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Youth,
Peace &
Security

Meeting Report

*Youth, Peace, and Security in the Arab States Region:
A Consultation and High-level Dialogue*

Organized under the Patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin
Abdullah II Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Amman, 4 – 6 December 2016



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Thank you to all the participants who provided their feedback and inputs to ensure this document accurately reflects the conversations they had over the 2-day consultation.

Introduction

In December of 2015, the Security Council adopted ground-breaking Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). For the first time, the UN Security Council dedicated a full resolution to the **positive role young people can and do play in conflict prevention, the prevention of violent extremism and peacebuilding**. The Resolution was championed by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and adopted unanimously.

UN SCR 2250 mandates the Secretary-General “*to carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels*”, and to present the results of the Study to Member States of the United Nations. The Study will provide evidence of young people’s contribution to sustaining peace, through an independent and participatory research process. An independent Lead Author, as well as an Advisory Group of 21 experts, were appointed by the Secretary-General to undertake the Study. Consultations with young people and youth-led civil society organisations offer an essential contribution to the Study, in order to gather the views, aspirations and demands from young people for peace and security issues. For more information about the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, please click [here](#).

The Arab States Consultation and High-Level Dialogue, held in Amman, Jordan, from 4 to 6 December 2016, was the first of a series of regional consultations for the Progress Study. It was organized by UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and the Peacebuilding Support Office. There were 59 young participants¹ selected out of 4,000 applications gathered through an open call. These young men and women came from 18 different countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The precise number of participants from each country is listed in Annex A. Participants were selected on the basis of their active engagement in peace and security issues, their involvement with youth-led organizations, youth-focused organization or affiliation with peacebuilding networks and non-violence movements, ensuring gender and age balance.

The meeting was organized in two parts: the first two days were dedicated to the youth consultation for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. These consultations were facilitated by 3 youth facilitators from the region, through a series of parallel interactive break-out discussions. The third day was conceived as an opportunity to facilitate a

¹Although 65 youth were selected to attend, only 59 were able to attend due to last minute cancellations or restrictions on young people's mobility. Specifically, two young people from Gaza were not given permission by the Israeli government to exit the Gaza Strip.

dialogue between the youth participants and other regional stakeholders around the youth, peace and security agenda. The list of organizations that attended day 3 is included in annex C.

This report provides an analytical summary of the main issues discussed by the young women and men who attended the meeting, as well as their recommendations for peace and security in the Arab States region. In order to ensure objectivity and accuracy in the reflection of participants' views, this report was shared with the participants for their inputs and comments. The first two days and part of the third day were held under Chatham House rules, and hence not comments or views expressed will be attributed.

1. What Youth, Peace and Security means to young people in the Arab States region

Basic needs: Securing the fulfilment of basic needs, such as food, water and electricity, was one of the main issues highlighted by young people from the Arab States when it was asked what peace and security meant to them. The absence of food, water and electricity are experienced as violations of young people's security and to live their lives with dignity. The resulting insecurity leads to the need for protection and undermines prospects of peace. Participants also emphasized the question of **poverty** as a priority issue, which in their view was directly related to young people's need for protection. In participants' view there is a positive correlation between poverty and the need for protection.

Protection: It was strongly emphasized that the protection of young women and young men from wide range of attacks and threats should be a fundamental aspect of the YPS agenda. Participants highlighted that the concept of protection should be discussed in a broad sense in its relation to diverse experience of young people – protection of young people from not only direct physical harm and sexual violence, but also protection of public institutions play an important role for young people. Participants specifically emphasized the importance of protecting schools during armed conflicts, since attacks on schools not only have a direct impact on their physical security but also limit their ability to gain education and necessary skills to find employment opportunities.

Human Rights: Participants reiterated interlinkages and mutually reinforcing relationship between human rights and peacebuilding in the context of YPS. Protection of fundamental rights has to be seen as the precondition of YPS agenda. In some of the countries in the region, young people are forced to lead their lives without obtaining any identification card, which is mentioned as a challenge to conduct youth peace work. As one of the participants mentioned, *"We can't talk about peace and security with groups who don't have basic rights. We first need to secure people's basic rights"*. Freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, freedom from fear and freedom from violence were mentioned as the most endangered freedoms in the region. In some of the countries youth do not

Education: Participants emphasized that in their eyes, YPS meant provision of basic education services and the improvement of current education institutions and curriculums. It was widely agreed among participants that there is a need to invest in education as the key for peace and development. Participants from multiple countries highlighted that current education curriculums defines identity, religion or ideology related differences negatively.

Education reform should extend beyond focus on the standard curriculum to incorporate knowledge on tolerance, diversity and gender equality. By this way education institutions could shape young people's values for openness. It is as well important to invest resources for the informal education opportunities which can encourage young people to think outside the box.

Diversity: Celebrating ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in the region was a topic repeatedly highlighted by participants throughout the entire meeting. Lack of tolerance and acceptance was outlined as a factor that leads to conflict and potential violence at community level. Instead of seeing diversity as source of tension, participants emphasized that the YPS agenda should frame diversity as a source of peace. Participants strongly stated that the YPS agenda should go beyond respecting, tolerating and accepting each other and rather embrace the diverse identities that youth have.

Participation: Participation in formal and non-formal decision-making processes was discussed as an important part of YPS. Participants explained that normative arguments to enhance their participation in decision-making had not been translated into practice. Conducive political, economic, and social environments should support youth participation in decision- making processes.

Context-based meaning: Recognizing geographical and circumstantial differences is vital to understanding what YPS means to youth within the region. Participants specified that peace and security means different things and is defined by different priorities for young men and women in different country contexts and localities across the region. Perception of YPS priorities varied substantially depending on whether participants lived in a conflict-affected zone (and depending on the nature of past or existing conflict), or in a more peaceful environment. There were stark differences in the way peace was defined in the Syrian and Yemen context vs., for example, the Moroccan or Omani context. Youth valued the need to develop and implement a YPS agenda, while also fully taking into account the varying social, economic and political context in any given country or sub-region.

Common challenges and opportunities for YPS: Despite participants emphasized to pay attention to context based differences, they acknowledged similar security threats, such as the risks associated with recruitment by armed groups, as well as the limitation of their freedoms. Participants repeatedly emphasized their diversity, or their heterogeneous youth identities, but also referred to their commonly held deep connection to their region, and their pride at being from the 'Arab States' region. Despite acknowledging how their lives are heavily affected by ongoing violent conflicts across the region, young people also expressed great loyalty and eagerness to invest in change. They spoke of not wanting to leave their countries and expressed great commitment to working for building peace

across the region, as well as nationalities, religions, communities and cultures. This love for the region embraced ethnic, religious and cultural differences, which were viewed as a creative and pragmatic opportunity to build peace.

2. Challenges and Obstacles to Peace and Security

Lack of confidence in the international community: Participants from the Arab States region expressed a significantly low level of confidence in the international community and the multilateral system. Participants were sceptical of the positive impact of the peacebuilding processes conducted by United Nations, which also influenced their perspectives on the role of the UN Security Council and thus on the value and function of UNSCR 2250. In the words of a young man from Syria in response to a presentation of UNSCR 2250: *“There is a lack of confidence in such resolutions [referring to former Security Council resolutions]. We are clearly frustrated since none of these resolutions are implemented in our country”*.

Building trust between youth and national and local governments: Participants emphasized the importance of working with local government to scale up their peacebuilding projects. However, some of the participants even among those who work with city or municipal authorities still express a low level of trust in national or local governments. They expressed doubt about the commitment of their governments to genuinely providing a safe space and opportunity for young men and women to take leading roles in their communities and their countries on issues related to peace and security. In many instances, young participants expressed concern about being targeted or reprimanded rather than supported by their governments. Participants described instances in which young people working on peacebuilding are often questioned by national or local security forces. As one female participant from Bahrain mentioned, “in order to have access to the field and the families we work with, we need to provide the list of names of the families we target to security forces”.

Freedom of speech: It was agreed by participants that lack of freedom of speech is a major challenge in the region for youth seeking to be involved in programming about peace and security. Young men and women across the region expressed that they did not feel they have a safe platform where they can express their thoughts, ideas, and needs freely on these topics.

Foreign military interventions and ongoing occupations: Beyond just the trust deficits young participants expressed in relation to their governments and the multilateral system on the subject of peace and security, participants coming from conflict-affected zones also

expressed frustrations with the interventions of other States in their homelands. This sentiment was expressed by young men and women from several countries in the region, but this was expressed most skeptically by one young man from Palestine: *"All countries have interfered in the future of Palestinian youth... except planet Mars!"*

Targeted Sanctions: Participants from Levant countries identified targeted economic sanctions as a major peace and security challenge. According to the experience of participants, targeted economic sanctions on their national governments have direct impact in young people's own economic situations, since punishing national economy creates further difficulties for young people to find employment opportunities. In addition to economic challenges, participants pointed out that young people's freedom of movement within and outside of the Arab States region is constrained by pursued sanctions.

Youth and violent extremist groups: On the one hand, some of the participants mentioned that lack of employment opportunities is one of the driving factors that make young people vulnerable to forced recruitment by violent extremist groups. One participant mentioned: *"Armed groups are basically seen as the easy way out by youth who do not have an [economic] alternative."* On the other hand, some of the participants recommended that making easy assumptions about how people join or leave violent extremist groups does not reflect the reality marginalized young people face. Lack of belonging to a social and political group, religious radicalization processes, ideologies and reaction to corruption are also important relevant driving factors that need to be considered. As another participant mentioned, *"listening to marginalized people, and to the people joined the radical group is important to understand why young people join or leave violent extremist groups."*

Conscription: According to participants current military conscription practices in most of the Arab States should be considered a challenge the YPS field has to tackle, since the right to conscientious objection has not been exercised in multiple countries in the region. Participants emphasized that forced military should be thoroughly investigated by experts and international organizations in order to better understand what young people experience.

Patriarchy and gender inequality: Sexual and gender based violence, male custodianship, under-age or forced marriage, bullying women in public space and the barriers to women's participation in decision making process, were all identified by participants as common challenges that young women face in the region. Whilst these problems are often seen as domestic matters or part of the private rather than public realm - and thus as detached from the broader issues of conflict and violent extremism - participants at the Amman Consultation identified them as critical and intrinsic to the peace and security agenda in the

region. They were also factors which were seen to impact the ability of young women to participate freely in peacebuilding work.

Political exclusion by laws: Current regulations exclude young people from decision-making processes. The gap between electoral age and voting age is a structural challenge young people face widely in the region. In other words, although young people are allowed to vote, they are not allowed to run for elections at national level.

Limited funding mechanism for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives: Funds supporting youth workers are perceived as less accessible to youth living in remote areas. There was a general concern expressed that “hard to reach” young people were often excluded in favour of urban-centric approaches or a willingness to engage with more elite youths. It was noted that the result is that in most countries, funds earmarked for youth programming are often only distributed to officially registered organizations, which is perceived to render these fund inaccessible to most of the youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, which are not officially registered organizations. As a result resources are not necessarily supporting the most innovative or needy programs and activities.

3. Priorities

Raising awareness of young peacebuilders: It was strongly asserted that there is a lack of awareness and understanding of young people’s positive role in preventing violent conflicts and building peace in the Arab States region. Using mass media and social media channels more effectively and cultivating a voice for the majority of young men and women involved in building sustainable peace, was seen as critical to raise awareness on the positive impact of young people and to address the stereotypes of young people as victims or perpetrators of violence.

Changing negative image of youth in mass media and as perceived by decision makers: YPS agenda in the region needs to prioritize how young people are portrayed in the mass media. In addition to social media, mainstream media channels should provide young men and women a space to discuss and broadcast their priorities and concerns, profile their positive contributions to peaceful societies and to positive change, and to enable inclusive discussions and dialogues.

Building partnerships with youth is necessary to access the most marginalized: Building effective partnerships with youth organizations is another priority for young people in the context of peace and security. Participants believed that building partnerships with youth themselves was the only option to reach and raise the voices of

young people who are not traditionally heard. Consultation participants emphasized that it is easier for young people to reach their marginalized peers than adults.

Training youth on conflict resolution and peace: Participants emphasized the need to hold more ‘conflict resolution’ workshops and peace education trainings that specifically target the youth population. These events should not be limited to youth living in urban areas: funds and organizations should reach out to youth living in remote rural areas. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of supporting and enhancing the capacities of youth organizations innovating in the spheres of peacebuilding, engagements in peace processes and in conflict resolution and dialogue programs.

Increasing support from governments: Participants requested more financial support from their governments to advance their peacebuilding projects. Without financial support from governments, the sustainability and the outreach of their peacebuilding projects remains limited. Building effective partnership with youth peace organizations and creating space for youth to represent themselves in governance and external relations of their countries have been prioritized by multiple participants.

Spreading a culture of peace: The importance of building a new dialogue culture in the region was repeatedly emphasized throughout consultations. This related to the importance that young participants placed on inculcating values associated with tolerance, a celebration of diversity, and respect for difference. They strongly asserted that these initiatives should begin with children and young adolescents. To this end, they specifically promoted the idea that a ‘culture of peace’ and the importance of dialogue needed to be integrated and developed through the formal education curriculum, as well as in informal educational settings. Participants felt strongly that this was an agenda that the YPS needed to promote.

Identifying the real needs of young people: The perspective was widely expressed that there is a lack of youth- focused research and age-disaggregated data that could help to identify the real challenges young people face and experience in the region. This type of research should have a specific focus on youth, actively involving young men and women themselves in all dimensions of the research. Needs, priorities and challenges of young people should not be discussed only at high-level expert meetings, but should be discussed with youth themselves and to this end policy and research platforms need to be actively cultivated for young people.

Recognize and prioritize problems associated with the exclusion of young refugees: Problems of young refugees were raised by number of participants who are themselves refugees and/or working to promote social cohesion between refugees and local

population. A Syrian refugee participant reiterated the necessity of conducting dialogue between local population and young refugees, *"I have been here in Jordan for three years as a Syrian refugee. I work with institutions, joined schools... Syrian children are being bullied and mistreated in schools here. In Syria, those children who are being raised during war and came here have suffered a lot of injustice. There should be enough space for these children to interact with Jordanian children and actually have a childhood."* In this respect, participants also highlighted that national migration policies and laws needs to be reviewed in order to include migrant and refugee into social and political life.

4. Recommendations

Lift economic sanctions, and control and ban arms trade: Participants agreed that the current economic sanctions on their countries should be lifted urgently. Instead of punishing youth by economic sanctions, the international community should punish countries that are trading weapons to the Arab States region.

Create alternative platforms and methods to enhance youth participation in politics and policy: Participants suggested the establishment of national youth councils, as a way of enhancing youth participation in policy development and decision-making, particularly where this relates to issues related to or influencing peace and security. Participants proposed that in order to enhance the political participation of young men and women, legal frameworks and norms should be established, such as the establishment of quotas for youth participation in national parliaments.

Integrated youth programs: Participants recommended that youth economic empowerment programs needs to create enabling conditions for young people participate in civic and political life actively. To this end, participants suggested economic empowerment programs for young people needs to be integrated to other youth programs, which have socio-political and cultural components. In participants view, these type of youth programs can enhance harmonious co-existence among different ethnic communities and reduce conflict.

Revise educational curriculum: Participants suggested that current curricula in most of the countries should be revised to better promote or include human rights education, the building of a broad based culture of peace, to foster religious tolerance and to cultivate a culture of dialogue and a celebration of diversity. Participants strongly emphasized that such an approach to education, is the single most important method to counter and prevent violent extremism.

Create a regional network for youth peacebuilders: Participants suggested the establishment of a regional online and offline communication network in order share good practices and lessons learned with each other in the fields of peace and security. It was argued that this network should provide a platform for young people to have face-to-face dialogues, as well as to create opportunities to 'scale up' innovative projects they already conduct at local levels, to national, regional levels and even global levels. They saw this as an important contribution of the YPS in profiling youth innovation, resilience and engagement in violence prevention and building sustainable peace. Participants emphasized that the creation of such a network can also provide a sense of belonging to youth living in the region.

Evaluate funding mechanism to support youth-led initiatives: Current funding opportunities do not match the needs of youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, which are mostly operational at grassroots level. YPS should seek to evaluate and propose financing models to support youth-led-peacebuilding, and should provide a mechanism and recommendations to improve better targeting funding of youth led and run peacebuilding at local level.

Reach young people in remote areas: The Progress Study on YPS should highlight knowledge and expertise of young peacebuilders who are working at local level and especially in rural or remote areas. Young people living in big cities and who are easily accessible should not be the only ones who participate in the Study. At the same time, young participants did articulate creative strategies for working in contexts of growing youth urbanization and seeking to partner with and connect to municipal and local authorities. As regards future consultations with young people, it should be kept in mind that a competitive selection process that is predominantly based on applicants' language or writing skills dismiss marginalized young people who are living in remote areas.

Demonstrate peaceful youth identity in the region: According to participants, young people have a particular sense of belonging to the Arab States region – a common value shared by all or most participants. YPS should explore and support reconstruction of a regional, peaceful youth identity. To this end, participants suggested to create an online blog/library which that can raise awareness and of the experiences of young people across the region.

Summary of high-level policy segment on day 3

a. Intergenerational Dialogue on the Recommendations of Young People

The third day started with a short talk given by consultation participant Emadeddin Badi (Libyan civil society activist). In his speech, Emadeddin shared his story about how he joined civil society organizations and started working as a young peacebuilder. Emadeddin echoed the words of Ahmad Alhendawi (UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth): *"If the situation does not change in this region, three out of four Arabs will live in a conflict zone in 2050."* Following two days of discussions on the YPS agenda in the Arab States region, three participants presented their key recommendations to the decision makers on a panel discussion, which was chaired by Ahmad Alhendawi. These recommendations have been reflected in the above section.

Mr. Rami Al Wreikat (Jordan Minister of Youth) shared his reflection on the recommendations presented by the participants. Mr. Wreikat mentioned that high youth unemployment rate is a critical issue in the region, and expressed his willingness to develop solutions through being in a dialogue with youth consultation participants. Mr. Wreikat highlighted that providing an enabling environment for young people to participate in decision-making processes is one of the top priorities of Jordan. To this end, Mr. Wreikat announced that Jordan is going to launch its National Youth Strategy in 2017.

Mr. Dhahi Khalfan Tamim (Lieutenant General United Arab Emirates) shared his strategy and vision of how young people can be a part of decision-making processes. Mr. Tamim presented the success of National Youth Council that which was established in UAE, and suggested other countries in the region to establish similar countries to enhance youth participation in decision-making processes. Mr. Tamim emphasized that the interlinkages between sustainable development and peace and security sector. Lastly, Mr. Tamim expressed his views on youth political participation in relation to Arab Spring.

Ms. Sigrid Kaag (UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon) emphasized that there is a need to think long-term in the region because current problems might heighten, when the region will be impacted more by climate change. Ms. Kaag emphasized the importance of including women and youth, and suggested that there is a need to move beyond the idea that women and youth could only be represented by dedicated ministries. She argued strongly that all of the key issues of development, humanitarian action and peacebuilding are youth and gender issues. Creating participation and representation opportunities for women and youth should therefore be mainstreamed, but also be done across all ministries.

Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad (Deputy Manager and Chief Country Office Support Team, UNDP regional hub for States in Amman) expressed that this consultation will lead to the establishment of a regional youth network cutting across the many barriers in our region. Ms. Ali-Ahmad shared some numbers stated in the Arab Human Development Report 2016 which particularly focuses on Youth. Ms. Ali-Ahmad stressed that 30 percent of the population (105 million people) are youth in the region, and the region had never such a large generation of youth in the history. Ms. Ali-Ahmad suggested that current youth population in the region should be seen as an opportunity for development instead of an economic burden.

Mr. Ahmed Magdy (Regional YPEER Center) stated that UN SCR 2250 makes young people feel stronger, since it is first time UN recognized youth as peacebuilders. Mr. Magdy mentioned that UN SCR is a useful tool to advocate for increased youth participation in peacebuilding. Mr Magdy reminded the young people of their responsibility to work for the implementation of SCR 2250, after attending this meeting.

b. Roundtable Discussion on YPS Regional Roadmap

A group of participants started the session with a sit-in protest to express their dissatisfaction with the organization and some of the speakers on the panel during the previous session. In the original program, the subsequent session was envisaged to include five parallel roundtable discussions on the five pillars (participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration) of the UN SCR 2250; through this sit-in protest, participants effectively created a sixth roundtable on intergenerational equality, which was moderated by UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth Ahmad Alhendawi and which was the most popular roundtable discussion. Participants expressed their frustration that they did not feel they had an equal opportunity to state their opinions in the previous session, while older panel speakers were effectively speaking for young people instead of listening to their stories about their own lives and experiences. This was seen as anathema to the promise of the YPS Progress Study as an endeavour - which was committed to accessing and listening to hard to reach young men and women. The reactions of participants were well recognized and embraced by the organizers. As a result of this discussion, an additional session was added to the original program to give an opportunity to participants to discuss their views and opinions in a non-hierarchical setting with Mr. Alhendawi. The reaction of participants demonstrated an example of how young men and women claim their space, and create and use alternative channels peaceful channels to raise their voices, when facing situations of perceived injustice.

c. Partnerships Panel

Maha Al-Salehi (Female participant from Yemen) started the discussion by emphasizing the need to make partnerships which support educational, cultural and youth-led projects from governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Mr. Luay Shabaneh (UNFPA Arab States Regional Director) emphasized the need for establishing dialogue platforms which can bring youth, decision-makers and the media together in creative dialogues. He also highlighted that we need to focus on the three E's, 'Education, Employment and Equality' as a basis to empower youth and establish strong partnerships between them and the rest of stakeholders.

Mr. Peter Weiderud (Director of Swedish Institute Alexandria) pointed out that young people have low level of confidence in international laws and resolutions in the Arab States region.

Mr. Paul Walton (Anna Lindh Foundation) mentioned that two days long consultations and interaction between youth and decision makers was useful for UN agencies and civil society organizations to orient their work on youth and peacebuilding. It was especially useful to identify the barriers to build partnership.

Mr. Egidijus Navikas (European Union Delegation to Jordan) highlighted that providing better opportunities for youth is not a moral obligation; it is also way to go further for development.

Ms. Mireille Maddah (Female participant from Lebanon): drew the conclusions of the panel speakers and shared them with the audience.

d. Open Forum Discussion on Priorities, Recommendations and Commitments

This final session was moderated by Mr. Alhendawi in an open forum setting where all participants had an equal opportunity to speak about their priorities, recommendations and commitments. In this discussion participants once again repeated their low confidence in the role of Security Council and multilateral system. Participants also expressed their concerns about the mechanisms to select participants for the regional consultations for the Progress Study on YPS, since youth living in Canada or Switzerland applied, were selected, and attended the consultations as participants from an Arab State Country. Participants living in the region emphasized that it is better to reach the local rather than the one living

in the diaspora to better understand the problems in the region. Youth from non-Arab backgrounds emphasized the need to recognize ethnic identities in the region – for example, the particular experience and voice of Kurdish youth was expressed as a concern by some of the participants. The top priority among participants was to create a networking platform which would allow exchange between youth from different countries within the Arab region. Participants emphasized that recommendations of the YPS Progress Study to the Security Council and UN member states need to be context sensitive, recognizing rural/urban and national and regional differences, whilst simultaneously seeking to offer some generic or cross-cutting proposals. Participants also shared their commitments to continue working on raising awareness of the sustainable development goals, spreading a culture of peace and organizing various peacebuilding activities in collaboration with other participants. Participants clearly highlighted their dedication to build peace in their communities, countries and also in the region. Despite the presence of ongoing armed conflicts and violent extremist groups, most young people articulated their desire to stay in their home countries and their resilience to build peace and security. Lastly, Graeme Simpson emphasized his commitment to address the peace and security priorities of young women and young men in his capacity as the lead author of the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. Mr. Simpson gave his assurance that the Study will be true and respectful to the challenges and recommendations of young people.

Annex A

Participants Profile

Country Profile

Country of origin	Number of participants
Algeria	2
Bahrain	2
Egypt	3
Iraq	4
Jordan	6
Kuwait	1
Libya	2
Lebanon	4
Morocco	2
Oman	3
Palestine	3
Saudi Arabia	2
Somalia	4
Sudan	4
Syria and Syrians in Host Countries	10
Tunisia	3
UAE	2
Yemen	2
Female	35
Male	24

Age Profile

Age	Number of participants
17	1
18	1
20	2
22	7
23	9
24	8
25	5
26	8
27	4
28	6
29	3
31	2
32	1
Unknown	2

Sex

Female	35
Male	24

Annex B

List of organizations that attended day 3

- ACTED
- DANIDA
- European Union in Jordan
- Embassies based in Amman
- Generations for Peace
- International Alert
- Jordan Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs
- Jordan Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Jordan Youth Ministry
- Mercy Corps
- Mohafazte Organization
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Oxfam
- Qatar Foundation
- Search for Common Ground
- UN Women
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNESCO
- UNICEF
- United States Institute of Peace
- UNSMIL
- World Bank
- World Vision International



Youth, Peace & Security in the Arab States Region: A Consultation and High-Level Dialogue

Concept Note

4 -6 December 2016

Background

Globally

In December of 2015, the Security Council adopted the groundbreaking Resolution 2250, on Youth, Peace and Security. For the first time, the UN Security Council recognized the **positive role young people can and do play in conflict prevention, the prevention of violent extremism and peacebuilding**. The Resolution was championed by Jordan, and adopted unanimously.

Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2250 is premised on the fact that governments and the multilateral system have been challenged in effectively accessing, working with and fully including young people in peacebuilding, prevention efforts and decision-making at all levels.

UN SCR 2250 mandates the Secretary-General “to carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels”, and to present the results of the Study to Member States of the United Nations. The Study is being undertaken as an independent, evidence-based and participatory research process, and will produce an operational report proposing a forward-looking agenda for the international community. It will provide the evidence of young women and young men’s engagement on peace and security issues and help overturn the negative stereotypes surrounding youth in conflict by highlighting and promoting young people’s active and positive contributions to sustaining peace.

The Arab States Consultation will be the first of a series of regional consultations for the Progress Study. It will also be an important opportunity to support a strategic dialogue between young people working on peace and security issues, civil society organizations, and regional partners and institutions on SCR 2250 to support concrete change on the ground.

Arab Region

More than 60 percent of the region's population is under the age of 30, and the current youth generation is historically the largest youth cohort this region has witnessed in the past 50 years, making up 30 percent of its population of 370 million. Given their vast numbers, youth are often exposed to the detrimental impacts of poverty and labour markets (dramatically reflected in 10 million unemployed Arab youths, between the ages of 18 and 25), and unmet expectations, due in part to the evolving dynamics of family structures and fanned by technology and the global media.² Violence and overall crisis further exacerbating the struggling development situation in the region. The State of Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and Iraq are all in conflict. Many Arab countries are also grappling with violent extremism.

Animosity and distrust created as a result of conflict have a detrimental effect on the social fabric. Conflicting media reports have added to the confusion, leaving the average citizen guessing over the truth and confused about who can be trusted. Sectarian violence has evolved into the norm, with parties and groups pointing fingers at each other, while stereotyping and demonizing 'the other' have become manifest in local languages.

In addition, and to further complicate matters, feelings of fear, resentment, and anger have driven individuals and communities to arm themselves whether in Syria, Yemen or Libya. The economy has significantly deteriorated with inflated food prices and a lack of gas, electricity, and fuel. The protracted nature of these conflicts is likely to lead to further deterioration of the social fabric and overall cohesion.

Mending and protecting the social fabric within a given country will require a multi-faceted and integrated approach, with linkages between political and economic development, humanitarian assistance, strengthening of civil society and peacebuilding. Focusing in on the peacebuilding dimension, it will **be critical to engage youth at the community, national and regional levels as effective agents of peace** supporting conflict resolution and mitigating tension where it may arise. Many young peacebuilders across the region have taken on this difficult task, and continuing to support their efforts will help consolidate a path for non-violence.

In this context, the Regional United Nations Development Group Interagency Technical Task Team on Young People (r/UNDG IATTTYP) developed a *Regional Framework of Joint Strategic Actions for Young People in the Arab States and MENA (2016-2017)*. The framework includes a set of four thematic priorities (Employment, Civic Engagement, Participation and Inclusion, Health and Education) together with strategic actions responding to the needs of young people both at the regional and country levels for a greater impact.

Under the Civic Engagement pillar, an activity **to empower peacebuilders** has been included as a

² Arab Youth Strategizing for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2006

priority and is the basis for this concept note.³

Creating sustainable peace cannot be achieved through engaging young peacebuilders alone. This initiative is not meant to replace or be the single answer to peace in any of the countries across the region, as a common national peace-building strategy will be essential for any long lasting reconciliation. However, this initiative is meant to support an important part of the process and provide an opportunity to engage a large part of society- youth- who have a clear stake in their countries' development.

Youth, Peace & Security in the Arab States Region: A Consultation and high-level Dialogue

Following both the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security held in Amman in 2015 and the newly passed UN SCR 2250, the aim of this consultation is to **mobilize young peacebuilders in the Arab region to explore their potential and assess the bottlenecks facing youth-led peacebuilding initiatives**. By analyzing the systematic and structural barriers, and local mechanisms and capacities, a **regional roadmap with clear policy and programming recommendations for a broad range of stakeholders will be defined**. The aim is to create opportunities to promote the role of youth in sustaining peace in national peace processes but also at the community level. It is hoped that the regional level discussions will promote an enabling environment at the national level, through the media and other stakeholders, for shifting the discourse and opening up opportunities for youth to effectively participate in peacebuilding processes.

The overall goals of the meeting will be:

- 1) To consult young peacebuilders from the Arab region on peace and security issues, in order to support the implementation of SCR 2250 in the region and as input for the Progress Study mandated by the Resolution.**
- 2) To provide a platform to facilitate dialogue between young people and decision and policy makers; mobilize partnerships and leverage support to inclusive, comprehensive and integrated programmes to be implemented in Arab States.**

UNDP and UNESCO are co-leading, on behalf of *the Regional United Nations Development Group-Interagency Technical Task Team on Young People*, **The Youth, Peace and Security Consultation and High-Level Dialogue** in partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNFPA.

The workshop will both work to chart a way forward with young peacebuilders in the Arab region, as well as broadcast their voices at the highest level through engagement on the Progress Study. This will be an opportunity to decide with young peacebuilders the best way forward to address the challenges

³ Activity 3.4: Support workshop with youth peacebuilders outlining challenges and opportunities to inform policy and support and buy-in for youth peacebuilders regional network.

they face and introduce the proposed roadmap to practitioners and decision-makers, creating a space for fruitful regional dialogue on young people's positive contributions to peace and security.

Specific Objectives

1. Identify the main peace and security-related issues that matter to and affect young people in their region, country or local context;
2. Discuss gaps, challenges and priorities to promote and support young women and men's active involvement in conflict prevention, social cohesion, conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the region/country;
3. Collect in-depth information on young people's activities and initiatives to build peace and prevent violence;
4. Identify recommendations for the Progress Study and for follow-up at the local/national/regional levels from policy and programming angles;
5. Establish a group of youth, peace and security spokespersons/advocates to be involved in a UN media campaign in 2017 calling for inclusion and aimed at further supporting an enabling environment for youth in peacebuilding locally, nationally and regionally;
6. Engage a broad range of regional and international actors and partners around the importance of youth-inclusive and youth-led peacebuilding programmes and initiatives and leverage their support around key identifiable areas of interventions in Arab States;
7. Form a regional youth-peacebuilding network for knowledge exchange, joint work, advocacy and coordination;

It will also be an opportunity to promote the global youth4peace.info platform (to be launched in October 2016), the one-stop shop supporting UNSCR 2250 implementation, available for young peacebuilders, UN system, civil society and all stakeholders (hosting online consultations as well in the context of the Progress Study).

Participants

Participants will include youth peacebuilders from the Arab region. 2-4 participants per country will be selected. Organizers will select other panelists, facilitators, INGOs and NGOS, peacebuilding experts, and partners.

Selection Criteria for Youth Participants

- Must be between 15 to 35 years of age
- Gender and age balance
- Must be engaged on peace and security issues locally, regionally, nationally or globally

- At least 70% of participants should come from youth-led organizations that work on peacebuilding, understood in a broad sense: peace process, social cohesion, reconciliation, transitional justice, PVE, SSR, DDR, humanitarian work.

Format

The Forum will last for three days and will be sequenced in two, interconnected segments:

- (1) A consultation for and with young peacebuilders, dedicated to the exchange of experiences and programmatic practices (Day 1 & 2);
- (2) A high-level policy segment during which participants will present and discuss key recommendations to partners (government officials, donors, and other stakeholders) (Day 3).

The driving principle for the full duration of this event will be to create the space for meaningful **dialogue with young peacebuilders from the Arab region.**

Agenda and thematic discussions

Day one

9:00-10:05 - Session 1: Welcome, Introduction, Ice breaker, Youth Ted Talk, Community Guidelines

+Jordan National Partner, and selected UN agencies representatives

10:10-11:00 - Session 2: What is peace, security, conflict, and violence?

11:00-11:20 Break

11:20 - 12:20 - Session 3: Exploring and identifying the peace and security issues that matter most to youth

12:20-13:30 - Lunch

13:30-14:15 - Session 4: Presenting and Discussing the SCR 2250

14:15 - 14:30 Break

14:30-16:30 - Session 5: Presentation of inspiring youth-led activities and initiatives to build peace and prevent violence

16:30-17:30: Evaluation and programming for the following day

18:30-20:30pm- Social Activity

Day Two

9:00 - 10:50 - Session 1: Youth perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for peace and security

10:50 – 11:10 Break

11:10-13:10 - Session 2: Developing context-specific youth plans of actions on YPS

13:15-14:15 - Lunch

14:15-16:30 - Session 3 Developing context-specific youth plans of actions on YPS – continued intro of creative methods?

DAY 3

9:15-11:15 - Session 1: HL panel – intergenerational dialogue – presentation of key priorities by youth and engagement with decision-makers and HL participants

11:15 – 11:30 - Break

11:30-13:30 - Session 2: Regional roadmap, including inter agency coordination, involvement in global consultations and youth4peace platform and regional Y&PB networks to follow up

13:30 – 14:30: Lunch

14:30-15:35 - Session 3: Implementing the regional roadmap and investing in youth – multi-stakeholder discussion on partnership & financing

16:00 – 17:00 – Concluding session