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Report of the United Nations Youth Office

United Nations Youth Office

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is the second report of the United Nations Youth Office since its formal establishment in accordance with General Assembly resolution [76/306](#) and outlines the work and achievements accomplished under the dedicated mandate, as well as the steps taken to further operationalize the new Office dedicated to youth affairs. The establishment of the Youth Office marked a pivotal breakthrough for the revitalization and expansion of United Nations engagement with and for young people, with a focus on addressing the challenges and opportunities for meaningful youth engagement.

During the reporting period, the Youth Office made substantial progress in enhancing United Nations system-wide collaboration, coordination and accountability on youth issues (in particular through the United Nations Youth Strategy), leading engagement and advocacy on youth issues across the United Nations in the areas of sustainable development, human rights and peace and security and strengthening meaningful youth engagement in the work of the United Nations and beyond.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is the second report of the United Nations Youth Office since its formal establishment by General Assembly resolution [76/306](#). The year 2023 was the start of a new era and a year of transition, in which the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth completed its mandate while ensuring a seamless continuity of operations and reaching key administrative and operational milestones in the establishment of the new Youth Office. Following the appointment of the first Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs on 1 December 2023, the process for the establishment of the new Office intensified. The transition from the Office of the Envoy on Youth to the United Nations Youth Office started on 1 January 2023 and is on track to be finalized by the third quarter of 2024, with the conclusion of the recruitment process for the 16 posts approved under the regular budget.

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs is the youngest-ever senior official in the history of the United Nations, and his appointment marked the start of an exciting new chapter in the work of the Organization with and for young people around the world. In the first half of 2024, critical focus was placed on the strategic positioning of the Youth Office, setting the vision and the direction of its work and engaging with a range of youth organizations, Member States, regional organizations and other stakeholders to strengthen partnerships and deliver impact.

3. Moving forward, the work of the Youth Office will focus on building young people's trust in the United Nations and the multilateral system and will be conducted through three major areas of action, which will serve as a guide as the Office embarks on its first strategic planning exercise for the next four years, namely (a) accelerating the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy to drive progress across the three pillars of the Organization; (b) rejuvenating the United Nations workforce; and (c) engaging young people meaningfully to realize both objectives.

4. In 2018, the Office launched the United Nations Youth Strategy "Youth 2030: working with and for young people",¹ the first-ever system-wide youth strategy seeking to transform the work of the United Nations system with and for young people. The fourth annual edition of the *Youth2030 Progress Report*, to be launched on the margins of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2024, provides a comprehensive overview of the progress achieved under the Strategy in 2023. Five years into its implementation and against the backdrop of a rapidly changing global context that has significantly affected advancements towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the first interim review of the Strategy was commissioned to take stock of progress and lessons learned. The High-level Steering Committee for the United Nations Youth Strategy, the joint working group (the technical leadership group) and its time-bound task teams continued to ensure the Strategy's implementation, including with regard to workforce rejuvenation and the strengthening of internships.

5. Building on the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution [75/1](#)) and Our Common Agenda ([A/75/982](#)), and as outlined in the Secretary-General's policy brief on meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes,² which the Office supported as a penholder, the upcoming Summit of the Future and its expected outcome, A Pact for the Future, which is currently under negotiation, will provide a unique opportunity to move towards a reinvigorated multilateral system that is better positioned to have a positive impact on people's lives.

¹ Available at <https://www.unyouth2030.com/about>.

² A/77/CRP.1/Add.2.

6. The Youth Office has developed a three-tiered approach to advance meaningful youth engagement at all levels, by implementing actions at the intergovernmental and United Nations system-wide levels and striving to lead by example. Using this approach, the Office will continue to support the positioning of young people as key enablers for reinvigorating multilateralism across A Pact for the Future, in particular its chapter IV on youth and future generations. With respect to its internal work, strategic planning and the implementation of key activities in 2024, the Office inaugurated its first youth core group, comprising diverse youth representatives, which will serve as a sounding board for the Office's work going forward.

7. The Youth Office made substantial contributions to the work of the United Nations on sustainable development, human rights and peace and security during the reporting period. The Office played a pivotal role in facilitating youth-led consultations and thematic discussions in the lead-up to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit held in September 2023 and is doing so again in preparation for the Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024, and is working to ensure meaningful youth engagement in the setting of specific commitments for meeting the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the realm of human rights, the Office actively participated in the World Programme for Human Rights Education (see para. 51 below), focusing its work on advancing human rights education with, for and by young people, while also advocating youth engagement in human rights mechanisms and forums. Moreover, the Office's leadership in advancing the youth and peace and security agenda is evident through its efforts to enhance collaboration, strengthen youth engagement and lead strategic communications and advocacy initiatives, in line with Security Council resolutions.

8. Through these multifaceted initiatives, the Youth Office continued to champion the rights and needs of young people across diverse global challenges, ensuring that their voices were heard and integrated into policymaking and decision-making processes. In addition, the initiatives underscored its commitment to coordination and accountability within the United Nations and with partners, to address the needs and rights of and meaningfully engage young people globally.

9. The year 2024 is a turning point for young people at the United Nations and beyond. Since the Youth Office is fully established and on a stable financial footing, 2024 marks a significant step forward in the work of the United Nations with and for young people.

II. Progress in the establishment of the Office

10. The General Assembly approved the appropriation of resources for the Youth Office for 2023 in the amount of \$2,376,100; resources in the amount of \$2,639,200 have been requested for 2024. In addition to programmatic activities, these appropriations cover the establishment of the new Office's structure comprising 16 posts (1 Assistant Secretary-General, 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 5 P-3, 6 P-2 and 1 General Service (Other level)).

11. Under the leadership of the first Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, the recruitment process gained momentum, in full adherence with Article 101 (3) of the Charter of the United Nations. Paramount consideration was given to securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. The new recruitments attest to a culture of diversity at all levels (age, geographical distribution and gender). All six P-2 positions in the new structure have been included in the young professionals programme.

12. While the Youth Office was advancing in the recruitment process, contingency planning was a top priority. For the purpose of business continuity, the contracts of seven staff members on temporary appointments with the Office of the Envoy on Youth were extended during the first quarter of 2024. The transition was completed seamlessly on 30 April.

III. Progress in the implementation of the mandate of the Youth Office

13. During the reporting period and in parallel with the process of establishing the Youth Office, as described above, progress was made on multiple fronts to advance on the Office's mandate in accordance with resolution 76/306, including with respect to strengthening United Nations system-wide coordination and accountability, with a particular focus on youth development, enhancing the representation of young people in the workforce of the Organization and advancing meaningful youth engagement on the issues of sustainable development, human rights and peace and security.

A. United Nations system-wide coordination and accountability on youth

Overview

14. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 76/306, the governance, coordination and accountability systems for implementing the Youth Strategy transitioned from the Office of the Envoy on Youth to the Youth Office.

Progress in the implementation of the Youth Strategy

15. The implementation of the Youth Strategy has gained significant momentum across the United Nations system, with 55 United Nations entities and 132 United Nations country teams (all functional country teams) actively advancing its priorities and reporting annually on progress. The fourth *Youth2030 Progress Report*, a testament to the collective achievements of the United Nations system, will be launched in July 2024 and provides a comprehensive overview of progress on the Strategy in 2023 and of challenges at the global, regional and national levels.

16. The High-level Steering Committee for the Youth Strategy, the joint working group (the technical leadership group) and its time-bound task teams continued to ensure that the implementation of the Strategy was on track, focusing on critical gaps and enhancing collective work in key areas. The time-bound task teams focused on knowledge management, young persons with disabilities, communications and the strengthening of internships.

17. The Youth Office, together with the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the Department of Operational Support and other members of the task team on strengthening internships³ finalized and launched a report entitled "Internships in the United Nations: an exploratory review".⁴ The review outlined strengths and gaps in the internship policies and programmes of the United Nations. It served to put forward recommendations to transform internships and make them coherent, fair and accessible to young people from across the world, in all their diversity.

³ The membership of the task team includes representatives of other United Nations entities and youth networks.

⁴ Available at <https://www.unyouth2030.com/internship>.

18. The Youth Office and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance co-chair the global working group on workforce rejuvenation, which was recently established in the Secretariat to review and assess existing practices and propose a holistic strategy for attracting and retaining young people for careers at the United Nations. When implemented, that strategy should result in a more versatile, multigenerational work environment that is aligned with the vision for a United Nations 2.0.

19. Two key outputs of the Youth Office, as a member of the Youth Strategy task team on young persons with disabilities, are the global report entitled *Believe in Better: Shaping the future through the meaningful engagement of young persons with disabilities*⁵ and the accompanying guidance note for United Nations country teams,⁶ which set out data and evidence, as well as challenges and recommendations for addressing them. As part of the task team, the Youth Office, in collaboration with the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, also led the development of a checklist to ensure the meaningful engagement of young persons with disabilities in humanitarian action⁷ (see para. 50 below).

20. In close collaboration with the Development Coordination Office, the Youth Office continued to provide technical assistance to United Nations country teams. During the reporting period, the Office engaged with youth focal points across at least 57 country teams through briefings on their priorities, providing bilateral support during strategic moments in the development of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and for reporting on the implementation of the Youth Strategy and/or building their capacities. In 2024, the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs engaged with several resident coordinators and their teams in the Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean regions, through bilateral meetings, field missions (Benin, Chile, Ethiopia, Kenya, Philippines and Thailand) and regional meetings to discuss critical challenges in advancing youth issues and potential solutions to address them. These field-level insights have helped to reinforce the positioning of the Youth Office and set the vision for and direction of its work. United Nations engagement with young women's and girls' networks has progressed, as outlined in the *Youth2030 Progress Report 2024*.⁸ In total, 74 per cent (37 out of 50) of United Nations entities and 83 per cent of country teams (109 out of 132) engaged with these networks.

Interim review of the Youth Strategy

21. The Youth Office commissioned a first interim review of the Youth Strategy in order to assess the first five years of its implementation. The review includes data and insights from 33 countries and at the global level. It serves to identify lessons learned and make recommendations for the next six years. The review will be made available on the website of the Office.⁹

22. The key findings of the review indicate that robust foundations have been established for implementing the Youth Strategy, including governance and system-wide coordination structures, performance measurement and accountability systems and mechanisms for the periodic tracking of progress. In the review, it is also noted that while engagement with the Youth Strategy has been extensively expanded across

⁵ Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/believe-better-shaping-future-through-meaningful-engagement-young-persons-disabilities>.

⁶ See https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/BB_guide_218x280_EN_26.04.pdf.

⁷ See https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/ENG%20Checklist_0.pdf.

⁸ *Youth2030: A Global Progress Report* (United Nations publication, 2024).

⁹ See: https://5d962978-9e17-4b96-91be-93983605fae8.filesusr.com/ugd/5c0fda_2e48c00936d742c2819baed1bcf0c869.pdf.

the United Nations system, acceleration is needed to realize the commitments by 2030.

23. The Youth Strategy has had a positive influence on governments' work on youth issues. It has served to provide crucial data and evidence; offer technical assistance for the development and revision of national youth policies with a focus on leaving no one behind; build capacities; implement multi-stakeholder projects with national impact; support innovative initiatives with and for young people; facilitate youth engagement in policymaking and voluntary national reviews; and connect global agendas to local contexts.

24. The review also highlights the pivotal role of the United Nations in nurturing and empowering youth-led organizations, in particular young women's networks. The United Nations has fostered a vibrant ecosystem of young leaders and organizations dedicated to driving positive social change by providing financial support, building the capacities of youth organizations and amplifying youth voices.

25. The Youth Strategy covers a wide array of gender-related issues, leading country teams to engage with Governments on legislation, programme implementation and capacity-building. That engagement has been focused on topics such as young women's participation in decision-making, the addressing of gender disparities, efforts to tackle gender-based discrimination and violence and child marriage, support for young women in rural areas and advocacy for reproductive health. Robust progress has been made in how the United Nations system engages youth in shaping country-level work. In 2023, for example, there was a tenfold increase at the country team level with respect to youth engagement in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes, compared with the 2020 baseline figures. The review also notes that there is a need, at all levels, to strengthen the policies and processes for engaging youth meaningfully. The areas that have shown the least progress are workforce rejuvenation and the strengthening of internships in the United Nations.

26. The review highlights that the parallel roll-out of the Youth Strategy and the United Nations development system reform processes has positively affected coherence, collaboration and advocacy on youth issues and youth engagement in action relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. The leadership of resident coordinators, the alignment of action with national priorities, the availability of guidance and the provision of capacity-development opportunities have played a facilitative role. The failure to align actions with national priorities, financing constraints and the lack of human resources for advancing youth affairs were barriers. Resources from the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund have been a great enabler, when available.

27. The lessons learned from the review will be discussed by the High-level Steering Committee for the Youth Strategy and taken forward in the coming months.

B. Engagement and advocacy for the advancement of youth issues across the United Nations

Overview

28. Given the important role played by young people in the promotion of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights, the Youth Office was established to lead engagement and advocacy for the advancement of youth issues across the United Nations, which implies working in close collaboration with the United Nations system, Member States, regional organizations, youth groups and other stakeholders.

Economic and Social Council youth forum

29. The Economic and Social Council youth forum, a platform for intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, collaboration and solidarity, was held from 16 to 18 April 2024 under the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”. Convened by the President of the Council, the youth forum was co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Youth Office, as mandated by General Assembly resolution [76/306](#), in collaboration with the children and youth major group and the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations.

30. In the lead-up to the youth forum, a global online public consultation entitled “Hear our voice! Young people at the Summit of the Future 2024” was held from 4 to 23 March, with the participation of United Nations entities, civil society organizations and youth-led organizations. Over 500 participants from across the world engaged in the consultation, which culminated in the “Voices of Youth” report presented during the youth forum.

31. The youth forum provided a platform for dialogue among Member States, young people and other stakeholders on solutions to challenges and opportunities to advance meaningful youth engagement in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future. Discussions were focused on the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, namely no poverty (Goal 1), zero hunger (Goal 2), climate action (Goal 13), peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16) and partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17). Over 1,000 young people attended in person and more than 25,000 participated virtually. More than 80 countries participated in the youth forum, with over 90 youth delegates representing their Governments.

32. The youth forum featured a high-level session on the theme of the Summit, “Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow”, emphasizing intergenerational partnerships and meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making. On the margins of the forum, the Office hosted a leadership event with various youth champions to strategize on ways to boost mobilization towards the Summit of the Future. Throughout the forum, young participants were featured in news articles and other communications, highlighting their contributions and recommendations.

Harnessing the power of youth in their societies

33. As a partner of the joint programme entitled “Financing a Green, Inclusive and Sustainable Recovery”, the Youth Office continued its efforts to help implement the 2030 Agenda and accelerate coronavirus disease (COVID-19) recovery efforts through the implementation of the “Youth Force: Transforming Accountable Growth and Recovery from COVID-19” programme, aimed at empowering young people, in particular from the Sahel region and the least developed countries, as partners for accountability. The programme’s second phase, initiated in the fourth quarter of 2023, was focused on supporting youth-led advocacy for climate action and green recovery. At the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Youth Office and different partners hosted interactive sessions on climate financing featuring the work of the “Youth Force” programme. The Youth Office also co-organized a youth round table with the Secretary-General, providing a platform for young climate activists to share their insights and recommendations.

34. The Youth Office actively supported the responsible development of artificial intelligence and digital participation. At the Internet Governance Forum 2023, the Office, together with various partners, co-organized an interactive dialogue on the topic of “Community-driven responsible artificial intelligence: a new social contract”¹⁰ to highlight the importance of inclusive artificial intelligence development processes and meaningful youth engagement in digital development. The Office also supported the work of the High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence by facilitating the participation of young people in the consultation process led by its members on the impact of artificial intelligence on young people and children.

35. Following the Youth Office’s participation as a key partner in the multi-stakeholder initiative Protection through Online Participation, led by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and the International Telecommunication Union, the Youth Office co-led the workstream on a children and youth engagement working group together with other United Nations partners, academia and civil society. At the Internet Governance Forum 2023, the International Telecommunication Union, the Office of the Special Representative, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Youth Office co-hosted an open dialogue to highlight the importance of working with young people on their safety and rights online and offline – helping them to be seen as partners, innovators and actors of change. Participants also discussed the preliminary findings of the initiative’s efforts to map child-led and youth-led online solutions that help children and young people to stay safe, as well as insights from interviews with children and youth solution-makers.

Advancing the youth and peace and security agenda

36. The Youth Office continued its close collaboration with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to implement the youth and peace, and security agenda.¹¹ Those efforts entailed leading strategic communications and high-level advocacy, as well as coordinating and collaborating with the United Nations system and civil society organizations, including youth-led and youth-serving groups. The Office is dedicated to strengthening the meaningful and safe engagement of young people within the peace and security initiatives of the Organization.

37. The international steering group for youth-inclusive peace processes, co-chaired by the Youth Office, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Search for Common Ground, launched its annual review¹² of the initiatives undertaken by its members in 2023, which contributed to strengthening youth participation in mediation and peace processes.

38. Furthermore, the Youth Office, together with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, co-authored a policy paper on financing the youth and peace and security agenda.¹³ The policy paper was presented on the margins of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, at a side event organized by the Permanent Missions of Finland and Jordan to the United Nations.

39. In partnership with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Youth Office conducted an internal mapping study to assess United Nations peacekeeping

¹⁰ See <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2023-ws-299-community-driven-responsible-ai-a-new-social-contract>.

¹¹ References defined by Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2535 (2020), and 2419 (2018).

¹² See <https://cnxus.org/resource/the-year-in-review-advancing-the-five-year-strategy-on-youth-inclusive-peace-processes/>.

¹³ See <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/c2-5-unoy-dhf-financial-report-final.pdf>.

operations engagement with young people and the implementation of the youth and peace and security agenda. The study, completed in September 2023, documented best practices from 10 peacekeeping operations and provided recommendations for further strengthening the agenda. A summarized version of the study's key findings and recommendations was published in December 2023.¹⁴

40. Key achievements on the youth and peace and security agenda, challenges and lessons learned were highlighted in the third report of the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security (S/2024/207), in line with Security Council resolution 2535 (2020). The Youth Office served as one of the penholders alongside the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UNFPA. The report also shares recommendations on accelerating the youth and peace and security agenda across the United Nations system, including within the Security Council, Member States and United Nations entities.

41. The Youth Office is now the technical secretariat for the group of champions of youth and peace and security, co-chaired by Jordan and Finland. The new role is a way of bolstering advocacy and advancing the coordination on youth and peace and security issues within the United Nations system.

42. The Youth Office supported the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in conducting a pilot research project on the implementation of the Youth Strategy, with a particular focus on the priority areas of human rights and peacebuilding.¹⁵ The research involved interviews with youth groups and members of United Nations country teams, as well as desk research aimed at assessing the advancement of human rights and peacebuilding. The findings were validated through a national youth consultation and published by the Foundation in a thematic paper. A high-level virtual round-table discussion was held in collaboration with UNFPA and the Foundation in June 2024, to present the findings and advocate the implementation of recommendations outlined in the research report.

43. In an effort to integrate the youth and peace and security agenda into the work of the Security Council, the Youth Office has advocated regular briefings on that agenda. In May 2024, a Security Council debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: the role of women and young people" was held under the presidency of Mozambique. The Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs called for more Security Council briefings and deliberations allowing young people to participate in high-level discussions and highlighted the need to protect young women and girls, especially those with disabilities and those from marginalized communities.

44. The Youth Office also launched the Paxterra initiative,¹⁶ a youth-sensitive version of the third report of the Secretary-General on youth and peace and security. This initiative distils key insights and recommendations into a concise, interactive format that resonates with young audiences. Paxterra presents a vision of a secure, utopian future where young leaders drive peacebuilding initiatives and are recognized as essential partners in decision-making. It contrasts this ideal with the current reality, reflecting the findings from the report of the Secretary-General.

Advocating meaningful engagement of young people in humanitarian settings

45. Throughout the reporting period, the Youth Office consistently advocated the meaningful engagement of young people in humanitarian settings. That commitment was prominently showcased at the Global Refugee Forum held in December 2023, at

¹⁴ See <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/YPS-agenda-in-UN-PKOs.pdf>.

¹⁵ See <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/implementing-the-un-youth-strategy-lessons-from-the-gambia/>.

¹⁶ See <https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/nscOWDak43JyT>.

which the Youth Office played a significant role. It was a co-lead on the “Youth leadership in action: global multi-stakeholder pledge to support work with, for and by young people in displacement”, which underscored the importance of the leadership of young people. The event also facilitated collaboration between various stakeholders to support displaced youth.

46. The Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action¹⁷ is co-chaired by UNFPA and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the Youth Office took the lead, in collaboration with key partners, in funding and conducting a comprehensive review of and strategic planning initiative for the Compact. This effort aimed to shape the Compact’s direction for the next five years, focusing on governance reform and the creation of a robust fundraising plan. The objective was to ensure that the network remains fit for purpose and capable of fulfilling its promise to young people in the area of humanitarian action. The findings of the review were presented at the annual meeting of the Compact held in Amman, in October 2023, and the operationalization of the proposed strategies is currently under way.

47. Lastly, the Youth Office, in collaboration with the Compact, developed a checklist to ensure the engagement of young persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. The checklist, which was launched to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, is accessible and available on ReliefWeb in English and Spanish. At the seventeenth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Youth Office led a side event and supported the engagement of young leaders with disabilities throughout the Conference.

Human rights and leaving no youth behind

48. In partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNESCO, the Youth Office participates in the World Programme for Human Rights Education, which is now at the end of its fourth phase (2020–2024) and is focused on human rights education with, for and by young people. On the margins of the Economic and Social Council youth forum 2024, the Youth Office, OHCHR and UNESCO, in collaboration with youth-led networks, hosted a side event to discuss the future of human rights education. Subsequently, the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs took part in consultations, emphasizing the need for intersectionality, inclusion and the protection of young human rights defenders. The outcomes of the meetings were instrumental in developing the plan of action for the fifth phase (2025–2029) of the Programme.

49. In collaboration with OHCHR, the Youth Office promoted the meaningful inclusion of young people in human rights mechanisms. The Office participated in key events, including a youth dialogue on the margins of the high-level event marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and round tables on civic space and digital rights. Furthermore, the Office developed internal guidance for the safe engagement of young people at the Security Council and other forums.

50. The Youth Office engages with partners and coalitions to highlight the importance of addressing intersectional inequality and discrimination in order to meet the needs and protect the rights of all young people – including girls and young women. The Office played an active role in coordination spaces such as the working group on gender and disability, led by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). It collaborated with UN-Women ahead of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. As a

¹⁷ See <https://www.youthcompact.org/>.

result, the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs participated in the Commission's interactive dialogue with youth representatives and its official youth forum. The forum provided a space for consultation with young women and youth feminist organizations to discuss their priorities, concerns and proposals for meaningful engagement in decision-making processes. The Youth Office also supported the creation of youth care spaces at the youth forums of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, providing young participants with opportunities to decompress and recharge through various activities, thereby promoting mental health as a central aspect of gender equality.

C. Advancing meaningful youth engagement in the work of the United Nations and beyond

Overview

51. While young people will inherit the consequences of action taken to tackle pressing global issues, or the lack thereof, there are limited opportunities for their engagement in public policymaking and decision-making at the global, regional, national and local levels. Strengthening meaningful youth engagement is at the heart of the Youth Office's work.

Striving to lead by example

52. In 2023, the Youth Office actively engaged in high-level advocacy to underscore the importance of meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes. The Office led the development of the Secretary-General's policy brief on meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes and engaged in consultations and advocacy with Member States, United Nations entities and youth-led and youth-focused organizations. The concrete recommendations for strengthening meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes at all levels, outlined in the policy brief, moved its work forward.

53. Against that backdrop, in early 2024, the Youth Office developed a robust approach to advance meaningful youth engagement as a cross-cutting priority in all of its work. The three-tiered approach focuses on implementing actions at the intergovernmental and United Nations system-wide levels (through the Youth Strategy), as well as within the Office. In addition, the Office inaugurated its first youth core group. The criteria for selecting the members of the group included gender and geographical distribution. The group will serve as a sounding board to help shape the priorities and activities of the Office going forward.

54. The Youth Office has continued to champion meaningful youth engagement in all processes and at all levels, ensuring that processes, discussions and decisions benefit from the rich input that young people bring as, inter alia, experts, activists, entrepreneurs, scientists, students, innovators, beneficiaries and young United Nations staff members.

Sustainable Development Goals Summit

55. Building on the recommendations of the Secretary-General's policy brief on meaningful youth engagement, the Youth Office and youth-led organizations facilitated the development of a youth-led meaningful youth engagement road map towards the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, which was held on 18 and 19 September 2023, marking the halfway point to the deadline for implementing the 2030 Agenda. The road map, which was aimed at consulting young people on how

they could be better engaged as full-fledged partners in the achievement of the Goals, built on the outcomes of the global consultation on youth and the Goals and the Economic and Social Council youth forum 2023. It included two virtual youth consultations, held on 30 June and 11 August 2023 respectively, entitled “Torchbearers for the Sustainable Development Goals: consultations on meaningful youth engagement and the 2030 Agenda”. It also led to the launch of guidance for self-organized youth consultations, for consultations held between June and August 2023, which invited youth-led, youth-focused and youth-serving organizations to host consultations in their communities and contribute to the overall process. Over 4,500 young people from all regions took part in the consultations, with 4,273 registering for the virtual consultations and 324 hosting self-organized consultations.

56. The road map culminated with a session entitled “Torchbearers for the Sustainable Development Goals: meaningful youth engagement and the 2030 Agenda”, held on 16 September 2023 during the Sustainable Development Goal Action Weekend, which was convened by the Secretary-General ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to maximize the Summit’s impacts. The session included spotlight segments showcasing youth activism, art and self-expression, in particular by vulnerable groups. It concluded with the official launch of an outcome document¹⁸ and a youth position paper by youth representatives. These documents echoed the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General’s policy brief for a global standard on meaningful youth engagement and called for such a standard to be a requirement in all intergovernmental processes, including at the United Nations.

57. During the Sustainable Development Goals Action Weekend, the Youth Office supported the participation of youth representatives in high-level dialogues and ensured the accreditation of over 40 young people from all regions to attend the Sustainable Development Goals Summit.

Summit of the Future

58. Advocacy efforts in the lead-up to the Sustainable Development Goals Summit contributed to a decision by the General Assembly on the scope of the Summit of the Future and its outcome document, entitled “A Pact for the Future”, comprising a chapeau and five chapters, including one (chapter IV) to be dedicated to youth and future generations.

59. Following that decision, the Youth Office advocated and supported youth participation in the intergovernmental process leading up to the Summit of the Future. That work, which began in December 2023, included supporting and amplifying stakeholder consultations and calls for written inputs on A Pact for the Future, and in particular chapter IV, as well as its annexes, the global digital compact and the Declaration on Future Generations. By providing input and facilitating youth involvement, the Office reinforced its commitment to integrating youth perspectives into global policy discussions.

60. In order to ensure that young people could contribute through various channels to the Summit of the Future process, the Office worked on opportunities for engagement in the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council youth forum, the United Nations Civil Society Conference and the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development. Youth engagement in such events, forums and processes at the United Nations is crucial to restore young people’s trust in multilateralism and nurture intergenerational partnerships and solidarity.

¹⁸ See <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Torchbearers-for-the-SDGs-Consultations-on-Meaningful-Youth-Engagement-and-the-2030-Agenda-Outcome-Document.pdf>.

61. In that spirit, at the United Nations Civil Society Conference in Nairobi, held on 9 and 10 May 2024, together with youth-led and youth-serving civil society organizations, the Youth Office participated in an intergenerational impact coalition on youth to ensure robust youth engagement in the processes leading up to and during the Summit itself. The outcomes of the Conference are now shaping preparations for the Summit of the Future Action Days and the Summit, particularly the Youth Action Day, which will be held on 20 September 2024, before the Summit. The Office is leading preparations and has created a coordination group, which includes representatives of the impact coalition on youth and intergenerational engagement. The coordination group comprises civil society and youth constituencies, including gender equality-focused organizations.

62. In addition, ahead of the Economic and Social Council youth forum and in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future, the Youth Office launched an initiative in the form of an open letter to world leaders, summarizing young people's key asks for strengthening meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes. The open letter serves as a vehicle for reinvigorating multilateralism and defining solutions for a better tomorrow.

Meaningful youth engagement in climate action

63. As part of the Youth Office's work in supporting and advocating meaningful youth engagement in key climate processes and in coordination with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Climate Action Team of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office supports and amplifies the work of youth-led networks and constituencies.

64. The Youth Office supported the Secretary-General and the Climate Action Team in launching the second cohort of the Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change. The mission of the Youth Advisory Group is to support and amplify the climate action priorities and agenda of the Secretary-General and to participate in key climate action discussions and processes linked to the 2030 Agenda. The Youth Office provided support to the members of the Youth Advisory Group for the co-organization of a youth round table with the Secretary-General at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which provided a platform for young people to share recommendations on priorities for the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties.

65. In the lead-up to the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, the Youth Office also supported youth-led recommendations that had been developed through other means, such as hackathons, as well as the outcomes of local and regional Conferences of Youth. At the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, the Office supported a round-table discussion between the Secretary-General and youth, engaging over 35 young people across the world, including Indigenous activists, grass-roots young leaders and young people from conflict-affected areas, and hearing their climate-related priorities.

66. The Youth Office also amplified the voices of youth in many ways at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties. First, it partnered with Connect4Climate on a series of heart-to-heart intergenerational youth-led dialogues. The dialogues featured a set of 10 discussions with international organizations, young activists, climate negotiators, community organizers, refugees and others. The campaign was centred on young people's calls for decision makers to strengthen youth engagement across climate decision-making spaces and beyond. Second, on the day dedicated to youth, children, education and skills, the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs took part in the high-level Dubai Youth Climate Dialogue and the launch of the Youth Stocktake, organized by the presidency of the session, in

collaboration with YOUNGO (a group of youth non-governmental organizations) and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to produce a comprehensive overview of the state of youth participation in the processes of the Framework Convention.

Youth in politics

67. The Youth Office has been advocating the meaningful engagement of young people in public life and politics, in particular young women's engagement in political processes, through its spearhead initiative, the global "Be seen, be heard" campaign. In concrete terms, the Office has been positioning the campaign in major advocacy events, including at the Global Citizen Festival and the World Economic Forum. The Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs also participated in the 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, reaffirming the importance of better representing young people, in particular young women, in public life, and highlighting the need for equal care and equal participation.

68. The Youth Office continues to promote young people's right to participate in public affairs by being part of relevant inter-agency groups, such as the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism for United Nations Electoral Assistance, and by strengthening collaboration with key partners in the field of political participation, such as the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Club of Madrid and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy.

D. Communications and outreach

69. Throughout the reporting period, social media remained a key tool used by the Office to meaningfully engage with young people worldwide. In December 2023, in line with the transition to the new Youth Office and the new Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs assuming his duties, the Office transferred its social media handles from @UNYouthEnvoy to @UNYouthAffairs across all channels. Nearly 800,000 people follow and engage with the Office over its social media channels (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok). In December 2023, the Youth Office also launched new channels on Threads and LinkedIn, amassing an additional 12,500 and 2,913 followers respectively. Collectively, these numbers represent an accelerated growth of approximately 22 per cent (and a total 147,000 new followers) in 2024.

70. The web presence through the Envoy on Youth website (www.un.org/youthenvoy) continued to experience sustained performance, with more than 1 million total website users in 2023, including continued representation of a healthy regional and geographic balance among users. The website also amassed nearly 1.6 million total page views. Efforts are ongoing to build the new Youth Office website,¹⁹ which is anticipated to be launched in the second half of 2024.

71. To diversify the communications channels and ensure more consistent mechanisms to engage with young people around the world, the Office continued to produce the Youth2030 Pulse newsletter. The newsletter serves as a centralized channel for youth-related updates on campaigns, events, opportunities and resources from across the United Nations system. The newsletter reaches more than 62,000 subscribers every month with an average open rate of more than 71 per cent and a click-through rate of 18 per cent.

72. The Youth Office continued to leverage and maintain the Youth2030 communications Trello board, which serves as a central repository for all youth-related communications campaigns and initiatives across the United Nations system.

¹⁹ To be hosted at the address www.un.org/youthaffairs.

The Trello board continues to be updated on a regular basis, especially ahead of major activations. Primary updates come from the Youth2030 Communications Group – a growing network of over 220 youth-focused communications focal points from across the United Nations system, working at the global, regional and national levels.

73. The Youth Office co-led communications surrounding the Economic and Social Council youth forum, held from 16 to 18 April 2024, for which it developed a comprehensive social media package with updated branding, a media advisory and support for “Sustainable Development Goals media zone” segments, among other relevant activities. In response to the Office’s outreach efforts and coordination with relevant partners at the global, regional and national levels, over 1,000 young people attended the forum in person and over 25,000 participants did so virtually.

74. On a biennial basis, the Office recognizes 17 exceptional young people as part of the Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals initiative, and as of June 2024, had facilitated nearly 600 engagements around the world.

IV. Conclusion

75. The Youth Office represents the resolve of the Member States to ensure that the Organization is better able to engage and support young people as fully-fledged partners in important processes and in the decisions to be taken to correct course for the world’s efforts towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, the promotion of peace and security and the fulfilment of human rights, leaving no one behind. Significant progress has been made since July 2023 to advance the transition process while delivering on the substantive mandates of the Youth Office as set out in resolution [76/306](#).

76. Moving forward, the Office will build robust foundations to continue advancing and mainstreaming youth affairs in the United Nations system and strengthening meaningful youth engagement at all levels. The ongoing strategic planning exercise will set the priorities and flagship initiatives of the Youth Office in line with resolution [76/306](#) and build on the intergovernmental framework to be set out in “A Pact for the Future”, to be adopted at the Summit of the Future. The review of the Youth Strategy will ensure that the United Nations system works collectively to accelerate efforts to achieve the Goals, with and for youth at every step of the way.

77. As the Office looks to the future, the ongoing support and collaboration of Member States, stakeholders, particularly young people in all their diversity, will be crucial in shaping its priorities. Championing the cause of young people and fostering an inclusive, equitable and sustainable world in which their contributions are recognized and valued, are areas in which the Office could make a positive impact. The Secretary-General reaffirms his commitment to this mission and calls upon the General Assembly to continue to support the pivotal work of the United Nations Youth Office.