

FORUM: Special Conference on Securing and Advancing Democracy 2

QUESTION OF: Encouraging youth to participate in local governance and decision making

SUBMITTED BY: Belarus

CO-SUBMITTERS: Ecuador, Congo, China, Nigeria, Eritrea, Kenya, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, Cameroon, Serbia, Portugal, Mauritania, Norway, South Korea, Greece, African Union, Liberia, Morocco, Pakistan, Argentina, Palestine, Oman, ECE, Chad, Ethiopia, Iran, Endorra, Vanuatu, Canada, Saint Lucia, Sweden, Fiji, Benin, Uganda, Mauritius, Tanzania, Dominican Republic, Sri Lanka, Togo, Ukraine, UK, Italy, Niger, Sierra Leone, Human Rights Watch, Holy see, Uruguay, Belize, Ivory Coast, Colombia

THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON SECURING AND ADVANCING DEMOCRACY,

Recalling the International Youth Year (1985) endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 36/28, 1981 to define ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years,

Brings attention to the fact that the youth as previously defined holds a significant percentage of the world’s population, 15.5% of the world population,

Expressing real concern approximately 90% of youths live in less developed countries with little to no opportunities to participate in governance;

Affirming that there are 20 youth-specific targets spread over six key SDGs: Goal 2 (hunger), Goal 4 (education), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work), Goal 10 (inequality) and Goal 13 (climate change) all of which are necessary in governance and pragmatic decision making,

Recognizes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as the foundation to any progress and discussion on this matter, seeing as it realizes that the total dignity and unconditional rights of all members of the human family is the groundwork of peace, freedom and justice in the world,

Further Recognizes that the youth is extremely efficient and beneficial for combating corruption in primarily less developed nations, but also developed nations,

Recalling the recent unanimous adoption of resolution 2419 (2018) of the Security Council for “Increasing Role of Youth in Negotiating, Implementing Peace Agreements,

Fully believing that the youth as previously defined deserves to be fully and adequately represented in local and national governance and policy-making within all nations,

Seeking the adoption of a decisive yet cautious approach to the inclusion of the youth in socio-political discussions with local governments,

Strongly Believing the main barriers to youth participation are social, economic and institutional in nature and that prevailing societal attitude towards young people is often that they are troubled and troubling, which gives justification to “act upon them without their agreement” (Checkoway, 2011),

Taking into account that information and communication technologies, in particular social media and their mobile use, offer new opportunities for involvement in and information about political processes thereby accelerating the development of alternative participation forms,

1. Proclaims young people to be lawfully acknowledged as partners and significant contributors to the decision making behind public and foreign policy overseen by all Member States;
2. Encourages governments to lower the age of suffrage, in order to incorporate the youth in the voting process, by, but to limited to:
 - a) establishing 18 years of age as the age required to vote, unless the voting age is already

below 18

- b) permitting 17-year-olds to vote in preliminary elections and caucuses
- c) allowing (pre-)registration at 16 and 17 and participation in local elections;

3. Recommends making the procedure of voting more simple and accessible, especially to the youth, by means such as but not limited to:
 - a) installing poll stations in youth populated institutions such as, but not limited to:
 - i. universities
 - ii. youth recreational centres
 - b) automatization of voting and poll access to citizens living abroad through either subscription to secure online platforms such as Simply Voting or Ballot IMPACT or creating a unique such national platform [as seen in the US 2016 presidential election];
4. Urges the full implementation of all conventions against any and all discrimination, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to promote further diversification of the electorate, particularly on gender equality and voting rights, and additionally:
 - a) discourages voter suppression and restriction of electoral privilege by recognizing the value of all types of views regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender amongst others;
5. Calls for an organic approach to all actions taken on this matter by refraining from forcing issues and which can potentially alienate the youth through unrelatable and ineffective methods of communication by calling on:
 - a) member nations to utilize public social media, radio and signage nationwide to promote youth participation by:
 - i. stressing the importance of voting
 - ii. advertising events, talks and meetings that engage the youth in political decision making
 - iii. permitting certain member states to qualify for United Nations (UN) aid (funded by the UN general budget) to help finance this as judged by a panel of experts
 - b) a current Non-Government Organization (NGOs), or urging the creation of a new NGO in order to further promote and advertise the youth's participation in voting, governance, and decision making at al local, regional, and national level through means such as but not limited to:
 - i. posters
 - ii. online advertisements
 - iii. television advertisements
 - iv. social media advertisements
 - v. speaker events at schools;
6. Advocates for reports that outline the progress in the level of youth participation in local governance and decision making in each member state to track the success of this resolution which are to be funded by the UN general budget through means including but not exclusive to:
 - a) the utilization of public social media, radio and signage nationwide to promote youth participation by:
 - i. rendering official recognition for the youth parliament
 - ii. rationing observer seats in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly to the youth parliament;
7. Allowing the youth parliament to initiate annual summit with self-determined agenda and involvement of local government officials related to the issue, in order to:
 - a) enhance the communication and interaction between government and youth, promoting mutual understanding through modern, new, and online means in conjunction with traditional means including but not exclusive to:

- i. social media such as the eBallot or email,
 - b) online advertisements
 - c) provide conduit of information regarding the implementation and actual effect of previous policies
 - d) establish channel for proposals submitted by the youth parliament and considered by the government if its practice to be offered financial and/or technical support
 - e) use the youth parliament to increase voting participation through taking the results into consideration during the decision making stage;
- 8. Emphasizes the significance of education regarding the formation of political interest as well as sustainable and sensible decision making, which can be improved via means such as but not limited to:
 - a) full integration of citizenship education into the system of formal education and giving student councils great emphasis
 - b) early transfer of responsibilities to school assignments
 - c) offering consultative workshops and information forums concerning democracy and politics at schools and youth institutions
 - d) make more openings for youth cooperation in community life; Support workshops, conferences and scheduled town hall meetings to advance juvenile and youth participation
 - e) providing extra-curricular courses including current, controversial topics such as but not limited to:
 - i. combating extremism and fundamentalism
 - ii. migration and integration
 - iii. prevention of violence
 - iv. gender mainstreaming
 - v. rent controls
 - vi. immigration
 - vii. climate change
 - viii. military spending
 - f) funding youth scholarships abroad in order to:
 - i. promote cultural exchange
 - ii. broaden horizons
 - iii. strengthen tolerance being an important quality and requirement for compromise-making
 - g) initiating youth competitions on new, innovative, social approaches
 - h) providing reliable information on platforms having a tremendous reach among young people such as but not limited to:
 - i. the internet
 - ii. social networks
 - iii. television
 - i) preventing the spread of false news and untruths as well as agitation against minorities and marginalised groups via those platforms:
 - i. consolidating, recording and sharing the experience and knowledge and strengthening information management
 - ii. building capacity through key partnerships and collaborative efforts with National and Local Governments and civil society, Ministries of Education, Youth, Culture and Sports, also initiating new partnerships with stakeholders invested in the child rights agenda in the member state
 - iii. implementing interactive, involved education systems within school and extracurriculars to address gaps related to legislation, and provision of child participation services
 - iv. being initially supported by United Nations experts who will advise and train similar professionals to eventually make the programs independent of the United Nations

- v. youth assemblies and conferences such as the Model United Nations (MUN) working in collusion with regional and local authorities;
9. Suggests the United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Bank as work as joint partners and obtain authority over program implementation and management of youth programs which are to include talks, events and meetings for example the 'In Youth The Future is Held' program in Belarus to encourage participation in politics, in collaboration with the Regional and Federal Government through means such as but not limited to:
- a) a result-based monitoring framework, indicator guide, and training focusing on the improvement in the involvement of the children
 - b) consolidating, recording and sharing the experience and knowledge and strengthening information management
 - c) building capacity through key partnerships and collaborative efforts with National and Local Governments and civil society, Ministries of Education, Youth, Culture and Sports, also initiating new partnerships with stakeholders invested in the child rights agenda in the member state
 - d) implementing interactive, involved education systems within school and extracurriculars to address gaps related to legislation, and provision of child participation services
 - e) establishing sustainable education finance and use of block grant mechanisms to improve overall efficiency in utilizing a member nations education budget
 - f) being initially supported by United Nations experts who will advise and train similar professionals to eventually make the programs independent of the United Nations;
10. Suggests the creation of the "International Youth Participation Week" September 2nd-10th of every year which will:
- a) celebrate the youth of each nation
 - b) promote global cooperation on youth issues would be promoted
 - c) create awareness of their needs in governance;
11. Advises for targeted expansionary fiscal policy use towards infrastructure which may include:
- a) government spending towards public education:
 - i. classroom digitalization by subscribing to paid services such as Moodle or free ones such as Google Classroom
 - ii. extracurricular programs such as sports teams, creative clubs and activities, and leadership youth organizations
 - iii. teacher workshops for more effective socio political education in social studies classes
 - b) subsidizing the political science and other such social studies departments in local public or private university research institutions.