

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

High Level Political Forum
United Nations Headquarters, New York

IDENTIFICATION	
Session focus	SDG 4, 16 and 17: Youth, Peace, Security and Social Inclusion
Session title	“The Empowerment and Inclusion of Youth in Africa in Promoting Sustainable Peace and Security: Building Concrete Solutions Towards the Implementation of SDG 16”
Session lead	Permanent Mission of The Republic of the Gambia
Session co-organizers	United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
	The African Union Office of the Youth Envoy
	The Gambia National Youth Council
	The African Youth Commission
	The United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth
Session moderator	TBD
Rapporteur	TBD
Session note-taker	TBD
BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES	

The High-level Political Forum(HLPF) will be held from 9 to 18 July 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The HLPF will serve as a central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The theme will be “*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.*” The focus will be on reviewing the progress and implementation of a specific set of SDGs: Goal 4, Quality Education; Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth; Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities; Goal 13, Climate Action; Goal 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; and Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals.

Today, the world is the youngest it has ever been with over one billion youth, of which 600 million live in violence- and conflict- affected areas. Of the approximately 1.4 billion people worldwide living in countries impacted by crime, violence, conflict and fragility, 50 per cent are under the age of 20. In 2016, children under the age of 18 constituted 51 percent of the refugee population, compared to just 31 per cent of the global population. Forced displacement has mainly affected developing nations, which currently host the majority of the forcibly displaced.

Despite being the majority of those affected by conflict and violence, youth are often not able to contribute to, or be the subject of, discourse surrounding issues of peace and security. Young peacebuilders are highly effective at making an impact at the grassroots level, as there are many youth-led initiatives operating around the world to bring about sustainable peace. As affirmed by UNSC Resolution 2250, the acknowledgement of youth agency and positive roles in society must be emphasized, and they must be firmly placed in discourse on peace and security as their involvement in decision-making processes is crucial for the development of sustainable and legitimate solutions for diverse social challenges.

Furthermore, the widespread socio-economic exclusion and marginalization of youth, conditions especially pervasive in developing nations, have contributed to rising rates of youth unemployment and equally concerning levels of youth who work but still live in poverty. These conditions have left youth vulnerable to crime, violence and violent extremism, in addition to contributing to the rising levels of young economic migrants and the continued expansion of transnational organized crime including human trafficking, of which youth are also disproportionately affected.

Just as unemployment contributes to violence, instability, and forced migration, those who are displaced experience significant economic and social impacts including limited social capital and few or no assets, coupled with the uncertainty of displacement. This has created an additional barrier for youth to create fulfilling livelihoods or become equipped for a demanding job market, coupled with widespread discrimination, xenophobia, and poor access to education and basic services.

In this regard, the voices of youth must be amplified by including them in all discussions surrounding peace and security and by bridging the gap between youth at the grassroots level and all relevant stakeholders including government, the public and private sector, civil society, academia, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations. The focus of this side event will be to bridge the gap between youth leaders of peace and security relevant stakeholder bodies through a roundtable discussion between youth and high-level representatives on the implementation of SDG 16.

During the side event, participants will look at the theme of the HLPF, “*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*”, from a youth perspective. Participants will identify mechanisms that empower youth, discuss youth’s role in peace and security, and advance collaboration efforts in the implementation and localization of SDG 16, including how it relates to SDG 4. The discussions will also focus on how education can play a key role in the implementation of SDG 16. Achieving inclusive

and equitable quality education for all will require increasing efforts, especially in sub-Saharan Africa for vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, refugee children and poor children in rural areas. UNODC's Education for Justice (E4J) initiative - under the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration - has been developed to create and disseminate education materials in UNODC mandated areas of crime prevention and criminal justice across the primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. Overall, the objective is to empower youth to become socially responsible global citizens with a sound moral and ethical compass who are prepared to tackle the world's challenges related to the rule of law, particularly on SDG 16 and other related Sustainable Development Goals.

This session will build on the previous UNODC and The Gambia National Youth Council joint side event that took place in Banjul, The Gambia during the AYC 3rd Pan African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development which brought together youth representatives from across Africa to engage in a dialogue with young African leaders, who are involved in government, policymaking and youth empowerment initiatives. As an independent Pan-African youth network founded by young leaders to foster synergies among youth and youth organizations, The Africa Youth Commission (AYC) will be a key partner in the side event. AYC is committed to providing a space and voice for youth to be key partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the UN Agenda 2030; Sustainable Development Goals, UNSCR 2250 and the Africa 2063 Agenda.

The Gambia National Youth Council, Office of The African Union Youth Envoy, The United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth will also play a significant role in the side-event. In 2017, The Gambia peacefully transitioned to a new democratic government; and with the assistance of The Gambia National Youth Council, many youths were involved and represented in the transitional justice processes such as the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission, Constitutional Review Commission, and National Human Rights Commission. The Council has played a strong role in assisting a nationwide tour to sensitize children and youth on their fundamental rights, their roles in transitional justice and conflict prevention mechanism, and in collaboration with UNOWAS, the council conducted school outreach projects on UNSC Resolution 2250 and 2419. The council's engagement continued to emphasize that Gambian youth will need to play a leading role in ensuring the creation and maintenance of just institutions and lasting peace and serves as a shining model for learning and possible replication. As a youth led public agency, Gambia youth council also currently works around migration management including return, receptions, reintegration assistance and social mobilization towards addressing the root causes, push and pull factors of youth irregular migrations from The Gambia.

SESSION OBJECTIVES

The side event aims to craft recommendations from young leaders in peace, justice and security for the development of youth-inclusive programmes and policies from relevant stakeholders in the implementation of SDG 16. There will be discussion around the role of youth, government, the public and private sector, civil society, academia, NGOs and IGOs in the empowerment and inclusion of youth, especially in developing nations, to find durable solutions for the promotion and maintenance of just institutions, peace and security.

It will serve to create solutions towards job creation and the prevention of economic migrants and

forcibly displaced persons. The current state of SDG 16 will be discussed, looking at progress indicators and creating the pathway towards furthering the implementation, localization and achievement of the indicators.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The side event will provide a platform to discuss harnessing the empowerment and inclusion of youth to contribute to finding durable solutions to the promotion of peace, security and just institutions, assisting in the streamlining the youth perspective throughout various sectors in society. Furthermore, the side event will assist in the opening of communication channels youth and the various stakeholders. It will aim to shift the lens from viewing youth as a threat to be contained as well as the helpless victims, to instead realizing their potential and necessary inclusion in all levels of peacebuilding, to further the implementation of SDG 16.

It is expected that concrete policy recommendations will be agreed, and these will be used to engage youth in decision-making processes and other further action. The innovative ideas generated by youth on this topic will help to advance the progress and implementation of SDG 16 while also feeding into the HLPF process.

The key messages of the event will be published, and communications materials will be developed to highlight the role of youth in ensuring equality, inclusivity and empowerment, as well as their role in attaining SDG 16.

APPROACH USED TO GENERATE REGIONAL NEEDS ANALYSIS & CONTRIBUTION

The side event will be an open and interactive session, guided and moderated by a youth representative. With the use of several discussion questions, the moderator will endeavor to define the needs of youth, prompting their interaction and recommendations to the panel of stakeholders. Namely, what actions do all stakeholders need to undertake to enhance the empowerment and inclusion of youth that would facilitate their ability to promote and maintain peace, security and just institutions?

With an expected robust participation from global youth representatives and other relevant stakeholders, the session will generate a wide array of contributions, which will be distilled by the moderator and session lead and co-organizers.

OVERALL STRUCTURE AND FLOW

The event will be structured as an interactive session, featuring governments, youth representatives, private sector, academia and shall be moderated by a prominent youth representative. It will have a preambular part where progress registered on the theme addressed in 2018 will be reviewed. It will be projected online via a webcast to allow a wide range of participants to participate even remotely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

To maximize the contribution of all participants in the side event, participants are encouraged to consider the following guiding discussion questions:

- How can the potential of youth be harnessed to further the implementation of SDG 16 and the achievement of its indicators? Specifically, indicators 16.3, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, and 16.8.
- How can education empower youth to support SDG 16?
- How can government, the public and private sector, civil society, academia, NGOs and IGOs enhance transparency and good governance, identify and eliminate corruption within their structures, and promote the rule of law at all levels, ensuring equal access to justice for all?
- What mechanisms have been put in place that have successfully increased youth participation in all sectors of society, including government, the public and private sector, civil society, academia, NGOs and IGOs? What mechanisms have failed?
- How can we strengthen the participation of developing countries in key institutions of global governance?
- How does discrimination, racism and xenophobia affect the empowerment and inclusion of youth, especially those who are migrants, forcibly displaced, IDPs, refugees and/or asylum seekers?
- How can we promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development and ensure international human rights law is being upheld throughout all levels and institutions?
- What are the experiences from the grassroots to accelerate the implementation of SDG 16?

SUGGESTED READING

- Sustainable Development Goal 16
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>
- UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)
<https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>
- Youth 2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth

- <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-un/>
- **The African Youth Charter**
http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf
 - **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development**
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>
 - **The African Union Agenda 2063**
<http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf>
 - **Agenda 2063-First Ten-year Implementation Plan 2014-2023**
<http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063first10yearimplementation.pdf>
 - **African Continental Framework on Youth Development (2015)**
<http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/nepad/youth-development-framework2015.pdf>
 - **The African Youth Commission (AYC)**
<http://africanyouthcommission.org/>
 - **The Global Compact for Migration**
<https://www.un.org/pga/72/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2018/07/migration.pdf>
 - **Young Person's Guide to saving the world**
https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/Young_Persons_Guide_Changing_the_World_FINAL.pdf