

# 22<sup>ND</sup> UNIVERSITY ON YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT

## YOUNG PEOPLE, PEACE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

18 TO 23 SEPTEMBER 2023, MOLLINA, SPAIN

### **Joint Declaration of the 22nd edition of the University on Youth and Development 23 September 2023, Mollina, Spain**

Since 2000, the [University on Youth and Development \(UYD\)](#) has represented an international hub for meetings, youth advocacy and exchange of good practices. It gathers, for one week, hundreds of young people, youth workers, decision makers, experts from the field and institutional representatives, providing them all with a space to meet, debate, build their capacities and cooperate on youth policy issues. The UYD is designed as a space for experiencing intercultural dialogue while debating the most pressing issues of the global youth movement. Youth organisations and youth-related institutions, gathering participants from across Europe, Africa and Asia have applied to join the UYD and organised 9 activities within the framework of the event.<sup>1</sup>

“Young people, peace and climate change” is the main theme of the 22nd edition of the UYD, with a particular importance given to intersectionality. We recognise that peace is a precondition to other global progress to be made, including climate action. Young people are disproportionately affected by conflict, being at the forefront of dealing with the consequences of climate change. They are also underrepresented in national and regional institutions, lacking a platform to raise awareness and amplify their voices. Only 2,6% of national members of the parliament are under the age of 30 years old worldwide.<sup>2</sup> Highlighting the critical importance of youth organisations, regional platforms, national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations is thus a prerequisite in fostering pluralistic democracies and meaningful youth participation.

Among the most important international processes, the high-level political forum (HLPF) organised in July with the presentation of the Voluntary review from the EU and several EU member states reporting on their work on their implementation of the SDGs need to be highlighted. The HLPF was followed by the SDG summit in September led to the adoption of the [political declaration](#) that reaffirms that the achievement of the SDGs is in peril as the implementation of most of the SDGs too slow or have even regressed since the adoption of the agenda in 2015. The declaration also recognises the important contribution of young people to achieve the 2030 Agenda while also recognising that sustainable development cannot be realised without peace and security.

The priorities of the Council of Europe (CoE) for the youth sector have been laid out in the [Youth Sector Strategy 2030](#) following the adoption of the [Committee of Ministers' Resolution \(2020\)2](#), which together with the [Reykjavik Declaration 2023](#), highlight the great importance of the role of young people in climate-related actions and generally in revitalising pluralistic democracies. In this regard, the role of the North-South Centre has been vital, as through their unique Summer University spaces they have been upscaling this impact to the global level.

The European Commission launched its [new Youth Action Plan for External Action](#) (2022-2027) following the adoption of [Council Conclusions on the role of Youth in External Action](#) aiming to engage young people in the EU external actions. It is composed of three

<sup>1</sup> Infopack, *22nd University on Youth and Development*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/youth-empowerment/data-youth-participation>

pillars that aim to engage young people through existing youth structures or to support the creation of youth structures where they are missing. The action plan also aims to support the empowerment of youth structures financially through funding streams and connect young people through youth exchanges in the educational sector. One of the thematic priorities of the youth action plan is to contribute to the implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

Furthermore, in order to achieve concrete positive peace and accelerate progress towards climate change, there is a need to foster inter-regional partnerships beyond the EU. The UYD remains committed to demonstrate the possible impact of this inter-regional collaboration through engagements with youth from the Africa and Middle East regions.

Equally, through the EU-Africa partnership, youth exchange initiatives have been initiated that bring together young people from both continents to co-create solutions on some of the most pressing development challenges, including peace and climate change. Such initiatives have demonstrated the remarkable potential of what is possible when young people from various regions think and act together.

In light of the above, the 22nd edition of the University on Youth and Development united the voices of young people on peace and climate change, resulting in the following recommendations:

1. Recognise and safeguard the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment, through a legally binding human rights instrument;
2. Strengthen the accountability of a wider range of stakeholders to safeguarding the full enjoyment of human rights by young people, and work towards a stronger international framework for youth rights;
3. Further implement and create links between the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and climate action, promoting an intersectional approach;
4. Empower young people to have a higher level of influence through meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes;
5. Actively support youth organisations in a systematic manner, as a way of strengthening pluralistic democracies;
6. Increase the participation of young people in the democratic life by recognising their imperative role in society and empower them to run for political positions;

This declaration is both a commitment and a call to action of the University on Youth and Development 2023 participants to the institutions, governments and the global community at large. The support of partner organisations and institutions in organising this year's UYD is recognised and highly valued.

*This manifesto was produced by partner organisations in the framework of the University on Youth and Development (UYD) 2023. The UYD is an activity organised with the financial support of the European Union, within a programme implemented by the Council of Europe. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author(s). Views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union or the Council of Europe.*

