



# The First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes

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5-6 March 2019  
Helsinki, Finland

Summary Report

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## Executive Summary

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On 5-6 March 2019, the first International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes took place in Helsinki, Finland. The Symposium brought together over 100 participants from 45 different countries, who have engaged with peace and meditation processes. Participants included young women and men leaders, senior peace mediators and negotiators, government ministers, United Nations, African Union, and European Union representatives. Over two days, the participants engaged in a series of strategic panels and discussions related to why young people's engagement in peace negotiations matters for sustaining peace, how young women and men have influenced peace agreements, and key lessons learned to shape recommendations in moving this field forward collectively and effectively. The Symposium included the launch of the first global policy paper on youth participation in peace processes, '*We are here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes*', which set the foundation for discussions and finalizing recommendations.

The symposium was co-hosted by the Governments of Finland, the State of Qatar, and the Government of Colombia, and co-organized by the office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY) and Search For Common Ground (Search), in partnership with the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY).

This report presents a summary of the agenda and key discussion and presentation points. For further information or queries, please contact Saji Prelis ([sprelis@sfcg.org](mailto:sprelis@sfcg.org)) and Michael Imasua ([michael.imasua@un.org](mailto:michael.imasua@un.org)).



Group photo of Symposium participants

## Background

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Across the world, young people are actively working to support peace processes, and are calling for a space in ongoing peace negotiations. In the last two decades, over 900 peace agreements have been signed globally<sup>1</sup>, across multiple countries and peace processes. Young people, however, continue to be unrepresented and excluded from decisions that will directly impact their present and future prospects for peace.

As an increasingly significant proportion of the population in many parts of the world, young people have been recognized for their important contribution to the stability of peace and prevention of violence in particular in fragile and conflict-affected states. Today, there are 1.8 billion youth in the world, the largest percentage of young people ever to have existed.<sup>2</sup> With a global median age of 29.7 years, it is estimated that 408 million youth live in a context affected by armed conflict.<sup>3</sup> These figures underscore the need to understand the dynamics of youth and their engagement in peace and conflict, as well as the importance of involving youth in political decision-making and engaging them in conflict prevention and mediation processes.

Today, one in three internet users is a young person,<sup>4</sup> creating opportunities for people-led movements to significantly influence ongoing peacemaking efforts. Against this backdrop, and after several years of advocacy by over 11,000 young people from over 110 countries, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted its first-ever resolution on **Youth, Peace and Security (UNSCR 2250)** on December 9th 2015.<sup>5</sup> This important step places youth firmly on the peace and security/sustaining peace agenda, recognizing the role of youth in peacebuilding, and advocates for youth engagement and participation in peace processes. The UN Security Council Resolution 2419 (2018) further reaffirmed the need to fully implement 2250 and calls on all relevant actors to consider ways for increasing the representation of young people when negotiating and implementing peace agreements. The Agenda 2030, and SDG 16, calls for the promotion of and support to peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

To explore the roles that young people can, and should play, and to understand what young people are currently doing to influence peace processes, the very first **International Symposium** focused on youth and peace processes was convened.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Department of Political Affairs website, which has been tracking data since 2011 against the indicator on the percentage of peace agreements with specific provisions to improve the security and status of women and girls. For the purposes of data collection, the Department of Political Affairs includes, under the term “peace agreements”, cessations of hostilities, ceasefires, frameworks and overall peace agreements signed between at least two parties to a conflict intended to end, prevent or significantly transform a violent conflict so that it may be addressed more constructively. <http://www.un.org/undpa/en>

<sup>2</sup> More information available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/es/node/9174> Note also that ‘youth’ are not a homogenous group, and have diverse roles and experiences during civil and political conflict, and in building peace.

<sup>3</sup> Hagerty, T. (2017) *Data for Youth, Peace and Security*. Institute for Economics and Peace.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF. *The State of the World’s Children*. 2017 Report.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 states: “the term youth is defined [...] as persons of the age of 18–29 years old, and further noting the variations of definition of the term that may exist on the national and international levels.”

## Justification

Historically, peace processes have focused on negotiations between key stakeholders and decision-makers within conflict parties, with minimal opportunity and attention directed towards inclusive processes and agreements. Inclusive peace negotiations are slowly replacing the traditional peace talks, and new research shows that broader participation can influence the success of a peace process.<sup>6</sup> The question, “How can young women and men be effectively included and participate in peace processes?” has not been fully answered, nor given adequate attention.

Studies have furthermore found that younger generations have the least trust in political institutions.<sup>7</sup> Youthful populations are losing faith in traditional institutions such as governments, media, businesses and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The institutions that are responsible to uphold the social contract have often failed in adequately representing, engaging or addressing the growing needs of this demographic. This has manifested in young people challenging the institutions, systems, and structures through organized movements and other non-violent actions. Marginalizing young people propels this political distrust, increasing chances for political failure and susceptibility to violent extremism.

The **UNSCR 2250 (2015)** and **UNSCR 2419 (2018)** make the clearest justification and urges member states to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels, including possible integrated mechanisms for youth to participate meaningfully in peace processes and dispute resolution. The Security Council recognized the critical need to engage young people not as a security threat, but as partners in key decision-making efforts including in political negotiations that have a direct impact on their lives today and in the future. The Resolution also mandates international bodies, including the United Nations, to partner with youth at a strategic level and to improve the coordination and interaction regarding the needs of youth in conflict situations.

On 23 April 2018, an open – first – **debate of the Security Council on Youth, Peace and Security** was organized under the Peruvian presidency. The open debate, at which 69 Member States took the floor, was held to present the independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security titled the “Missing Peace” mandated by the UNSCR 2250. Fourteen Member States, including two permanent members of the Security Council, called for increased and meaningful youth engagement in peace processes. On 6 June 2018, UNSCR 2419 had 77 co-sponsors, further recognizing the important role of young people in peace processes.

A peace agreement is only sustainable if it is acted upon; the youth of today, in collaboration with other actors, have critical roles in shaping, implementing and sustaining peace agreements. Today’s youth will either inherit an agreement’s long-term benefits if its implemented, or its long-term consequences if it is not implemented. It is essential to consider, then, how the younger generation is socialized and engaged during a peace process, as it will shape their perception of

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Thania Paffenholz, 2015. *Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation*; Nilsson’s 2012 statistical analysis of peace agreements reached between 1989 and 2004 showed that the involvement of civil society actors reduced the risk of a peace agreement failure by 64%; see *Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace*. Taylor and Francis. 243-266.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Chen-chia Wu et al. (2012) ‘The Youth’s Trust in Institutions’. Conference paper prepared for ‘Democratic Citizenship and Voices of Asia’s Youth’, organized by the Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica, and co-sponsored by Asian Barometer Survey, National Taiwan University, September 20-21, 2012, Taiwan

legitimacy of the process<sup>8</sup>: will they feel that they were part of the process and have a sense of ownership? Including youth in important decisions and national-level processes recognizes their role in building and sustaining peace and reconciliation, and prepares them to be future leaders as their country transitions to peace and stability.

## Organization of the Symposium

The symposium was co-hosted by the Governments of Finland, the State of Qatar, and Government of Colombia, and co-organized by the office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY) and Search For Common Ground (Search), in partnership with the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY).



Symposium Organizers

## Global Policy Paper

As part of the organization of the Symposium, two young researchers were contracted to research and develop the first global policy paper on youth participation in peace processes. The aim of the seminal paper was to document, assess and highlight where, how, and in what forms young people have participated in – and influenced – peace processes over the last 20 years. The paper set a foundation for the discussions and topics raised in the Symposium. The two independent researchers were Ali Altiok and Irena Grizelj, who spent the five months prior to the Symposium to design, research, develop and lead the drafting of the paper. The paper – [‘We are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes’](#) – was shared with the Symposium participants a few days ahead of the Symposium as a key reading. The Policy Paper can be accessed at:



Ms. Irena Grizelj, and Mr. Ali Altiok

<https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Global-Policy-Paper-Youth-Participation-in-Peace-Processes.pdf>

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<sup>8</sup> 4 McEvoy-Lee, Siobhan ed. 2006. *Troublemakers or Peacebuilders? Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame.

## Key Objectives

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The International Symposium was a key step in moving forward the implementation of UNSCR 2250 and UNSCR 2419 as it relates to inclusive peace processes with regards to young people. The Symposium built on continuing efforts by young people who strive to influence peace processes in their respective countries and other key stakeholders. The Symposium was intended as a strategic event that brought together key actors actively working on – or interested in – youth inclusion and participation in peace processes.

The key objectives of the Symposium were as follows:

- ❖ Engage a multiplicity of actors to decisively step-up global attention to young people's contribution to peace processes and chart a common agenda
- ❖ Further mobilize international political support aimed at Member States and relevant institutions, to empower young people within peace processes at national-levels – confirming the recognition of the important role of young people in both UNSCRs 2250 and 2419
- ❖ Contribute to the development of a joint understanding of the positive contributions young people bring to peace processes and other mediation efforts
- ❖ Highlight youth-led efforts to influence and participate in peace processes, focusing on key lessons learned and recommendations moving forward

## Participants:

For the first gathering of this kind, invitees included: young women and men who have participated in – or sought to participate in – peace negotiations and peace processes; professional mediators who have organized and/or led formal and informal peace processes or been part of third-party mediation efforts; government representatives; representatives of international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat and sub-regional organizations. Just over **100 participants from 45 different countries** participated in the two-day Symposium.

The Symposium sought to allow participants to exchange views and best practices on the engagement and involvement of young people in formal and informal peace processes, with a view to developing possible recommendations, guidance and suggestions on concrete ways to enhance this, in support of the UNSCR 2250 and UNSCR 2419. For ongoing conflicts that continue to affect millions of lives and influence national and international security, such as in Syria, Afghanistan, Palestine, Yemen, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and numerous other countries, understanding and implementing innovative, impactful, inclusive and sustainable solutions to lasting peace is critical for national security and stability in the short and long-term.

## Summary of Panels & Discussions

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### Day 0: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019

An introduction among the youth participants was organized by the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) the afternoon ahead of the Symposium. The youth participants had the

opportunity to meet and get to know one another, as well as review the agenda, share their ideas on the panels and begin strategizing key messages over the next two days. Ms. **Jutta Urpilainen, Special Representative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland on Mediation**, shared an introduction on Finland's journey on the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and emphasized her – and Finland's – support in moving forward the role of young people in influencing decision-making in peace and security. Ms. **Cecile Mazzacurati, Head at the Secretariat on Youth, Peace and Security, UNFPA/PBSO**, provided a brief history of UNSCR 2250 and the YPS journey, and encouraged the young people to continue to be innovative, creative and persistent in their commitment to building peace and the prevention of violence. Introduction and trust-building activities were organized, followed by a dinner that evening with the youth participants.

## Day 1: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019

### Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony was live-streamed and watched by over 600 viewers, from across the world. The Symposium was opened with an original acoustic song, composed and performed by Ms. **Claire Louise Turner, from Beyond Skin, Northern Ireland**. The song gave light to the 'ordinary heroes':

Opening song performed by Ms. Claire Louise Turner, from Beyond Skin, Northern Ireland:

*"I'm shining a light on the ordinary heroes  
Ordinary, ordinary, ordinary heroes  
I'm shining a light on the ordinary heroes  
I'm talking about you  
I'm talking about all of you  
Where do you think the world would be,  
Without you or me?  
I'm shining a light on the ordinary heroes"*

The opening panel was then introduced and moderated by Ms. **Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, United Nations**, who also formally opened the Symposium and welcomed all the participants to the event.



Ms. Claire Louise and Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake



**Ms. Farida Amri, Afghans for Progressive Thinking, Afghanistan**, shared her story and the story of millions of young people in Afghanistan. Forced to flee the war, she came back to the country thereafter and continued with her education at the American University of Afghanistan – the same university that was attacked by the Taliban in 2015. Amri shared some, of the many, examples of how Afghan youth work for a peaceful Afghanistan. This included the Helmand Peace March initiative, which involved a one-month march for peace in 2018 through villages and the countryside. Many young people joined to demand an end to war. At the end of the march, a 3-day ceasefire was reached in Afghanistan. Young people also find creative ways to share their visions for peace, through art work, such as painting on buildings with messages of peace, which are changing the image of the city. At an international level, in 2018, young Afghan citizens raised their voices at the UN, with their first ever youth ambassador nominated to the UN.

Her closing remarks emphasized that critical changes are needed for more inclusion, and that the mentality that age brings wisdom should be changed: wisdom does not always depend on age. There are many wise young people; it is therefore better to engage both the young and older, and recognize youth and their activities towards peace.

**H.E. Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland**. The Minister shared his experience of Finland as a key promoter in the role of young people in mediation, recognizing that youth are not only the present, but also the future. Finland started 16 years ago on this agenda, in parliament together with Jutta Uuttilainen. Focusing on youth means that Finland provides access for youth constituencies to health, education, technology, allowing the creation of opportunities. Governments need to pay attention to young people, and the 2030 agenda is critical as it is formed together with young people. One of the biggest new challenges, however, is that social media is very quick, whilst politics is very slow to react. Young people want fast results, while politics can be frustrating, because it is slower to respond. Therefore, it is important to provide possibilities and access for young people and it is necessary to include them in decision-making processes. Young people are the best resource we have all over the world: they need access to everything. We cannot also ignore women and girls, who are 50% of the population. H.E. Soini concluded with Finland being a role model to other governments as one of the first countries with a national action plan on UNSCR 2250.

H.E. Soini's closing remarks included Finland's commitment to keep a spotlight on YPS: new technology and access to information should be utilized. He remarked that "youth can read the wind and know what is about to come and change; chances to influence decision-making have changed a lot for the good."

**H.E. Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, The State of Qatar**, highlighted that in the next decade, youth will be one of the most pressing issues of our time. He stressed that young people are the most creative force of social change and sustainable peace. When thinking about how we can empower youth, H.E. Al-Muraikhi proposed that, first, we must address the wide misconception that young people should not have a say about the world's problems, especially those living in conflict contexts. Qatar is a mediator in various peace processes, such as Lebanon, Sudan and Afghanistan; but without involving young people, problems will continue. Second, *involve* young people. Qatar has a long track record of collaboration with youth on quality education initiatives, and established a youth advisory committee. In 2018, the Doha Youth Forum was organized together with the Qatar Foundation. Doha also furthermore hosted several meetings of the Arab-European Youth Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations.



*Opening Ceremony Speakers*

**H.E. Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Colombia**, noted that Colombia is implementing UNSCR 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) in the framework of legality, through working on education, sports, and employment. There are three key aspects of peacebuilding involving youth in Colombia: first is the demobilization of minors who have been forcibly recruited; second is the reintegration of former combatants; and third is the participation of youth in public affairs, including implementation of the peace agreement. These are important areas of youth involvement and leadership. Last year, Colombia further established youth councils at the national, regional and local levels. A rural education plan has also been developed to fight illiteracy and develop income generating projects. Colombia works to strengthen democracy by promoting pluralism and participation.

In his closing remarks, H.E. Trujillo mentioned the opening up spaces, and building frameworks for more active participation of youth, including to engage youth in the way societies run, take active parts in politics, open space in political parties.

**Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, United Nations**, started his speech with reinforcing that UNSCR 2250 and 2419 are important as they build momentum for an entire generation that needs to be involved in peace and security issues – the progress study on Youth, Peace & Security highlights youth as that critical Missing Peace. He stated that it is no longer a choice: the resolutions request the UN to actively and systematically include the youth, in peace agreements, peacekeeping missions, and mediation processes. Today is the biggest youth generation in history. This is no longer about future; it is crucial now. Particularly for political mediation and peacebuilding processes, the actual role of the UN is to invest in these processes and ensure it reaches out to the marginalized – those for whom the violence of exclusion is most felt. He noted that we have to involve young people and youth organizations at all levels. Today's generation is a networked generation, which is relevant to all peace processes. How do we

change the way we change the world? The very notion of political inclusion is critical for peace processes. In order for peace agreements to be sustainable and transformative, they have to strongly involve all people it aims to represent, including young women and men.

In his closing remarks, Fernandez-Taranco stressed that it is time for action and for implementation. Now we have the frameworks, this allows Member States to take YPS and inclusion as an obligation – and we need to start implementing the crucial recommendations in the resolutions, the progress study and this global policy paper. The issue is to translate this momentum into political action. For this, he added that we need to build a movement that is interlinked and able to influence the policy and action for peace to come bottom-up, with real engagement not based on tokenism.

**Mr. Shamil Idriss, CEO, Search for Common Ground**, noted that Search for Common Ground tries to facilitate peacebuilding efforts at all levels. He highlighted the real challenge that practitioners face to involve all key stakeholders, especially young people – but noted that the challenge was a necessity. This is not a favor to young people. It is an investment that will be tremendously successful, as previous investments in peace have allowed to prevent major conflicts. The challenges today and new dynamics are collapsing states (e.g. Rwanda 1994, Syria now) and violent groups (such as criminal gangs and terrorist organizations) threatening the ability for the states to provide very basic services. We are seeing now the results of these violent conflicts, as the primary factors in causing poverty and massive migration and refugee flows. Frontline research, state-to-state diplomacy and civil society work, and bottom-up power will need to be increasingly coordinated, with greater dialogue.

In his closing remarks, Idriss asked the participants to look forward in 5 years, *‘what should have changed until then in terms of inclusion?’* He stressed that the YPS agenda should be less of an ad-hoc experimentation but should feed into a more formalized network. He ended with highlighting that we, as a global community, are 20 years behind in what we should need to be on this.

**Ms. Gwendolyn Myers, Messengers of Peace-Liberia Inc., Liberia**, highlighted that most of the perpetrators in conflicts are young people; they are not given the ability to participate in political processes. Myers gained her knowledge of formal mediation processes at the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) training; previously working on advocacy roles. Through FBA, her eyes were opened on the increased power youth could have with a formal voice in mediation processes. She shared the example of Liberia in the 2017 elections: with a team of 1000 youth, plus 25 young people trained as mediators, they worked for non-violent election processes at the local level. Young women and men worked in community mediation, were assigned to the polling centers, and established an online platform used for all young people to contribute by reporting conflict and related incidents. This was *youth-led* conflict prevention. Messengers of Peace-Liberia were the first youth-led peacebuilding organization to receive a peace prize by the President of Liberia. For young people, UNSCR 2250 was a game changer, and UNSCR 2419 has given young a formal platform for advocacy and inclusion.

Myers’s concluding remarks ended with advice for young people: have passion and compassion for others, and do not be afraid to engage in peace advocacy; engage with different actors, including politics, and religious groups; make sure you work hard work and have resilience; and do not be taken as tokenism or create competition in space between one another. Be careful if you receive funding and ensure that the image of your organization is trusted and respected. Great mentors and mentorship are crucially important – find mentors. She concluded that we need genuine collaboration of youth organizations to educate one another and the world.

Ms. **Jayathma Wickramanayake**, concluded the session echoing Colombia in that ‘inclusion is the name of the game’. She emphasized that commitments are needed, but also, and most importantly, investments and resources.

The opening ceremony was concluded with a special Video Message from **António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations**. The message was as follows:

**Video Message from António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations:**

*Friends,*

*Thank you for coming together in Helsinki to focus on youth engagement in peace efforts.*

*This Symposium highlights the importance of ensuring more inclusive peace processes – and recognizes the vital contributions of young women and men to help reach and sustain peace agreements.*

*There is much we can learn from young peacebuilders from Colombia to Somalia, from the Philippines to Yemen, and beyond.*

*I wish you productive discussions and thank you once again for sharing your ideas and experiences to ensure more inclusive mediation practices and to build peace.*

Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake introduced the MCs, Ms. **Gizem Kilinc, Leading Coordinator at UNOY, Turkey** and Mr. **Achaleke Christian Leke, Local Youth Corner, Cameroon**, who gave an overview of the agenda and offered a concluding statement to the opening ceremony and panel.



*Mr. António Guterres, and Ms. Gizem Kilinc and Mr. Achaleke Christian Leke*

## Panel Session 1: Today’s Challenges and New Frontiers in Peace Processes

This first panel sought to highlight the current landscape of today’s evolving conflicts, including changing conflict drivers, shifting power dynamics, and how social movements and social media have shaped new frontiers in peace processes writ-large.

The session was moderated by Ms. **Irene Limo, Coordinator Peacemaking Unit, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)**.

Mr. **Nicholas Haysom, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations** was asked to begin the panel by reflecting on when he entered the peace and security space, how the landscape has changed, and what are some of the new and emerging conflict dynamics that peace processes are confronted with today. Haysom highlighted that the nature of conflicts has changed over the years, as they have become increasingly internationalized with a diverse set of stakeholders involved. This reflects on the practice of mediation, which has become more professionalized, yet at the same time the ground has become more complicated and the list of agenda items for mediation processes is constantly growing. Another change is that a broader range of civil society organizations now have a role in conflict prevention and local initiatives gain importance/influence. This opens up a space for youth engagement. He highlighted the global policy paper as a key guidance resource in this space.

When asked about the lessons on inclusivity from the peace processes he has been a part of, Haysom raised the point that inclusion is easier said than done. For example, in Afghanistan, women have limited public roles and the movements are all male, so it was very difficult to identify women as participants to the peace process. It is understandable that youth feel affronted. Youth inclusion is also an effective measure of countering violent extremism. He emphasized that the three layers (inside, around, and outside the room) mentioned in the policy paper shouldn't be viewed as in hierarchy to each other, but as simultaneous. *How* youth are represented is equally important as the fact *that* they are included.

In the Q&A, Haysom explained that mediators are often skeptical towards too much inclusion, due to the view that a crowded agenda of a mediation process can obscure the focus on silencing the arms. But it is important to consider inclusion not as add-ons, but as add-ins. The process of mediation is about crafting a new social contract for the country.

Ms. **Miriam Coronel Ferrer, Senior Mediation Adviser, Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers**, was asked how social movements have influenced peace processes. She emphasized that civil society organizations are not transformative if they are not linked to social movements. In fact, social movements are the bosom of peace movements. A global social movement for peace is necessary to counter conflicts. She reflected on her involvement in peace movements during her time as a young woman, and the importance of not marginalizing – but listening and including – these critical voices.

When responding to the question on her lessons learned on inclusivity from peace processes, she has been a part of, Ferrer stated that society is not homogenous: there are many more narratives that are legitimate and need to resurface and be taken into account. For example, in the Philippines negotiations with the Bangsamoro rebels, the rebels did not acknowledge women among their own. There are many obstacles and barriers to inclusion. These include: cultural barriers towards women's and youth inclusion; the idea that peace processes only deal with hard issues, excluding all soft issues; and that youth and women need to prove themselves before being accepted. She emphasized that it is not only about *process inclusivity*, but also *substance inclusivity*, namely to find inclusive solutions with *all* interests being taken into account.

Mr. **Leonardo Párraga, BogotArt, Colombia**, was asked, as someone who was part of a youth-led social movement in Colombia, how he thinks social movements have influenced peace processes. Párraga noted that social movements are the backbone of any longer-term development. In

Colombia, the ‘No’ campaign for the peace agreement referendum was a spark for several further social movements (i.e. Paz a la Calle, Campamento por la Paz, Cartas por la Reconciliación, etc.). Social media today offers an unrepresented channel to bring the word out, to get people together and to act. When asked about the challenges he faces, from a young person’s perspective, in terms of engaging in peace processes, Párraga reflected on the situation in Colombia: the peace is currently missing, with social leaders being murdered on a daily basis. The government has implemented limited mechanisms to protect these people. Violence is presently getting worse in conflict-affected areas left by the guerrilla, where other armed groups are taking over, and the life of people affected by conflict has not changed since the peace agreement, because there is lacking political will from the current government. The government is trying to ignore what was agreed in the peace accord, has not allocated any specific budget for its implementation and is pushing a narrative centered in war and winning the conflict against the other guerrillas militarily and not through dialogue.

In the Q&A, Párraga highlighted the fact that the Foreign Minister of Colombia has just agreed to work on an action plan on youth and UNSCR 2250 and 2419. This shows the possibilities that can happen when young people and high-level officials collaborate and are in the same room.



*Panel Session 1 Speakers*

**Mr. Graeme Simpson, Lead Author of the Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, Director of Interpeace, USA**, was asked about the concept of ‘Violence of Exclusion’ in the Progress Study, and how this influences peace processes today. Simpson noted that there is a continuity of young people’s marginalization and exclusion. He reflected that the image of young people as being violent has led to the exclusion and mistrust of youth, but also mistrust within communities and towards the state. There is a structural exclusion of youth that is also fundamentally gendered. Experiences of young people need to be taken into account; the sense of injustice needs to be addressed; and we must move beyond symbolic participation. Yet,

participation and inclusion are not always welcomed by youth. If processes are exclusive or manipulated, often youth don't want to be included.

## Panel Session 2: Youth Participation in Peace Processes – Where Are They and Why Does It Matter?

The second plenary focused on a presentation of the first global policy paper on youth participation in peace processes (*'We Are Here: An integrated approach to youth-inclusive peace processes'*). The policy paper provided a comprehensive overview of youth participation in past and current peace processes, including examples of good practices and lessons learned along with set of draft recommendations to be finalized at the conclusion of the symposium taking into consideration suggestions from all participants.

**Ms. Cecile Mazzacurati, Head, Secretariat on Youth, Peace and Security, UNFPA/PBSO** moderated the session.

**Ms. Irena Grizelj, Consultant & Researcher, Policy Paper on Youth Participation in Peace Processes**, opened the panel with an overview of the background and aim of the policy paper, along with key findings. Grizelj explained that, up till now, there has lacked a comprehensive discussion and literature that defines what youth engagement and inclusion in peace processes means. There is literature and practice that focuses on how young people engage in a post-agreement, or implementation phases of a peace process, as peacebuilders or as potential destabilizers of a peace agreement. But very little has been done to assess how young people engage *before and during peace negotiations* to shape the peace agreement itself. This is surprising when young people today often constitute the majority population in countries with ongoing peace processes. Irena explained that while young people *have been, and are involved*, during peace processes in different ways, this information has not been systematically collected and analyzed. Through documenting the roles that young people play in peace processes, we can begin to understand how they support and influence sustainable peace agreements. The way that the paper approached this research is through a bottom-up, evidence-led and exploratory approach: they did not assume how young people participate through pre-set frameworks, rather derived this through the interviews. She went on to explain the 'Inside/Around/Outside the Room' framing, which can be found in the paper.

Grizelj emphasized that we should aim for *'youth-inclusive peace processes'* as opposed to including youth *in* peace processes as an add-on or tick box; there needs to be a fundamental shift in how we design and implement peace negotiations, with young people from the outset. She concluded with noting that the field of research and practice on youth inclusive peace processes is nascent, and that the policy paper should set the trajectory for further long-term, collective, and collaborative investment to systematically document, monitor, assess, and support youth inclusive peace processes.

**Mr. Jean-Felix Riva, Central African Republic**, shared his experience of engaging in the Brazzaville Ceasefire Conference process. He stressed the importance to raise the voice of young people who were *not* engaged in rebellion, that is, to not only talk to the ones who are involved in violence. He noted that we must engage young peacebuilders and those affected by the violence. The international network of young peacebuilders is very important to strengthen national youth movements. Riva furthermore shared examples of how young people communicate with each other and have a code to convey a message; and when they are not invited to 'the table', they create

their own table. Young people have the power to boycott meetings, and they have the strength of mobilization and resistance with the public.



*Panel Session 2 Speakers*

Ms. **Shatha Al-Harazi, Independent Journalist, Yemen**, shared her experience of being a youth representative in the Yemen National Dialogue process. She highlighted that in Yemen, youth was very directly engaged in the political process, both inside and outside the room. However, although youth were the drivers of change in Yemen, they were not included in the Gulf Countries agreement. But provisions foresaw the inclusion of youth and women (20% youth inclusion), and the UN Special Envoy was very engaged for an inclusive process. Al-Harazi also discussed the selection process and criteria for youth, which included an online application form, with hundreds of applicants. However, the preparatory committee reached out to key pre-selected representatives directly. This selective and targeted selection of representatives led to an initial frustration among youth, some of whom did not view the process as transparent. While the Yemeni government added the 20% quota for youth to be in the room, and it was an important moment, on an individual level, young people in the room were not satisfied. She explained that “even though we had a seat at the table, we didn’t feel as though we were meaningfully involved.”

Al-Harazi explained that after the shut-down of the National Dialogue, young people were again excluded from the political process. But the culture of mediation had changed, and youth took action themselves and engaged in mediation processes outside the room, on a community basis. Additionally, tech-savvy youth were important as part of the negotiation teams. This highlights the importance of political leadership to include young people and women, who can shape a process accordingly.

Ms. **Ayak Achol, ANATABAN, South Sudan**, shared her initiative of using art to open up new spaces for dialogue in South Sudan. This led to civilian discussions and people talking about key community and national issues, such as the need to end rape and the need for an inclusive peace process, which includes civil society and in particular youth representatives sitting at the peace



table. Achol explained that in South Sudan, youth make up 70% of the population. Achol liaised between youth representatives in the room and the constituency outside the room: through several “kitchens” (online platforms), experts from “outside” were able to feed into the official talks; regionally, but also online and with the diaspora. This virtual platform was instrumental to mobilize for the peace process and keep the public aware of the process. In addition, there were online and on-the-ground campaigns that mobilized young people and the general public, for example ‘South Sudan is Watching’ [see example in policy paper]. The movement created online forums and campaigns with regular updates on the peace negotiations, to make sure that young people all over South Sudan were informed. The campaign sought to make sure South Sudan knew we (young people) are watching.

**Mr. Ali Altiok, Independent Researcher on Youth and Peacebuilding, Policy Paper on Youth Participation in Peace Processes**, concluded the session with emphasizing that youth power and influence over negotiations is not always correlated to young people’s proximity to the peace table. Comprehensive youth consultations that are supported with appropriate reporting mechanisms may be more influential than having just a single youth representative at the table. Similarly, young people marching for peace outside the negotiation room is often more influential than having young people as passive observers inside the negotiation rooms. In fact, youth power may be best found in mass protests or social media activism for peace – this is an unexplored power to increase the legitimacy of peace processes. However, he added that we should recognize that power at the negotiation table has a different sort of nature: critical power-sharing decisions on disarmament demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) and criminal justice reform process are often made inside the room.

## Parallel Breakout Sessions 1: Validating the Evidence, Expanding the Narratives

Following the second plenary, the participants were split into 6 roundtable groups and offered the space to share their understandings and discuss the key findings from the global policy paper, along with lessons learned and promising practices in the field of youth-inclusive peace processes. The discussions sought to help strengthen networks and ensure further validation of the paper’s findings by the participants of the Symposium. The participants were split into mixed



*Parallel Breakout Session discussions*

groups, with young people, senior mediators, and institutional and government representatives sharing the same space and table. This session concluded with a plenary presentation with one participant from each group sharing the key takeaways captured from each of the roundtable discussions.

The day was concluded with a **welcome dinner hosted by the City of Helsinki**.

## Day 2: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019

The day opened with two young inspirational speakers, who shared their stories on working for youth inclusive peace processes. Ms. **Özge Özoğul**, **Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, Cyprus** and Mr. **Ehab Badwi**, **Syrian Youth Assembly, Syria**. The MCs then explained the agenda for the second day and introduced the first panel.



*Ms. Özge Özoğul and Mr. Ehab Badwi*

## Panel Session 3: Lessons from Civil Society, Women, And Religious Actors in Shaping Inclusivity in Peace Processes

This session highlighted key lessons learned from various civil society groups, women and religious actors in terms of how these groups have influenced peace processes, including some lessons on how this is relevant to youth-inclusive peace processes.

Ms. **Sabine Freizer**, **Policy Advisor on Governance, Peace and Security, UN Women**, opened the session with sharing that while there is a strong normative framework on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), there is still very little actual progress, despite strong support by the UN Secretary General. For example, in the UN system, there are only two female senior mediators: the Special Envoy on Myanmar and the UN Special Representative for the Geneva International Discussions. There has been progress on the technical gender expertise provided in peace processes, however this is not inside the room, rather around and beyond the room.

There are also increasing consultations with women, but the question is whether this is only used as window dressing as opposed to substantive and quality inclusion. In terms of lessons for youth in peace processes, Freizer highlighted that we don't necessarily need capacity building for youth, but capacity building and training for mediators and international and regional institutions on youth inclusion. The development of networks is also very useful. And while normative frameworks exist, the real challenge is the implementation and the lack of political will. For the WPS agenda, the key priority is to influence a peace agreement (Track 1 participation), because this constitutes a new social contract.

Ms. **Laura Londén**, Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA began with emphasizing that supporting civil society actors in their work for development, humanitarian relief, and peacebuilding, is a central function of the United Nations. Civil society organizations and actors are generally the first responders when a disaster strikes, they are the insiders who can bring together divided parties, and they are themselves political partners and allies. For peace processes and peacebuilding specifically, the funds, agencies and programmes of the United Nations vastly rely on the know-how and insights from civil society. When the partnership is solid and based on mutual understanding and respect, this is a win-win situation. Londén then provided a few best practice examples of how UNFPA has supported civil society in their peacebuilding work. In conclusion, she shared key reflections on lessons learned in supporting the inclusion and participation of civil society:

- Support across political and dividing lines is essential, since civil society is always multiple, diverse and fragmented. The international community have to play the role of an honest broker and provide support across political affiliations.
- Young people, like everyone else, are divided political actors. We should embrace this diversity and contribute to everyone’s engagement and leadership, in spite of the challenges this may present. We are striving for young people to be driven and engaged citizens. This means they won’t always sing our tune.
- Young people’s engagement in peace and security is deeply influenced by many people around them: parents, friends, communities, religious leaders, teachers. This is similar for women. These different stakeholders all need to be engaged and convinced on why and how young people can make a difference for peace. We need to balance direct support to young people and their organizations, with a whole-of-society approach.



*Ms. Esther Jeyang, Mr. Suchith Abeyewickreme, Ms. Laura Londén, and Ms. Sabine Freizer*

Mr. **Suchith Abeyewickreme**, Interfaith Colombo / United Religion Initiative, Sri Lanka, discussed his reflections on the inclusion of faith-based actors and religious leaders in peace processes through the example of Sri Lanka. The peace process in Sri Lanka broke down between 2000 and 2004 because religious leaders were not included in the process. In many contexts, religious communities cannot be excluded from peace processes. Abeyewickreme explained that while we talk about being ‘at the table, around the table, and outside the room’, in the Sri Lankan peace

process, it is hard to know where these rooms are. It is not known because there is no transparent process. Thus, there is no meaningful opportunity for young people to participate in the process. The point was that stakeholders need to know where the room is in order to be inside the room. If we look at peace processes broadly beyond formal at the table negotiations, we can see that Rooms can also be religious places – Temples, Kovils, Churches and Mosques – and be part of a peace process.

Abeyewickreme highlighted some dangers to be aware of when engaging religious communities meaningfully: we may need to be careful in terms of how much control they may exert because if religious leaders define the content or process, it could be very exclusive (e.g. no women, no LGBTQI, etc), which should not happen. Religious communities being engaged may also result in older religious leaders gaining voice. Hence, we must acknowledge and engage youth participation within religious communities. To do this, we must engage young religious leaders and scholars in scriptural interpretations and not exclude religious language. We must also ensure the formative experiences of young religious leaders and education are inclusive and they are engaged with each other peacefully early on. In his own experience working with religious communities, Abeyewickreme adopted a strategy he calls “reverse mentoring”: he invites religious leaders to informally be mentors/advisors to young people, but in that relationship, he challenges both parties to open up to one another, respond to needs for peace, and collaborate to address issues.

Ms. **Esther Jeyang, Civil Society Forum for Peace, Myanmar**, shared the example of the role of civil society in the Myanmar context. In Myanmar, there are formal and informal spaces in the ongoing peace process, which includes over 20 different negotiating parties. The formal peace process consists of (i) a peace conference, (ii) a nationwide ceasefire agreement, and (iii) a national dialogue process. In Myanmar, civil society is excluded from the official Track 1 process. However, they did not wait for inclusion: civil society organized to create its own space in the peace process through engaging in both formal and informal processes. One key role that civil society takes is in linking the different tracks. For example, civil society coordinates, collects and synthesizes different community voices from across the country, and shares this with formal negotiation processes. In the peace conference, while civil society is present as observers, they use this to promote public understanding of the peace processes. One key debate civil society faced is in defining the meaning of participation and inclusion. Jeyang explained that they overcame the challenge by agreeing on “participation by all means”; no form of participation is viewed as better than another, and all participation matters.

Several further key lessons were shared: engage with all parties, both those who have and do not have the political will to support participation; international interventions must be aware to not lead with pre-set frameworks; coordination and mediation among civil society is critical; and you have to be so strong that you cannot be ignored.

Mr. **Ville Brummer, Programme Director, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI)**, emphasized the lesson that inclusivity *in mediation teams* is crucial for an inclusive process. ‘The best way to sell anything, is to make people feel they haven’t been sold anything.’ This is also true of inclusiveness in peace processes. Brummer noted that by showing inclusivity and diversity, this encourages others to do the same. Using inclusivity can also address sensitive issues that official peace processes may struggle with, while maintaining a link to the short- and mid-term strategies. He added that inclusivity mechanisms need to be processes of engaging different actors with a built in feedback loop to ensure accountability and the inclusion of these critical perspectives.

## Parallel Breakout Sessions 2: Reviewing and Finalizing Recommendations



*Parallel Breakout Session discussions*

Following the third plenary, the participants were split again into 6 roundtable groups in order to discuss key recommendations, based on the first day's discussions. The participants were provided a key set of questions to reflect upon, and then reviewed and offered feedback to strengthen the draft recommendations in the policy paper. The session concluded with a plenary, where each group shared their key one participant from each group sharing the key takeaways captured from each of the roundtable discussions.

Upon the participants sharing their summary comments to strengthen the recommendations, Irena Grizelj and Ali Altiok provided some key reflections on the recommendation discussions, and how these discussions will be incorporated into finalizing the paper. They stressed that we are no longer discussing 'why youth matter' but moving towards acting on the urgency. The discussions clearly show a need and opportunity for a collective and collaborative movement, network, and community to move this field forward in a meaningful and conflict sensitive way

## Panel Session 4: Strategies for Gaining Political Will for Supporting Youth Participation in Peace Processes

This session focused on strategies for gaining political will for youth participation in peace processes to advance the discussions beyond the Helsinki Symposium and internalize recommendations in the work of institutional partners engaged in supporting peace processes. There was an interactive portion at the end of the session that lasted for 30 minutes.

**H.E. Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, The State of Qatar** shared an important update, announcing the commitment of The State of Qatar in hosting the **Second International Symposium on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes in Doha 2020**.

The panel started with a keynote speech from **H.E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of United Nations General Assembly**. The full speech can be found [here](#).

### *Keynote address: President of the General Assembly (PGA)*

*"Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Let me begin by acknowledging the youth peacebuilders in this Symposium, with whom I just had a very stimulating conversation over lunch. You and all those you represent, are the champions of this agenda. I am truly honoured to be part of the First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes. This is an historic occasion. So, I would like to begin by*

congratulating the organizers – the Governments of Finland, Qatar and Colombia; Search for Common Ground; and the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth; as well as their partners – the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNDP, UNFPA and the UNOY network of youth peace organizations.



H.E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President  
of United Nations General Assembly

Let me state unequivocally that I am fully committed to the youth, peace and security agenda. And I am fully committed to working with you and all 193 Member States to make this agenda central to the work of the General Assembly. I assure you, these are not just warm words put together for this occasion. Youth, peace and security has been at the heart of my work from the outset. It is one of the seven priorities for my Presidency. These priorities were shaped through my own experiences – of seeing firsthand how young diplomats achieve breakthroughs in difficult negotiations, for instance. As Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence, following the dynamics of conflict and peace building as well as forced migrations and integration. They were also shaped by extensive consultations on the most transformative changes needed to realise the Sustainable Development Goals: the international community’s blueprint for a safer, fairer and more sustainable world.

And the common thread? Youth.

On youth, peace and security, I am working hard to promote the full inclusion of young people in peace processes. Six hundred million young people – a third of the total youth population – live in fragile and conflict-affected states. Often, we focus on those in the most extreme situations: child soldiers, survivors of sexual violence. And rightly so. But we must do more to reach out to young people who are simply trying to live their lives in conflict situations, and who have the same needs and wants as young people the world over. We must do more to support young people working for peace in different ways.

We know that young people helped to foster intercommunal dialogue in Kenya to address post-election violence. We know young people held events to consolidate peace in countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. We know they are trying to provide humanitarian support in countries such as Yemen. We know they have risked their lives to document human rights violations in places such as Syria and Colombia. We know they continue to campaign for nuclear disarmament in Japan – seven decades after Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

And yet – what percentage of negotiators and mediators are under 30? What happens when the Martti Ahtisaari’s of this world are not available? We need to nurture a new generation of peacebuilders, who like Mr. Ahtisaari, can make the impossible dream of peace come true. We must involve young people at all stages of our work for peace.

I am greatly encouraged by the work of Jayathma, the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, and by the excellent new UN strategy for youth 2030. But we still have a mountain to climb when it

comes to meaningful youth participation. Just 38 states sent youth delegates to the opening of this session of the General Assembly. Too few of my colleagues have Aya's the Youth Envoy for the AU, perspective on the challenges we face. I still find myself sitting in meetings on youth, listening to a series of grey-haired speakers pontificate about the importance of hearing young voices. This only adds to the sense of alienation, and the lack of trust, that young people have in institutions. In life I have learnt that transnational terms and settings are more effective and powerful.

We adults may mean well, but this has to change.

Last year's seminal "Missing Peace" study highlighted that too many policy-makers still see young people as problems to be solved. They associate them with political violence, with criminal activity, with extremism – and all on the basis of lazy assumptions and flawed or partial data that ignores the facts that that only a tiny proportion of young people are involved in such activities, and that several other factors, including deep-seated structural inequalities, are at work here.

It is similar to the old debates on gender equality, which put the onus on women to do better, to work harder, to dress more modestly, without tackling the societal, political, economic and institutional causes of sexism. We have to start celebrating the positive contribution that young people make, and I will be sure to use what I heard at my lunch with youth representatives earlier today in my speeches and statements going forward.

Second, we should take seriously the recommendation in the Missing Peace report to allocate \$1.8 billion dollars to youth – representing just one dollar per young person – by 2025, the tenth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 2250. Youth programmes and organisations continue to be underfunded in all regions of the world. We need to invest in the capacities, agency and leadership of young people even as we call on them to work with us to address global challenges.

And lastly, we must improve youth participation in national and international decision-making. At the UN, this means encouraging more Member States to include young people in their delegations. It means working closely with Jayathma's office and others to find ways to increase meaningful youth participation in our work – not just through token side-events or one-off consultations.

I am fully committed to ensuring young people are heard – and listened to – during my term as President of the General Assembly, including, of course, on the crucial youth, peace and security agenda. I will be following closely the discussions and ideas generated at this Symposium and look forward to engaging with you today and in the future."

The remainder of the panel was moderated by Ms. **Hajer Sharief, Together We Build It, Libya.**

Ms. **Rebecca Hovhannisian, UNOY Peacebuilders & Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre, Armenia,** shared a background on the United Network of Young Peacebuilders and its role on the YPS agenda, which includes continued advocacy for UNSCR 2250. The UNOY is a platform and network by, and for, young peacebuilders across the globe, which offers peer-to-peer support and works together with the United Nations, African Union and European Union. The UNOY additionally publishes key research to highlight trends and challenges in supporting youth-led peacebuilding. Hovhannisian emphasized UNOY's commitment in advancing and localizing the YPS agenda, and continuing the momentum for UNSCR 2250 and 2419.

Mr. **Rene Van Nes, Acting Head of Conflict Prevention and Mediation Division of the European External Action Service, European Union (EU),** provided concluding remarks on his views of the global paper, the Symposium, and the youth-inclusive peace processes/YPS agenda. He agreed

that we, as decision-makers and the international community, need to *listen* to youth, not give them a voice. Young people already have a voice, and we see this happening through youth activism. He shared examples of the EEAS engaging the key actors, including youth actors, in building negotiation skills in the Central African Republic, along with other ways that EEAS is engaged in mediation support in other contexts. Van Nes noted that providing mediators with a toolbox for youth inclusion would be a recommendation as part of this agenda. He further shared the following commitments from EEAS:

1. Wide distribution of policy paper and recommendations;
2. Support the development of a toolbox for mediators on how to engage with youth;
3. Identify concrete examples on how and where youth want and need support (to prepare effective inside mediators);
4. Support to youth networks (also financial);
5. Promote the YPS agenda through various events in Brussels.

Ms. Aya Chebbi, Youth Envoy, African Union (AU), stated that we need to change the narrative of youth as being violent, unemployed and dangerous. There is a need for an empowering discourse: youth as creators of opportunities, not destroyers of opportunities. The AU Youth Charter is a very comprehensive document with recommendations and guidelines. Chebbi highlighted three further commitments from the AU Youth Envoy office:



Ms. Hajer Sharief, Ms. Aya Chebbi, and Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco

1. Advocacy and implementation of recommendations of the global paper through Youth4Peace;
2. Five regional African Youth Ambassadors will be appointed, as part of young African mediators' program;
3. Work with AU Peace and Security Council to involve YPS.

Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, United Nations, noted the importance of the partnership dimension: building alliances, networks and platforms, and to connect with other youth peacebuilders. He reflected that the YPS agenda is ultimately about courage, leadership and commitment. Youth are engaged and dedicated to promote peace and security, even under the risk of their own lives. This movement is already in action, and the institutions have the obligation to support this movement to advance and be heard. It is no longer about *what* we should be doing, but *how* we will be doing it. Fernandez-Taranco highlighted the following commitments

1. Continued support to the UN Youth Envoy and her office;
2. Strengthening the link between prevention, mediation, and. peacebuilding;



3. Engaging Member States through creating an inclusive platform to capture experiences on YPS and infuse the SG report 2020 with concrete examples;
4. Support to PBSO to continue their Secretariat function on Youth, Peace and Security together with UNFPA;
5. Drive the increased allocation of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) funding to youth-led peacebuilding initiatives (PBF Youth Promotion Initiative).

The panel discussions were concluded with the MCs, who facilitated participants to stand up and raise and/or voice their own commitments to this agenda.

### Closing Ceremony:

The closing ceremony was moderated by Mr. **Saji Preliis, Director of Children and Youth Programmes, Search for Common Ground and Co-Chair, Global Coalition on Youth, Peace & Security**, who asked the panelists to reflect on their key takeaways and concluding remarks. The ceremony was once again live-streamed online, and watched by over 600 viewers from across the world.

**H.E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of United Nations General Assembly**, expressed her invigoration and inspiration in attending the Symposium. She shared her learning that this topic should go beyond the Security Council Resolution and the agenda of the General Assembly: it should be part of the structure of the United Nations. H.E. Espinosa acknowledged the important role of DPPA, and the good news that Qatar has offered to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium in 2020. She expressed her invigorating day, where the lunch with youth participants was the highlight of the day. There is a momentum on YPS issues: years of campaigning, including by the UN Youth Envoy, PBSO, Search for Common Ground, youth and other key stakeholders, lay the ground for the youth conference in Jordan in August 2015 and the groundbreaking UNSCR 2250 in December 2015. The UNSCR 2250 offered for the first time that young people can, and must, play a central role in decision making to build peace and resolving conflicts, including in countering violent extremism. UNSCR 2419 reaffirms the importance of youth participation in peace processes.

She committed to sharing the outcomes of this Symposium in New York and to work with Member States on opportunities to work with youth. A strong multilateral system is crucial for the YPS agenda and inclusivity of youth. Young people need spaces act, and we need the involvement and innovative thinking of youth to continue with this roadmap on how best to engage youth. She noted that less than 6% of parliamentarians worldwide are under the age of 35; most states do not include youth in a meaningful way in decision-making, yet we have the largest population of youth in history. She noted that we must seize on the energy and potential of youth before it is too late. The full speech can be found [here](#).

**H.E. Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland**, noted that we often need the wisdom of the elders, but also the wisdom and new ideas of the youth, which is the cornerstone of progress. The inclusion of young men and women matters, including marginalized people. The symposium is part of a process; the recommendations of the global policy paper now need to be taken further, creating spaces for young people to *draft and influence* peace agreements. Young people have the right to be heard and protected by law. He noted that we can count on Finland's firm support to this agenda, in Helsinki and beyond.

**Ms. Laura Londén, Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA**, expressed her impress by the quality of deliberations over the last two days. Congratulates were expressed for the global policy paper, which will be the foundation for political commitment and for a new practice on

the ground. Young women and men are the center of UNFPA's work; the Secretary General launched the UN youth strategy in September, which prioritizes building peace and resilience for the young. She shared some ideas that the YPS field may consider in moving forward:

- Continue to push for the shift to be sure that young people are seen as bringing a positive impact. For this, it is important to document and share good examples of youth participation in peace processes;
- Support youth networks through investing in the capacity of youth, including financial investment. While 1. 8 Billion seems like a lot, it is in fact only 1 USD per young person;
- Support and facilitate the access of youth to all three layers mentioned in the global policy paper, through a platform where young people can interconnect and exchange;
- Establish a road map action-plan at regional and national levels;
- Use the media to better communicate the message from youth.



*Closing Ceremony Speakers*

Ms. **Lama Drebaty, Mobaderoon, Syria**, closing remarks noted how critical and sensitive it is to be present as a Syrian young woman. She has participated in the Civil Society Support Room in Syria, and chose to stay in the country, despite the war. She highlighted that the work of youth in Syria is very important: they create open spaces for interactions between different religions and sexes and different groups of population. Young people should be included in the peace process. Drebaty asked the participants to think through some numbers: 5 million refugees; 6 million IDPs; over 400,000 people killed; more than 500,000 people live in besieged places; and only 80 people in this room to focus on youth participation in peace processes. Her message to UN Security Council: please invest in youth and in women, and not in weapons.

Ms. **Jayathma Wickramanayake** gave concluding remarks on the Symposium, pointing out that, during the Symposium, the participants encompassed a macro cosmos in terms of peacebuilders. She noted that the goal of the Symposium was not just to discuss the importance of youth inclusion, but *how* they are being involved, what their opportunities are, what the different layers are and how

they are connected. The outcome of this Symposium will shape her work and her advocacy. Wickramanayake shared the following further highlights over the last two days:

- When we talk about peace processes, it is important to talk about the inclusivity of the substance – this must be the next step in Qatar as part of Doha 2020;
- There is a huge gap in information and lack of capacity in the different layers inside the UN in terms of youth inclusivity. There is a need to train the UN country teams to achieve more coherence and to ensure that the UN speaks in one voice;
- We need to address the specific challenges of LGBTIQ youth, who may not fit in ‘young women and men’ collectives;
- A stronger network of peacebuilders needs to continue – this coalition of colleagues around the world needs to explore how we can better support youth peacebuilders.

Wickramanayake added that the European Commission decision on YPS shows the strong political will within the organization – there is a need for concrete action now. The policy paper is an excellent example, which can be used to show Member States concrete steps that can be taken forward. It is now important to test, implement, and build lessons from implementing the recommendations of the policy paper. There is a need to go to Doha with concrete actions and examples of what we will achieve in the coming year.

## Final Concluding Remarks

The Symposium concluded with final remarks from Mr. **Saji Prelis**, who coined the Symposium as the birth of a new movement in sustaining peace. Prelis thanked the Government of Finland for their commitment and support of the process including playing gracious hosts for the first global symposium on youth and peace processes.



*Closing remarks: Participants ‘shining a light on the ordinary heroes’*

The State of Qatar was recognized for hosting a pre-symposium expert group consultation in February 2019 and for committing to host the **next Global Symposium in Doha in 2020**. Others partners including the Government of Colombia, United Nations partners and key civil society partners were equally appreciated for their commitment and support to the successful launch of the Symposium. Special thanks were given to Ali Altiok and Irena Grizelj for their tremendous contribution in moving this field forward with their first global policy-paper on youth inclusive peace processes. A final photo was taken shining a light on ‘all the ordinary heroes’ in the room, and outside across the world.

A concluding traditional dinner was hosted at **Löyly Helsinki**.

## Annex – Symposium Agenda

2:00-5:00 PM	<p><b>PRE-SYMPOSIUM YOUTH DIALOGUE</b>  <b>**Only open to Youth Participants**</b></p> <p><i>Youth participants are invited to an informal youth networking meeting.</i></p> <p><b>Welcome Remarks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jutta Urpilainen, Special Representative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland on Mediation</li> <li>• Cecile Mazzacurati, Head, Secretariat on Youth, Peace and Security, UNFPA/PBSO</li> </ul>
6:30-8:30 PM	<p><b>DINNER</b>  <b>**Only open to Youth Participants and targeted dignitaries by invitations only**</b></p> <p><i>Youth participants are invited to informal buffet dinner at Glo Hotel Kluuvi with facilitated interactive activities with selected dignitaries.</i></p>

### DAY ONE

**TUESDAY, March 5th 2019**

**Venue:** House of the Estates (Säätytalo), **Address:** Snellmaninkatu 9-11, 00170 Helsinki, Finland

8:00-9:00 AM	<p><b>REGISTRATION</b></p>
9:00-10:30 AM	<p><b>OPENING CEREMONY</b>  Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><i>The opening plenary will highlight the importance of UNSCRs 2250 and 2419, the role young people play in their adoption and implementation and how they link to peace processes.</i></p> <p><b>Musical performance by Claire Louise McBride, Beyond Skin, Northern Ireland</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, United Nations</p> <p><b>Opening Segment Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farida Amiri, Afghans for Progressive Thinking, Afghanistan</li> <li>• H.E. Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, The State of Qatar</li> <li>• H.E. Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Colombia</li> <li>• Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, United Nations</li> <li>• Shamil Idriss, CEO, Search for Common Ground</li> <li>• Gwendolyn Myers, Messengers of Peace-Liberia Inc., Liberia</li> </ul> <p><b>Video Message:</b> António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations</p>

	<p><b>MCs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gizem Kiliç, Leading Coordinator, UNOY Peacebuilders</li> <li>• Achaleke Christian Leke, Local Youth Corner, Cameroon</li> </ul>
10:30-11:00 AM	<p><b>GROUP PHOTO &amp; COFFEE BREAK</b></p>
11:00-12:30 PM	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION I: TODAY'S CHALLENGES AND NEW FRONTIERS IN PEACE PROCESSES</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><i>This session will highlight the current landscape of today's evolving conflicts, including changing conflict drivers, shifting power dynamics, and how social movements and social media have shaped new frontiers in peace processes writ-large. There will be Q&amp;A portion at the end.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Irene Limo, Coordinator of the Peacemaking Unit, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miriam Coronel Ferrer, Senior Mediation Adviser, DPPA Team of Senior Mediation Advisers</li> <li>• Leonardo Párraga, BogotArt, Colombia</li> <li>• Graeme Simpson, Lead Author of The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, Director of Interpeace, USA</li> <li>• Nicholas Haysom, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations</li> </ul>
12:30-2:00 PM	<p><b>LUNCH BREAK</b> Venue: Dining hall (Room 20)</p>
2:00-3:30 PM	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION II: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES: WHERE ARE THEY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><i>This session will present the draft policy paper providing a comprehensive overview of youth participation in past and current peace processes. It will also include examples of good practices and lessons learned along with set of recommendations.</i></p> <p><i>This will be finalized at the conclusion of the symposium taking into consideration suggestions from all participants. There will be Q&amp;A portion at the end.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Cecile Mazzacurati, Head, Secretariat on Youth, Peace and Security, UNFPA/PBSO</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irena Grizelj, Consultant &amp; Researcher, Policy Paper on Youth Participation in Peace Processes</li> <li>• Jean-Félix Riva, National Youth Council, Central African Republic</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shatha Al-Harazi, Independent Journalist, Yemen</li> <li>• Ayak Achol, ANATABAN, South Sudan</li> <li>• Ali Altiok, Consultant &amp; Researcher, Policy Paper on Youth Participation in Peace Processes</li> </ul>
3:30-4:00 PM	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
4:00-5:30 PM	<p><b>PARALLEL BREAKOUT SESSIONS 1: VALIDATING THE EVIDENCE, EXPANDING THE NARRATIVES</b> Venue: Breakout Rooms (Rooms 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23)</p> <p><i>This session will offer the space for participants to share, understand and discuss lessons learned and promising practices in the field of youth and peace processes, based on the policy paper shared earlier.</i></p> <p><i>It will help strengthen the paper and ensure further validation by the participants of the symposium. This session will conclude by capturing key takeaways from each of the roundtable discussions.</i></p>
5:30-6:00 PM	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION III: REPORTING BACK ON KEY TAKEAWAYS ON POLICY PAPER REFLECTIONS FROM BREAKOUT GROUPS</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p>
7:00-8:30 PM	<p><b>WELCOME BUFFET &amp; NETWORKING</b> Venue: Empiresali, Aleksanterinkatu 20, Helsinki <i>Buffet reception hosted by City of Helsinki.</i></p>

## DAY TWO

**WEDNESDAY, March 6th 2019**

**Venue:** House of the Estates (Säätytalo), **Address:** Snellmaninkatu 9-11, 00170 Helsinki, Finland

9:00-9:30 AM	<p><b>WELCOME REMARKS, RECAP DAY 1 AND OVERVIEW DAY 2</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><i>The session will feature a youth speaker sharing their personal experiences.</i></p> <p><b>Youth Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Özge Özoğul, Association for Historical Dialogue and Research, Cyprus</li> <li>• Ehab Badwi, Syrian Youth Assembly, Syria</li> </ul>
9:30-10:45 AM	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION IV: LESSONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY, WOMEN, AND RELIGIOUS ACTORS IN PEACE PROCESSES</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><i>This session will highlight key lessons learned from various civil society groups, women and religious actors as they have influenced peace processes. Speakers will outline lessons learned and how they think it is relevant to youth inclusion in peace processes.</i></p>

	<p><b>Moderator:</b> Millicent Otieno, Founder and Director, Local Capacities for Peace International</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Esther Jeyang, Civil Society Forum for Peace, Myanmar</li> <li>• Ville Brummer, Programme Director, Crisis Management Initiative</li> <li>• Laura Londén, Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA</li> <li>• Sabine Freizer, Policy Advisor on Governance, Peace and Security, UN Women</li> <li>• Suchith Abeyewickreme, Interfaith Colombo &amp; United Religions Initiative, Sri Lanka</li> </ul>
10:45-11:15 AM	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
11:15-1:00 PM	<p><b>PARALLEL BREAKOUT SESSIONS 2: RECOMMENDATIONS ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES</b> Venue: Breakout Rooms (Rooms 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23)</p>
1:00-2:30 PM	<p><b>LUNCH BREAK</b> Venue: Dining Hall (Room 20)</p>
2:30-3:15 PM	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION V: REPORTING BACK ON RECOMMENDATIONS ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p>
3:15-4:45 PM	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION VI: STRATEGIES FOR GAINING POLITICAL WILL FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES</b> Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><i>This session will focus on strategies for gaining political will for youth participation in peace processes to advance the discussions beyond the Helsinki Symposium and internalize recommendations in the work of institutional partners engaged in supporting peace processes. There will be an interactive portion at the end.</i></p> <p><b>Keynote Address:</b> H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the United Nations General Assembly</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Hajer Sharief, Together We Build It, Libya</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aya Chebbi, Youth Envoy, African Union (AU)</li> <li>• Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, United Nations</li> <li>• René Van Nes, Acting Head of Conflict Prevention and Mediation Division of the European External Action Service, European Union</li> <li>• Rebecca Hovhannisyan, UNOY Peacebuilders &amp; Gyumri Youth Initiative Centre, Armenia</li> </ul>

4:45-5:15 PM	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
5:15-6:00 PM	<p><b>CLOSING PLENARY</b>                  Venue: Main Auditorium (Room 15)</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Saji Prelis, Director of Children and Youth Programmes, Search for Common Ground and Co-Chair, Global Coalition on Youth, Peace &amp; Security</p> <p><b>Closing Remarks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the United Nations General Assembly</li> <li>• H.E. Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland</li> <li>• Laura Londén, Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director, UNFPA</li> <li>• Lama Drebati, Mobaderoon, Syria</li> <li>• Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, United Nations</li> </ul>
6:00-7:45 PM	<i>Bus transportation from House of the Estates and GLO Hotel Kluuvi to the dinner venue available. Buses from the hotel leave at 6:45 PM, 7:15 PM and 7:45 PM.</i>
7:00-10:00 PM	<p><b>FAREWELL DINNER</b>                  Venue: LÖYLY, Hernesaarenranta 4, 00150 Helsinki (private event)                  Finnish buffet dinner</p>
8:00-23:00 PM	<i>Bus transportation to GLO Hotel Kluuvi/city center available.</i>