

**Peacebuilding Commission**  
**Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Youth, Peace and Security**  
**24 February 2021**

**Chair's Summary**

1. On 24 February 2021, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an ambassadorial-level meeting on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Mohamed Edrees, Chair of the PBC. The meeting aimed at exploring ways of further contributing to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on YPS. The UN Envoy on Youth and PBSO briefed the Commission. Youth representatives from the Philippines and Nigeria shared their experiences in peacebuilding, and representatives of the respective Missions in New York presented national strategies and plans in support of YPS.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair (Egypt) underscored the importance of the role of youth in peace and security, including peacebuilding, and stressed that more efforts need to be exerted to enable youth to realize their full potential. In Africa youth represented 60 per cent of the population, making it the youngest continent. It was critical to harness the demographic dividend through investing more in youth, which is also an investment in peace. The Chair highlighted the Commission's adoption of the Strategic Action Plan on youth and peacebuilding as demonstrating the PBC's active support to the YPS agenda in the context of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Through its implementation, the Commission will be able to monitor the progress made in advancing its efforts in support of the critical role of young women and men in peacebuilding and the need to empower them. As an example of a national YPS initiative, the Chair mentioned that Egypt has been hosting an annual World Youth Forum since 2017 to establish a platform for youth to interact with leaders and high-level officials on various topics, including peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and communicate their concerns.
3. Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, noting that all resolutions on YPS highlight the important role of the PBC to support young people and their organizations in planning and stabilization efforts related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, welcomed the PBC starting the year by placing YPS firmly on its agenda. She highlighted that resolution 2535 (2020) calls for action, moving from policy to implementation, and encourages Member States to develop and implement dedicated policies and programmes, with sufficient resources and in close partnership with young people. The upcoming "High-Level Global Conference on Youth-Inclusive Peace Processes" – a joint initiative of the Governments of Qatar, Finland and Colombia – will provide two forward looking resources to support and secure national commitments to advance the YPS agenda: a five-year strategy to foster more youth-inclusive peace processes and a set of guidelines for country-level operationalisation of the YPS agenda. She noted that UN field missions and country teams must play a key role in supporting and fostering intergenerational dialogue and creating space for young people to contribute to national security strategies. She underscored the importance of youth engagement at the community-level, which requires adequate, predictable and sustained financing, but currently is underexplored with grassroots youth groups operating, on average, on an annual budget of under \$5,000. While the Peacebuilding Fund's Youth Promotion Initiative is making a crucial contribution, the PBC has a role to play to encourage much-needed support at the local level. She welcomed the PBC Strategic Action Plan as a way for the

Commission to review its efforts in increasing engagement with young people to build and sustain peace and looked forward to a comprehensive update in the PBC's annual report. Finally, she encouraged Member States to prioritize the development of dedicated local, national and regional road maps and actions plans for YPS and to collectively address the systemic challenges of young people's exclusion in decision-making, sustainable resourcing, and restrictions on their civic space.

4. Ms. Mia Franczesca D. Estipona, Generation Peace Youth Network (GenPeace) in the Philippines, outlined how GenPeace engages youth in conflict-affected areas through capacity building programmes, campaigns anchored in peace, democracy, and human rights, and creating spaces that nurture interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Since 2008, GenPeace has crafted the youth peace agenda which reflects the five pillars of resolution 2250 (2015) and includes the indigenous people's youth peace agenda that aims to protect the indigenous youth from atrocities and development aggression. The Network has been advancing YPS through policy advocacy, monitoring developments, and assessing the impact of different policies that directly concern youth in conflict-affected areas, including supporting the efforts of the Philippines towards the adoption of 2250 (2015) and consultations developing the roadmap on YPS. She underscored the importance of the Commission to directly engage with the youth in conflict-affected areas, particularly at the community levels, who already lead peacebuilding initiatives but whose programmes cannot be sustained due to lack of access to funding and support. Member States and the UN should engage youth in a sustained manner in the process of consultation, crafting, implementation, and monitoring of programs and policies. She also highlighted the need to address the increasing violence contributed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which causes insecurity among the youth and their communities. Finally, she underscored the protection pillar of the resolution in terms of prioritizing access to justice and protection mechanisms for youth and applying a human rights-based perspective.
5. Mr. Allwell O. Akhigbe, Building Blocks for Peace Foundation in Nigeria, described the work of his youth-led peacebuilding organization that works to counter violent extremism in local communities in Nigeria and the region by facilitating community-based dialogues, evidence-based research on youth peacebuilding, capacity-building training of youth and empowerment of youth peacebuilders. He remarked on the negative societal stereotypes that youth continue to face, which have resulted in his colleagues in the region facing heightened insecurities, human rights abuses and shrinking civic spaces. Despite these challenges, the Nigeria Coalition on YPS has since its creation provided momentum to the development of Nigeria's National Action Plan on YPS by leading consultations and validation workshops with government agencies, civil society and community stakeholders and providing technical assistance to the drafting of the Plan. He urged the PBC to facilitate the protection of youth peacebuilders in conflict environments in line with resolution 2250 (2015) by prioritizing their safety and protecting civic space which is increasingly under attack. He also stressed the importance of providing youth-sensitive long-term funding to scale up the impact of youth-led initiatives that often operate on less than \$3,000 annual budgets and are yet highly impactful in the local communities. The UN should develop youth-specific funding mechanisms that are tailored to youth expertise and organizational structures. The PBC also has a role to play to promote stronger partnerships between youth peacebuilders and international and local peacebuilding organizations in a sustainable manner.

6. Mr. Oscar Fernández-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support, welcomed the adoption of the action-oriented PBC Strategic Action Plan on youth and peacebuilding as being timely and important coming soon after the 5th anniversary of resolution 2250 (2015) and adoption of resolution 2535 (2020) that encouraged the PBC to continue supporting the important role played by young women and men as well as youth-led organizations in planning and stabilization efforts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. While remarking on the huge progress made in only five years, he also highlighted the need to accelerate implementation of the agenda; particularly with regards to barriers to participation, violation of the human rights of youth, and insufficient investment in facilitating their inclusion and empowerment. The UN system has contributed to addressing these challenges, including with PBSO and UNFPA working together as the Joint Secretariat for YPS and through the Peacebuilding Fund's Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI), the largest funding initiative in support of the YPS agenda investing more than \$79 million since 2016 in projects implemented by UN and civil society partners. In 2020, the GYPI focused on providing support to youth leadership and their meaningful participation and representation; and protection of youth peacebuilders and human rights defenders. Funding of small, local youth-led efforts to build and sustain peace, however, remained the biggest challenge without enough mechanisms to reach small organizations. Additionally, PBSO, UNDP and UNFPA, with the support of the Folke Bernadotte Academy, developed a YPS Programming Handbook designed to strengthen guidance, capacity and programming work in the field.

7. Participants welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- While recognizing the progress made since the adoption of resolution 2250 (2015), they noted that much work remains to be done. Several participants emphasized that youth represent more than half of the population of their countries or regions. No peacebuilding initiative can succeed without their full, effective and meaningful participation as highlighted in resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020).
- They welcomed the adoption of the PBC Strategic Action Plan on youth and peacebuilding, with its five focus areas, to guide and monitor the progress made by the Commission in support of the critical role of young women and men in peacebuilding. Implementation and monitoring will be key and they encouraged the plan to be embedded at the country level through, for example, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and in missions settings.
- They stressed the role of the PBC and the UN system in supporting local, national and regional actions to advance YPS and the need for more countries to adopt national plans on YPS as a critical aspect to enhancing trust in governments and political institutions.
- They thanked the critical work performed by the youth briefers' organizations and emphasized the importance of continuing to engage with youth and have them participate more frequently at PBC meetings.
- They noted that youth are not a monolithic group; diversity should be embedded in the PBC's approaches and encouraged the PBC to seek out a diverse range of perspectives from youth peacebuilders. They also stressed the importance of intercultural, interreligious and intergenerational dialogue.

- They emphasized the need for adequate, predictable and sustained financing to help empower youth to fulfil their potential as agents of positive change. While recognizing the Peacebuilding Fund's YPI in supporting young people's critical contributions to peacebuilding at the local and national levels, several participants noted that a significant funding gap remains particularly at the local level and disbursement mechanisms should be simplified.
- They called for greater consideration to innovation and appropriate application of information technology in order to increase youth engagement and better support youth-led peacebuilding activities and expressed concern over the digital divide in terms of media and information technology literacy in youth populations.
- Several participants stressed that there is no alternative to quality education, particularly at the primary level, to support youth in overcoming poverty and finding livelihood opportunities in line with their needs. COVID-19 further negatively impacted youth, including depriving access to education, particularly for young women.
- They emphasized the synergies between YPS and WPS and encouraged youth- and gender-sensitive conflict analysis.
- They highlighted the importance of removing barriers limiting the participation of young people with disabilities in peacebuilding, and youth in conflict-affected areas having access to inclusive mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS).
- They called for the PBC to promote greater cooperation within the UN system on YPS and build synergies with international financial institutions and regional and subregional organizations such as the AU to fulfill Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns Agenda.
- They underscored the importance of ensuring safe and enabling environments for young peacebuilders, including safeguarding their freedom of speech and the civic spaces which make their participation possible.
- They highlighted the unique role that the PBC should continue to play as a political platform that allows regular sharing of experiences and discussion on YPS related progress and challenges and to build synergies with other issues such as security sector reform and the climate and environment. In this regard, YPS should be mainstreamed further into the work of the PBC and the UN.