in youth-inclusive peace processes. The policy paper - the first of its kind - was prepared in advance of the First *International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes*, which took place in Helsinki, Finland from 5-6 March 2019.

The independent paper, co-written by authors and researchers **Ali Altiok** and **Irena Grizelj**, builds upon the existing knowledge and collaborative approach generated by the [Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](#), which was mandated by United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250. This paper #WeAreHere builds evidence to support **UNSCR 2419** calls for “inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements.” António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, highlights “around the world, young women and men are striving for justice, inclusion, gender equality and human rights. We must make the most of their power as drivers of a culture of peace.” The policy paper is the first to document and analyze where and how young people engage with peace processes, highlighting why youth inclusion matters for achieving sustainable peace agreements.

Young people play a critical role in the implementation of peace agreements due to their inevitable engagement in (re)building societal trust and leading reconciliation across generations. The launch of this policy paper addresses the lack of dedicated study to young people’s positive contribution to peace processes: “young people often constitute the majority population in contexts with ongoing peace processes over the last two decades, and yet, no comprehensive studies have assessed the role and impact of youth during and in the lead up to peace agreements. It is imperative that we bridge this evidence gap. As the nature of conflict has evolved, so must our response: **we must design and implement peace processes inclusive of youth, recognizing young people as a critical bridge to peace.**” said Co-Author and Researcher, Irena Grizelj.

Due to limited literature and documentation in this field, the paper is largely based on qualitative **key interviews with 46 stakeholders**, with young women and men who have participated - or sought to - in peace processes in various forms, as well as senior mediators, peace practitioners, and academics who shed light on the dynamics around youth participation.

The paper includes case studies in understanding the role of young people in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Colombia, Kenya, Myanmar, Northern Ireland, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Yemen. More than half of the young people interviewed for the policy paper attended the Symposium in Helsinki. The participants further contributed to the discussion and development of the recommendations targeted towards Member States, UN entities, mediators, regional and international organizations, and civil society to move from normative commitments to operational action on youth inclusion and participation.

Young people should no longer be unrepresented and excluded from decisions that will directly impact their present and future prospects for peace. “This research indicates that young people’s power and influence over peace negotiations is not always directly correlated with their proximity to the negotiation tables,” said Co-Author and Researcher Ali Altiok. “The findings challenge our traditional notion of inclusion, and for the inclusion of young people in peace processes to be meaningful, it is **fundamental that we develop strategic and synchronized connections between young people inside the room, around the room, and outside the room.**”

This policy paper was commissioned by the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and produced with the financial support of the Government of Finland. The paper is a joint civil society, youth-led, and United Nations initiative, in partnership with Search for Common Ground, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, and the African Union Commission and European Union mediation support units. “I urge policymakers, mediators, community leaders, and peacebuilders to consider this paper’s key messages and recommendations as a source of guidance and inspiration in their efforts, as we collectively strive towards youth-inclusive peace processes,” said António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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The Policy Paper is available for download here: <http://bit.ly/WeAreHereYPS>

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