



# ADVANCING YOUTH CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

WITH YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



# ADVANCING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS WITH YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN

"YOUTH ARE MORE THAN A DEMOGRAPHIC FORCE;  
THEY ARE A FORCE FOR PROGRESS"

**UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN-KI MOON**

## ADVANCING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS WITH YOUNG WOMEN AND YOUNG MEN

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## PREFACE



As the UN Secretary General recently said, the world is experiencing an unprecedented demographic phenomenon. There are more people under the age of 25 today than ever, totaling nearly 3 billion of which 1.3 billion of that total are between the age of 12 and 24. These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns; the cities of the developing world account for over 90% of the world's urban growth and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants.

Urban youth face challenges that need to urgently be addressed. The global youth unemployment rate, which is estimated at 12.6 per cent in 2013, is creating an environment in which young people are unable to satisfy their basic needs. As demonstrated by the mass protests in many cities globally, young people believe that their voices are not being heard and their needs are not being addressed. For example in Africa, the median age of African leaders is 3 times that of the African population. There is a growing concern about the state of democracy in Africa amongst youth, with less than a 1/4 of African youth surveyed by Gallup thinking their country is a full democracy, and less than 1/2 satisfied with their democracy.

These are some of the reasons for which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made it a priority for the UN system to find ways to address the social, political and economic marginalization of youth. "We are addressing youth today," the Secretary-General has said, "because youth have placed themselves on the top of the agenda."

The Secretary-General has appointed a Special Envoy on Youth, and has instructed the Inter-Agency network on Youth Development, a network consisting of UN entities whose work is relevant to youth, to deepen the work of the UN with youth on issues such as employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship and protection of rights, and education.

UN-Habitat is working closely with the Secretary-General through his Special Envoy on Youth. UN-Habitat has placed youth at the centre of its agenda. From Nairobi to Rio de Janeiro, UN-Habitat is partnering with youth to carry forward new ideas and solutions in areas such as good governance, decent livelihoods, adequate shelter and secure tenure. We are doing this through our longstanding youth programmes such as the One Stop Youth Resource Centres, the Urban Youth Fund and the Youth 21 initiative.

All these issues are exacerbated by the lack of engagement of youth in governance at all levels which in turn undermines their rights as citizens. As this report demonstrates, youth citizenship and engagement in governance is about more than political engagement. It is as much about dealing with limited access to economic resources and socio-political assets. This begins with engaging youth as equal partners, recognizing their rights to participate in decision-making processes and to productively use their knowledge, perspectives, and experience.

UN-Habitat believes that youth are not only leaders of tomorrow, but leaders of today. This report seeks to outline how youth are taking these leadership roles, and to explore how we can support youth to become active and responsible citizens now and in the future.



**Joan Clos**

Under-Secretary-General, United Nations  
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

## CHAPTER ONE: NEVER YOUNGER, BUT WITH A STEEP ROAD AHEAD: CURRENT SITUATION OF THE WORLD'S YOUTH



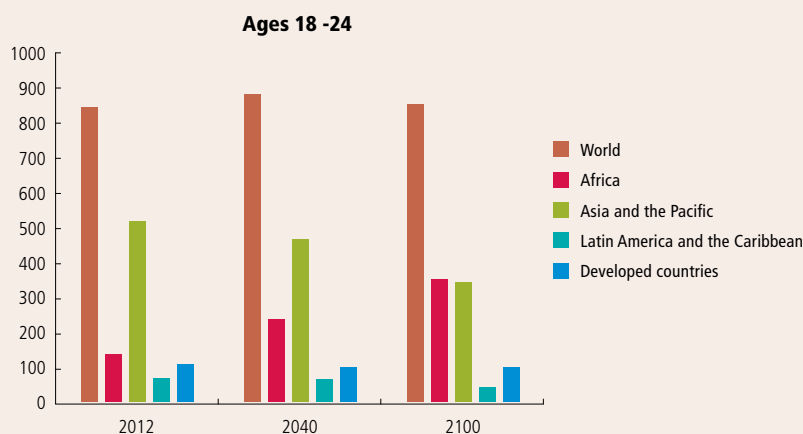
Participants of Global Youth to Business Forum  
listen to speaker in congress-hall of Moscow  
School of Management in Skolkovo, August 20,  
2012, Moscow, Russia. © Pavel L /Shutterstock

01

**T**he world has never been younger. It is estimated that currently young men and women –those aged 12-24– account for approximately 23 per cent of the world's total population. That is, about 1.6 billion people –a vast majority of which live in developing countries– whose existence faces the most diverse demographic, geographic, political, and socio-economic conditions: from high unemployment rates in a developed economy like Spain's, to deficient education in Africa or Latin America.



**FIGURE 1: POPULATION AGED 18-24 BY REGION, 2012 TO 2100**



**Source:** Commission on Population and Development

In the coming years, special attention should be directed toward Asia and the Pacific, and Africa, where 60 and 18 per cent of the world's youth live –amounting to a staggering 1.2 billion young people (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Young people today have very different lives to those of previous generations. They lead a predominantly urban existence. They have better access to educational and health services. They are increasingly globalized and exposed to diverse systems of values.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the Commission on Population and Development's report on adolescents and youth states: "Compared to young people 20 years ago, adolescents in 2012 are healthier and more likely to spend their adolescence in school, to postpone entry into the labour force and to delay

marriage and childbearing."<sup>3</sup> However, access to different economic, cultural, natural, political, and social resources is still a challenge for young people around the world.

Over the last few years, when youth have increasingly caught the attention of governments and the international community, several challenges to youth livelihood have been identified. To a greater or lesser degree, each of them constitutes a hindrance to the effective participation of young people in the development of their communities and countries, and to their effective and productive transition into adulthood. This situation undoubtedly prevents the exercise and realization of youth citizenship and the human rights of youth.

<sup>1</sup> UN Commission on Population and Development, E/CN.9/2012/2. [[http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5\\_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report\\_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf)]

<sup>2</sup> UN Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth, Investing in Youth Policy. [<http://www.investinginyouthpolicy.com/>]

<sup>3</sup> UN Commission on Population and Development, E/CN.9/2012/2. [[http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5\\_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report\\_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf)]

**FIGURE 2: YOUTH LITERACY RATE BY COUNTRY, 2011**



Source: UNESCO

Poverty is sadly part of the existence of a substantial number of youth throughout the world. Approximately 64 and 84 per cent of African and Asian youth live in countries where at least one third of the population is considered to be under the poverty line – which basically means that they subsist on less than US\$ 2 a day.<sup>4</sup> In Latin America and the Caribbean, people aged 15-19 constitute the second largest segment of the population living in poverty.<sup>5</sup> These indicators do not even begin to convey the non-monetary aspects of poverty: early parenthood, gender-biased access to opportunities, lack of a healthy living environment, etc.

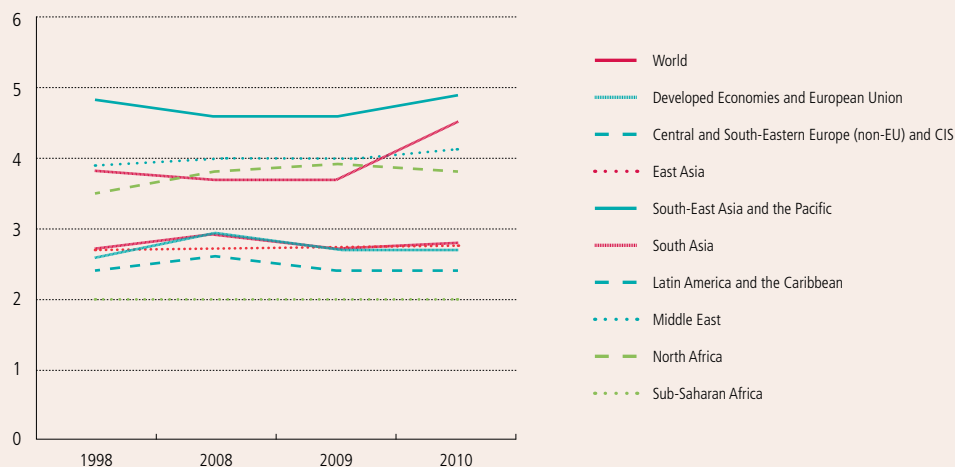
Education, which constitutes a fundamental part of the transition to adulthood, is another bottleneck for youth development in most developing countries, where quality, if not coverage, is still an issue. While significant progress has been made in most regions, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia still exhibit youth literacy rates below 80 per cent (see Figure 2). In some Pacific and Asian countries secondary enrolment levels are as low as 25 and 16 per cent. Within national borders, ethnicity, income, gender, and location continue to determine large disparities in the access to and quality of education.<sup>6</sup>

Employment, also central to the aforementioned transition, is a problematic area, as youth is persistently overrepresented among the world's unemployed.

<sup>4</sup> UN-Habitat, "Youth 21: Building an Architecture for Youth Engagement in the UN System."

<sup>5</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2007. Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> UN-Habitat, "Youth 21: Building an Architecture for Youth Engagement in the UN System."

**FIGURE 3: RATIO OF YOUTH-TO-ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY REGION, 1998, 2008 -10**


Source: International Labour Organization

While accounting for only 25 per cent of the world's working-age population in 2007, young people accounted for more than 40 per cent of the unemployed.<sup>7</sup> Today, young people are three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. In 2010, while the global adult unemployment rate was 4.8 per cent, the global youth unemployment rate was 12.6 per cent. The latter had seen its peak in 2009, when 75.8 million young people were without a job (see Figure 3).<sup>8</sup>

In Europe, nearly one in four young people are out of a job; in North Africa and the Middle East, youth unemployment has reached 30 per cent –the highest worldwide.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2012. Youth Unemployment: Youth Perspectives on the Pursuit of Decent Work in Changing Times* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> UN News Centre, "Creation of Sustainable Jobs at Centre of UN Youth Forum" (4 May 2012). [<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41924&Cr=youth&Cr1=employment>].

And still those who manage to find employment often do so under less than ideal conditions in the always-burgeoning informal economy. Neither time nor economic growth alone will suffice to solve this situation. For example, in terms of income levels, Latin American youth was worse off in 2007 than they were fifteen years before. An astounding 27 per cent of those aged 20-24 were neither studying nor working.<sup>10</sup>

A look at the mortality rates of those aged 15-24 provides an overall picture of the different threats youths throughout the world must face in their daily lives. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies the causes of death into three categories: the first includes infectious and parasitic diseases, respiratory infections and maternal and perinatal

<sup>10</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2007. Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2007).

conditions; the second refers to non-communicable diseases; and the third, encompasses all injuries, whether intentional or unintentional.

Ever since the 1950s mortality rates related to communicable diseases have drastically decreased, and in most countries today, a low proportion of all deaths are attributable to them. However, in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, communicable diseases still constitute major causes of death. In South Asia, for example, they are the cause of 40 and 29 per cent of female and male deaths of those aged 10-24. Much worse is the situation in Africa, where they cause 70 and 44 per cent of female and male deaths in the same age group. This region accounts for 83 per cent of the world's HIV/AIDS-related deaths between the ages of 10 and 24. Furthermore, 3.4 and 1.4 of its women and men aged 15-24 are currently living with HIV.<sup>11</sup>

Globally, injuries account for 51 and 28 per cent of the total number of deaths of males and females aged 10-24. This is not a problem only of developing or transitioning economies, but one that is also a daily experience for youth in developed market economies, where they account for 73 and 55 per cent of the total number of deaths of males and females aged 10-24. But while unintentional injuries account for the most part of injury-related deaths in most regions, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean take the forefront in terms of violence-related deaths among those aged 10-24 with a staggering 69 per cent.



 A female student listening to an English class in a community school in Cite Soleil—one of the poorest areas in the Western Hemisphere in Cite Soleil, Haiti. © arindambanerjee/Shutterstock

Furthermore, there is gender component to violence, as it kills five times more males than females in the same age group.<sup>12</sup>

All these problems—whether in its cultural, economic, or social manifestations—are acutely exacerbated by a lack of voice. That is, of systems of citizen participation—in this case, group-specific—and of governmental accountability. In some cases, the result seems to be widespread apathy and disaffection. Traditionally regarded as politically engaged, Latin American youth have been—despite certain notable exceptions in recent times—progressively withdrawing from the realm of politics.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> UN Commission on Population and Development, *E/CN.9/2012/2*. [[http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5\\_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report\\_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf)]

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2007. Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2007).





 Shopkeepers in medina, central Tangiers. Morocco.  
© Arne Hoel/World Bank

In 2010, a survey conducted in 18 Latin American countries revealed very low levels of trust in key institutions associated with democratic governance among those aged 15-25. For example, only 14 per cent of those in this age group claimed to have some or a high level of trust in political parties. Something similar happens with the judiciary and legislative branches. Concomitant to this distrust toward political institutions, there is also a lack of interest in political affairs and low levels of political activism and involvement. The same survey revealed that only 24 per cent of those aged 15-25 was somewhat to very interested in politics. And what is worse, it also revealed that only somewhere between 8 and 12 per cent of them actually participated in a political activity of any kind.<sup>14</sup>

In other cases, however, the result is quite the opposite, as in Africa and the developed market economies. Faced with increasing challenges, youth in these regions have opted for taking a more radical stance against what they regard as the sources of their ills, as in the case of the so-called Arab Spring in the MENA region, the 15-M movement in Spain, or the Occupy movement in the United States. As early as 2007 there was already talk about a growing global civil society and an upsurge in global volunteerism, facilitated by the Internet and digital communication technologies. However, particularly in the case of developed market economies, political activism and participation have taken unconventional forms that depart from more institutionalized and structured –and by extension, less attractive– options.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Latinobarómetro 2010: Annual Survey on Politics and Institutions*. [<http://www.latinobarometro.org>]

<sup>15</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report 2007. Young People's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges* (New York, NY: United Nations, 2007).

What is there to do? As will be shown below, youth citizenship has to do with more than political engagement of young men and women. The enhancement of youth citizenship has to do with addressing its shortcomings in terms of limited access to economic resources and socio-political assets, and of a loose and weak social network, in order to foster their participation in the development of their communities and societies. This begins with engaging youth as equal partners, recognizing their rights to participate in decision-making processes and to productively use their knowledge, perspectives, and experience. "Participation is, in essence, a way of thinking that incorporates young people as partners all the time and in as many ways as possible. The focus should be not on one specific approach to or level of involvement, but rather on creating channels for the expression of young people's opinions and their dynamic participation in daily interactions, in service delivery or project implementation, and in more formal structures at all levels."<sup>16</sup>

United Nations has recognized this, and as per the instructions of the Secretary-General, the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) has been tasked with drafting an action plan to deepen the youth focus of existing UN programmes at all levels. Said action plan should focus on five priority areas, as identified by the Secretary-General: employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship and protection of rights, and education.<sup>17</sup> This document is precisely intended as an input for the development of the action plan, especially in what it has to do with youth citizenship and the protection of youth rights.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>17</sup> [[http://www.un.org/sg/priorities/sg\\_agenda\\_2012.pdf](http://www.un.org/sg/priorities/sg_agenda_2012.pdf)]

## CHAPTER TWO: NOR HERE, NOR THERE: A FRAMEWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF YOUTH



An unidentified protester attends a large anti-cuts rally on March 26, 2011 in London, UK. The TUC organised event, March for the Alternative, drew an estimated 250,000 protesters.

© 1000 Words/Shutterstock

# 02

**W**hy should resources be directed to young people just on account of their age? With many countries experiencing a so-called youth bulge, the answer to this question might be based on the fact that today youth constitutes a significant proportion of the population of regions like Asia and Africa. However, demographics alone are not enough. A satisfactory answer should also stem from the recognition that, despite the traditional emphasis of the international development community, youth need to stop being regarded as

a problem. While there is a tendency to link them to delinquency, drug use, and violence, young people are actually a key resource in their adaptability, idealism, and inventiveness. They are strategic partners for solving many of the economic, environmental, political, and social challenges that the world faces today. In this sense, youth need to stop being regarded just as subjects of rights, for they are also subjects of responsibilities.

But while the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) clearly acknowledges and affords a distinct set of rights to a distinct demographic group, defined as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier," the same does not occur for those "Over 18s" that have not yet fully transition into adulthood.<sup>18</sup>

Something similar occurs with other international human rights instruments that are targeted toward specific populations, who –due to their state of vulnerability– have been recognized as subjects of special protection on account of their gender, as with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);<sup>19</sup> of long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, as with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);<sup>20</sup> of their ethnicity, as with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP);<sup>21</sup> or even of their age, as with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (UNPOP).<sup>22</sup>

There is not a specific instrument that affords youth –as a concrete demographic group– a specific set of rights and of protection mechanisms thereof. But at the same time, they are theoretically covered –at the very least– by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).<sup>23</sup> Are they enough?



Scene from El Rastro flea market on May 1, 2011 in Madrid Spain. El Rastro is visited by over 100,000 people and tourists every Sunday.  
© Pedro Rufo/Shutterstock

<sup>18</sup> *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Art. 1. [<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>]

<sup>19</sup> [<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>]

<sup>20</sup> [<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/disabilities-convention.htm>]


<sup>21</sup> [<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement>]

<sup>22</sup> [<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/olderpersons.htm>]

<sup>23</sup> [<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>][<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>]





 Mohammed Abdel Ati Alhusein's is a successful business owner in Kassala the capital of Kassala State in eastern Sudan. He bought himself one brick-making machine and used a microfinance loan to purchase the rest.  
© Salahaldeen Nadir/World Bank

The truth is that, though not uniform, youth do exhibit specific aspirations, challenges and needs that are intricately related to their own standing in their life cycle. And even if theory can go a long way, in practice youth still feel that their voices are not being heard, that their interests are not being represented, and that their needs are not being addressed. As we argued in the first chapter of this document, while today's youth lead considerably different lives than the generations that preceded them, the challenges they face—in terms of education, employment, participation, and poverty—are still enormous.

### The Third World Youth Forum and the Braga Youth Action Plan

This is not new. Almost fifteen years ago, in 1998, the Braga Youth Action Plan (BYAP) was issued as the outcome document of the third World Youth Forum in Portugal. The forum focused on youth participation, youth policies, and youth rights.

The forum came at a moment in time when youth felt as a very fluid and indeterminate age cohort, who was not enjoying the full extent of applicable human rights instruments. A rapidly growing ageing population in the Western hemisphere had shifted the focus away from youth throughout the 1970s and 1980s. But now the Cold War was over, and the globalized 1990s presented an era of opportunities for coordination, interconnectivity and joint action of the more than 50,000 youth-led organizations that existed at the time. Indeed, probably the most important outcome of this whole process lies in the fact that a regional preparatory meeting for the World Youth Forum, as per the recommendations of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), endorsed the idea of an African Youth Charter (AYC).

At the closing of the World Youth Forum, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called upon youth to “ensure those rights [of the UDHR], which know no distinctions of race, national-

ity, creed, gender –or, I might add, age. These are truly the rights of all people.”<sup>24</sup> The following day, at the opening of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, he reminded governments from throughout the world: “No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death.”<sup>25</sup>

The BYAP was explicitly formulated to empower young people to participate in human development. And in this sense, it recognizes them “not only as future leaders, but as actors of society today, with a direct stake in the development process,” and as “both creators and beneficiaries of development.”<sup>26</sup> While not conceived in terms of human rights of youth, the BYAP provides instead a comprehensive list of policy recommendations so that these rights are effectively realized. Its thirty recommendations touch on the formulation and implementation of integrated cross-sectorial youth policies; the enhancement of cooperation of youth-led organizations at the national level; the role of youth in poverty eradication and development; the strengthening of youth participation; the relationship between youth-led organizations and the UN; the provision of education, employment and health services, etc.

Responding to the concrete historic conjuncture of the UN Decade on Human Rights Education, which took place between 1995 and 2004, the BYAP devotes an entire section to the issue of the role of youth in the promotion of human rights (but not of youth-specific human rights).

It is in later paragraphs that the BYAP tangentially addresses the issue of human rights of youth. Significantly, it calls on the UN to provide assistance to youth-led and youth-servicing organisations in order to develop a compendium of existing youth rights included in reports adopted by the UN General Assembly and UN human rights instruments. Finally, it recommends the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Youth Rights.



 Graffiti artist paints the wall on June 19, 2010 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. © **Maljalen/Shutterstock**

<sup>24</sup> [<http://www.un.org/events/youth98/pressrel/sgyouth.htm>]

<sup>25</sup> [<http://www.un.org/events/youth98/speeches/sgyouth2.htm>]

<sup>26</sup> World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, “Braga Youth Action Plan.” [<http://www.un.org/events/youth98/yforum98/bragayap.htm>]

### BOX 1.0: THE BRAGA YOUTH ACTION PLAN

"The World Youth Forum Recommends:

28. Instead of a so called "Youth Rights Charter", the United Nations Youth Unit produce and assist youth NGOs disseminate at international, regional, national and local levels a *compendium on existing youth rights* which consists of the compilation of the existing rights regarding young people already included in reports adopted by the General Assembly and United Nations Human Rights instruments, including United Nations international conferences such as the conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen, Vienna and Beijing. The compendium should be made into a *youth friendly* publication available and accessible to all youth around the world. (It was not adopted).
29. The *UN Special Rapporteur on Youth rights* should be appointed by United Nations Secretary General before the end of 1999 basing on nominations through regional consultations of NGOs to be made by August 1999. He or she should be mandated for three years (renewal possible only for two terms). He or she should be a young independent expert (no older than 35 years of age at the time of appointment and renewal), experienced with human rights issues, recently and directly involved with youth organisations.
30. We urge the Secretary General of the United Nations to take the initiative, with the help of specialised agencies, relevant regional organisations and youth NGOs, for the organisation of an *ad hoc* event on Youth Rights, in order to bring together representatives of states and all interested national, regional and international youth NGOs. This World event (either a special session of UN General Assembly or a UN World Conference on Youth Rights) should be prepared at the national and regional levels through campaigning to promote the largest possible involvement of young people. The *ad hoc* event on Youth Rights should address the questions of how to improve the Human Rights situation of youth under sanctions, embargoes and occupation."

\* *Ibid.*



 The english teacher teaching english in a local community school in Cite Soleil- one of the poorest area in the Western Hemisphere on August 25 2010 in Cite Soleil, Haiti. © arindambanerjee/Shutterstock

The BYAP was later presented to the government representatives to the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held the following week in Lisbon. In the outcome document, participating governments committed themselves to several actions in different realms, including national youth policies, participation, development, peace, education, employment, health, and drug and substance abuse.

While the BYAP and the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (LDYPP) certainly overlap at times, the recommendations included in the last paragraphs of the former were not included in the latter. Nonetheless, throughout the declaration there are several mentions of the human rights of youth. This is the case, for example, of paragraph 26, in which participating governments commit themselves to discourage the adoption of and refrain from any unilateral measure [...] that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the

affected countries, in particular young women and young men, that hinders their well-being and that creates obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights.”<sup>27</sup>

Although it was never implemented, the BYAP definitely lit a spark that more than ten years later would bear its fruits. Within the UN system, although the proposed reforms were never carried out, the BYAP and the LDYPP arguably played a role in the revision of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) in 2000. Furthermore, the BYAP also contributed to create the momentum necessary for bolder initiatives and new governance structures that we will discuss ahead. Outside the UN system, the BYAP and the LDYPP definitely constitutes an important antecedent to regional efforts to establish a normative framework for human rights of youth in Africa, Europe and Iberoamerica.

<sup>27</sup> World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, “Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes.” [<http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/lisbon.pdf>]



## Regional Youth Charters

In 2005, Member States of the Iberoamerican Youth Organization (IYO) adopted and signed the Convention on the Rights of Youth (ICRY).<sup>28</sup> This regional instrument came into force in 2008, and has thus far been ratified by Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Spain, and Uruguay. While Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, and Venezuela have signed it –but not yet ratified it, Andorra, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and El Salvador have not.

The ICRY explicitly acknowledges the WPAY, the BYAP and the LDYPP as important antecedents, and as exemplary commitments with youth. And in its preamble, justifies its existence on the need for youth to enjoy a commitment that specifically recognizes, guarantees and protects their rights, as expressed in not only the UDHR and the CRC, but also the ICCPR and the ICESCR. Thus, its Article 2 stipulates that States Parties “acknowledge the right of all youth to enjoy all human rights, and undertake to respect and guarantee youth the full enjoyment and exercise of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.”<sup>29</sup>

And while the ICRY affords youth basically the same rights that the aforementioned international human rights instruments do, it makes sure to emphasize youth’s responsibilities with the fostering of a culture of respect and toler-

ance. In its Article 3, State Parties “undertake to develop policies and propose programmes that encourage and perpetuate the contribution and commitment of youth with a culture of peace and of respect for human rights.”<sup>30</sup>

To this purpose –to realize youth’s potential as human rights subjects–, the ICRY states that they should be considered priority subjects in the initiatives undertaken to realize their right to cultural, economic, political, and social development. With this in mind, States Parties have the duty to “adopt the appropriate measures to guarantee [...] the participation [of youth] in the discussions leading to development plans and their integration in the implementation of the corresponding national, regional and local actions.”<sup>31</sup>

The ICRY allowed for the creation of the Iberoamerican Tracking System, an accountability mechanism through which State Parties are required to present biannual reports on their compliance with the obligations acquired under the convention. The Secretariat of the IYO then analyzes these reports and establishes a dialogue with State Parties in order to advance their compliance.

On the other hand, the countries of the African Union adopted in 2006 the African Youth Charter (AYC), which constitutes a legally binding framework for governments to develop youth policies. Furthermore, it provides a platform from whence youth asserted their rights and their responsibilities toward their continent’s development.

<sup>28</sup> The term *Iberoamerica* refers to a group of countries that includes Latin American countries, and the countries of the Iberian Peninsula (Andorra, Portugal and Spain). Organización Iberoamericana de Jóvenes. [www.oij.org]

<sup>29</sup> Iberoamerican Convention on the Rights of Youth, Art. 2. [www.laconvencion.org]

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 3. [www.laconvencion.org]

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 34. [www.laconvencion.org]

In the same way as the ICRY, the AYC acknowledges the UDHR, the ICCPR, and the ICESCR as valuable precedents, and roughly addresses the same issues and affords the same rights. However, what is most interesting about this document is that it also outlines the responsibilities of young people toward their families, their society, the state, and the international community. In this sense, Article 26 states that youth have the duty, among others, to “become the custodians of their own development”; to “have full respect for parents and elders and assist them anytime in cases of need”; to “partake fully in citizenship duties including voting, decision making and governance”; to “engage in peer-to-peer education to promote youth development”; to “promote tolerance, understanding, dialogue, consultation and respect for others”; and to “defend democracy, the rule of law and all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”<sup>32</sup>

Here it is worth noting that if affording a set of rights can be empowering, so is making youth the subjects of such high-stakes responsibilities. Implicitly, what the AYC is recognizing here is that youth are much more than just the beneficiaries of governmental action. As custodians of their own development, they are the key stakeholders and partners in the development process. As active citizens, they are the last line of defence of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. As preservers of the African cultural heritage, they hold in their the aspirations and legacies of past and future generations.

More than the rights afforded to youth in Articles 2-24, this list of duties and responsibilities constitutes a testament to the extent to which the AYC acknowledges youth as valuable resources for the advancement of society in general.

Though different in scope and depth –the AYC going much more into detail regarding the governmental actions required to realize the rights included therein–, the African and the Iberoamerican charters do exhibit certain parallels in terms of the rights that they afford. As for the differences, we might venture the hypothesis that they stem from the specificity of each region’s cultural, economic, political and social context. In this sense, for example, the Iberoamerican countries recognize youth’s right to a sexual education, while the AYC does not mention anything of the sort. On the contrary, the latter affords youth the right to live anywhere in the world or to the elimination of harmful of social and cultural practices, which are two topics that the former does not cover –given, for example, the presence of Andorra, Portugal and Spain in the IYO.

<sup>32</sup> African Youth Charter, Art. 26(a), 26(c), 26(d), 26(e), 26(i) and 26(j). [<http://www.africa-union.org/root/ua/conferences/mail/hrst/charte%20english.pdf>]

**TABLE 1.0: PRINCIPLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUTH IN THE AFRICAN  
AND IBEROAMERICAN CHARTERS**

ICRY		AYC
N/A	Duties and Responsibilities of Youth	Art. 26
Art. 17	Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion	Art. 6
Art. 18	Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Association	Arts. 4 and 5
Art. 5	Principle of Non-Discrimination	Art. 2
Art. 7	Protection of the Family	Art. 8
Art. 27	Right to Adequate Work Conditions	Art. 15
Art. 12	Right to Conscientious Objection	N/A
Art. 24	Right to Culture and Art	Art. 20
Art. 34	Right to Development	Art. 10
Art. 22	Right to Education	Art. 13
N/A	Right to the Elimination of Harmful Social and Cultural Practices	Art. 25
Art. 19	Right to Form Part of a Family	N/A
Art. 20	Right to Form a Family	N/A
Art. 6	Right to Gender Equality	Art. 23
Art. 25	Right to Health	Art. 16
Art. 31	Right to a Healthy Environment	Art. 19
Art. 15	Right to Honour, Intimacy and Personal Image	Art. 9
Art. 30	Right to Housing	N/A
Art. 14	Right to Individual Identity and Personality	N/A
Art. 13 and 16	Right to Justice (or Due Process)	Art. 18
Art. 32	Right to Leisure and Recreation	Art. 22
Art. 13 and 16	Right to Liberty and Personal Security	Art. 18
Art. 9	Right to Life	N/A
N/A	Right to Live Anywhere in the World	Art. 21
Art. 21	Right to Participate	Art. 11

## Principles, Rights and Responsibilities of Youth in the African and Iberoamerican Charters

ICRY		AYC
Art. 4	Right to Peace	Art. 17
Art. 10	Right to Personal Integrity	N/A
N/A	Right to Property	Art. 9
Art. 11	Right to Protection against Sexual Abuse	N/A
Art. 23	Right to Sexual Education	N/A
Art. 28	Right to Social Protection	Art. 14
N/A	Right to Special Care and Equal Access of Youth with Disabilities	Art. 24
Art. 33	Right to Sport	Art. 22
Art. 29	Right to Vocational Training (or Skills Development)	Art. 13
Art. 26	Right to Work (or Gainful Employment)	Art. 15

But even if the AYC and the ICRY are fundamentally based on existing human rights instruments and do not create any new rights by themselves, some articles do open new avenues for thinking about these rights -this time, specifically targeted at a population in a specific stage of their life cycle and with specific characteristics and needs. For example, Article 14 of the ICRY affords youth the right to their individual identity and personality, including the sexual orientation component of this identity and personality.<sup>33</sup>

As for Europe, while the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter are certainly applicable to youth, there does not exist a human rights instrument specially crafted for this specific age group.<sup>34</sup>

However, in 2011, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe recommended its Council of Ministers to "instruct the relevant intergovernmental authorities to study the possibility of drafting a framework convention on the rights of young people, [...] which include[s] common indicators as tools for monitoring the implementation of youth rights."<sup>35</sup> However, this is a non-binding recommendation and it is far from certain that this will lead to this framework in the short or medium term.

Meanwhile, and on a positive note, it is worth noting that citizenship education is now part of the school curricula in every Member State of the European Union. According to a recent report, "citizenship education is taught as an independent compulsory subject in 20

<sup>33</sup> *Iberoamerican Convention on the Rights of Youth*, Art. 14. [[www.laconvencion.org](http://www.laconvencion.org)]

<sup>34</sup> *European Convention on Human Rights*. [<http://www.echr.coe.int/nr/rdonlyres/d5cc24a7-dc13-4318-b457-5c9014916d7a/0/englishanglais.pdf>]

<sup>35</sup> *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Recommendation 1978 (2011)*. [<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta11/EREC1978.htm>]



education systems, an increase of 3 compared to the 2005 study. In the majority of countries where citizenship education is not taught as a separate subject, it is entrenched into the curriculum of other subjects.”<sup>36</sup> Conscious of its importance for the future of democratic practices, with this measure these countries seek four main objectives: achieving political literacy, developing critical thinking and analytical skills, fostering democratic attitudes and values, and promoting active participation in schools and communities. Furthermore, they have also introduced regulations to promote learning by doing, such as involvement in school governance.

### The UN Secretary-General’s Second Term Priorities (2012-2016)

The road toward making human rights of youth a central part of the international development agenda has had its highs and its lows. But as one report acknowledges, there has not been “a pivotal global meeting on youth in the same scale as the breakthrough meetings that so advanced relevant concerns relating to women, elderly, and indigenous peoples in the past.”<sup>37</sup>

More than ten years after Braga and Lisbon, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the year starting on 12 August 2010 to be the second International Year of Youth (IYY).<sup>38</sup> In the context of this commemoration, it also adopted the outcome document of its high-level meeting on youth, encouraging Member



English people protest to defend the right to protest and free Frankie and end political sentencing on August 20, 2011 in York city center.

© Charlie Edward/Shutterstock

States to “further develop and improve the existing international framework on youth [...] in order to fully address all current challenges affecting youth”; recognizing the “need for further efforts to promote the interests of youth, including the full enjoyment of their human rights, inter alia, by supporting young people in developing their potential and talents and tackling obstacles facing youth”; reaffirming its “determination to give priority attention to the promotion of youth and their interests and to address the challenges that hinder youth development”; calling “for increased participation of youth and youth-led organisations in the formulation of, as appropriate, local, national, regional and international development strategies and policies”; and reiterating that “the full and effective participation of young people and youth-led organisations in relevant decision-making processes through

<sup>36</sup> [<http://intranet.youthforum.org/newsletters/node/34151>]

<sup>37</sup> UN-Habitat, “Youth 21: Building an Architecture for Youth Engagement in the UN System.”

<sup>38</sup> UN General Assembly, A/Res/64/134. [<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/469/87/PDF/N0946987.pdf?OpenElement>]



Visitors at a job fair, passing the tent of a job agency during B.N Job fairs in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on November 19, 2011. © Ali Mufti/Shutterstock

appropriate channels is key to, inter alia, achieving the internationally agreed development goals.”<sup>39</sup>

In a report on the implementation of Resolution 64/134, the Secretary-General recognized the second IYY as a success in underscoring the role of youth in the achievement of the development agenda, especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Among its recommendations, the Secretary-General suggests Member States to consider the possibility of undertaking “measures in partnership with relevant stakeholders [presumably, including youth and youth-led organisations] to develop a youth-centred global development agenda.”<sup>40</sup>

Building on the momentum generated by the IYY and the high-level meeting, the Secretary-General issued his agenda for his second term in office, in January 2012. This five-year plan outlines a series of concrete actions to respond to what he deems as current generational imperatives, among which there is the need to work with and for women and young people. In this sense, the Secretary-General affirms his commitment to “address the needs of the largest generation of young people the world has ever known by deepening the youth focus of existing programmes of employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship and protection of rights, and education, including on reproductive health.” To do this, he proposes the development and implementation of an action plan, the creation of a young volunteer programme under the umbrella of the UN Volunteers, and the appointment of a new Special Adviser on Youth.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> UN General Assembly, A/Res/65/312. [<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/432/09/PDF/N1143209.pdf?OpenElement>]

<sup>40</sup> UN General Assembly, A/66/129. [<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/411/94/PDF/N1141194.pdf?OpenElement>]

<sup>41</sup> [[http://www.un.org/sg/priorities/sg\\_agenda\\_2012.pdf](http://www.un.org/sg/priorities/sg_agenda_2012.pdf)]

His commitment was reiterated, among other occasions, at the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development, where he eloquently stated: “Youth are more than a demographic force; they are a force for progress.”<sup>42</sup>

Within the UN, other bodies have either contributed to building this momentum or have picked on it through their own resolutions. The latest example is that of the aforementioned Commission of Population and Development, which recently adopted a resolution that, while it does not make a reference to human rights of youth in general, it does urge governments and Member States to protect “the human rights of adolescents and youth to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health”; to enact and enforce “complaint and reporting mechanisms for the redress of violations of [the] human rights” of adolescents and youth; to take action “to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the rights of adolescents and youth living under foreign occupation”; and to “promote and protect effectively the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially young people.”<sup>43</sup> This resolution, through these and other statements, constitutes one of the UN’s most emphatic declarations in favour of enhancing youth citizenship and the human rights of youth.

UN-Habitat through its Youth 21 initiative has focused on how to actualize youth rights within the UN system, specifically giving them a “seat at the table”, and a voice in decisions affecting them. The *Youth 21: Building an Architecture for Youth Engagement in the UN System report* outlined two modes through which youth could be engaged, the aforementioned Special Envoy position which was appointed by the Secretary General in early 2013, and the creation of a Permanent Forum on Youth, modelled after the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues. Member states such as the Norwegian government have been strong supporters of these institutions: “*The Norwegian Government supports the Secretary-General’s initiative on youth, including the establishment of a Special Advisor on Youth and to work for the establishment of a UN forum based on the model of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.*”<sup>44</sup>

While the great shift is still to come, it will certainly feed from these experiences, and be grounded on the recognition of youth as a resource, as strategic partners, and as subjects of rights but also of responsibilities. For as the outcome document of the most recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) implies, change begins by recognizing not only the importance of youth engagement and participation in decision-making processes, but also the fact that their “contribution [...] is vital to the achievement of sustainable development.”<sup>45</sup>

42 [\[http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/pop1001.doc.htm\]](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/pop1001.doc.htm)

43 UN Commission on Population and Development, Res/2012/1.

44 Norwegian White Paper on UN policies, September 2012

45 UN Convention on Sustainable Development 2012, “The Future We Want,” Para. 50. [\[http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727THE%20FUTURE%20WE%20WANT%20-%20FINAL%20DOCUMENT.pdf\]](http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727THE%20FUTURE%20WE%20WANT%20-%20FINAL%20DOCUMENT.pdf)

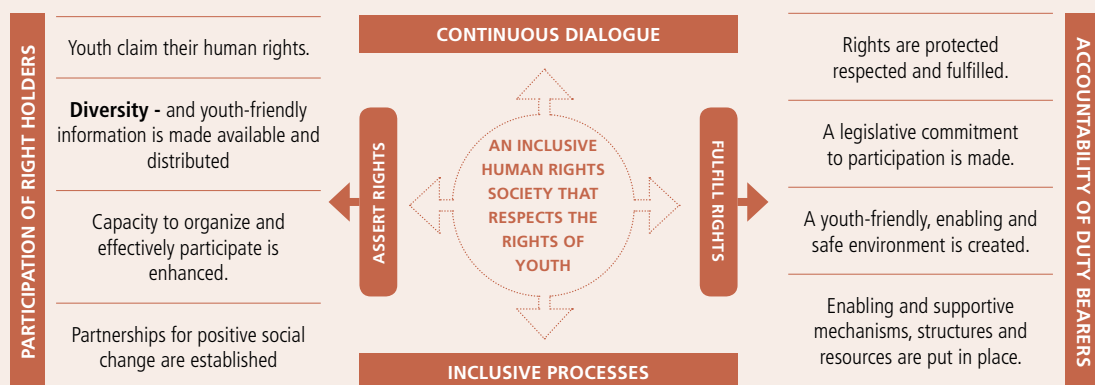
## CHAPTER THREE: YOUTH AS RIGHT HOLDERS: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CLAIMING THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS



An Egyptian woman participating in a rally at Yonge and Dundas square during the global day of support for the Egyptian revolution on January 21 2012 in Toronto, Canada. © [arindambanerjee/Shutterstock](#)

03

It has indeed been a long process, but youth can no longer—and will not stand to—be regarded as empty vessels or passive subjects that need to be filled or told what to do. Providing youth with relevant, diversity- and youth-friendly information in various mediums and formats is not enough anymore. It is imperative, with 2015 looming close, to create, foster and guarantee mechanisms, opportunities and structures for them to participate in the political and public life of their communities; in short, for them to claim their human rights.

**FIGURE 4: YOUTH AS RIGHT-HOLDERS PARTNERING WITH DUTY-BEARERS TO CREATE A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED SOCIETY**


**Source:** Ravi Karkara

A positive conversation among youth regarding their own human rights will prepare them to actively engage and participate in processes that transform their reality and that of others around them.

For many, opportunities begin in their family or caregiving settings, in their school and workplace, and in their community. It is vital to emphasize that, more often than not, youth claim their human rights at the local level. This experience, nevertheless, may have a ripple effect in subnational and national processes. And youth action in this regard can be manifested both in individual and collective behaviour, all with the aim of positive social change. There is no doubt that, as recent events attest, youth are making important contributions to their societies by exercising their voice. The more they are involved in public affairs, the more they learn and develop as citizens.

Modelling inclusive participatory behaviour is crucial in building a human rights culture among youth. Figure 4 shows the need to build and support sustainable capacity of rights holders, in this case youth from diverse backgrounds. This does not mean, however, merely to distribute youth-friendly versions of documents and human rights instruments. Most importantly, it means to prepare youth for their effective and meaningful participation in society, by educating them on their rights to express themselves, engage and participate in decision-making processes that affect them and their communities, and encouraging them to exercise their rights as active citizens to bring about positive social change. This enables youth, as rights holders, to confidently express their opinions and views, be taken seriously and wield their influence in decision-making processes.





 Students at Catholic University study homework together at the university in Lima, Peru. © **Dominic Chavez/World Bank**

Another crucial element is to support youth in creating and sustaining youth-led organisations and networks that can influence and feed into the governance structures, strengthening further the promotion of human rights of youth. Youth should be encouraged to build the capacity of other youth as drivers and facilitators of change, by creating their own methodologies and tools to promote human rights, social justice, participation, non-discrimination and responsibility.

A human rights-based approach to youth also underscores the need to work also with the duty bearers, by supporting them in the creation of mechanisms, opportunities and structures for youth to effectively participate. This means governments building capacity of staff and other crucial professionals that work on youth-related issues at local, subnational and national levels (for example, across ministries

like Communications, Education, Environment, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Health, Information Technology, Justice, Social Welfare, Women, Youth, etc.).

Governments must invest in long-term national capacity-building plans, such as introducing a human rights curriculum at the secondary, post-secondary and university levels, thereby promoting a vernacular discourse on human rights and participation. They should also support the establishment of an independent mechanism that promotes human rights of youth. They are accountable for guaranteeing and securing human rights of youth, including the provision of youth-friendly and youth-centred environments and services to build their capacities and skills to participate, and to promote their civic engagement and exercise citizenship.

It is fundamental that any process of this kind is rooted in the principles of equality, gender equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, in order to ensure that youth from all backgrounds and ethnicities are able to participate as equals. Special efforts should be made to foster participation of the most marginalized groups: indigenous and minority youth, migrant youth, youth in hard-to-reach rural and urban communities, youth with disabilities, youth affected with HIV/AIDS, etc.

A solid set of rights, like the one depicted in Figure 4, can only be achieved with inclusive processes and continuous dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers.



An unidentified Palestinian youth picks olives in groves that will soon be blocked by the Israeli separation wall in Al-Walaja, West Bank.

© Ryan Rodrick Beiler/Shutterstock

## **BOX 2.0: APPLYING A HUMAN RIGHT BASED APPROACH TO YOUTH – YOUTH AS RIGHT-HOLDERS**

**Put youth at the centre, recognizing them as right-holders and social actors.** Support youth and build their capacities to participate.

**Recognise governments as primary duty-bearers accountable to their citizens, youth included, and the international community.** Create structures and mechanisms where rights holders have a continuous dialogue with duty bearers (for example, academia, governments, the international community, media, the private sector, religious leaders, etc.).

**Recognise parents and families as primary caregivers, protectors and guides, and support them in these roles.** Develop parenting programmes that are for both father and mother, with clear focus on encouraging adolescent girls and young women to express and participate in decisions that affect them.

**Give priority to young people and create a youth-friendly environment.** Create an environment that is safe and based on respect and mutual trust, so youth can engage and dialogue with key actors at all levels (local, subnational, national, regional and global) and in all settings (family, community, school, media, etc.).

**Be gender-sensitive, and seek inclusive solutions that focus on those youth that are at risk and are discriminated against.**

Policy makers and programmes must ensure a non-discriminatory and inclusive response that ensures the participation of indigenous and minority youth, migrant youth, youth with disabilities, young affected by HIV/ AIDS, youth affected by conflict, etc. Encourage work with male youth to promote gender equality and social inclusion.

**Address unequal power structures, based on class, sex, ethnicity, age, caste, religion, etc.** Ensure that these power structures do not hinder or replicate in youth participation processes. Implement efforts to ensure a sharing of power, resulting in an empowering culture for all, especially the most marginalised young women and young men.

**Hold a holistic vision of the human rights of youth while making strategic choices and taking specific actions.** Set goals in terms of the fulfilment of rights. Ensure a human rights-based society where both right holders and duty bearers advance dialogue and social justice.

**Aim at sustainable results for youth by focusing not only on the immediate, but also on the root causes of problems.** It is crucial to address social norms and values that discourage youth expression and participation. Patriarchal structures and hegemonic norms of masculinities need to be made more inclusive.

**Use participatory, non-discriminatory, inclusive and empowering approaches.** Implement efforts to breach the digital divide.

**Build partnerships and alliances for the promotion of human rights of youth.** Develop inter-governmental working groups to ensure that youth participation and human rights of youth are protected and fulfilled. Encourage partnerships with youth-led organisations and networks.

**Establish local to global (glocal) structures that are bottom-up and promote youth's voices and partnerships for development.** Advance community action for policy advocacy at national and international levels to advance youth participation and human rights of youth.

**Adopt a holistic perspective for a multi-sectorial response.** Ensure that youth participation is seen as crosscutting in all aspects of youth programmes ranging from social budgeting and national plans of action to thematic focuses in protection, health, education, environment, water and sanitation, etc.

**Establish a long-term goal.** Set out international legal frameworks that are shared with governments, donors and civil society. Promote the implementation of the WPAY, counting on international cooperation.

**Develop inclusive and participatory communication tools and channels.** Have an inclusive approach to the use of progressive technology like social networking and SMS.

**Have an evidence-based and results-oriented perspective.** Develop youth-centred systems that promote an active role of youth in knowledge creation and knowledge management, and in the development of youth-led indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

### **BOX 3.0: UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:**

"Art. 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

**Participation is a fundamental right, and also the key.** This is one of the guiding principles of the UDHR, which has been reiterated in many other conventions and declarations. Through active participation, youth are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities. This allows them not only to learn vital life-skills, but also to develop knowledge on

human rights. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as education about and access to mechanisms to enforce their human rights.

The UN has long recognized that youth are major human resources for development, and key agents for economic growth, social change and technological innovation. Youth participation in decision-making processes is a priority of the UN agenda.

The commitment of the UN was rekindled in 1995, with the issuing and adoption of the WPAY, an international strategy to address youth's challenges more effectively. To promote the effective and full participation of youth, the programme proposes the following lines of action: improving the access to information; educating youth on their rights and responsibilities; promoting youth associations; taking into account the contribution of youth in decision-making processes; increasing cooperation and exchange between youth organisations; and strengthening the involvement of youth in international forums.

The international community has reaffirmed its commitment to youth participation through Resolution 58/133, which reiterates the "importance of the full and effective participation of youth and youth organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels in promoting and implementing the World Programme of Action and in evaluating the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in its implementation."<sup>46</sup> Subse-

quent resolutions have also dealt with policies and programmes involving youth as well as promoting youth participation in social and economic development.<sup>47</sup>

Youth have opportunities to participate in civic life through volunteerism, community service and service learning. At the community level, youth can serve as members of youth committees in local governments, offering their views on several issues and influencing youth policy. They can also establish school and university clubs aimed at educating each other on their human rights and on their civic responsibilities. Furthermore, they can set up Internet discussion groups and forums to exchange ideas and inspire each other to take action in their respective communities.<sup>48</sup> In some countries, national youth councils—that is, umbrellas for youth-led organizations—are key stakeholders in decision-making processes on youth-related issues. Yet, in others, they have merely a symbolic status. At the international level, there are a number of youth conferences organized by youth themselves, such as the World Youth Congress series. They may also participate in international and UN policy processes by becoming youth delegates to the General Assembly, the Commission on Sustainable Development or the Commission for Social Development.

<sup>46</sup> UN General Assembly, A/Res/64/134. [<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/469/87/PDF/N0946987.pdf?OpenElement>]

<sup>47</sup> International Year of Youth, "Fact Sheet: Youth Participation." [<http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/youth-participation.pdf>]

<sup>48</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Youth Participation in the Democratic Process." [<http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/122/res-3.htm>]



 CIRCA 1990 - Urban cleanup crew in Los Angeles on Earth Day.  
© spirit of america/Shutterstock

Moreover, there are growing examples of meaningful youth participation in various stages of programme-cycle management, from youth-led participatory situational analysis to youth-led programme monitoring and evaluation. At the same time, we see an increased focus on youth participation in many thematic programmes, such as those aimed at preventing violence against women and children, or HIV; at promoting actions against climate change, inclusive education, or sustainable development.

**All these are examples of youth-led, claim-making processes that advance and enforce their own human rights, through the exercise of one of them: that of participation.**

However, they are still scattered efforts, and are far from being institutionalised practices in government programmes and policies. Many governments are yet to develop national strategic frameworks and action plans to promote meaningful youth participation in issues that affect them. Some other challenges include a lack of laws that promote youth participation; a limited or absence of capacity to promote participation; inadequate structures, mechanisms and processes to enable inclusive participation of all youth, including indigenous youth, youth affected by HIV/AIDS, youth slum dwellers, and youth with disabilities.

The following figure can be regarded as a road-map of sorts for the way forward.



**TABLE 2.0:** EFFORTS SHOULD BE AIMED AT ACHIEVING APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES, AS MEN AND WOMEN ENTITLED TO THE SAME HUMAN RIGHTS AS THEIR ADULT COUNTERPARTS.

How to do this?					
Information	Capacity-building	Advocacy	Decision-making	Enforcement	Accountability
Diversity- and youth-friendly information and materials regarding the human rights of youth should be developed with youth themselves, through traditional and technology-based platforms –such as internet, social networks, mobile telephones, etc. This information and materials must be accessible to youth with disabilities and in hard-to-reach areas, and should support the creation of a knowledge base of the human rights of youth.  Youth should be involved in monitoring and evaluation of initiatives, programmes and policies to advance their human rights, including in terms of their participation in said initiatives, programmes and policies. They also need to be involved in developing youth-led indicators for this purpose.	Capacity building on the promotion of the human rights of youth and youth participation should be carried out with both adult and youth stakeholders.	Support should be given to youth-led initiatives, organizations and networks engaged in human rights advocacy and promotion.	As equal partners and key resources, youth should meaningfully participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives, programmes, and policies that affect them –such as education, the environment, reproductive health, social protection, etc.	Structures and mechanisms should be created to enforce the human rights of youth, such as a special rapporteur or a youth ombudsman, expedited judiciary procedures, etc.	Government accountability should be strengthened by facilitating youth's meaningful participation in consultation processes for laws and policies that relate to their own human rights.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

# WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT YOUTH CITIZENSHIP?

### TOWARD A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH CITIZENSHIP



Soukaina (left) and Mouna work in the marketing department at Label Vie's corporate headquarters in Rabat, Morocco. © Arne Hoel/World Bank

# 04

The conversation regarding the human rights of youth will certainly cut across issues of participation and political inclusion, and the protection of those rights without which the former are but illusions. The starting point will be a much-needed look at citizenship and its implications.

There are innumerable benefits to fostering an active and engaged exercise of citizenship among youth, which are not limited to the potential contributions that they can make to shape their immediate and mediate circumstances. First of all, youth who are active, engaged and responsible citizens tend to keep on being active, engaged and responsible citizens in their adulthood. Second, investing in an aware, educated and well-informed citizenry has important implications for economic growth. A smarter workforce is a stronger workforce. A stronger workforce produces a stronger economy. A stronger economy reduces poverty. Third, active citizenship fosters trust and responsibility, and reduces violence. Without opportunities for productive civic engagement, youth's frustrations may result in anomie and negative social behaviours.


### The Two Dimensions of Citizenship

Often enough, citizenship is defined as the collection of rights and responsibilities that define individual membership to a political community. While Western cultures tend to place an emphasis on individual rights, non-Western cultures –in Asia, for example– tend to stress the responsibilities of the individual toward his or her family, community and society. To thrive, societies require a combination of the two.

Rights include civil and political, as well as cultural, economic and social rights. On the one hand, the former constitute generalized entitlements to liberty and equality, including freedom of expression and religion, the rights to access information and to participate

in political life. On the other hand, the latter are related to different kinds of struggles that over the past three centuries have shaped and reshaped questions of cultural hegemony, class structures, labour relations, etc.<sup>49</sup>



 Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. Protesters built a library inside Gezi Park and thousands of books were donated by civilians and publishers, Istanbul.  
© Emine Dursun/Shutterstock

But besides this normative aspect, citizenship has a performative or practical dimension, which is manifested in the active exercise and fulfilment of these rights and responsibilities through civic engagement, democratic action, and political participation.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> On this topic, see T. H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," in *Class, Citizenship, and Social Development: Essays by T. H. Marshall* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1973): 71-134.

<sup>50</sup> On this topic, see Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2003).

## BOX 4.0: THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

### THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION OF CITIZENSHIP

#### Civil rights and individual freedoms

- Freedom of movement
- Protection of privacy
- Freedom of speech, thought and religion
- Right to information
- Right to justice
- Right to equality and non-discrimination
- Right to name and nationality
- Freedom of association and assembly

#### Social rights

- Right to education
- Right to life and security

#### Economic rights

- Right to own property
- Right to conclude valid contracts
- Right to minimum economic welfare

#### Political rights

- Right to vote
- Right to stand for political office

### THE PERFORMATIVE DIMENSION OF CITIZENSHIP

#### Social responsibility

- Volunteering and mutual help
- Acquiring an education
- Civic education
- Active use of the media
- Knowing the laws and legal literacy
- Demanding justice
- Demanding government accountability
- Citizen campaigns
- Civil rights movements
- Voting

However, people do not suddenly become active and responsible citizens upon reaching a certain age. Legal definitions are often arbitrary, and do not necessarily reflect the range of an individual's capacities, which of course vary according to circumstances. In this sense, it is safe to argue that citizenship—that is, the practices that it entails—must be learned. And citizenship is learned through everyday experiences that raise civic and political awareness.

**So what do we actually mean when we talk about youth citizenship?** Citizenship can be everything and nothing. It is indeed a malleable concept, and in the past five centuries it has been constantly shaped and reshaped, both in theory and practice. But think of it as a network of rights and responsibilities that relate to each other and to their respective private or public enforcers—what we have called duty bearers. In real life, the way citizenship

is effectively exercised is not merely about a set of rights and responsibilities, formally sanctioned or merely articulated as part of the political strategy of a given group of individuals. It is about how these rights and responsibilities, and their enforcers interact with, and relate to each other at different times and in different places.

Practical experience shows that the most promising initiatives designed to foster well-being are the ones that combine strategies for personal, relational, and collective change.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Nicole Yohalem and Shanetta Martin, "Building the Evidence Base for Youth Engagement: Reflections on Youth and Democracy," *Journal of Community Psychology* 35:6 (2007): 807-10.

Scot Evans and Isaac Prilleltensky, "Youth and Democracy: Participation for Personal, Relational, and Collective Well-being," *Journal of Community Psychology* 35:6 (2007): 681-92.

In other words, human rights of youth are more likely to be realized if they are understood as intimately intertwined with the rights and responsibilities of all people, regardless of their age. In this sense, indivisibility, which is one of the key principles underpinning all human rights legislation, applies to the relationship between youth and adults, as well as to that between youth-specific rights and human rights in general. Citizenship involves the exercise of one's rights and responsibilities in the best interest of oneself and others.

In this way, to enhance youth citizenship means, as we stated in the first chapter of this document, to address its shortcomings in terms of limited access to economic resources and socio-political assets, and of a loose and weak social network, in order to strengthen the relationship between their rights and responsibilities, and their respective private or public enforcers, so that the former are effectively realized and fulfilled.

To do this we need to foster youth participation in the decisions that affect them and in the development of their communities, increasing their access to the aforementioned resources and assets, and allowing them to create a strong social network. Indeed, citizenship is a continuous process that stems from their participation in, and influencing of decisions and outcomes that affect them, at the personal, family, communal, societal and international levels.<sup>52</sup>

By experiencing direct participation in matters that concern them, youth acquire the capacities and skills to foster democratic, human rights-conscious, and peaceful societies. Participation leads to a culture of respect, in which decision-making processes involve negotiation rather than confrontation. Participation also leads to the realization that human rights are reciprocal and relational, and not a route to individualism and self-interest. Participation is the gateway to citizenship.

This begins, with strategic actions that acknowledge their stake in the issues that concern them; that contribute to create safe spaces for youth to express their opinion and participate in decision-making; and that enhance their access to information and the media, and their capacity and willingness to come together in youth-led organisations and networks.<sup>53</sup>

### Expression of Opinion and Participation in Decision-making

The right to self-expression and express one's opinion is a fundamental right from the moment of birth. It is not earned or granted at a certain age. It is universal. It applies equally to male and females, regardless of their age, origin, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. But within youth lays, however, a heightened ability to express their ideals and views candidly and through effective and innovative forms of communication.

<sup>52</sup> Ravi Karkara et al., *CD Resource Book on Facilitating Children's Organisation and Children's Citizenship and Governance* (Kathmandu: International Save the Children Alliance, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> The following paragraphs have been adapted from Joachim Theis, *Children as Active Citizens: Commitments and Obligations for Children's Civil Rights and Civil Engagement in East Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok: Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation et al., 2008).



Nonetheless, adults must learn to listen. In some societies, adults expect youth to be seen and not heard. But youth often have valuable and important information and opinions. These are lost or wasted if adults do not listen.

Youth have the right to intervene in the decisions that affect their lives. Youth's views and concerns must be listened to and taken into account in any matter that touches upon their education, employment, healthcare, families, etc.

However, this is just one side of the story. For youth who express their opinions learn to take responsibility and become better at making decisions. Youth who ask questions are more likely to develop the ability for critical thinking. These are important qualities of good citizenship.

The effective and full realization of this right yields several benefits for society. First, enhanced interpersonal communication helps develop non-violent forms of conflict resolution. And less violence leads to more harmonious communities and stronger nations. Second, youth that get involved in the decisions concerning their lives tend also to get involved in the decisions affecting their communities and societies. And finally, government services are more efficient and less wasteful when they are informed by the concerns and opinions of their constituency –youth included.

To contribute to the effective and full realization of youth's right to express their opinion and participate in decision-making processes, governments should begin by developing their decision-making skills in schools and other



Young boy working in delhi textile factory, india  
© paul prescott/Shutterstock

institutions through mandated committees, councils, and mechanisms. They should also review the legal and administrative procedures to ensure youth involvement in important decisions, and raise awareness among adults and youth about the latter's right to express their opinions.

### Youth Influence in Public Decisions

The vast majority of public decisions affecting youth are made without considering their views or involving them. Much of the work of government and civil society is carried out without explicit recognition of youth. But public decisions that are informed by the views and concerns of young people lead to better policies and better services.

National and international decisions are high-stakes, high-powered and can be heavily contested. These can difficult areas to start with. However, community-level decisions are the best starting point for building lasting mechanisms for youth participation. Recognizing and facilitating youth's meaningful participation in public decision making helps build a better future for all of society.

Participation provides youth with a particular knowledge about government and democracy, and strengthens their sense of social responsibility. Participating in public decisions is a gateway to active citizenship. But there is a need to ensure that youth who are involved in policies and politics are protected and are not exposed to violence and other unacceptable risks.

To ensure youth's influence over public decision-making processes, governments must create open and effective mechanisms and structures at the local and national levels for them to be consulted and have a say in policy formulation and resource allocation. Internet-based consultations and video conferencing need to be used more as they offer new ways to consult large numbers of youth. Electronic conferencing has to be combined with local-level consultations to include youth that do not have access to the Internet. In any way, policies should be developed based on the views and concerns of youth. Furthermore, governments should create opportunities for youth to provide feedback on the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of public services, thus involving them in monitoring and social-auditing processes.

### Youth Access to Information

Access to information is a basic civil right that has major implications for youth development and participation. Well-informed youth are better able to protect themselves from and effectively address the different challenges that they face. Knowledge makes youth's opinions more informed and their decisions more sound and responsible. Furthermore, youth that have access to information are more vocal and engaged in solving the issues that affect their societies.

Indeed, information has to be not just available, but accessible to all youth. It must be free or affordable. It must be youth-friendly and youth-relevant, and presented in formats that appeal to youth. Special efforts are needed to

ensure information is available in all formats and languages required by ethnic minorities, migrant and refugee youth, and youth with disabilities.

To this purpose, governments should make sure that legislation, policies and services effectively promote youth's right to information, and that it is available in formats that are non-discriminatory and appropriate for youth from all backgrounds and conditions. But most importantly, they should involve them in the development of information materials on matters that affect them.

## Youth and the Media

Youth are not just users, but also subjects and producers of media. As such, they should be able to express themselves, their cultures, languages and life experiences through broadcast programmes that affirm their sense of self, community and place.

The power and influence of media, both mainstream and digital, is growing. Rather than being just a source of entertainment, or reinforcing stereotypes and misconceptions, the media can be used to broaden knowledge, engage youth with society and develop their citizenship skills.

Young journalists are an example of active citizens with their own views and opinion. This counteracts common media portrayals of youth as passive recipients of adult benevolence, or as the source of many of society's ills. Indeed, the media can project positive images of youth and reinforce their perception as agents of change. Youth involvement

in the media can raise awareness about youth-relevant issues and encourage constructive and creative solutions to problems.

Globally, digital media are rapidly becoming youth's preferred medium of communication. It is the most efficient tool for national and global participation on a large scale. Furthermore, by using digital media, youth are obtaining the skills and knowledge they will need in rapidly modernizing economies. However, this digital revolution does present challenges. Access to digital media is still low in some developing countries, but growing.



Ildiko Erdosi in action at EHF Cup handball match Siofok (HUN) vs. Astrakhanochka (RUS) in Siofok, Hungary. © muzsy/Shutterstock

To foster and guarantee a positive engagement with the media, one that builds essential competencies for citizenship and provides knowledge on key political and social issues, governments should –of course– begin by recognizing that independent media are fundamental to the pursuit of democracy and freedom, and that censorship and control are opposed to the best interests of society. This is fundamental for creating an effective and secure environment in which the media can work professionally and independently. Furthermore, they should offer opportunities for youth to develop media skills and critical media literacy, and support media initiatives aimed at providing greater access to youth, serving their needs and promoting their rights. Finally, youth access to information –as described above– and to communications technologies should be increased.

### Youth-led Organisations

It is a basic human right, recognized by all international human rights instruments, that people from all walks of life are free to form and join associations if they so decide to do and in accordance to interests.

Youth-led organisations contribute to develop youth's civic and leadership skills. They foster democratic principles. They are especially important for developing the skills of marginalized youth and giving them opportunities to express their views and to advocate for their rights.

Youth-led organisations can be anything and everything. They can engage in the most diverse causes, and can serve to provide peer outreach and represent youth aspirations and interests in multiple forums. They give youth a voice in their affairs, and provide representation and strength in numbers. This can be especially effective in advocacy efforts, allowing society to become more aware of the aspirations, desires, needs and problems of youth.

Youth-led organisations require some support from adults. This may lead to adults trying to control these organisations or setting their own agendas. But adults should not interfere.

To foster and guarantee the right of youth to associate, governments might need to remove legislative barriers. This is a good place to start. But most importantly, they should provide a supportive environment and make sure that membership of any organization is strictly voluntary. Finally, they take special measures to promote the freedom of association of youth with disabilities.

## BOX 5.0: DRAFT KEY PRINCIPLES FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

Youth participation, in order to be meaningful, should be:

- **Transparent and informative:** Youth must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely and their views to be given due weight, and on how this participation will take place –i.e. its scope, purpose, and potential impact–, ensuring that such information is accessible to the most marginalised groups.
- **Inclusive:** Youth participation must be inclusive, challenge existing patterns of discrimination, and encourage opportunities for marginalized youth to be involved. Youth are not a homogenous group and participation needs to provide for equality of opportunities for all, without discrimination on any grounds. Programmes also need to make sure that they are culturally sensitive to youth from all communities.
- **Supportive of youth-led organisations and networks:** Youth-led organisations and networks, including online networks, should be supported and strengthened. Special efforts should be made to reach out to the most marginalised youth-led organisations and networks, such as those led by adolescent girls and young women, indigenous youth, LGBT youth, minority youth, youth with disabilities, and youth slum dwellers.
- **Voluntary:** Youth should be encouraged to volunteer and their contributions must be promoted and respected. Youth should never be forced or manipulated into expressing views and they should be given the option to discontinue their involvement at any stage.
- **Respectful:** Adults working with youth should acknowledge and respect youth's contributions to their families, schools, cultures, the media, etc. Youth's views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Youth need to be respected as knowledge leaders and contributors of a knowledge base for youth participation from their perspective and experience.
- **Relevant:** Youth need to be given space to enable them to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important. The issues should enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills, abilities and responsibilities.
- **Youth-friendly:** Investments need to be made in developing youth-friendly environments, processes, structures and mechanisms that enable youth to effectively participate in matters that affect them. Participatory and inclusive methodologies and tools should be adapted to maximize youth's capacities and potential.
- **Given enough time and resources:** Adequate time and resources (financial and human) should be made available to ensure that youth are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views and supportive actions in processes of social transformation.
- **Supported by capacity development:** Adults need preparation, skills and support to effectively facilitate youth participation. Youth themselves can be involved as trainers and facilitators. Youth require capacity-building to strengthen their skills and their awareness of their human rights. They further need training in organizing meetings and campaigns, raising funds, establishing youth-led organisations, dealing with the media, public speaking, and advocacy.
- **Accountable:** A commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential. For example, in any research or consultative process, youth must be informed as to how their views have been interpreted and used and, where necessary, provided with the opportunity to challenge and influence the analysis of the findings. Youth are also entitled to clear feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes. Wherever appropriate, youth should be given the opportunity to participate in follow-up processes or activities.



## CHAPTER FIVE: PRACTISING CITIZENSHIP: YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN AS ACTIVE CITIZENS IN URBAN SETTINGS



Protesters march through central London in opposition to government spending cuts March 26, 2011 in London, UK. An estimated 250,000 people joined the TUC organised rally. © 1000 Words/Shutterstock

# 05

The following case studies depict young men and women exercising and promoting the exercise of their human rights, in their different dimensions – civil and political, economic, social, and cultural– which are nevertheless intricately interrelated. They showcase the diversity –in origin and background– that is inherent to youth creativity, idealism and innovation. Finally, they are all examples of youth engagement in advancing positive social change.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, the case studies presented in this chapter were taken from UN-Habitat, *Mapping Urban Youth-led Development: Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2010). [<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3024>] UN-Habitat, *Ideas to Action: Best Practices in Youth-led Development* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2010). [<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3023>]

## **BOX 6.0: CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: YOUTH SHADOW LOCAL COUNCILS (OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY)**

In 2007, the population of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region exceeded 432 million people, half of them children and youth under 24 years of age. Over half the populations of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq are under 25 years old, while over 60 per cent of Pakistan and Afghanistan is under 25 years old. Over the last few decades, school enrolment rates have risen markedly throughout the region for both young men and women. Yet, the recently released Arab Human Development Report finds that youth unemployment presents the biggest challenge to all Arab countries, which have nearly double the global rate. A projected 51 million new jobs will have to be created by 2020 to absorb youth into the labour force. Unemployment also often affects women more than men, with unemployment rates for Arab women being higher than those for Arab men, and among the highest in the world. In 2005, the youth unemployment rate for men was 25 per cent compared to 31.2 per cent for women.\*

In this regional context, many Palestinian youth no longer believe that their opinions matter or that their voices can be heard. Where Palestinian youth have traditionally been active, involved, and engaged in leadership roles in their communities, many youth today are idle, disenchanted, and unengaged. In this sense, it is fundamental to provide youth with a formal channel for participation in their local governments, giving them the support and capacity building to identify and advocate youth issues, and empowering them to change policies and practices both locally and nationally.

Youth Shadow Local Councils (YSLC) is a project that aims to create an enabling environment and sustainable mechanism for youth participation in local governance; more channels for active civic and social youth participation in their communities; and the chance for youth to learn

first-hand about democratic good governance both in theory and in practice. To this purpose, YSLC was established to set up Youth Local Councils (YLC) in two cities in the Gaza Strip. YLCs are conceived as voluntary governmental bodies composed of Palestinian youth aged 15-20 years old who are elected by their peers to fill positions that mirror their local city councils. As representational bodies for local youth, YLCs provide youth a much-needed platform for increased and effective civic participation and engagement in their communities and local governments. YLC members represent their youth peers and work closely with their city council counterparts to ensure that youth opinions are heard, reflected, and adequately addressed in local policy and projects.

The Youth Councillors build their skills and knowledge on how Palestinian local government systems function and operate through active participation and mentorship with their city council counterparts. They assume defined roles, are invested with real responsibilities, and are in charge of various functions such as planning, financial management, and project implementation. Youth councillors do not represent political parties, but rather serve as elected representatives with a direct democratic mandate to give young people a voice and serve youth interests through a formal, structured liaison with their local governments.

The advantages resulting from this type of initiative include a sustainable, effective platform for youth participation and representation in local government; a cadre of youth aware of its rights and obligations, knowledgeable on good governance, citizenship, and the roles and functions of democratic processes and institutions, and ready to assume future leadership positions; and policy initiatives responsive to youth needs.\*\*

\* UN-Habitat, *Youth Development in MENA Cities: A Crisis and an Opportunity* (Nairobi: UN-Habitat, 2012) [<http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3315>]

\*\* [<http://www.globalyouthdesk.org/YouthFund/ArticleView.aspx?vid=121>]

**BOX 7.0: ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: ASSOCIATION FOR  
COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (MOZAMBIQUE)**

Young men and women from Sub-Saharan Africa face countless challenges. These obstacles stem not only from the demographic explosion of youth throughout the region, which could also be regarded as an opportunity, but mostly from the pool of resources to which this population has access. Indeed, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world that has experienced a sharp increase in the number of working youth who subsist on less than \$1 per day. Today, they amount to 45 million people. Moreover, the region presents highly uneven literacy rates and also extremely high numbers of youth outside of or that have never been inside the education system. For example, almost 60 per cent of Malian males aged 20-24 had never had an education in 2001. It goes without saying that the situation of females is much worse. Of course, this situation has bearing on the fact that youth in Sub-Saharan Africa are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed. By 2005, the region's average unemployment rate had risen well above 30 per cent.

All of this is added to the existence of armed conflicts in several countries. Between 1990 and 2000, Africa experienced 19 major armed conflicts, from civil wars to the 1998 international conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. In addition, Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique all experienced chaotic transitions from colonial rule.

In this context, a wide array of youth-led organizations has emerged to tackle several issues, of which 63 per cent focus on jobs; 33 per cent, on policy and advocacy; 32 per cent, on governance; 28 per cent, on capacity building; and 16 per cent, on micro-credit.

Mozambique is among the poorest countries in the world. With 70 per cent of the population living under the poverty line, unemployment

and economic alienation are the daily reality of most Mozambican youth. It has been recognized that this trend can only be reversed by focusing on youth empowerment and inclusion in the development of their country.

The Association for Cooperation and Development (ACCORD) was established with the purpose of stimulating youth participation and cooperation in development initiatives. Since 2005, this group has organized work camps where youth participate in advocacy, evaluation, fundraising, and research. The project involves passing skills to young people, researching on areas where youth can be engaged in gainful employment, and funding community projects.

ACCORD has documented the situation of youth, especially in terms of poverty and unemployment. This has led to implementation of several programmes to create youth employment in the province of Inhambane, where the project is based.

The purpose of all of this, according to ACCORD, is to contribute to the attainment of MDG 1. That is, the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty.

ACCORD is an example of youth-led initiatives that focus on the full realization of their economic rights through the fulfilment of three fundamental principles. As a youth-led organization, ACCORD provides youth the possibility of defining their own goals and objectives, and setting their own agenda for development. With its running programmes, ACCORD provides a platform and a space for youth to participate in development. Finally, ACCORD makes youth the role models of other youth, and demonstrates the need for interventions geared toward making them more economically and socially empowered.

## **BOX 8.0: SOCIAL RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: FONDO GRANDE AHEAD (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC)**

Despite progressive economic, political and social change over the past three decades, Latin American youth is still faced by several challenges that hinder their transition into adulthood. Poverty and inequality are still key issues in the region, with a profound impact on youth's opportunities to access essential resources and services, such as education, employment and health.

Although universal coverage in primary education has been achieved in most of the region's countries, quality remains an issue that needs to be addressed. With widespread poverty among youth, very few people have the benefit of full and high-quality education that might allow them to improve their socio-economic standing. Of course this has profound implications for the labour market. Employment is a particularly dire issue for women, who are less likely than their male counterparts to participate in the job market, have a harder time finding a job, and are paid lower wages. And even when they manage to find a job, both male and female youths do so in the informal sector and face the utter absence of labour protections. On top of this, youth seem to be withdrawing from the realm of political activism, and apathy has definitely increased among them. It seems that both political and socio-economic factors affect the capacity and willingness of youth to participate in the political process.

In the region, youth-led organizations address several issues, of which 69 per cent focus on capacity building; 38 per cent, on policy and advocacy; 38 per cent, on jobs; 38 per cent, on vocational training; and 20 per cent, on communication networks.

Dominican Republic is not the exception, and as a small island developing state it is also safe to say that it faces challenges of its own. Founded in December 2007, Fondo Grande Ahead is a youth-led organization with the mission of allowing Fondo Grande's youth to contribute to the development of their community, by providing them with the necessary intellectual and methodological tools to engage in this process.

In the area, there are two headwaters that flow into a river whose water is shared by thousands of people along the border with Haiti. The challenge for the locals has been to improve their quality of life while preserving the environment.

Fondo Grande Ahead focuses on capacity building for youth and the community, through discussion, research and training; and the formulation of projects. To this purpose they promote research about the cultural, economic, environmental, political and social aspects of the Fondo Grande community and its surrounding areas; provide capacity building in fields related to agriculture, culture, the environment, and rural development, taking into account the interests of the community; coordinate agricultural, environmental and entrepreneurial projects geared toward sustain, in conjunction with other local organizations; and carry out activities to promote local culture and identity.

Furthermore, in the making is an alternative energy project to reduce reliance on liquefied petroleum gas, by producing biogas from organic waste; and another one to reduce the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> from slash-and-burn agriculture, by intercropping organic cocoa and fruit trees.



**BOX 9.0: CULTURAL RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:  
AL TOQUE NEGRO (URUGUAY)**

About 150 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean are of African descent. That is, 30 per cent of the total population. They are spread across the region, and in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Panama they represent between 45 and 10 per cent of the population. Nevertheless, Afro-descendants were not considered a variable in national census until very recently.

Despite being a part of their respective societies for over five hundred years, and with considerable contributions to their national cultures, these citizens continue to experience considerable economic, political and social exclusion, being subjected still to discrimination and racism.\* According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, citizens of African descent live in the poorest areas, where infrastructure is still very precarious. They are considerably more exposed to crime and violence, and face various obstacles to access fundamental resources and services: education, employment, health and housing. Furthermore, they are underrepresented across the board of political institutions and policy-making instances. All of this constitutes a serious challenge to the realization of their civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights.\*\*

While there are nuances and particularities across countries, populations of African descent are united by a common claim for historical vindication, for the acknowledgement of their role in the building of their respective nations and of their citizen rights.

Al Toque Negro was born in this context, and as part of the mobilization around the International Year of People of African Descent in 2011. Based in Montevideo, this project strives to promote participation of youth of African descent. Their work focuses on strengthening ethnic, racial and gender identities; on fostering the emergence of true subjects of rights, and of agents and leaders of local development. To this purpose, Al Toque Negro held workshops on the collective rights of the populations of African descent. In the context of the 2011 census rounds, youth of African descent implemented a campaign to create awareness of the importance of ethnic and racial self-identification to shed light on the socioeconomic conditions of the populations of African descent, and to demand affirmative actions and reparation policies.\*\*\*

\* *United Nations Development Programme, Derechos de la población afrodescendiente de América Latina: Desafíos para su implementación (Panama: PNUD, 2010).*

\*\* *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "La situación de las personas afrodescendientes en las Américas."* [[http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/afrodescendientes/docs/pdf/AFROS\\_2011\\_ESP.pdf](http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/afrodescendientes/docs/pdf/AFROS_2011_ESP.pdf)]

\*\*\* [<http://www.globalyouthdesk.org/YouthFund/ArticleView.aspx?vid=204>]



## **BOX 10: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ASIA: YOUNG POWER IN SOCIAL ACTION (BANGLADESH)**

Asia is also experiencing a youth demographic bulge. It is expected that by 2030 there are going to be 530 million youth living in urban areas throughout Asia, where poverty continues to be a problem. Indeed, poverty rates range between 12 and 40 per cent in Asian cities, where 30 to 40 per cent of the population lives in slums. The slum population in Asia actually exceeds that of any other region in the world. Employment is another salient issue. For example, in South-East Asia, youth are five times more likely than adults to be unemployed. And in South Asia, they are still three times more likely.

Inflexible labour markets and education systems have not always been able to absorb urban youth adequately, making them more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. High unemployment rates are believed to derive, at least partially, from a lack of correspondence between training and skill requirements for the jobs created by the region's process of globalization.

Youth-led organizations throughout the continent have stepped up to face the different challenges posed by this situation, of which 57 per cent focus on policy and advocacy; 54 per cent, on capacity building; 48 per cent, on communication networks; 40 per cent, on information exchange; and 31 per cent, on jobs.

In this context, communities are always looking for opportunities to engage in productive labour to overcome exclusion from the job market and poverty. Bangladesh is not the exception.

It was in 1960 when a cyclone drove a Greek ship to its shores. Since it could not be re-floated, it had to be scrapped locally. And thus the country's ship-breaking industry was born.

Ever since the 1980s, this industry has been booming in Bangladesh, where 52 per cent of the world's large ships are scrapped nowadays. Ship-breaking activities are concentrated in Sitakund, just north of Chittagong city. This

presents both challenges and opportunities. Meeting the increasing demand for raw materials such as steels needs to be balanced with the negative impact this activity is having on the environment, and with the unfavourable condition of workers.

Most of the ship-breaking workers come from the poverty-stricken northern region of Bangladesh. They are not allowed to form or join a trade union. They are deprived of proper compensation due to the lack of valid contracts. They are subjected of dangerous working conditions. And they are not entitled to overtime, sick or annual leave, or any type of benefits.

There are no arrangements for clean drinking water, healthy food, hygienic toilets or appropriate living conditions for the workers. Eighty-six per cent of them have stated that they receive no medical benefits. As the government has not recognised it as an industry, the industry forms and applies its own labour laws.

Young Power in Social Action is a youth-led organization working to improve the condition in the ship-breaking yards. Their goal is to influence public policy makers to formulate an industry-specific policy. To this purpose they raise awareness at the communal and national levels through advocacy and campaigns; they strive to influence policy makers to ensure environment-friendly ship breaking, and that the rights of workers in the industry are upheld; they conduct research, monitoring and fact finding activities on the industry at the grassroots level; and they provide support and assistance to injured ship-breaking workers and the families of deceased workers.

As a result of their work, ship-breaking workers are becoming aware of their basic labour rights. The general public is more aware of the reality of the industry. And policy makers are awakening to the crisis and are becoming more active in monitoring the industry.



**BOX 11: YOUNG WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: U-REPORT (UGANDA)**

In Uganda, social media has given youth a voice and a way to communicate with peers, adults and other stakeholders in civil society, government and the private sector. It has helped to spread messages of development in a relaxed and conversational way. However, the downside to social media is that it cannot be used as a stand-alone tool for meaningful youth engagement: it is a means and not an end in itself.

However, with low Internet penetration, it is still difficult to use social media to mobilize local masses, although it may still be a tool to garner international support. According to online social networking statistics, Facebook penetration in Uganda is of 1.20 per cent of the country's population, with the largest age group currently being 18-24, followed by those aged 25-34. In light of these statistics, social media using mobile technology continues to be the best option for youth, who make up over 70 per cent of the population, to influence public policy and public opinion.

U-report is a free SMS service designed to give Ugandan youth a chance to voice their opinions about issues that affect them and that they care about. Users can register for free by texting "join" to short-code 8500. U-reporters are then asked a series of questions during the registration process by which responses can be analysed and messages, targeted.

U-report was launched in May 2011, and now has over 126,000 U-reporters in Uganda. Users' average age is 24, and 51 per cent of them are female. U-reporters are located across all districts of Uganda. Each week SMS polls or alerts are sent to all of the U-reporters asking for their opinion on a given issue and the results are shared and amplified through the media and government to bring attention to the issues youth face in their communities.

Social media presents young women with increased opportunities to exert influence and develop professionally. According to Jessica

Faye, of the 87 million women active on the Internet in the United States, an estimated 67.5 million are engaged with social media. Women are now the majority of users on sites like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. This indicates that there are more reasons to explain their engagement than just the fact that they enjoy social interaction.

One reason for women's interest in social media has to do with its symbolic capital, and what it represents in our culture. As language changes often signify underlying social change, people adopting emerging forms of communication like social media, are also embracing the consonant social identities. Social media represents an identity that is connected and modern; that promotes information sharing, participation and transparency; and that has a global outlook (as technology crosses geographic boundaries). The other reason is more pragmatic. Social media offers benefits and improvements to a woman's quality of life. The practical benefits that social media affords, combined with its emotionally fulfilling features make it likely that women will not only continue to engage with social media, but with future related innovations as well.

As noted, language changes or the introduction of linguistic variants, such as social media, are symbolic of social change. What social media symbolizes is an increased access to both information and platforms to express ideas. Indeed, social media has opened the door for new leaders, experts and voices, and has helped them to get their messages across.

Women stand to benefit from this type of social change more than men because women generally have less access to influential networks and leadership roles in society than men do. Despite considerable progress, women continue to confront numerous inequities and considerable marginalization from influence in our society. It is precisely these challenges that fuel women's greater interest in social media and social change.



The experience of U-report in Uganda, and its large female constituency can help forward the discussion about women's engagement with social media in a new direction. It is not about a communication style that is unique to women, nor is it based on some supposedly evolutionary instincts that women possess. It is

about engaging women across the various layers of their identities. Recognizing women not just as limited stereotypes, and understanding that their interest in emerging technologies is a reflection of various aspects of their identities, is a useful starting point for organizations that hope to reach and engage women online.\*

\* This case study was adapted from a brief piece by Caroline Barebwoha from UNICEF. For more information, see U-report's website. [[www.ureport.ug](http://www.ureport.ug)]

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## RESOURCE LIST

### INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

Convention on the Rights of the Child  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/disabilities-convention.htm>

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement>

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

United Nations Principles for Older Persons  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/olderpersons.htm>

### REGIONAL YOUTH CHARTERS

African Youth Charter  
<http://www.africa-union.org/root/ua/conferences/mail/hrst/charter%20english.pdf>

Iberoamerican Convention on the Rights of Youth  
<http://www.laconvencion.org>

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UN General Assembly, A/Res/55/2: **"United Nations Millennium Declaration."**  
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<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/432/09/PDF/N1143209.pdf?OpenElement>

UN General Assembly, A/66/129: **"International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding: Report of the Secretary-General."**  
<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/411/94/PDF/N1141194.pdf?OpenElement>

### UN DOCUMENTS

**"The Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda."**  
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International Year of Youth, **"Fact Sheet: Youth Participation."**  
<http://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/youth-participation.pdf>

UN Commission on Population and Development, E/CN.9/2012/2: **"Monitoring of population programmes, focusing on adolescents and youth: Report of the Secretary-General."**  
[http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5\\_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report\\_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/E.CN.9.2012-5_UNFPA-Population-programmes-report_Advance%20Unedited%20Copy.pdf)

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## ANNEX 1: IBEROAMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH

### Preamble

The States Parties, aware of the extreme importance for humanity to count with such instruments as the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”; the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”; the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination”; the “Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women”; the “Convention on the Rights of the Child”; the “Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”; and other instruments approved by the United Nations and its specialised Organisations and by the systems of protection of the fundamental Rights of Europe and America, which recognise and guarantee the rights of every person to freedom, equality and dignity.

Considering that the mentioned instruments form part of the legal heritage of humanity, whose aim is to create a universal culture of respect of liberty, peace and human rights, and that the present Convention is integrated in them.

Taking into account that the United Nations and several regional organisations are promoting and supporting actions in favour of youth in order to guarantee their rights, respect and the promotion of their chances and perspectives of freedom and social progress to which

they legitimately aspire, among which the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, proclaimed by the General Assembly Resolution 50/81 of the United Nations, is to be pointed out.

Considering that the “Lisbon Declaration”, approved by the 1st World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, celebrated in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1998, constitutes a frame for international cooperation in the field of youth policies, in which the Ministers encouraged and supported the actions of such institutions as the OIJ, undertaking to support the bilateral, sub-regional, regional and international exchange for better practices, at a national level, for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of youth policies.

Taking into account the conclusions of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, celebrated in Braga, Portugal, in 1998, as well as the Action Plan approved in the mentioned event.

Verifying that young people form a social sector of singular characteristics due to psycho-social, physical and identity factors which require a special attention because of being youth a period of life in which personality, acquisition of knowledge, self-esteem and projection of future are formed and consolidated.

Taking into account the verification of serious lacks and omissions among the youth in the Region which affect their comprehensive formation when they are limited or deprived of such rights as: education, employment, health, environment, participation in social and political life and decision taking processes, effective law guardianship, information, family, housing, sport, leisure and culture in general.

Considering that there must be a progress in explicitly recognising the rights of youth, in the promotion of bigger and better chances for youth and the consequent obligation of the States to guarantee and adopt such measures as may be necessary for the full exercise of these rights.

Recognising that these factors invite to specify the scope and application of the International Law instruments on Human Rights through declarations, laws and policies which specifically regulate and protect the right of youth and generating a more specific legal frame inspired in the principles and rights which protect human beings.

Taking into account that the Iberoamerican Ministers of Youth have been working for the elaboration of a Charter of Rights for Iberoamerican Youth, being the concept and methodology bases approved by the IX Iberoamerican Conference of Youth Ministers for the elaboration of a document which, under the perspective of overcoming prejudices and contemptuous, paternalist or merely utilitar-

ian conceptions of youth, demands their condition as persons, full citizens, real and effective subjects of rights, guarantees equal rights of men and women, social and political participation, the passing of policies aiming the full exercise of their rights, satisfies their needs and recognises them as strategic characters of development.

Stating that, in addition to the instruments of International Law on Human Rights, the elaboration of an “Iberoamerican Convention on Youth Rights” is justified in the need of youth to count with the commitment and law bases which recognise, guarantee and protect their rights, ensuring so the continuity and future of our peoples.

### **Accordingly:**

The States Parties approve, proclaim and undertake to fulfil and make fulfil the present Iberoamerican Convention on Rights of Youth with the spirit of recognising youth as subject of rights, strategic characters of development and people able of responsibly exercising the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention; and so that all the countries of Iberoamerica, its peoples and institutions are involved in this document, make it effective in the daily practice and make possible that programmes which give life to what this Convention promotes regarding youth and its total fulfilment in justice, peace, solidarity and respect of Human Rights are carried out.

## Preliminary Chapter

### ARTICLE 1. **Application scope.**

1. The present convention considers included under the expressions "young" and "youth" all people, nationals or residents in any Iberoamerican country, with ages between 15 and 24 years. This population group is subject and holder of the rights recognised in this Convention, without prejudice to the rights which equally benefit minors by the application of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### ARTICLE 2. **Youth and Human Rights.**

The States Parties recognise in this Convention the right of all youth to enjoy all Human Rights, and undertake to respect and guarantee youth the full enjoyment and exercise of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

### ARTICLE 3. **Contribution of youth to Human Rights.**

The States Parties to the present Convention undertake to develop policies and propose programmes which encourage and make permanent the contribution and commitment of youth with a peace culture and respect of Human Rights and to spread values of tolerance and justice.

## Chapter I

### General Regulations

#### ARTICLE 4. **Right to Peace.**

This Convention proclaims the right to peace, a life without violence and fraternity and the duty of encouraging them through education and programmes and initiatives which

conduct youth solidarity and cooperation energies. The States Parties shall promote peace culture, stimulate creativity, enterprising spirit, education in values inherent to the respect of Basic Human Rights, favouring, in any case, understanding, tolerance, friendship, solidarity, justice and democracy.

#### ARTICLE 5. **Principle of non-discrimination.**

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised to youth in the present Convention does not admit any kind of discrimination on the ground of race, colour, national origin, belonging to a national, ethnic or cultural minority, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, opinion, social condition, physical abilities, disabilities, living place, economic resources or any other condition or personal or social circumstance of the young person which may be invoked to establish discriminations which affect the equality of rights and the chances to enjoy them.

#### ARTICLE 6. **Right to gender equality.**

This Convention recognises the equal rights of young women and men and declares the commitment of the States Parties of boosting policies and legal and budgetary measures which ensure equality between young women and men within the frame of equal chances and the exercise of rights.

#### ARTICLE 7. **Prominence of the family.**

The States Parties recognise the importance of the family and the duties and responsibilities of parents, or their legal substitutes, of guiding their young children, minors, in the exercise of the rights recognised by this Convention.

## ARTICLE 8. **Adoption of inner law measures.**

The States Parties recognise the rights provided in this convention and undertake to promote, protect and respect them and to adopt any legal, administrative or other measure, as well as to assign the resources which enable the enjoyment of the rights recognised by the Convention. They shall equally formulate and evaluate youth policies.

## Chapter II Civil and Political Rights

### ARTICLE 9. **Right to life.**

1. Every young person has the right to life and, therefore, all States Parties shall adopt such measures as may be necessary to guarantee the physical, moral and intellectual development which allow the incorporation of youth to the prominence of collective life with optimal maturity levels.

In any case, protection measures shall be adopted against aggressions which may be cause of detriment of the development of the above stated process.

2. No young person shall be sentenced to death. The States Parties which preserve death penalty shall guarantee that the latter shall not be applied to people who, at the time of the commission of the crime, were considered young in the terms of the present Convention.

### ARTICLE 10. **Right to personal integrity.**

The States Parties shall adopt specific protection measures in favour of youth regarding

their physical and mental integrity and security, as well as against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

### ARTICLE 11. **Right to protection against sexual abuse.**

The States Parties shall take such measures as may be necessary to prevent from exploitation, abuse or sexual tourism or any other kind of violence or mistreatment of young people and shall promote the physical, psychological and economic recovery of victims.

### ARTICLE 12. **Right to conscientious objection.**

1. Youth have the right to make conscientious objection towards obligatory military service.
2. The States Parties undertake to promote the pertinent legal measures to guarantee the exercise of this right and advance in the progressive elimination of the obligatory military service.
3. The States Parties undertake to assure youth under 18 years of age that they shall not be called up or involved, in any way, in military hostilities.

### ARTICLE 13. **Right to Justice.**

1. The States Parties recognise the right of youth to justice. This implies the right to report, audience, defence, fair and decent treatment, free justice, equal rights before law and all the guarantees of the corresponding procedure.
2. The States Parties shall take such measures as may be necessary to guarantee a legal



procedure which takes into account the young condition, makes the exercise of this right real and includes all the guarantees of the corresponding procedure.

3. Youth charged with a criminal offence have the right to a decent treatment which stimulates their respect for human rights and takes account of their age and the need to promote their re-socialisation through alternative measures to the application of the penalty.
4. In all cases in which young minors are in conflict with the law, the rules of the corresponding procedure and effective legal guardianship shall be applied according to the rules and principles recognised under the International Law on Human Rights.
5. The States Parties shall take measures to ensure that the youth who are imprisoned have space and decent human conditions in the penal institution.

#### **ARTICLE 14. Right to individual identity and personality.**

1. All young people have the right to: have a nationality, not be deprived of it and acquire another one voluntarily, and to an individual identity, consisting in the building of the own personality attending to specificities and characteristics of sex, nationality, ethnic origin, filiation, sexual orientation, religious belief and culture.
2. The States Parties shall promote respect for the identity of youth and shall guarantee their free expression ensuring the eradication of situations which discriminate them in any of the aspects concerning their iden-

tity.

#### **ARTICLE 15. Right to honour, intimacy and personal image.**

1. Youth have the right to honour, personal and family intimacy and to their own image.
2. The States Parties shall adopt such measures as may be necessary and formulate proposals of high social impact to achieve the full effectiveness of these rights and prevent youth from any exploitation of their image or practices against their physical or mental condition which may deteriorate their personal dignity.

#### **ARTICLE 16. Right to liberty and security of person.**

1. The States Parties recognise youth, with the extension expressed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the right to their liberty and its exercise, without being restricted or limited in the activities deriving from it and prohibiting any measure which may prejudice the liberty, integrity or physical or mental security of youth.
2. Consequent with the recognition and duty of protection of the right to liberty and security of youth, the States Parties guarantee that Youth shall not be arbitrarily arrested, detained, imprisoned or exiled.

#### **ARTICLE 17. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.**

1. Youth have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, being any kind of persecution or thought repression prohibited.

2. The States Parties undertake to promote such measures as may be necessary to guarantee the exercise of this right.

**ARTICLE 18. Freedom of expression, assembly and association.**

1. Youth have the right to freedom of opinion, expression, assembly and information, to have youth forums at their disposal and create organisations and associations where their problems are analysed and may present proposals of political initiatives before public authorities in charge of attending youth matters, with no kind of interference of limitation.
2. The States Parties undertake to promote such measures as may be necessary to enable them to obtain the existing resources for the financing of their activities, projects and programmes, respecting the independence and autonomy of youth organisations and associations.

**ARTICLE 19. Right to form part of a family.**

1. Youth have the right to form active part of a family which promotes relations where mutual affect, respect and responsibility prime among its members and to be protected against any kind of mistreatment or violence.
2. Minor young people have the right to a hearing in case of divorce or separation of their parents for the effects of attribution of the own guardianship, as well as, to make their will determining in the case of adoption.

3. The States Parties undertake to create and enable the educational, economic, social and cultural conditions which promote the values of the family, cohesion and strength of family life and healthy development of youth in it, through public policies and its corresponding financing.

**ARTICLE 20. Right to found a family.**

1. Youth have the right to freely choose a partner, to common life and to the constitution of marriage on the ground of equality among its members, as well as to a responsible maternity and paternity and the dissolution of the marriage according to the civil capacity established by the inner law of each country.
2. The States Parties shall promote all legal measures which guarantee the compatibility of work and family life and the responsible exercise of paternity and maternity and allow their continuous personal, educational, formation and vocational development.

**ARTICLE 21. Youth participation.**

1. Youth have the right to participation in politics.
2. The States Parties undertake to boost and strengthen social processes which generate forms and guaranties which make the participation of youth from all sectors of society effective in organisations which encourage their inclusion.

3. The States Parties shall promote measures which, in conformity with the inner law of each country, promote and encourage that youth exercise their right to register in political associations, to elect and be elected.
4. The States Parties undertake to promote that governmental and legislative institutions promote the participation of youth in the formulation of policies and laws concerning youth, drawing up the corresponding mechanisms to make effective the analysis and discussion of youth initiatives through their organisations and associations.
5. The States Parties recognise that education is a life-long learning process which includes elements from formal and non-formal education which contribute to the continuous and comprehensive development of youth.
6. The States Parties recognise that the right to education is opposite to any kind of discrimination and undertake to guarantee the universalisation of basic, compulsory and free education for all young people and, specifically, to enable and ensure the access and permanence in secondary education. The States Parties likewise undertake to stimulate the access to higher education, adopting the needed political and legislative measures to achieve so.

### Chapter III Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

#### ARTICLE 22. **Right to education.**

1. Youth have the right to education.
2. The States Parties recognise their obligation to guarantee a comprehensive, continuous, appropriate education of high quality.
3. The States Parties recognise that this right includes the freedom of choosing the educational centre and the active participation in its life.
4. The education shall promote the exercise of values, arts, science and technology in the transmission of teaching, interculturalism, respect of ethnic cultures and open access to new technologies and promote among the educated people the vocation for democracy, human rights, peace, solidarity, acceptance of diversity, tolerance and equal rights of men and women.
7. The States Parties undertake to promote the adoption of measures which enable the academic and scholar mobility of youth, and so agree to establish validation procedures which allow, when applicable, the equivalency of levels, academic degrees and professional qualifications of their respective national educational systems.

#### ARTICLE 23. **Freedom to sexual education.**

1. The States Parties recognise that the right to education also includes the right to sexual education as a source of personal, affective development and communicative expression, as well as to the information concerning reproduction and its consequences.

2. Sexual education shall be taught at all educational levels and shall promote a responsible conduct in the exercise of sexuality, aiming the personal full acceptance and identity of youth, as well as the prevention of sexual diseases, HIV (AIDS), undesired pregnancy and sexual abuse or violence.
3. The States Parties recognise the important role and responsibility which corresponds to the family regarding sexual education of youth.
4. The States Parties shall adopt and implement sexual education policies, establishing plans and programmes which assure information and the full and responsible exercise of this right.
2. This right includes free primary health care, preventive education, nutrition, specialised health care and care of youth health, promotion of sexual and reproductive health, research on young age health problems, information and prevention of alcoholism, nicotine poisoning and the improper use of drugs.
3. They equally have right to confidentiality and respect from the health service staff members, particularly concerning their sexual and reproductive health.
4. The States Parties shall ensure the full effectiveness of this right, adopting and applying comprehensive health policies and policies which specifically aim the prevention of diseases, promotion of health and healthy life-styles among youth. Policies for the eradication of dealing and consume of drugs which damage health shall be boosted.

#### ARTICLE 24. **Right to culture and art.**

1. Youth have the right to cultural life and free creation and artistic expression. The practice of these rights shall be connected to their comprehensive formation.
2. The States Parties undertake to stimulate and promote artistic and cultural creation of youth, promote, respect and protect autochthonous and national cultures, as well as to develop exchange programmes and other actions which promote a better cultural integration among youth of Iberoamerica.

#### ARTICLE 25. **Right to health.**

1. The States Parties recognise the right of youth to a comprehensive, high-quality health.
3. The States Parties shall adopt the needed legislative policies and measures which promote the stimulation of companies to promote activities of integration and qualification of youth for work.

## **ARTICLE 27. Right to conditions of work.**

1. Youth have the right to equal opportunities and treatment concerning integration, remuneration, promotion and working conditions, to the existence of programmes which promote a first employment, vocational qualification and to a special attention to youth who are temporarily unemployed.
2. The States Parties recognise that working youth shall enjoy equal working and union rights as those recognised to all workers.
3. The States Parties recognise the right of youth to be protected against economic exploitation and any employment harmful to their health, education or physical or psychological development.
4. The work for youth with ages between 15 and 18 years shall be object of a special protection law according to the international working rules.
5. The States Parties shall adopt measures so that young minor women workers benefit from specific promotion additional measures which, in general, correspond to working legislation, Social Security and Social Assistance. In any case, they shall adopt in their favour special measures by developing Section 2, Article 10, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In the mentioned development, special attention shall be given to the application of Article 10, Covenant 102, of the International Labour Organisation.

6. The States Parties undertake to adopt the needed political and legislative measures to eradicate any kind of discrimination against young women in the working field.

## **ARTICLE 28. Right to social protection.**

1. Youth have the right to social protection towards situations of illness, accident in the workplace, disability, widowhood or orphanage and any other situation meaning lack or decrease of means of subsistence or capacity to work.
2. The States Parties shall adopt such measures as may be necessary to achieve the full effectiveness of this right.

## **ARTICLE 29. Right to vocational training.**

1. Youth have the right to a non-discriminatory access to initial, continuous, adequate, high-quality vocational and technical training which enables them to incorporate to work.
2. The States Parties shall adopt all needed measures to guarantee the non-discriminatory access to formal and non-formal vocational and technical training, recognising their professional and technical qualification in order to favour the incorporation of qualified youth to an employment.
3. The States Parties undertake to boost public policies with appropriate financing to enable the qualification of youth who suffer some disability so that they may incorporate to work.



### ARTICLE 30. **Right to housing.**

1. Youth have the right to a decent housing of good quality which enables them to develop their life project and relations with the community.
2. The States Parties shall adopt all kind of measures to make effective the mobilisation of public and private resources aiming the easier access of youth to a decent housing. These measures shall result in the promotion and construction of homes by the Public Administrations and the stimulation and support to those of private promotion. In any case, the offer of homes shall be done in reasonable terms for the personal or/and family means of youth, giving priority to those with lower economic income.
3. Housing policies of States Parties shall constitute a contributory factor for the optimum development and maturity of youth and their grounding of new families.

### ARTICLE 31. **Right to a healthy environment.**

1. Youth have the right to live in a healthy and balanced environment.
2. The States Parties recognise the importance of protecting and using properly the natural resources in order to satisfy the current needs without endangering the requirements of future generations.
3. The States Parties undertake to encourage and promote awareness, responsibility, solidarity, participation and education and information regarding environment among youth.

### ARTICLE 32. **Right to leisure and recreation.**

1. Youth have right to recreation and leisure, to travel and know other national, regional or international communities as a mechanism to promote cultural, educational, experience and leisure exchange in order to manage to know one another and the respect towards cultural diversity and solidarity.
2. The States Parties undertake to implement policies and programmes which promote the exercise of these rights and to adopt measures which enable the free movement of youth about their countries.

### ARTICLE 33. **Right to sport.**

1. Youth have right to physical education and the practice of sports. The values of respect, becoming better, personally and collectively, team work and solidarity shall prevail in the promotion of sport. In any case, the States Parties undertake to promote the mentioned values as well as to eradicate violence associated to the practice of sport.
2. The States Parties undertake to promote, under equal opportunities, activities which contribute to the development of youth in the physical, intellectual and social levels, guaranteeing the needed human resources and infrastructures for the exercise of these rights.

#### ARTICLE 34. **Right to development.**

1. Youth have the right to social, economic, political and cultural development and to be considered priority subjects of the initiatives taken with that aim.
2. The States Parties undertake to adopt the appropriate measures to guarantee the assignment of the needed human, technical and economic resources for programmes which attend the promotion of youth, in rural and urban areas, the participation in the discussion to elaborate development plans and their integration in the starting process of the corresponding national, regional and local actions.

### Chapter IV Mechanisms for Promotion

#### ARTICLE 35. **Youth National Organisations.**

1. The States Parties undertake to create a permanent governmental organisation in charge of designing, coordinating and evaluating public youth policies.
2. The States Parties undertake to promote all legal measures, as well as any other one, aiming the promotion of organisation and consolidation of youth participation structures in the local, regional and national scope, as tools to promote the participation in associations, exchange, cooperation and representation before public authorities.
3. The States Parties undertake to provide national public youth organisations with the needed capacity and resources to carry out a monitoring of the degree of application of the rights recognised in the present

Convention and in the respective national legislations and to elaborate and diffuse annual national reports about the evolution and progresses achieved in the matter.

4. The national authorities competent for public Youth policies shall submit the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation a biannual report on the progress made in achieving the observance of the provisions of the present Convention. The mentioned report shall be submitted to the Headquarters of the Secretary-General six months before the celebration of the Iberoamerican Conference of Youth Ministers.

#### ARTICLE 36. **About the regional monitoring of the application of the Convention.**

1. Within Iberoamerica and in conformity with this Convention, the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation (OIJ) is granted the mission of requesting the information considered appropriate concerning youth public policies, as well as knowing the reports elaborated from the obligation assumed by the States Parties in the present Convention and formulating the proposals considered appropriate to acquire the effective respect of the rights of youth.
2. The Secretary General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation (OIJ) shall transmit the results of the reports deriving from the application of the provisions of the Convention submitted by the national authorities in the form foreseen in the previous article to the Iberoamerican Conference of Youth Ministers.

3. The Conference of Ministers may dictate the rules or regulations governing the exercise of the mentioned powers.

#### ARTICLE 37. **Diffusion of the Convention.**

The States Parties undertake to make the principles and dispositions of the present Convention widely known by Youth, as well as by the whole society.

### Chapter V

#### ARTICLE 38. **Interpretation rules.**

The provisions for the implementation of the present Convention shall apply without prejudice of existing dispositions or rules which recognise or extend the rights of youth proclaimed in it or which may be included in the laws of a signing Iberoamerican State or in the international law in force regarding that State.

#### Final clauses.

#### ARTICLE 39. **Signature, ratification and accession.**

1. The present Convention is open for signature by all Iberoamerican States.
2. The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation.
3. The present Convention shall be open to accession by any Iberoamerican State. Accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation.

#### ARTICLE 40. **Validity.**

1. The present Convention shall enter into force 30 days after the date of the deposit of the fifth ratification or accession instrument with the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation.
2. For each Iberoamerican State ratifying the Convention or acceding to it after the deposit of the fifth instrument of ratification or instrument of accession, the Convention shall enter into force 30 days after the date of the deposit of its own instrument of ratification or instrument of accession.

#### ARTICLE 41. **Amendments.**

1. Any State Party may propose an amendment and file it with the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation, who shall thereupon communicate any proposed amendments to the rest of the States Parties with a request that they notify him whether they favour a Conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting upon the proposals. In the event that, within four months after the date of such notification, at least one third of the States Parties favours such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the Conference.
2. An amendment shall come into force when it has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the States Parties.
3. When amendments come into force, they shall be binding on those States Parties which have accepted them, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Covenant and any earlier amendment which they have accepted.

**ARTICLE 42. Reception and communication of declarations.**

1. The Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation shall receive and communicate all States Parties the reservations formulated by the States upon ratification or accession.
2. Reservations which are incompatible with the object and aim of the present Convention shall not be accepted.
3. Any reservation may be retired at any moment through a notification for the purpose and submitted to the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation, who shall thereupon inform all States. The mentioned notification shall become effective the date of reception by the Secretary-General.

**ARTICLE 43. Denounce of the Convention.**

Any State Party may denounce the present Convention through written communication to the Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation. The denounce shall become effective one year after the Secretary-General receives it.

**ARTICLE 44. Designation of the Depositary.**

The Secretary-General of the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation is designated as depositary of the present Convention, whose texts in Spanish and Portuguese are equally authentic.

In witness whereof, the plenipotentiary undersigned, duly authorised by their respective governments, have signed the present Convention.



## ANNEX 2: AFRICAN YOUTH CHARTER

### Preamble

GUIDED by the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the States Parties to the present “African Youth Charter”;

GUIDED by the vision, hopes and aspirations of the African Union, inclusive of Africa’s integration, the inherent dignity and inalienable rights afforded to all members of the human family as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1976) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), and articulated for the African peoples through the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (1986);

RECALLING the resolution of the Heads of State and government during the 1999 Algiers Summit for the development of the Pan-African Charter;

FULLY ATTACHED to the virtues and values of African historical tradition and civilization which form the foundation for our concept of people’s rights;

RECALLING the historic injustices imposed on Africa such as slavery, colonization, depletion of natural resources and taking into account the firm will of African peoples for self-determination and the economic integration of Africa;

CONVINCED that Africa’s greatest resource is its youthful population and that through their active and full participation, Africans can surmount the difficulties that lie ahead;

BEARING IN MIND the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights relating to the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the progress achieved in eliminating gender discrimination, but ever cognisant of the obstacles that still prevent girls and women from fully participating in African society;

REAFFIRMING the need to take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children as outlined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and through the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999);

ACKNOWLEDGING the commitments already made towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and inviting the partners to reaffirm their support to advance the well-being of youth;

RECOGNISING the efforts made by States Parties and civil societies to address the economic, social, educational, cultural and spiritual needs of youth;



NOTING with concern the situation of African youth, many of whom are marginalized from mainstream society through inequalities in income, wealth and power, unemployment and underemployment, infected and affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, living in situations of poverty and hunger, experiencing illiteracy and poor quality educational systems, restricted access to health services and to information, exposure to violence including gender violence, engaging in armed conflicts and experiencing various forms of discrimination;

RECALLING the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond and the ten priority areas identified for youth (education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, girls and young women and youth participating in decision-making), and the five additional areas (HIV/AIDS, ICT, Inter-generational dialogue,...) adopted at the 2005 UN General assembly; RECOGNISING that youth are partners, assets and a prerequisite for sustainable development and for the peace and prosperity of Africa with a unique contribution to make to the present and to future development;

CONSIDERING the role that youth have played in the process of decolonisation, the struggle against apartheid and more recently in its efforts to encourage the development and to promote the democratic processes on the African Continent;

REAFFIRMING that the continuous cultural development of Africa rests with its youth and therefore requires their active and enlightened participation as espoused in the Cultural Charter for Africa;

GUIDED by the New Partnership for Africa's Development Strategic Framework for Youth Programme of 2004 that is working towards youth empowerment and development;

ACKNOWLEDGING the increasing calls and the enthusiasm of youth to actively participate at local, national, regional and international levels to determine their own development and the advancement of society at large;

ACKNOWLEDGING ALSO the call in Bamako (2005) by the youth organisations across Africa to empower youth by building their capacity, leadership, responsibilities and provide access to information such that they can take up their rightful place as active agents in decision-making and governance;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the inter-relatedness of the challenges facing youth and the need for cross-sectoral policies and programmes that attend to the needs of youth in a holistic manner;

CONSIDERING that the promotion and protection of the rights of youth also implies the performance of duties by youth as by all other actors in society;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the needs and aspirations of young displaced persons, refugees and youth with special needs;

## Have agreed as follows:

### DEFINITIONS

“Chairperson” shall mean the Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

“Charter” shall mean the African Youth Charter;

“Commission” shall mean the Commission of African Union;

“Diaspora” shall mean peoples of African descent and heritage living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and who remain committed to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union (DOC.EX.CL/164(VII));

“Member States” shall mean Member States of the African Union;

“Minors” shall mean young people aged 15 to 17 years subject to each country’s laws;

“States Parties” shall mean Member States, which have ratified or acceded to the present Charter;

“Union” shall mean the African Union;

“Youth” For the purposes of this Charter, youth or young people shall refer to every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

## PART 1: RIGHTS AND DUTIES

### ARTICLE 1: **Obligation of State Parties**

1. States Parties of the African Union to the present Charter shall recognize the rights, freedoms and duties enshrined in this Charter.

2. State Parties shall undertake the necessary steps, in accordance with their Constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Charter, to adopt such legislative or other measures that may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Charter.

### ARTICLE 2: **Non-discrimination**

1. Every young person shall be entitled to the enjoyments of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of their race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that youth are protected against all forms of discrimination on the basis of status, activities, expressed opinions or beliefs.
3. State Parties shall recognize the rights of Young people from ethnic, religious and linguistic marginalized groups or youth of indigenous origin, to enjoy their own culture, freely practice their own religion or to use their own language in community with other members of their group.

### ARTICLE 3: **Freedom of Movement**

1. Every young person has the right to leave any country, including his/her own, and to return to his/her country.

### ARTICLE 4: **Freedom of Expression**

1. Every young person shall be assured the right to express his or her ideas and opin-

ions freely in all matters and to disseminate his or her ideas and opinions subject to the restrictions as are prescribed by laws.

2. Every young person shall have the freedom to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing, in print, in the form of art or through any media of the young person's choice subject to the restrictions as are prescribed by laws.

#### **ARTICLE 5: Freedom of Association**

1. Every young person shall have the right to free association and freedom of peaceful assembly in conformity with the law.
2. Young people shall not be compelled to belong to an association.

#### **ARTICLE 6: Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion**

Every young person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

#### **ARTICLE 7: Protection of Private Life**

No young person shall be subject to the arbitrary or unlawful interference with his/her privacy, residence or correspondence, or to attacks upon his/her honour or reputation.

#### **ARTICLE 8: Protection of the Family**

1. The family, as the most basic social institution, shall enjoy the full protection and support of States Parties for its establishment and development noting that the structure and form of families varies in different social and cultural contexts.

2. Young men and women of full age who enter into marriage shall do so based on their free consent and shall enjoy equal rights and responsibilities.

#### **ARTICLE 9: Property**

1. Every young person shall have the right to own and to inherit property.
2. States Parties shall ensure that young men and young women enjoy equal rights to own property.
3. States Parties shall ensure that youth are not arbitrarily deprived of their property including inherited property.

#### **ARTICLE 10: Development**

1. Every young person shall have the right to social, economic, political and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind.
2. States Parties shall encourage youth organizations to lead youth programmes and to ensure the exercise of the right to development.
3. States Parties shall:
  - a. Encourage the media to disseminate information that will be of economic, political, social and cultural benefit to youth;
  - b. Promote the development of youth media for the dissemination of information to young people;

- c. Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of information from both national and international sources that are of economic, social and cultural value to youth;
- d. Provide access to information and education and training for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, to be schooled in democratic processes, citizenship, decision-making, governance and leadership such that they develop the technical skills and confidence to participate in these processes;
- d. Give priority to policies and programmes including youth advocacy and peer-to-peer programmes for marginalised youth, such as out-of-school and out-of-work youth, to offer them the opportunity and motivation to re-integrate into mainstream society;
- e. Provide access to information such that young people become aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate in decision-making and civic life;
- f. Institute measures to professionalize youth work and introduce relevant training programmes in higher education and other such training institutions;

#### ARTICLE 11: Youth Participation

1. Every young person shall have the right to participate in all spheres of society.
2. States Parties shall take the following measures to promote active youth participation in society:

They shall:

- a. Guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws;
- b. Facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in decision-making at local, national, regional, and continental levels of governance;
- c. Ensure equal access to young men and young women to participate in decision-making and in fulfilling civic duties;
- g. Provide technical and financial support to build the institutional capacity of youth organisations;
- h. Institute policy and programmes of youth voluntarism at local, national, regional and international levels as an important form of youth participation and as a means of peer-to-peer training;
- i. Provide access to information and services that will empower youth to become aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- j. Include youth representatives as part of delegations to ordinary sessions and other relevant meetings to broaden channels of communication and enhance the discussion of youth related issues.

## ARTICLE 12: National Youth Policy

1. Every State Parties shall develop a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy.
  - a. The policy shall be cross-sectoral in nature considering the inter-relatedness of the challenges facing young people;
  - b. The development of a national youth policy shall be informed by extensive consultation with young people and cater for their active participation in decision-making at all levels of governance in issues concerning youth and society as a whole;
  - c. A youth perspective shall be integrated and mainstreamed into all planning and decision-making as well as programme development. The appointment of youth focal points in government structures shall enable this process;
  - d. Mechanisms to address these youth challenges shall be framed within the national development framework of the country;
  - e. The policy shall provide guidelines on the definition of youth adopted and specify subgroups that shall be targeted for development;
  - f. The policy shall advocate equal opportunities for young men and for young women;
  - g. A baseline evaluation or situation analysis shall inform the policy on the priority issues for youth development;
  - h. The policy shall be adopted by parliament and enacted into law;
  - i. A national youth coordinating mechanism shall be set up and shall provide a platform as well as serve as a linking agent for youth organisations to participate in youth policy development as well as the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of related programmes;
  - j. National programmes of action shall be developed that are time bound and that are connected to an implementation and evaluation strategy for which indicators shall be outlined;
  - k. Such a programme of action shall be accompanied by adequate and sustained budgetary allocation.

## ARTICLE 13: Education and Skills Development

1. Every young person shall have the right to education of good quality.
2. The value of multiple forms of education, including formal, non-formal, informal, distance learning and life-long learning, to meet the diverse needs of young people shall be embraced.
3. The education of young people shall be directed to:
  - a. The promotion and holistic development of the young person's cognitive and creative and emotional abilities to their full potential;

- b. Fostering respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as set out in the provisions of the various African human and people's rights and international human rights declarations and conventions;
  - c. Preparing young people for responsible lives in free societies that promote peace, understanding, tolerance, dialogue, mutual respect and friendship among all nations and across all groupings of people;
  - d. The preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures and the development of national and African identity and pride;
  - e. The development of respect for the environment and natural resources;
  - f. The development of life skills to function effectively in society and include issues such as HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, substance abuse prevention and cultural practices that are harmful to the health of young girls and women as part of the education curricula;
4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving full realisation of this right and shall, in particular:
- a. Provide free and compulsory basic education and take steps to minimise the indirect costs of education;
  - b. Make all forms of secondary education more readily available and accessible by all possible means including progressively free;
  - c. Take steps to encourage regular school attendance and reduce drop-out rates;
  - d. Strengthen participation in and the quality of training in science and technology;
  - e. Revitalise vocational education and training relevant to current and prospective employment opportunities and expand access by developing centres in rural and remote areas;
  - f. Make higher education equally accessible to all including establishing distance learning centres of excellence;
  - g. Avail multiple access points for education and skills development including opportunities outside of mainstream educational institutions e.g., workplace skills development, distance learning, adult literacy and national youth service programmes;
  - h. Ensure, where applicable, that girls and young women who become pregnant or married before completing their education shall have the opportunity to continue their education;
  - i. Allocate resources to upgrade the quality of education delivered and ensure that it is relevant to the needs of contemporary society and engenders critical thinking rather than rote learning;



- j. Adopt pedagogy that incorporates the benefits of and trains young people in the use of modern information and communication technology such that youth are better prepared for the world of work;
  - k. Encourage youth participation in community work as part of education to build a sense of civic duty;
  - l. Introduce scholarship and bursary programmes to encourage entry into post-primary school education and into higher education outstanding youth from disadvantaged communities, especially young girls;
  - m. Establish and encourage participation of all young men and young women in sport, cultural and recreational activities as part of holistic development;
  - n. Promote culturally appropriate, age specific sexuality and responsible parenthood education;
  - o. Promote the equivalence of degrees between African educational institutions to enable the youth to study and work in State Parties;
  - p. Adopt preferential recruitment policies for African youth with specialised skills amongst States Parties.
5. Youth are determined to transform the continent in the fields of science and technology. Therefore they are committed to:
- a. Promoting and using science and technology in Africa;
  - b. Conducting research towards science and technology.
6. State Parties should encourage youth to conduct research. In this regard, an African discoveries day should be established along with mechanism of awarding prizes at the continental level.
7. Enterprises that are located in Africa should establish partnerships with training institutions to contribute to technology transfer for the benefit of African students and researchers.

#### **ARTICLE 14: Poverty Eradication and Socio-economic Integration of Youth**

- 1. States Parties shall: Recognise the right of young people to a standard of living adequate for their holistic development.
- 2. Recognise the right of young people to be free from hunger and shall take individual or collective measures to:
  - a. Enhance the attractiveness of rural areas to young people by improving access to services and facilities such as educational and cultural services;
  - b. Train young people to take up agricultural, mineral, commercial and industrial production using contemporary systems and promote the benefits of modern information and communication technology to gain access to existing and new markets;

- c. Provide grants of land to youth and youth organisations for socio- economic development purposes;
  - d. Facilitate access to credit to promote youth participation in agricultural and other sustainable livelihood projects;
  - e. Facilitate the participation of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, policies and poverty reduction strategies.
3. Recognise the right of every young person to benefit from social security, including social insurance.

In this regard, States Parties shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realisation of these rights in accordance with their national law especially when the security of food tenure, clothing, housing and other basic needs are compromised.

#### ARTICLE 15: Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Employment

- 1. Every young person shall have the right to gainful employment.
- 2. Every young person shall have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is likely to be hazardous to or interfere with the young person's education, or to be harmful to the young person's health or holistic development.
- 3. States Parties shall address and ensure the availability of accurate data on youth employment, unemployment and underemployment so as to facilitate the prioritisation of the issue in National development programmes complemented by clear programmes to address unemployment;
- 4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving full realisation of this right to gainful employment and shall in particular:
  - a. Ensure equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work or equal value of work and offer protection against discrimination regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, disability, religion, political, social, cultural or economic background;
  - b. Develop macroeconomic policies that focus on job creation particularly for youth and for young women;
  - c. Develop measures to regulate the informal economy to prevent unfair labour practices where the majority of youth work;
  - d. Foster greater linkages between the labour market and the education and training system to ensure that curricula are aligned to the needs of the labour market and that youth are being trained in fields where employment opportunities are available or are growing;
  - e. Implement appropriately-timed career guidance for youth as part of the schooling and post-schooling education system;

- f. Institute incentive schemes for employers to invest in the skills development of employed and unemployed youth;
- g. Institute national youth service programmes to engender community participation and skills development for entry into the labour market.
- e. Institute comprehensive programmes to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS by providing education, information, communication and awareness creation as well as making protective measures and reproductive health services available;

#### ARTICLE 16: Health

1. Every young person shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health.
2. States Parties shall undertake to pursue the full implementation of this right and particular shall take measures to:
  - a. Make available equitable and ready access to medical assistance and health care especially in rural and poor urban areas with an emphasis on the development of primary health care;
  - b. Secure the full involvement of youth in identifying their reproductive and health needs and designing programmes that respond to these needs with special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged youth;
  - c. Provide access to youth friendly reproductive health services including contraceptives, antenatal and post natal services;
  - d. Institute programmes to address health pandemics in Africa such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria;
  - f. Expand the availability and encourage the uptake of voluntary counselling and confidential testing for HIV/AIDS;
  - g. Provide timely access to treatment for young people infected with HIV/AIDS including prevention of mother to child transmission, post rape prophylaxis, and anti-retroviral therapy and creation of health services specific for young people;
  - h. Provide food security for people living with HIV/AIDS;
  - i. Institute comprehensive programmes including legislative steps to prevent unsafe abortions;
  - j. Take legislative steps such as banning advertising and increasing price in addition to instituting comprehensive preventative and curative programmes to control the consumption of tobacco, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and alcohol abuse;
  - k. Raise awareness amongst youth on the dangers of drug abuse through partnerships with youth, youth organisations and the community;

- l. Strengthen local, national, regional and international partnerships to eradicate the demand, supply and trafficking of drugs including using youth to traffic drugs;
- m. Provide rehabilitation for young people abusing drugs such that they can be re-integrated into social and economic life;
- n. Provide technical and financial support to build the institutional capacity of youth organisations to address public health concerns including issues concerning youth with disabilities and young people married at an early age.

#### ARTICLE 17: Peace and Security

In view of the important role of youth in promoting peace and non-violence and the lasting physical and psychological scars that result from involvement in violence, armed conflict and war, States Parties shall:

- a. Strengthen the capacity of young people and youth organisations in peace building, conflict prevention and conflict resolution through the promotion of intercultural learning, civic education, tolerance, human rights education and democracy, mutual respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, the importance of dialogue and cooperation, responsibility, solidarity and international cooperation;
- b. Institute mechanisms to promote a culture of peace and tolerance amongst young people that discourages their participation in acts of violence, terror-

ism, xenophobia, racial discrimination, gender-based discrimination, foreign occupation and trafficking in arms and drugs;

- c. Institute education to promote a culture of peace and dialogue in all schools and training centres at all levels;
- d. Condemn armed conflict and prevent the participation, involvement, recruitment and sexual slavery of young people in armed conflict;
- e. Take all feasible measures to protect the civilian population, including youth, who are affected and displaced by armed conflict;
- f. Mobilise youth for the reconstruction of areas devastated by war, bringing help to refugees and war victims and promoting peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation activities;
- g. Take appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of young victims of armed conflict and war by providing access to education and skills development such as vocational training to resume social and economic life.

#### ARTICLE 18: Law Enforcement

1. Every young person accused or found guilty of having infringed the penal law shall have the right to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

2. States Parties shall in particular:

- a. Ensure that youth who are detained or imprisoned or in rehabilitation centres are not subjected to torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment;
- b. Ensure that accused minors shall be segregated from convicted persons and shall be subject to separate treatment appropriate to their status;
- c. Build rehabilitation facilities for accused and imprisoned youth who are still minors and house them separately from adults;
- d. Provide induction programmes for imprisoned youth that are based on reformation, social rehabilitation and reintegration into family life;
- e. Make provisions for the continued education and skills development of imprisoned young people as part of the restorative justice process.
- f. Ensure that accused and convicted young people are entitled to a lawyer.

**ARTICLE 19: Sustainable Development and Protection of the Environment**

1. States Parties shall ensure the use of sustainable methods to improve the lives of young people such that measures instituted do not jeopardise opportunities for future generations.
2. States Parties shall recognise the vested interest of young people in protecting the natural environment as the inheritors of the environment. In this regard, they

shall:

- a. Encourage the media, youth organisations, in partnership with national and international organisations, to produce, exchange and disseminate information on environmental preservation and best practices to protect the environment;
- b. Train youth in the use of technologies that protect and conserve the environment;
- c. Support youth organisations in instituting programmes that encourage environmental preservation such as waste reduction, recycling and tree planting programmes;
- d. Facilitate youth participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of environmental policies including the conservation of African natural resources at local, national, regional and international levels;
- e. Develop realistic and flexible strategies for the regeneration of forests;
- f. Initiate intensive actions to prevent the expansion of deserts.

**ARTICLE 20: Youth and Culture**

1. States Parties shall take the following steps to promote and protect the morals and traditional values recognised by the community:

- a. Eliminate all traditional practices that undermine the physical integrity and dignity of women;
  - b. Recognise and value beliefs and traditional practices that contribute to development;
  - c. Establish institutions and programmes for the development, documentation, preservation and dissemination of culture;
  - d. Work with educational institutions, youth organisations, the media and other partners to raise awareness of and teach and inform young people about African culture, values and indigenous knowledge;
  - e. Harness the creativity of youth to promote local cultural values and traditions by representing them in a format acceptable to youth and in a language and in forms to which youth are able to relate;
  - f. Introduce and intensify teaching in African languages in all forms of education as a means to accelerate economic, social, political and cultural development;
  - g. Promote inter-cultural awareness by organising exchange programmes between young people and youth organisations within and across States Parties.
1. States Parties recognise that the shift towards a knowledge-based economy is dependent on information and communication technology which in turn has contributed towards a dynamic youth

culture and global consciousness. In this regard, they shall:

- a. Promote widespread access to information and communication technology as a means for education, employment creation, interacting effectively with the world and building understanding, tolerance and appreciation of other youth cultures;
- b. Encourage the local production of and access to information and communication technology content;
- c. Engage young people and youth organisations to understand the nexus between contemporary youth culture and traditional African culture, and enable them to express this fusion through drama, art, writing, music and other cultural and artistic forms;
- d. Help young people to use positive elements of globalisation such as science and technology and information and communication technology to promote new cultural forms that link the past to the future;

#### ARTICLE 21: Youth in the Diaspora

States Parties shall recognise the right of young people to live anywhere in the world. In this regard, they shall:

- a. Promote the equivalence of degrees between African educational institutions to enable the youth to study and work in State Parties;



- b. Promote the recruitment of African youth with specialized skills, in the spirit of African solutions for African problems, according to national policies and priorities;
- c. Facilitate youth organisations to liaise and collaborate with the African youth Diaspora;
- d. Establish structures that encourage and assist the youth in the diaspora to return to and fully re-integrate into the social and economic life in Africa;
- e. Promote and protect the rights of young people living in the diaspora;
- f. Encourage young people in the diaspora to engage themselves in development activities in their country of origin.

#### **ARTICLE 22: Leisure, Recreation, Sportive and Cultural Activities**

1. Young people shall have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities that are part of a health lifestyle as well as to participate freely in sport, physical education drama, the arts, music and other forms of cultural life. In this regard, States Parties shall:
  - a. Make provision for equal access for young men and young women to sport, physical education, cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities;
  - b. Put in place adequate infrastructure and services in rural and urban areas for youth to participate in sport, physical education, cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

#### **ARTICLE 23: Girls and Young Women**

1. States Parties acknowledge the need to eliminate discrimination against girls and young women according to obligations stipulated in various international, regional and national human rights conventions and instruments designed to protect and promote women's rights. In this regard, they shall:
  - a. Introduce legislative measures that eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and young women and ensure their human rights and fundamental freedoms;
  - b. Ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively with boys at all levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavours;
  - c. Institute programmes to make girls and young women aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate as equal members of society;
  - d. Guarantee universal and equal access to and completion of a minimum of nine years of formal education;
  - e. Guarantee equal access to and completion of vocational, secondary and higher education in order to effectively address the existing imbalance between young men and women in certain professions;
  - f. Ensure that education material and teaching practices are gender sensitive and encourage girls and young women to undertake studies in the sciences;

- g. Provide educational systems that do not impede girls and young women, including married and/or pregnant young women, from attending;
- h. Take steps to provide equal access to health care services and nutrition for girls and young women;
- i. Protect girls and young women from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous, takes them away from education or that is harmful to their mental or physical health;
- j. Offer equal access to young women to employment and promote their participation in all sectors of employment;
- k. Introduce special legislation and programmes of action that make available opportunities to girls and young women including access to education as a prerequisite and a priority for rapid social and economic development;
- l. Enact and enforce legislation that protect girls and young women from all forms of violence, genital mutilation, incest, rape, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, trafficking, prostitution and pornography;
- m. Develop programmes of action that provide legal, physical and psychological support to girls and young women who have been subjected to violence and abuse such that they can fully re-integrate into social and economic life;

- n. Secure the right for young women to maternity leave.

#### ARTICLE 24: **Mentally and Physically Challenged Youth**

1. States Parties recognise the right of mentally and physically challenged youth to special care and shall ensure that they have equal and effective access to education, training, health care services, employment, sport, physical education and cultural and recreational activities.
2. State Parties shall work towards eliminating any obstacles that may have negative implications for the full integration of mentally and physically challenged youth into society including the provision of appropriate infrastructure and services to facilitate easy mobility.

#### ARTICLE 25: **Elimination of Harmful Social and Cultural Practices**

State Parties shall take all appropriate steps to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices that affect the welfare and dignity of youth, in particular;

- a. Customs and practices that harm the health, life or dignity of the youth;
- b. Customs and practices discriminatory to youth on the basis of gender, age or other status.

#### ARTICLE 26: **Responsibilities of Youth**

Every young person shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State, and the international community. Youth shall have the duty to:

- a. Become the custodians of their own development;
  - b. Protect and work for family life and cohesion;
  - c. Have full respect for parents and elders and assist them anytime in cases of need in the context of positive African values;
  - d. Partake fully in citizenship duties including voting, decision making and governance;
  - e. Engage in peer-to-peer education to promote youth development in areas such as literacy, use of information and communication technology, HIV/AIDS prevention, violence prevention and peace building;
  - f. Contribute to the promotion of the economic development of States Parties and Africa by placing their physical and intellectual abilities at its service;
  - g. Espouse an honest work ethic and reject and expose corruption;
  - h. Work towards a society free from substance abuse, violence, coercion, crime, degradation, exploitation and intimidation;
  - i. Promote tolerance, understanding, dialogue, consultation and respect for others regardless of age, race, ethnicity, colour, gender, ability, religion, status or political affiliation;
  - j. Defend democracy, the rule of law and all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
  - k. Encourage a culture of voluntarism and human rights protection as well as participation in civil society activities;
  - m. Promote patriotism towards and unity and cohesion of Africa;
  - n. Promote, preserve and respect African traditions and cultural heritage and pass on this legacy to future generations;
  - o. Become the vanguard of re-presenting cultural heritage in languages and in forms to which youth are able to relate;
  - p. Protect the environment and conserve nature.
- ARTICLE 27: Popularization of the Charter**
- States Parties shall have the duty to promote and ensure through teaching, education and publication, the respect of rights, responsibilities and freedoms contained in the present Charter and to see to it that these freedoms, rights and responsibilities as well as corresponding obligations and duties are understood.
- ARTICLE 28: Duties of the African Union Commission**
- The African Union Commission shall ensure that States Parties respect the commitments made and fulfil the duties outlined in the present Charter by;
- a. Collaborating with governmental, non-governmental institutions and developmental partners to identify best practices on youth policy formulation and implementation and encouraging

the adaptation of principles and experiences among States Parties;

- b. Inviting States Parties to include youth representatives as part of their delegations to the ordinary sessions of the African Union and other relevant meetings of the policy organs to broaden the channels of communication and enhance the discussion of youth-related issues;
- c. Instituting measures to create awareness of its activities and make information on its activities more readily available and accessible to youth;
- d. Facilitating exchange and co-operation between youth organisations across national borders in order to develop regional youth solidarity, political consciousness and democratic participation in collaboration with development partners.

## PART 2: Final Provisions

### ARTICLE 29: Savings clause

Nothing in this Charter shall be taken as minimising higher standards and values contained in other relevant human rights instruments ratified by States concerned or rational law or policies.

### ARTICLE 30: Signature, Ratification or Adherence

1. The present Charter shall be open to signature by all the Member States. The present Charter shall be subject to ratification or accession by Member States. The instrument of ratification or accession to the present Charter shall be deposited with the Chairperson of the Commission.
2. The present Charter shall come into force thirty (30) days after the deposit with the Chairperson of the Commission of the instruments of ratification of fifteen (15) Member States.

### ARTICLE 31: Amendment and Revision of the Charter

1. The present Charter may be amended or revised if any Member State makes a written request to that effect to the Chairperson of the Commission, provided that the proposed amendment is not submitted to the Assembly of the Union for consideration until all Member States have been duly notified of it.
2. An amendment shall be approved by a simple majority of the Member States. Such amendment shall come into force for each Member States that has ratified or acceded to it on the date of the deposit of its instrument of ratification.



## ANNEX 3: TEN PRINCIPLES FOR A EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON YOUTH RIGHTS

Youth rights are those rights which enable young people to successfully make the transition between childhood and adulthood, to become informed, independent, autonomous, responsible and committed citizens at local, national and international levels. Ensuring young people's access to their rights is a means of ensuring cohesive, sustainable societies and is an investment in the future of the European construction. An instrument for the implementation of youth rights should serve as a framework for modelling national youth policies and should be based on the following ten principles.

### 1. Definitions

What is missing at the moment is a clear and comprehensive definition of the meaning of youth. Member states should define the age groups covered by their youth policies, which should be coherent with other legal provisions concerning young people, and as far as possible correspond to those of other European countries. A framework convention on youth rights should seek to provide common definitions to facilitate the implementation of rights and the monitoring of their implementation through statistics.

### 2. Education and training

States should provide education that is universal, free and accessible. Beyond economic considerations, education should be valued as a means of self-fulfilment and of empowerment for young people. As well as equipping young people for employment, education should promote values. Education systems need to be reorganised to better correspond to rapid economic changes and the skills and sectors of the economy of the future. Moreover, educational policies should be characterised by flexibility and allow for vocational retraining and mobility.

Member states should adopt measures which enable the mobility of students in higher education and establish validation procedures for recognition of academic achievements and professional qualifications across Europe. To this end, they should promote the effective use of the European Higher Education Area, and implement the Bologna Process and other mechanisms for recognition of qualifications.

Non-formal education, intercultural learning and volunteer work should be more recognised as an integral part of young people's qualifications. Quality vocational training should be provided as an alternative or accompaniment to university education.

Young people also need to be given opportunities to gain language proficiency throughout their education, especially when their mother tongue is other than that spoken in their community.

### 3. Employment

Employment is the primary means of ensuring young people's autonomy. Across Europe, the highest unemployment rates are among young people. Member states should take concrete measures to facilitate the entry of young people into employment (active employment policies and tax and financial incentives to encourage companies to recruit young people into agreed training programmes with on-the-job certification), thereby facilitating the transition between education establishments and the labour market and preventing the excessive use of unpaid work experience or low paid employment. Policies should aim to encourage businesses to assist young people's transition from insecure contracts to stable jobs. National systems and bilateral agreements should ensure that gaps in social security protection systems and problems with labour market integration are identified and closed.

### 4. Housing

Young people have a right to decent, affordable housing of a quality in line with European standards, to enable them to achieve a stable environment for their development as adults and their relations with the community. The ability to become independent by leaving one's parental home should be enabled through access to housing of an adequate standard.

Member states should ensure that higher education institutions provide affordable student lodgings, especially in areas with high rents; social housing should enable young people to live independently at the beginning of their professional career and states should insist on the implementation of percentage quotas for such housing in all regions. Secure and sustainable financial facilities should be made available to aid the granting of mortgages and loans to young individuals and families and ensure that low-interest opportunities are open to them.

### 5. Health and the right to a healthy environment

Health education must be taught at all educational levels. There must also be policies in place to prevent and protect against sexually transmitted diseases, undesired pregnancies, sexual abuse or violence, alcoholism, nicotine poisoning and drug abuse. Comprehensive and age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education should be provided as part of the school curriculum. Member states should conduct health-awareness campaigns directed at young people about health risks and their avoidance, including practical information such as on access to treatment and guarantees of confidentiality.

Young people should also be involved in environmental policies as they are directly affected by their consequences, and are a more certain source of forward-thinking, idealistic and creative ideas concerning environmental preservation and sustainable development.



Young people can serve as highly efficient multipliers of good individual and group practices.

## 6. Participation

In order for young people to understand their rights, accept the accompanying responsibilities and be given opportunities to express themselves, full and effective participation of young people in the life of society and in decision making must be encouraged from an early age. States should promote the implementation of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, and Recommendation Rec(2006)1 of the Committee of Ministers on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development. The Council of Europe's 2010 Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education should also serve as a policy guideline for training youth leaders and member states should foster the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and youth organisations in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education.

Youth parliaments serve to emphasise the importance of developing the capacity of youth for the purpose of preparing them to assume responsibilities, to engage in dialogue, exchange ideas and introduce them to democratic processes. Young people should not, however, be relegated into youth parliamentary structures to the detriment of their participation in core decision-making procedures.

It is important that young people participate in democracy by voting. Therefore, member states should consider lowering the voting age.

## 7. Culture and sport

Cultural policies must ensure young people's access to cultural activities and exchanges, as well as the right to maintain their cultural and personal identity; state spending on culture should not be sacrificed during periods of economic downturn. Universities should recognise the need for students' cultural development and cultural institutions should have the means to use modern, interactive methods of communication and awareness raising. Spaces for artistic creation need to be made available to young people for all cultural activities, including art and music.

Everyone should have the right to maintain their cultural heritage. School students speaking a minority language should be offered lessons in the language in question. Optional courses on minority language and culture should also be offered to students from the majority population.

Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the right to freedom of expression for every young person without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. Appropriate measures should be adopted in order to facilitate the access of young people to the media and, in particular, to the Internet.

Sport is an important way for young people to explore and use their physical capacities, and a potential factor of greater social cohesion and integration. Sports facilities should be pro-

vided free of charge in all regions and in both rural and urban areas. Young people must be allowed to develop their personal abilities and identities as they wish.

## 8. Non-discrimination

Member states should ensure that young people are not discriminated against because of their age, for instance in assuming political or professional responsibilities. The specific problems of young people in vulnerable population groups such as Roma, migrants and refugees, or other minority groups in society should also be addressed, as well as discrimination based on gender and nationality and homophobia, to which young people are particularly exposed.

Positive measures adopted by member states in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective implementation of youth rights, taking due account of the specific conditions of young people within society and their particular needs in relation to their age, should not be considered to be discriminatory as regards the rest of the population.

## 9. Communication on youth policies

It is necessary to raise awareness of the existence and importance of youth rights by increasing, centralising and harmonising the information available to policy and decision makers and to the general public. Youth policies in member states should be disseminated through the most up-to-date communication channels, and be made available in as many

languages as are necessary to ensure they are understood by all. In order for young people to be able to act in accordance with their rights, these rights should be recognised, protected and implemented.

## 10. Implementation

A European framework convention on youth rights would serve as a tool for the effective implementation of national and international provisions applicable to young people. The instrument should contain a set of common indicators, based on concrete statistics for the age groups concerned in each of the above areas. It should also provide guidelines for co-operation between member states in the same areas and common goals to be attained, and regular shared stocktaking exercises should be part of the follow-up to the convention. A new arrangement should be found to allow national youth parliaments or their equivalents to undertake an assessment of progress on youth rights and give further guidance on future programmes. What is needed is better recognition and implementation of the rights of young people in Europe.

*United Nations Population Division, DESA, "World Population Ageing 1950-2050 – VI. Conclusions" p. 33, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldageing19502050/pdf/92chaptervi.pdf>, Accessed 5/4/11*

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