



Concept Note

**Interactive webinar on the margins of the 75th session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

“An Intergenerational Conversation: The Future They Want”

Tuesday, 29 September 2020 | 11:45 AM - 1:15 PM EDT

Background:

The current youth generation is acknowledged as the largest in history with 1.85 billion young women and men 10 to 24 years of age in the world, 90% of whom live in developing countries and one in four affected by violence or armed conflict¹. Africa and the Arab region have a wealth of young people who account for two thirds of the Arab region’s population and 65% of the African continent.

It would be stating the obvious to say that young women and men are critical agents for social change, economic growth and development. They actively contribute to the resilience of their communities and represent an important pool of talent, ideas, energy and passion. Young people are a key asset which can leverage unparalleled multiplier effects with their ability to mobilize their peers and implement innovative solutions to address challenges.

At the same time, young people continue to suffer disproportionately from conflict and poverty and have been traditionally facing systemic challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated those challenges for most young women and men. Millions lost their jobs and hundreds of thousands remain without education due to partial closures of educational institutions. Failure to address those challenges leads to alienating young people and eroding their trust in the political establishments. Such environment provides an open space for extremist groups to exploit youth’s anger and despair to fan the flames of hatred and radicalization. Extremists and radical groups are taking advantage of the proliferation of digital platforms to double down on social media spreading hatred and offering youth a twisted sense of purpose based on lies.

Yet, during the pandemic, young people had also been in the front lines volunteering and providing support to their communities. They found ways to engage, demand change and fight for peace, inclusion and justice. It is, therefore, essential to recognize young people at the center

¹ Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security, 2020

of our recovery efforts and as we chart the re-building of peaceful, resilient and inclusive societies.

On 27 April 2020, the UN Security Council marked the 5th Anniversary of the adoption of the groundbreaking resolution 2250 (2015) by holding an open debate to take stock of the progress made in the previous five years and identify actions that the Security Council could take to ensure the meaningful participation of the youth in peace and security efforts. During the open debate, the UN Secretary-General presented the key findings of the first report focused on the youth, peace and security agenda mandated by UNSCR 2419 (2018). In his statement, the Secretary-General noted that notwithstanding the progress achieved, the Youth, Peace and Security agenda still faces formidable challenges. Participation opportunities remain inadequate particularly in the decision-making processes. He called to action on youth, peace and security agenda and to address these challenges guided by the findings of the Independent Progress Study on Youth Peace and Security.

In July 2020, the Security Council adopted resolution 2535(2020), which in its first operational paragraph *“calls on all relevant actors, to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth for the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacebuilding, including when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, and to ensure the full, effective and meaningful participation of youth, recognizing that their marginalization is detrimental to building sustainable peace”*.

In February 2019, the UN Security Council welcomed Africa’s initiative of the “Silencing the Guns” and called for international support and cooperation to achieve peace in Africa. In order to achieve (STG) agenda and article 17 of the African Youth Charter, the AU Youth Envoy launched a continental platform for conversation among young people to exchange views on the challenges and solutions towards to achieve a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Framing the Conversation:

Youth is one of the five pillars of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) together with education, migration, media and the role of women as mediators and peacemakers in conflicts with cultural and religious settings. Through education, capacity building, training and many other opportunities for innovation and creativity, UNAOC empowers young women and men and youth-led civil society globally and recognize them as powerful agents for social change. Over the years, UNAOC has developed programming that recognizes young people as essential partners in fostering mutual understanding between peoples of different cultures and religions, highlighting the will of the majority to reject violent extremism and embrace diversity. Youth-led organizations that foster peaceful and inclusive societies have been supported since 2008 through the Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF). Seed funding and technical support are given to projects, led by and focused on young people, that demonstrate innovative and effective approaches to intercultural or interfaith dialogue. Financial support for recent editions has been provided by the Government of Finland. An independent evaluation report was produced in 2018, of ten youth-led organizations supported by YSF in 2016 and 2017, which includes best practices and lessons for similar youth-focused donor programmes.

In line with the theme chosen to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and in the spirit of keeping the UN75 dialogues going, this interactive conversation between UNAOC young alumni and senior officials will present an opportunity to further engage young people and amplify their voices around the importance of youth engagement in the peace and security agenda.

Objective:

Through an interactive, intergenerational discussion, the panel will identify key challenges that youth are currently facing as a result of the pandemic and will make recommendations to strengthen their engagement and amplify their voices as the world gears-up for recovering from the pandemic and re-building a better world.

Format:

The virtual event will take place on 29 September, 11:45AM – 1:15PM (EDT) in the form of an interactive conversation between UNAOC youth alumni and senior officials and Permanent Representatives. The conversation will be driven by youth.

Participants:

Leading the conversation:

- **Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos**
High Representative, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

Panelists:

- **Mr. Vladimir Voronkov**
Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)
- **Ms. Diene Keita**
Deputy Executive Director for Programme, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Assistant-Secretary-General
- **Amb. Sima Sami Bahous**
Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations
- **Ms. Corinne Momal-Vanian**
Executive Director, Kofi Annan Foundation

Special Guest:

- **Ms. Aya Chebbi**
Youth Envoy, African Union

UNAOC youth alumni panelists