

## **Contributions to the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future**

Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development's [Annual Report 2023 - A/HRC/54/41](#)

### **Meaningful youth engagement in policy and decision-making processes from the right to development perspective**

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The realization of the right to development requires the combined efforts of diverse stakeholders, including youth, to advance the relevant actions necessary to address current challenges.

The Expert Mechanism welcomes the Our Common Agenda policy brief entitled “Meaningful youth engagement in policy-making and decision-making processes”, with its emphasis on the fact that youth are key to identifying new solutions that will secure the breakthroughs that the world urgently needs. Progress in youth participation is also essential for the inclusive and effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, bearing in mind the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the spirit of the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights, and gender equality as a cross-cutting theme.

Article 8 of the Declaration on the Right to Development provides that States should undertake, at the national level, all necessary measures for the realization of the right to development and shall ensure, *inter alia*, equality of opportunity for all and that States should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realization of all human rights. Article 3 indicates that States have the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favourable to the realization of the right to development and the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.

The full participation and meaningful engagement of youth, including the empowerment of young women and girls and young men and boys in all their diversity, is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive, and stable societies and to overcoming serious threats and challenges, such as the impact of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, violence, and migration.

There is a need to harness the critical voices and hopeful vision of young people to identify new solutions to current and potential challenges through their meaningful engagement, stronger national commitment, and vigorous international cooperation. Youth can be the driving force for society and the vehicle for accelerating the achievement of Our Common Agenda.

It is of paramount importance to boost the adoption of innovative and systematic ways for young people to meaningfully participate in policy- and decision-making processes at all levels, using a right-to-development approach.

The international community and donors have a critical opportunity to engage in cooperation arrangements that include young women and men as a target group and as partners in and leaders of key project activities. In turn, it is essential that donors make it a priority to increase the diversity of the young people involved in policy- and decision-making, while ensuring transparent mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of such actions.



Youth participation is a human right, and the exclusion of youth might amount to a violation of their rights. There should be mechanisms that ensure their meaningful engagement based on non-discrimination, guarantees for greater diversity and representation and equal opportunity and dignity for all. Young people, including young women and girls, in more vulnerable situations, such as those from rural areas, Indigenous Peoples or those living in stressful economic and social conditions, from a diversity of cultures, countries and regions, must be involved in the design and adoption of the necessary changes and reforms.

In line with the Declaration on the Right to Development, fostering civic space is essential for youth engagement. There is an urgent need to strengthen or create new mechanisms and bodies, including digital platforms, at the national, regional, and global levels to enable the meaningful participation of young women and men in all their diversity. This requires adequate, albeit ambitious, medium- and long-term financial support, intergenerational solidarity and committed support for their empowerment and the strengthening of their capacity for meaningful participation. It is also important to ensure that their participation is safe and based on transparent processes and includes appropriate feedback, including relevant indicators.

In summary, innovative policies, strategies and cooperation agreements, including the use of technology, digital platforms and technology transfer, intergenerational partnerships and the active and more visible involvement of young women and men, the use of relevant indicators to measure and evaluate the performance of current and future-related efforts and processes, effective and transparent mechanisms to prevent and remove obstacles and barriers and the prompt adoption of necessary reforms and changes, are among the ways in which to move forward towards more inclusive and sustainable development and making the right to development a reality for all.

Greater leadership of today's youth will provide better prospects for current and future generations in building the future we want. This transformation requires the active and diverse contributions of States, the United Nations and other international and regional institutions and a broad range of civil society actors, with strong youth voices throughout.

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