

# The importance of youth participation in addressing the world's most pressing challenges

Well, thank you Mr President and thank you for using their presidency to highlight this issue and organise this briefing on Youth Peace and Security. May I also thank very much our briefers. It is very valuable and to hear that which was of course commissioned by the Secretary-General's Envoy for Youth. And we look forward to Secretary-General's upcoming report to build further on recommendations to implement resolutions 2250 and 2419.

Now Mr President, the importance of youth participation in addressing the world's most pressing challenges, including conflict – the business of this Council – really ought to be self-evident: more than half of the world's population is now below the age of 30. And I think looking around this Council table it is fair to say that not all of us around the table are below the age of 30. I'd like to see your birth certificate Jerry.

These are therefore voices that must not be ignored. And it is only by taking in the views of youth, including in this Council, that we can properly account for the diversity of perspectives and long-term vision which we need to defend and promote human rights and develop the sustainable political, economic and social solutions to those challenges.

And one of the things the United Kingdom regularly says in this Chamber Mr President, is the importance of an inclusive political process when it comes to conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Because we know that when peace processes are inclusive, they are one-third more likely to be sustainable. And greater sustainability is crucial to ongoing peace.

And I agree very much with Ms Ramyar had to say. She was referring I think in particular to the situation in Afghanistan. But I think it is applicable more widely about the importance of youth having a role in peace processes, being heard and listened to. And that is vital for the future of those countries because the future of those countries is represented in youth.

I also thought what you had to say, if I may, about the prejudice you have suffered as a young women was really quite revealing. And i think we would say in the United Kingdom that young women have a key role to play in this area. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, we see the engagement of young women as instrumental. And we see it all the time: in building coalitions; mediating local ceasefires; in repairing community relations; and challenging and changing the status quo.

Mediation is an issue we have discussed regularly before Mr President, but you will allow me to say that we are extremely proud of the fact that we, the UK with fellow members of the Commonwealth support the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) initiative. We were able to support members of that

network to participate in a Youth Forum in Nairobi this year, and that forum addressed the lack of young women's representation in mediation processes and how we can overcome these barriers. The women's mediators across the Commonwealth now has nine members who are under the age of 35 who are supported to resolve conflict in their communities, and we are committed to ensuring more young mediators are in that network.

When we consider instability in regions across the world, it is clear that meeting the aspirations of youth is crucial in defending and promoting human rights, resolving conflict and sustaining peace. Youth are an incredible mobilising force to drive political change, which is further enabled through their use of social media and technology, as we seen recently in Sudan for example.

Mr President, we must ensure young people are able to live to their full potential. In July last year, the UK launched the \$75 million second phase of our Girls' Education Challenge, which will support 70,000 girls and train 1,000 young women to teach in remote areas.

And, we are also one of the largest bilateral donors to "Education Cannot Wait", which was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to protect access to education for children and youth in conflict zones. And we urge others in the international community to support this initiative.

Again, this is all part of peacebuilding, of conflict prevention, of post-conflict stability. Sadly, Mr President, there are of course instances where young people find themselves in positions of great danger. In November this year, the UK is hosting an international conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict called Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First. And we are ensuring that the voices of youth survivors play a crucial role in this meeting.

So let me conclude Mr President by thanking you again for this debate, by thanking our briefers for coming here and for their wise words. I hear you say, Special Envoy, that the title of your paper was "We Are Here". Well, you are certainly here today in this Council and you are heard.