



7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
Baku, Azerbaijan, 25-27 April, 2016

Youth Event: “Living Together in Inclusive Societies: Narratives of Tomorrow”

Background

Recent years have seen unprecedented progress in the recognition of young people’s contribution to peace and development. There was series of “firsts” at international level, such as the first Global Forum on Youth Policies (Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2014) or the first Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security (Amman, Jordan, in 2015). There were also meaningful continuations of established initiatives such as the UNESCO Youth Forums or the UNAOC Youth Events, who over the years have refined their methodologies for inclusion of young people in international level dialogue and policy discussions.

The United Nations further affirmed its commitment to working with and for young women and young men by establishing, in addition to existing programming that addresses the needs of young people, entities such as the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. Through collaboration and partnership with civil society organizations and youth-led organizations, these entities amplify the voice and goals of youth within and beyond the United Nations, coordinate and strengthen the mechanisms of participation for youth at the international level, as well as the advocacy efforts to advance the youth agenda.

In 2015, The World Programme of Action for Youth celebrated its 20th anniversary and continues to provide a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people around the world. A groundbreaking achievement was reached at the end of 2015 when, for the first time in its history, the Security Council recognized the important role young women and men play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, by adopting the Security Council Resolution 2250. The resolution was a direct follow-up of the Amman Declaration, developed based on inputs from over 11,000 young people from around the world who called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution recognizing the work of young peace builders and calling on Member States to support their efforts.

These initiatives have brought to the forefront the active engagement of young people and are showing the world that youth are not passive citizens, but active agents shaping social and economic development, key partners to engage in consolidating inclusive societies in an effort to promote peace and prevent violent extremism. In this regard, International Organizations and Member States play the essential role of creating, providing and optimizing the tools, support and frameworks that facilitate youth engagement and action.

Young people are valuable partners for reaching the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Young women and young men from all over the world were consulted in the drafting process of the 2030 Agenda. Now, their contribution in the implementation process is of utmost importance in the

global effort to leave no one behind. More specifically, particularly relevant to UNAOC mandate are *Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (which includes education for a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development)* and *Goal 16. Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies*. They bring forward the vision of a diverse and inclusive society, a society of equal opportunities and a culture of peace. As stated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "the new global goals will come of age with today's young people. It is up to us to keep our promises so that we reach our goals as youth reach adulthood (...) Let us give young people the tools they need to create a new future for all of humanity."

Young people are global citizens acting for peace and social inclusion

Young people are agents, beneficiaries and victims of social changes. They aspire to full participation in the society. Creating opportunities for young people to engage in inter-generational and intercultural dialogue, bringing forward young people's stories of resilience, their role as change-makers and their active contribution to development are important steps for creating inclusive societies and a peaceful world.

Young people play an important role in preventing violent extremism

The international community raises awareness of the need for counter-narratives to attract people (especially young people) away from potentially compelling narratives/discourse of terrorist organizations, and engagement in violent acts. The narrative of a global movement of young global citizens acting for social inclusion holds tremendous potential and can be a compelling alternative for countering polarization. Therefore, youth need to be involved in the development of solutions and new policies for preventing violent extremism around the world.

Aim

The Youth Event is a unique international opportunity for civic and intercultural participation, conceived as a preparatory event of the UNAOC Global Forum, in order to maximize youth's experience and contribution, to facilitate learning, sharing and partnership building. The Youth Event will engage with the above-mentioned topics and context.

Objectives

Support and provide a framework for selected 125-150 young people from diverse backgrounds to meaningfully participate in the UNAOC Global Forum, engage with the Forum theme and subthemes and bring youth voices to the Forum discussions;

- Engage with UNAOC on the relevance of its activities for young people;
- Grow selected participants' network and expand their activities through interaction with other youth involved in social action;
- Support youth participants' access to and knowledge of the global youth movement for peace and its network;
- Promote the SDGs and discuss the role of youth in achieving them by 2030;
- Facilitate the creation of *Narratives of Tomorrow* as the main outcome of the Youth Event. These narratives articulate participating youth's vision and solutions for the world to "live together in inclusive societies" and chart the course for the way forward;
- Further motivate and empower participants to act as agents for social transformation and intercultural dialogue in their communities.

Outcomes

The main expected outcomes of the Youth Event are:

1. Increased competences of young people to act as agents of social transformation (increased knowledge about intercultural dialogue and social action for inclusive societies, exposure to international event/policy discussion; awareness of the global youth movement for peace);
2. Access to resources and networks, including possibilities of partnerships;
3. A Global Forum and related policy and programming discussions that are inclusive of diverse youth voices and perspectives;
4. Development of *Narratives of Tomorrow*: A reference to be used by youth organizations, other civil society organization, UNAOC, and interested stakeholders.

Format and Methodology

The Youth Event is a youth and participant-centered platform that uses participatory and interactive methodologies to facilitate co-operative, open-ended and experiential learning. The program is built based on participants' contribution to the online discussion before the event, on their vision and solutions for a world in which people "live together in inclusive societies".

The Youth Event is an intercultural event, open and inclusive of all cultures and nationalities. It is committed to creating an environment that values diversity of perspectives as a way to achieve solutions, contributing thus to the empowerment of young people to become full participants in decision-making, active citizens and agents of social transformation.

Through the use of narratives, participants will seek to deconstruct stereotypes, to challenge the dominant discourses and to create space for new stories, ideas and norms to flourish. Narratives and storytelling are powerful tools to drive positive social change. They are a way to reframe and change stories, to create more possibilities for social justice initiatives. For example, the dominant discourse on young people often places them in a passive or victim role. Youth activists around the world talk about the need to break these stereotypes and present narratives that view young people and other non-dominant groups as part of the solution.

Structure

The Youth Event is designed to give participants the opportunity to share their experiences, learn from each other, interact with key stakeholders and experts in their area of interest and produce an output entitled *Living Together in Inclusive Societies: Narratives of Tomorrow*, which articulates their vision for inclusive societies. The process will include three distinct stages:

Phase 1 – Getting ready for the Youth Event and Global Forum (March-April 2016)

Early engagement will help maximize the exchange of ideas among participants and preparation for the actual youth event. Selected participants will exchange ideas and practices on social inclusion and join a group to discuss one forum sub-theme of their choice; groups will self-moderate their conversations according to a set of guidelines and community agreement.

Phase 2 – Participate in the Youth Event and Global Forum in Baku (25-27 April 2016)

At the Youth Event, participants will meet high-level speakers from the United Nations and Host Government; policy makers and/or youth leaders; youth workers, trainers and/or advocates. They will have the opportunity to continue conversations started online and are prompted to formulate a narrative on their sub-theme. The narratives will be shared, as the Youth Event's main outcome, with the Forum community during the opening ceremony, in the Forum report and through the media channels of UNAOC. During the days of the Forum, participants will also share their narratives with invited VIPs.

Phase 3 – Follow-up

All participants of the Youth Event will be expected to promote the Forum outcomes, the *Narratives of Tomorrow* and ideas discussed back in their home countries/communities/platforms of action. In order to support the sustainability of the Youth Event, the participants are invited to exchange and receive useful updates on relevant topics through the online platform.

Participants

The participants to the Youth Event are 125-150 international and local youth aged 18-35, selected based on their membership in youth-led organizations/networks/initiatives and their commitment to diversity and pluralism, nonviolence, peaceful and inclusive societies. The international selection committee is composed of representatives of UNAOC and the government of Azerbaijan, as well as members of youth-led structures and/or networks.

Moderator:

Ms. Isabelle Tibi, UNAOC Youth and Education Project Specialist, **Ms. Oana Sandu**, UNAOC Youth Programme Consultant and **Mr. Azer Abasaliyev**, Project Assistant, Ministry of Youth and Sport, Azerbaijan

Speakers:

United Nations Secretary-General (tbc)

United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

Representatives of the Host Government (tbc)

Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Jordan

Mr. Solvi Karlsson, Leading Coordinator, United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY)

Ms. Noella Richard, Youth Policy Specialist, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

Mr. Rashid Zuberu, Leading Coordinator, Young Peace Brigades

Representative of youth-led structure engaged in SDG implementation (tbc)