

Annual Youth Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel

10-12 December 2018, Ouagadougou

Concept Note

1. Background and rationale

The Security Council adopted on 9 December 2015, Resolution 2250 (2015) and on 6 June 2018, Resolution 2419 (2018) calling on member states to take measures to remove the causes and prevent the radicalization of young people and invest in the youth. These resolutions are a message of hope for about 600 million young people living in conflict zones, who have often been categorized as perpetrators of violence or as victims.

Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) seek to address the rise of radicalization and violent extremism, especially among young people, both women and men. They also provide a boost to peacebuilding and conflict prevention initiatives directed at young people to build peaceful communities and support good governance. Moreover, they urge Member States to examine ways to increase the inclusive representation of young people in decision-making at all levels and to propose mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution in partnership with young people. The resolutions also refer to the limited opportunities for young people to participate in peace processes and calls for their involvement in mediation and peace-consolidation efforts.

UNOWAS, in line with its mandate to support regional institutions in enhancing their capacities and in addressing cross-cutting threats to peace and security, has taken steps to promote the implementation of these resolutions in the region. Among these activities, UNOWAS carried out a regional study on “Young women and men contribution to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel” and supported the development of a youth mentoring program that promotes intergenerational dialogue and the coaching of young women and men in order to increase their participation in peace and development processes in the region.

The ECOWAS Youth and Sports Development Centre is a specialized agency of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established in Accra on 19 January 2005 with a mandate to initiate, formulate, coordinate, follow up and implement programmes relating to youth development in the Community. It was established by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in response to the need to put in place a permanent institutional framework within the Community through which youth issues as well as sporting activities in the sub-region can be developed and promoted, while enhancing the commitment of youth in the ECOWAS regional integration process. Some of its major interventions include youth capacity building for business creation and self-employment, the ECOWAS Volunteers Programme (which has provided support to rebuilding and reconstruction efforts as well as youth advocacy campaigns and efforts in conflict prevention in 3 post-conflict member States), and a youth entrepreneurship and mentoring programme (EYEP), among others.

The two institutions have agreed to organize a Youth Forum to validate and launch the product of their various initiatives and mobilize all actors to enhance the involvement of young women and men in peace, security and development processes.

2. General objective of the Forum

The overall goal of the Youth Forum is to support regional organizations, government actors, civil society, universities and training centers in their efforts to effectively implement resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) in West Africa and Sahel. The objective is to organize the forum annually

3. Specific objectives

Specifically, the Youth Forum aims to:

- a) Validate the report of the study entitled: "Young women and men in peace and development processes in West Africa and the Sahel “;
- b) Launch the Mentoring Program for Young Women and Men involvement in Peace and Security processes in the region;
- c) Mobilize partners and resources for the implementation of the mentoring program.

4. Expected outputs and outcomes

The expected outputs and outcomes of the Youth Forum are:

- 1) **Validation of a baseline study:** During the conference, a report on the contribution of young people to peace processes and conflict resolution in West Africa and the Sahel will be shared and validated. The report includes a baseline on the situation of young people in the region, their organizations and associations as well as their roles before, during and after conflicts. Furthermore, the report takes stock of measures taken by member states and regional organizations to protect young people, to promote their participation at all levels and to develop strategic development partnership for peace and security. Finally, the report suggests recommendations on the way forward.
- 2) **Validation of a mentoring program:** During the conference, a mentoring program for young women and men involvement in peace and security processes will be validated (notably through an Intergenerational Dialogue for Young Men and Women) and launched.
- 3) **Mobilization of development partners:** Diplomatic representatives and financial and technical partners will be mobilized on the third day of the Forum to promote implementation of the mentoring program and other initiatives for young women and men in the region.

5. Participants

About 100 people will attend the event, including: Ministers of Youth of 17 countries in West Africa and the Sahel; one representative of National Youth Council and one representative of ROAJELF (Reseau Ouest Africain des Jeunes Filles Leaders) from each country, regional and international organizations and experts working on Youth, Peace and Security issues.

6. Dates and venue

The Youth Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel will take place from 10 to 12 December in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.