

Panel discussion on youth and human rights

Concept note (as of 7 September 2016)

- Date and venue:** 22 September 2016, 12 to 3 p.m., Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva
(will be broadcast live and archived on <http://webtv.un.org>)
- Objectives:** The panel will identify challenges, best practices and lessons learned in the exercise of human rights by young people, as well as relevant opportunities for the empowerment of youth in the exercise of their rights.
- Chair:** H.E. Mr. Choi Kyonglim, President of the Human Rights Council
- Opening statement:** Ms. Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Video message:** Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth
- Moderator:** H.E. Ms. Anna Korka, Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva
- Panellists:**
- Ms. Virginia Bras Gomes, Member of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
 - Ms. Johanna Nyman, President of the European Youth Forum
 - Mr. Simon-Pierre Escudero, Representative of the Asociación de Tierra de Jóvenes, El Salvador
 - Ms. Maria D'Onofrio, Representative of VIDES International
 - Ms. Yvonne Matuturu, Head of the Social and Human Sciences Section, UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for Central Africa, Cameroon
- Outcome:** A summary report of the panel discussion will be prepared.
- Mandate:** In its resolution 32/1 of 30 June 2016 the Human Rights Council decided to convene at its thirty-third session a panel discussion on the theme, “Youth and human rights”, the objective of which would be to identify challenges, best practices and lessons learned in the exercise of human rights by young people, as well as relevant opportunities for the empowerment of youth in the exercise of their rights, and requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to liaise with States and all stakeholders, including relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, national human rights institutions and civil society, including representatives of youth organizations, with a view to ensuring their participation in the panel discussion.
- Format:** The opening statement by the Deputy High Commissioner, and initial presentations by the panellists guided by the moderator, will be followed by an interactive discussion with States and observers intervening from the floor. The list of speakers for the discussion will be established at the beginning of the panel and, as per practice, statements by high-level dignitaries and groups will be moved to the beginning of the list. States and observers, including representatives of civil society, will take the floor for a 2-minute intervention each (total 45 minutes), followed by responses from panellists (15 minutes). A second round of interventions from the floor (45 minutes) will be followed by responses and concluding remarks from the panellists and the moderator (15 minutes).
To make the panel interactive, speakers are encouraged to focus their interventions on the themes of the panellists either by asking the panellists questions or sharing concrete

examples and relevant national experience. Interpretation will be provided in the six United Nations official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

Background: With 1.2 billion youth in 2015, today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known. By 2030, the target date for the sustainable development goals, the number of youth is projected to grow by 7 per cent, to nearly 1.3 billion.

Youth deserve special attention to their needs and priorities. As highlighted in the report of the expert meeting organized by the OHCHR in July 2013, "*young people do experience difficulties in the exercise of their rights by the virtue of being young*".

Specific challenges faced by youth require integrated and comprehensive responses by States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders. Although continuous efforts are exerted towards realizing the enjoyment of human rights, young people on many occasions are often left aside. They are not recognized as a key resource and driving force, but are rather portrayed in many instances as part of the problem, both locally and globally. Since they are often perceived as the cause of emerging societal and economic tension.

Accordingly, young people can often feel deprived of their human rights and excluded from decision-making processes. Lack of participation and opportunities to exercise active citizenship sometimes generate frustration and disaffection among this vibrant age bracket.

Inadequate political and social participation, unemployment, lack of decent work and barriers to access quality education have detrimental impacts on youth, but also on society at large. As highlighted in the report of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee at its ninth session (Geneva, 6 to 10 August 2012), youth is an important human resource for development, and can be positive and fundamental actors in social change. Also, Human Rights Council resolution 28/14 of 26 March 2015 establishing the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law decided that the theme of the first session of the Forum would be "Widening the democratic space: the role of youth in public decision-making". The Forum will take place in Geneva on 21 and 22 November 2016 and will provide a unique opportunity to a variety of stakeholders to discuss best practices, opportunities and challenges for youth to meaningfully and effectively participate in public decision making at local, regional and international level.

Further, access to quality education, among others, is a major challenge. Education and research are crucial tools to awareness-raising and empowerment of youth, in order for young people to be able to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of all States, and to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms.

By their very nature, young people are called to be initiators for positive change in society. Full recognition and implementation of youth rights is necessary to prepare them adequately to assume their responsibility in society. The empowerment of young people in the exercise of all their rights will allow for their proper political and civil engagement. If empowered through ensuring the enjoyment of human rights, youth will find ways to help make those rights a reality for the rest of the society. It is crucial to create new spaces for youth as key actors for the promotion of human rights for all.

Background documents:

- [Human Rights Council resolution 32/1](#) (30 June 2016), "Youth and human rights"
- [General Assembly resolution 70/127](#) (17 December 2015), "Policies and programmes involving youth"
- [General Assembly resolution 50/81](#) (14 December 1995), "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond"
- Report of the Advisory Committee on its ninth session (2012) ([A/HRC/AC/9/6](#))