

UN Security Council

Resolution 2250:

Youth, Peace and Security

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N. 14 · September 2016

ISSN: 2014-2765

There are more young people today than at any other time in human history: according to the United Nations Population Fund, there 1.8 billion people between 10 and 24 years of age¹, of whom more than 600 million live in conflict zones. However, until December 2015 there was no international framework analysing or responding to issues of youth, peace and security.

The demographic argument is probably one of the most powerful and compelling reasons for recognising the role of youth in building peace: if the failure of peace processes has generally been associated with the absence or the limited inclusion of certain social groups, it was impossible to ignore a group that represents more than half of the population in fragile countries. But it is not only a matter of the role of youth in contexts of war or armed conflict, it is also a question of giving space and recognition to youth in their efforts to prevent all forms of violence (direct, cultural and structural) and in conflict transformation.

Eventually, on 9 December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a historic [resolution on youth, peace and security, resolution 2250](#).

Background

Resolution 2250 is historic because it finally puts youth² at the centre of processes and policies for the sustainable development of peace and security. It is a unique and unprecedented resolution for different reasons. To start with, it is the first time that the Security Council has adopted a thematic resolution dealing comprehensively with youth in issues related to peace and security. In addition, the document recognises the role of young people in their ability to promote peace, transform conflicts and prevent violence. In this resolution, youth are not considered only as a group to be protected (youth as victims), nor as a group to be protected from (youth as perpetrators of violence), but are rather considered as actors for positive change in their communities, recognizing their role as catalysts for peace and actors in preventing violence. The resolution demands to give voice to young people in peace processes, urging governments, private

and public entities, and civil society and institutions—including UN agencies—to provide both the tools and the necessary funding to transform the text into real policies and specific projects.

Previously, the UN Security Council had always addressed this issue through resolutions focused on individual countries or regions. For example, resolutions 1702 and 2070 included within the mandate of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) the task of coordinating with the national government in order to provide employment opportunities for young people at risk of social exclusion, as well as the continuity of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs to reduce violence in communities. Similarly, Security Council resolutions dealing with peacekeeping in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Burundi, South Sudan and Yemen also included sections dedicated to youth. Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security adopted on 9 December

marked a shift in focus concerning young people and their participation in the field of peace.

Trajectory

It is particularly significant that the adoption of this resolution, sponsored and led by Jordan, was initially pushed by civil society in general, and by youth organisations in particular.

In 2012 the [United Network of Young Peacebuilders \(UNOY\)](#), a global network of youth organisations working for peace and conflict prevention, started training a group of young representatives from five continents who have been promoting the adoption of this resolution. With the support of organisations such as [Search for Common Ground](#) and [World Vision](#), among others, the Youth Advocacy Team of UNOY have developed advocacy strategies, including different missions to the United Nations headquarters in New York, where they met with the permanent representations of Member States, UN agencies and civil society organisations.

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Finally, the draft resolution crystallised in mid-2015 when Jordan, a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2015, organised the [first thematic debate on youth, peace and security at the Security Council](#). Historically these debates have been organised when there is interest in subsequently introducing a resolution.

But before starting to negotiate the draft resolution with Member States, Jordan organised the [first forum on youth, peace and security](#) in Amman on 21-22 August 2015, with the support of [the office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth](#), the [United Nations Development Program \(UNDP\)](#) and the [UN Peacebuilding Support Office](#). This forum brought together 600 participants: representatives of youth organisations, Member States, UN agencies, NGOs, academics, donors and professionals. One of the most eagerly anticipated outcomes of the forum was the adoption of the [Amman](#)

[Declaration](#), which reflects the commitment of young people to work for peace through a common vision and establishes a roadmap to reinforce a political framework that supports youth in conflict transformation.

The forum was followed by advocacy initiatives, with a campaign where the hashtag #youth4peace was used to bring visibility to all the actions that young people were undertaking in favour of peace, solidarity, respect and tolerance in their countries, thus aiming to counteract the negative imagery which links youth with violence. The Youth Advocacy Team of UNOY network continued to travel to New York to participate in different key meetings such as the Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism in September of the same year, or in the revision of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

Also noteworthy is the work of the interagency group on youth and peace, made up of representatives of various UN agencies, civil society and youth, which launched key publications such as the [Guiding principles on young people's participation in peace building](#).

One can understand the adoption of this resolution as the result of a number of factors:

(i) firstly, it is undeniable that civil society and youth organisations have played a key role as promoters of this resolution. Since 2012, especially, they have struggled to raise awareness among different stakeholders on the need for and the importance of such a resolution, publishing reports on the triangular relationship between youth, peace and recognition / inclusion / participation.

(ii) The leading role of Jordan was a key factor; this non-permanent member of the Security Council managed to conduct the negotiations and bring about a unanimous vote by the Council's 15 Member States.

(iii) The path opened up by the women's movement working for the adoption in 2000 of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security undoubtedly favoured youth organisations, both in terms of learning from the process and in the formulation of the text.

(iv) Finally, one cannot ignore the current security context which is shaking a large part of the world: the attraction of many young people

towards terrorist groups has reinforced the labelling and narratives about youth as perpetrators of violence. The resolution was also adopted with the intention of counteracting that.

The content of the resolution

This resolution stems from an inclusive process in which young people, through the Declaration of Amman, had a space to express their demands and needs concerning their participation in policies and programs for peace and security, and to a large extent, the resolution has managed to incorporate them.

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A first aspect to point out is that the resolution defines youth as people aged between 18 and 29 years, recognising the variations that may exist in different national or regional contexts.

With respect to its areas of action, the resolution covers the following key areas:

1. Participation: it calls on Member States to increase the active participation of young people in decision-making processes, at the different stages both of negotiations and of the implementation of peace agreements. In addition it urges Member States to look for and provide mechanisms to encourage such participation;

2. Protection: it reaffirms the necessity and obligation to protect civilians, making specific reference to young people, during armed conflict and in post-conflict contexts, and in particular to protect them from any form of sexual or gender-based violence. Special mention is also made of international legal instruments such as the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (with its 1967 Protocol) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979.

3. Prevention: special emphasis is placed on Member States to support young people through inclusive policies and instruments that allow them to act as key players in the prevention of

violence. Education stands out as a vital tool to enhance the employability of young people, to promote their political engagement, and to support youth entrepreneurship. Finally we should highlight the mention made on access to high quality education for peace, which permits young people to develop their knowledge, skills and above all values.

4. Partnerships: the need is underlined to increase the political, financial, technical and logistical support from UN agencies and regional and international organisations for work with young peacebuilders.

5. Reintegration: strategies and programs are required to disconnect young men and women from involvement in armed conflict and reintegrate them.

6. Follow-up: Finally, the resolution requires the Secretary General to conduct a progress study of young people's positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels. It is important to establish a starting point for understanding the current situation of young people and their participation and impact on peacebuilding in order to monitor the progress made. Knowing what the current situation is and being able to develop appropriate programs and tools that respond to real needs is one of the guarantees of the success of this resolution.

Recommendations

Below, a series of recommendations are proposed in various areas that could be considered at a European level, both by the European institutions and by civil society (from academics through to the media). Finally attention is drawn to some of the possible risks when interpreting the resolution and trying to turn it into specific actions.

Raising awareness

The first step has been taken, and it was a major one: the 15 permanent³ and non-permanent⁴ member countries of the UN Security Council voted unanimously in favour of resolution 2250. However, few of the key actors in Europe know what resolution 2250 deals with or refer to it in

their programs and/or policies. It is necessary to start raising awareness among institutions and civil society in the European Union on the existence of this resolution, but also on the importance of ensuring ownership, bringing it into Europe and starting to apply it. The media will have a key role in raising awareness of this issue in Europe, and European civil society could support this process by organising forums for dialogue and debate.

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From words to action

To avoid the resolution becoming an empty promise, it will have to operationalize it, defining strategies, identifying priorities and resources and determining responsibilities and timeframes for its implementation.

Unfortunately, the [Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union](#) developed by the European External Action Service keeps considering young people as the recipients of policies. In this sense, the implementation phase should guarantee that both young people and youth organisations are consulted and involved.

In general, public policies, programs and projects have to stop considering young people as passive recipients and start involving them as active subjects in their formulation and development. For young people to cease to be systematically excluded from the processes of peace and security, the formal recognition given by resolution 2250 is an important step, but it cannot be the only one. Young people and youth organisations should be involved and included in a substantial way in participation processes. For this resolution really to acquire sense, we need meaningful participation in which both young people and elders are properly represented in decision-making processes.

Moreover, it is necessary for European countries not to consider issues of youth, peace and security as exclusively related to foreign and security policies; they must also be taken on as

an internal matter. The European Commission, through its [Directorate General for Education and Culture](#), which has the responsibility for policies on youth and sport, could devote funding lines to those youth organisations that work for the culture of peace and peace education, as well as non-violent conflict transformation, for example through its ERASMUS+ program.

Alliances and lessons learnt from the women, peace and security agenda

This resolution is based to a great degree on resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, adopted by the United Nations Security Council in October 2000. Youth organisations have collaborated with different networks and groups of women who at the time promoted the resolution 1325, in order to understand its development, to learn from their successes and challenges, and to ensure mutual support.

Likewise, resolution 2242 adopted in 2015 as a continuation of 1325, resolution 2250 emphasises the role of youth in front of the growth in radicalisation and violent extremism that can lead to terrorism. In the same way that the women's movement was critical of the possible justification that these references could give to increased militarisation⁵, young people should undertake the same exercise to prevent military actions being justified under the youth, peace and security agenda. Always ready to defend the leadership role of young people, the youth movement has achieved that the [Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#) adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2015, includes, on the direct recommendation of youth organisations, a section on "Youth empowerment" among the actions to be taken.

Financing

To ensure that the resolution is implemented and that it gives rise to concrete programs and policies, specific funding mechanisms are needed. The resolution states that Member States and regional organisations should contribute financially to UN funds so that programs and tools can be developed to effectively implement the resolution.

Thus the European Commission, responsible for introducing and implementing the European budget, must activate the mechanisms necessary to ensure a budget line that supports youth projects and peace or at least that its funding

instruments in the field of peace, security and stability consider the inclusion of young people. Also, there should be no recourse to simple solutions like regrouping the funding earmarked for the gender dimension in peace projects, and just adding in the youth aspect. The two resolutions have to be cumulative and European institutions must ensure that the agendas of women and youth are complementary and do not end up competing for the same funds.

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The intergenerational challenge

The participation of youth in peace processes means that elders must open up spaces for participation and must be willing to share spheres of power and decision-making. There is no point in creating mechanisms in which only young people can participate, and which could thus reproduce aspects of generational exclusion. Elders will have to assess the opportunities that are really accessible for young people in terms of sharing power and responsibilities.

European institutions and civil society organisations have to find ways of introducing a youth lens within their peace and security programs, such as in the case of the refugee crisis. In this context, we should see how the EU has sought to collaborate with youth organisations and young people who, as volunteers, have supported the responses to the massive influx of refugees. Some civil society organisations are already working with young refugees, who explain their life stories in European schools in order to raise awareness about the reasons that made them flee their countries⁶. Such interventions make it possible for these young people to become visible as actors for peace and not only as victims of conflicts. It will be important that these initiatives are also backed up by institutions and governments and be systematized.

Representing the diversity

Youth is defined basically by age, as occupying the transitional phase between childhood and

adulthood. But young people are not a homogeneous group with which one can work as a single whole. It will be essential to take into account the differences and characteristics of each sub-group: young women, young men, indigenous youth, differently abled youth, LGBTI youth, youth of African descent, young ex-combatants, middle class youth, young victims, young victimisers... Only by ensuring the representation of the diversity of youth can we guarantee real inclusion. For this reason and because of the intergenerational challenge, it is desirable to develop training programs aimed at youth and elders so they learn to work together as equals.

Coordination and partnerships

It is necessary for all involved actors, from governments and UN agencies towards civil society organisations, to work together in a coordinated way. No stakeholder must transform this agenda into an individual one; on the contrary, they must all display collaborative leadership, so as to promote programs that involve a wide range of actors and adopt a transversal perspective when addressing the issue of youth in the various peace initiatives.

In conclusion, Security Council resolution 2250 has the merit of having been initiated from the youth movement and youth peacebuilders, of having an inclusive language, of calling for recognition and participation and of understanding peace in its most holistic sense. Now the work and the effort must begin so that resolution 2250 changes the ways of working and the discourses. Youth are no longer the future, as it used to be thought, they are the present reality that cannot longer be ignored.

NOTES:

1. More information available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/es/node/9174>
2. Resolution 2250 defines youth as persons of between 18 and 29 years of age.
3. Countries of the European Union that were permanent members of the Security Council during the adoption of resolution 2250: France and the United Kingdom.
4. Countries of the European Union that were non-permanent members of the Security Council during the adoption of resolution 2250: Spain and Lithuania.
5. http://icip.gencat.cat/web/.content/continguts/publicacions/policypapers/2016/PolicyPaper13_ENG.pdf
6. <http://www.paxvoorvrede.nl/actueel/dossiers/vluchtelingen-het-verhaal/vluchtelingen-vertellen-hun-verhaal/luister-naar-het-verhaal-van-een-vluchteling>

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