**Intersessional Seminar on Youth and Human Rights**

12 April 2021 | 10AM – 12PM & 3PM – 5PM (CEST)

**Concept Note**

(*as of 26 March 2021*)

# Mandate

The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 41/13, requested the High Commissioner to convene a full-day intersessional seminar focused on the challenges and opportunities of young people in the field of human rights during the first semester of 2020, with the participation and involvement of youth-led and youth-focused organizations. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, in its decision 45/113, the Human Rights Council decided to postpone the seminar, to take place in the first semester of 2021.

# Background and objectives

With a global youth population of 1.8 billion, there are more young people in the world than ever before. That demographic reality creates unprecedented opportunities for social and economic progress. At the same time, many young people see their potential hindered by social norms, cultural attitudes, institutional and structural barriers and violations of their fundamental rights.

The report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on youth and human rights ([A/HRC/39/33](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/39/33)), submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to its resolution 35/14, documented examples of discrimination and challenges young people face in exercising their human rights by virtue of their age. Moreover, the report highlighted that age is one characteristic that often intersects, adds to and multiplies discrimination based on other grounds, preventing many young people from enjoying equal opportunities and substantive equality.

Youth face specific challenges regarding participation in politics and public decision-making, the transition from education to work, access to quality employment and social protection, access to health services and sexual and reproductive health services in particular, and conscientious objection to military service, among others. Moreover, youth in vulnerable situations face additional challenges due to their specific circumstances and often multiple discrimination, as is the case for young migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, young people in conflict with the law, youth with disabilities, young women and LGBTI youth.

The global pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities. A global survey on youth and COVID-19 found that the impacts of the pandemic on young people, particularly among women, younger youth and youth in l ower income countries, are systematic, deep and disproportionate.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Despite the human rights challenges young people face, the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights found that the mainstreaming of youth issues is not systematic in the overall context of international human rights mechanisms.

The UN Youth Strategy: Youth 2030, recognizing young people as rights holders, identifies youth and human rights as one of its five priority areas, including a focus on *“mainstreaming of all rights of young people […] into the work of treaty bodies, special procedures and other human rights mechanisms […]”*.[[2]](#footnote-2) Furthermore, the Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security identified a need to broaden the engagement of human rights institutions and processes with young people by mainstreaming the rights and participation of young people into the work of the human rights mechanisms.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Against this background, the intersessional seminar will aim to:

1. Highlight discrimination and challenges that young people in all their diversity face in the realization of their human rights, by virtue of their age;
2. Explore how youth is mainstreamed across different human rights mechanisms and consider possibilities to further enhance youth mainstreaming;
3. Identify possible actions and measures for the consideration of Member States and the Human Rights Council to improve human rights for young people.

# Methodology and format

The seminar will take place online on 12th April, over two 2-hr sessions (10.00-12.00 and 15.00-17.00 CEST). Each session will focus on a different thematic area, starting with an introduction of the theme by the panellists followed by an interactive discussion. Information and guidance regarding participation, including the submission of pre-recorded statements for the interactive discussion, as well as the online platform hosting the event, is available separately. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).

# Participants

The event is open to UN Member and Observer States, Intergovernmental Organizations, UN agencies, funds and programmes, International Organizations, National Human Rights Institutions, NGOs with ECOSOC consultative status, as well as youth-led and youth-focused organizations. The participation of UN Youth Delegates is strongly encouraged.

# Outcome

OHCHR will prepare and submit a report on the seminar to the Human Rights Council prior to its 49th session.

# Relevant documents

* [Human Rights Council resolution 41/13](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/41/13) of 11 July 2019, “Youth and human rights”
* [Human Rights Council decision 41/113](https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/DEC/45/113) of 6 October 2020, “Postponement of the implementation of certain activities mandated by the Human Rights Council
* Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on youth and human rights ([A/HRC/39/33](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/39/33))

1. ILO, OHCHR, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, AIESEC, European Youth Forum: <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/campaign/COVID19-survey> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. United Nations, [Youth 2030: Working with and for young people](https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf) (p.12) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security](https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf) (p.122) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)