

## Human Rights 75 Global Youth Consultation

14 August 2023

### SUMMARY REPORT

#### Opening session

In the opening session, an overview of the Human rights 75 Initiative was provided, and the objectives of the Global Youth Consultation were explained:

This year the world commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On this occasion, UN Human Rights launched the Human Rights 75 initiative to rejuvenate the spirit that led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and look into the future of human rights.

Youth participation is at the core of the Human Rights 75 Initiative. UN Human Rights created a Youth Advisory Group of 12 young human rights activists from different regions, who help to implement the Human Rights 75 activities, and promote the initiative among young people around the world.

The main task of the Youth Advisory Group is the development of the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration, which will reflect the views of young people on the future of human rights. This Declaration will be presented at the Human Rights 75 High-Level event, which will take place in Geneva on the occasion of the Human Rights Day on 11-12 December.

This consultation was organized to gather views of young people on the issues which will be reflected in the Youth Declaration. In parallel with the Consultation, OHCHR launched a youth survey available in Arabic, English, Spanish, French, Russian and Chinese, that any young person can complete, and a call for input also available in these 6 languages which targets youth organizations.

The opening has been concluded with the video remarks from Mr. Volker Türk, UN High-Commissioner for Human Rights, and Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, who highlighted the importance of involving youth in shaping the future of human rights.

The Consultation continued with the discussion of the three main questions addressed to youth:

1. What are the challenges the world is facing now, how will they affect the future of human rights, and what future do you want for human rights?
2. What are your recommendations to decision and policymakers, including governments, civil society, international organizations, the United Nations, and others, to advance human rights in the future?

3. As young people, what are your commitments and actions towards advancing human rights in the future?

**DISCUSSION ON QUESTION 1: What are the challenges the world is facing now, how will they affect the future of human rights, and what future do you want for human rights?**

Participants highlighted numerous challenges which, in their opinion, will affect the future of human rights:

- **Climate change** poses a significant threat to human rights, depriving millions from enjoying most basic human rights, causing deaths, food and water shortages, and destroying lands. It disproportionately affects marginalized communities and vulnerable populations, increasing inequalities, and endangers present and future generations. Climate change-driven displacement is a growing issue, with millions displaced due to environmental factors. Since the existing legal frameworks, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, fail to address those displaced by climate change, the global community needs to address the rights of climate migrants and provide them legal protection.
- **Authoritarian regimes** commit war crimes and violate human rights through repression, censorship, and disregard for civil and political rights. Human rights defenders and activists are at risk of persecution, arrest, and torture under authoritarian governments. This threatens democratic values and freedoms, impeding progress towards a future with universally respected human rights. Disinformation machinery and far-right ideologies divide people, putting the lives of the most repressed, including women, transgender people, minorities, refugees, and migrants at risk.
- **Global inequality and poverty** are on the rise, leading to unequal access to basic social safety net. Widening inequalities in gender, class, race, sexuality, and power are reversing the limited progress made in advancing economic, social, and cultural rights. Capitalist greed exacerbates these disparities, perpetuating economic and social injustices. Racial injustice and environmental racism are the challenges that should be addressed by promoting active participation of racialized people and people from the global South in building the structures of the human rights promotion and protection and considering them as a valid source of knowledge inside the human rights academia.
- **Digital world** playing a significant role in youth culture, education, and communication, information censorship and limited access to internet are very important challenges in the realization of human rights. Advocacy for digital accessibility and privacy is crucial to ensure unfettered access to information and protection of personal data. The discussions about Internet and emerging technologies like AI should be human rights centered and address the issues of Internet freedom and privacy.
- **Intergenerational trust** in governmental institutions has declined, necessitating efforts to rebuild trust and engage younger generations. Empowering youth voices through global platforms, activism, and advocacy is essential for promoting human

rights and meaningful change. Advocacy for human rights should be prioritized within political agendas, focusing on accountability and effective decision-making.

- **Governmental agendas** have allowed the politicisation of human rights, which are being treated as simply a matter of ethics, when it should be a matter of law. Outdated legal definitions and governance structures need to be adapted to address contemporary challenges, such as climate-induced displacement. Governments must prioritize human rights and the rule of law, ensuring that individuals are protected from rights violations and abuses. The implementation of human rights should be a central aspect of decision-making and policy formulation.
- **The capture of corporate businesses on States** is challenging human rights. Extractive activities held by the multinationals in the Global South violate social, environmental and economic rights of the population without any legal binding instrument available to repress those degrading actions.
- **Indigenous communities** in different regions face numerous challenges including political persecutions, violations of land rights, displacement, violence and torture. Climate change severely affects ecosystems of indigenous peoples forcing them to leave their lands, and threatening their culture, identity, traditional knowledge, and survival. Upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and addressing violations against indigenous communities is imperative.
- **Persons with disabilities** face numerous barriers in the participation in society because of the lack of accessible infrastructure, including public spaces, transportation, and digital platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities within disability communities, including limited access to healthcare, isolation, and disrupted support systems. Stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities persist as significant challenges. Accessibility, inclusive technologies, and representation are crucial for a future that values diversity and empowers persons with disabilities.

**According to the participants, the future they want for human rights is the future where:**

- Everyone enjoys their fundamental rights and freedoms, lives in dignity and free from poverty, violence, and discrimination.
- Human rights institutions truly work for all and hold those in power accountable for protecting and respecting human rights.
- Duty barriers and rights holders know that human rights are not an abstract aspiration, but an everyday obligation that must be upheld.
- The historical and collective traumas of victims of human rights abuses, especially indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, people of color, and the formerly colonized, are recognized and healed, and the reparations are paid by the Global North to former colonies.
- Human rights are not used as a tool for domination by more powerful States but are seen as crucial to self-determination and liberation in the global South.

- All human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights and the rights to environment and sustainable development, are universally recognized by all States, especially the most powerful.
- Climate justice is ensured for the future generations, and those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.
- Everyone has unhindered access to the digital world and the benefit that comes with it.
- Indigenous peoples are acknowledged and celebrated, their rights to autonomy, self-governance, and self-determination are ensured, and their bond with ancestor lands is safeguarded, including through environmental protection.
- Gender, race, sexuality, and different social classes are genuinely taken into account in the development of policies and laws.
- Accessibility is prioritized as a fundamental right, ensuring that all aspects of life are open and available to everyone, and assistive technologies are readily available and affordable, enabling persons with disabilities to participate fully in education, employment, and social activities, and be represented in all spheres of life, from media to decision-making processes.
- Disability rights are central to emergency response plans, ensuring that needs of persons with disabilities are met and their voices are heard in the crisis context.
- Youth is involved in shaping policies and advocating for human rights and empowered to contribute to decision-making processes and hold governments accountable for respecting human rights.
- Human rights education and empowerment are provided to young people as an educational and empowering tool that shapes a legacy of empathy, dignity, and justice, that honors the inherent worth of every human being and safeguards the essence of our shared humanity.

**DISCUSSION ON QUESTION 2: What are your recommendations to decision and policymakers, including governments, civil society, international organizations, the United Nations, and others, to advance human rights in the future?**

Participants provided the following recommendations to the decision and policymakers:

- Young people and their perspectives and experiences should be taken into account by the decision and policymakers, and they should be at a table when the decisions are made affecting their lives and their future. Their voices should be heard on all matters, including climate policies, minimum wages, fiscal policies, and others. And it's important to involve all groups of young people in these conversations, including LGBTIQ+ youth, youth with disabilities, youth refugees, and others.
- Policymakers should strive to understand how young people experience discrimination and inequality, including in terms of age-related barriers and unintentional discriminatory policies. They should recognize youth rights as much as

other human rights, such as women's rights, and ensure that policies actively work for young people.

- Existing policies done for young people should be harmonized. The United Nations and Member States should consider strengthening mechanisms to protect youth rights, potentially through a creation of a special procedure for youth rights and adoption of the Convention on Youth Rights which would allow to set the common universal understanding of youth rights.
- Human rights defenders and decision makers should pay urgent attention to the children and youth living in the alternative care, as many young people and teenagers issued from alternative care institutions face barriers in the realization of their human rights.
- For a sustainable future, the world needs visionary leaders and collaboration between countries to tackle global issues, prioritizing dialogue and multilateral agreements.
- The world needs inclusive governance ensuring that marginalized communities have a voice in decision making and guaranteeing distribution of resources and benefits.
- Humanitarian action should be prioritized, particularly for the assistance and disaster relief in the context of the climate crisis and emergencies. Governments should move towards sustainable finance and innovative solutions to tackle climate change. Education on climate change is also also needed.
- Human rights education, and a human rights approach to education should be integrated in the educational curricula in primary schools, universities and colleges. In particular, it is crucial to familiarize children and young people with the UDHR and other human rights instruments, including through using their child friendly and youth friendly versions. Providing opportunities for direct engagement of youth in human rights activities is equally imperative. Policymakers should also Invest in education to raise awareness about human rights among citizens, government officials, and civil society organizations, fostering a culture of respect for these rights.
- Decision-makers should provide training for law enforcement and judiciary personnel to ensure fair enforcement of laws and just legal proceedings.
- Governments should commit to democracy and prioritize robust democratic institutions to protect rights and ensure transparency and accountability for all the citizens. Diplomacy should be the way for solving conflicts, replacing hostility and violence with sustainable solutions that honor human rights. Governments, civil society and international organizations should unite and create strength to address human rights issues across the world comprehensively.
- Decision and policymakers should recognize the existence of a huge policy gap in the Global South concerning the rights and welfare of the LGBTIQ+ community. There is need to address and advocate for progressive policy recommendations and legislative institutions for full realization of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people.
- Decision and policymakers should consider that human rights and climate change are interconnected issues that require comprehensive and collaborative approach. To effectively tackle climate change, decision and policymakers must recognize its

impact on various human rights, such as the right to life, health, food, water, and healthy environment. It is crucial to identify the most pressing climate-related human rights issues in communities and countries, considering disproportional impact on certain groups of population. Policies and programs should be developed and implemented with consideration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions of climate change, addressing the unique needs and perspectives of different groups. There's also a need for effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that are essential for tracking the impacts of climate action on human rights.

- For enhanced climate action, Governments should ensure the implementation of existing Nationally Determined Contributions and the immediate ratchet of ambition, the operationalization of finance flows to developing and most affected countries, the equitable phase out of fossil fuels, and the meaningful inclusion of children and youth in climate decision-making processes.
- In discussions surrounding human rights monitoring and evaluation, it's imperative to emphasize the importance of assessing these aspects with a specific focus on youth. The approach must encompass not only current measurements but also anticipate potential future impacts stemming from human rights violations. This calls for the utilization of diverse methods tailored to the unique needs and perspectives of young people.
- Policymakers should strengthen gender policies, including by implementing coordinated strategies regarding the tackling and follow-up of gender-based violence, adopting intersectional strategies that consider gender, sexuality, race, disability, and social status, and adopting a coordination reparations system by sharing the know-how between countries and regions.
- Policymakers should collaborate to develop and enforce comprehensive human rights laws and regulations that align with international standards, while addressing region-specific challenges. They should examine if existing laws are consistent with the international human rights standards, and if there are inconsistencies, change the laws accordingly. International organizations and mechanisms should make recommendations about laws that should be adopted in relation to human rights, investigate individual complaints against the human rights violations, conduct national inquiries, intervene in courts and tribunals where there may be human rights issues at stake and educate communities about issues that are crucial for advancing human rights in the future.
- Youth is a very diverse category and this should be considered in policymaking. The heterogeneity of the youth affects their access to opportunities to participate in actions that determine sustainable future and leadership. Decision-makers should recognise that young people are more than political mobs but great resource for sustainable development. The plight of youth in migration, e.g. refugees and other types of migrants should be addressed with equal importance.
- It is important to implement trauma sensitive programs for youth from conflict zones to ensure their meaningful participation in the development.

- It should be made easier to report war crimes and human rights violations to the international courts for follow-up, accountability and push for global peace.

### **DISCUSSION ON QUESTION 3: As young people, what are your commitments and actions towards advancing human rights in the future?**

The following commitments and actions toward advancing human rights in the future were raised by the participants:

- Advocate for policies that prioritize human rights, social justice and equitable access to education. This may entail shedding light on discriminatory practices and championing reforms that nurture inclusivity and fairness.
- Create content, including on social media, to educate young people about human rights, clearly explaining them the concept, and organize activities to connect young people around human rights.
- Make human rights more accessible by advocating before states to include classes on human rights into their educational systems. Human rights education can also be done through activities, seminars, easy-to-read books on human rights which would be interesting for young people and children. Educating on human rights at early age can help break stereotypes which cause inequalities that the world is facing for years.
- Acknowledge the intricate web of intersectional identities that shape individuals' experiences within the educational sphere. By addressing the interplay of race, gender, class and disability, we can rectify inequalities and create a more inclusive educational landscape.
- Instead of only working at the global level, it is important to also implement activities at the family and community level, and especially reach out to less privileged communities to make human rights accessible to them.
- Focus on and provide funding to women, especially young women, so that they can safely participate in politics. Women are very active in the areas of the rights of children and youth, and in many countries, they are being threatened and murdered because of their activism. It is important to fund and build capacities of women who are working in grassroot communities on projects focused on public policies, politics, and places of decision and power.
- Develop patterns of action that deepen ties of solidarity across generations and throughout entire communities.
- Keep on fighting for human rights and peace, educating people on the importance of human rights, especially in the underprivileged contexts.

### **Closing session**

The Consultation was concluded with an overview of the next steps:

OHCHR will produce a summary report from the Consultation and then will combine the raised points with the responses received through the online survey and the call for input.

Based on this information, OHCHR will work with the Human Rights 75 Youth Advisory Group to develop a Youth Declaration, which will be then presented to policymakers in December during the Human Rights 75 High-Level Event.