

Communiqué

26th – 28th
November 2014

The 2014 Asker Conference on Youth and Governance

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The participants of the Asker Conference on Youth and Governance, representing local and national governments, inter-governmental organizations, youth and youth-led networks and organizations, and civil society organizations, thank the Asker Municipality, the Norwegian Children and Youth Council and the UN-Habitat Oslo Youth and Governance Programme for convening this critical meeting to discuss the issues of youth and governance.

The participants appreciated the presence of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Haakon Magnus of Norway, and look forward to his continued participation and input in the follow-up process to the conference.

At the Asker Conference, we had the opportunity to evaluate our journey, which started in Oslo 2011, up till now, and while we celebrate our achievements and progress, including the appointment of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, we agree that the structures we currently have in place, alone, are not enough.

During the conference, we invested time in discussing how we can move forward and better strengthen meaningful youth engagement in the global system. We recognize the urgency of issue and we agree we need to move fast.

Every generation has its own set of values, experiences, history and way of looking at the world. If one generation is left out of creating the solutions of tomorrow, we risk neglecting their perspectives and meeting their needs. When we talk about young people, if they are not invited to have an equal say in decision-making processes, we risk neglecting the needs of 1.8 billion people, as well as their energy and support to implement the decisions made.

During the 3 days of the conference, we have discussed:

- 1- The critical role young people can play in governance at local, regional and global levels, and we agreed an intergenerational approach is crucial to ensure a sustainable development.
- 2- That the diversity of young people within countries, and around the world, requires that we work harder to create more inclusive and participatory processes that can enable the engagement of minorities and vulnerable groups.
- 3- The urgent need to ensure that youth are meaningfully represented in the United Nations, and in any deliberations related to UN issues such as Habitat III.
- 4- We strongly believe that the role of technology, private sector involvement, and wider stakeholder engagement are critical to the achievement of our goals.
- 5- The urgent need to establish permanent structures that enable youth to engage in the UN, as outlined through the Youth 21 initiative.
- 6- The importance of creating, strengthening and building capacity amongst youth and youth-led organizations at the local, national and regional levels, based on principles of meaningful participation.
- 7- When young people are given a meaningful way to participate, and are respected for their views and values, they can contribute in a highly constructive way.
- 8- We should encourage the engagement of local governments, and work towards strengthening their capacity to better engage young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local policies.

- 9- Young people are severely affected during conflict and post conflict situations, and they play roles as both victims as well as aggressors. There will be no lasting peace without meaningful participation of all stakeholders. Engaging youth in peace and reconciliation processes is the only way to create shared ownership and ensures lasting results.

While we celebrate the World Program for Action on Youth, as we are approaching its 20th anniversary we still see very little progress in its implementation. We need to work to widely promote the content, as well as to develop better monitoring and evaluation systems. The best way forward is to create structures where governments, UN entities and youth can come together and are held accountable to each other.

Young people's ideas and solutions are multi dimensional, and therefore the structures need to be integrated and cross cutting.

Youth civil society and youth-led organizations need to be able to bring their issues and solutions to the table and be taken seriously. There is therefore not enough to offer a seat at the table, but Member States need to engage young people in real and meaningful discussions that go beyond just merely participation. Young people want to have their say respected on all issues, such as health, education, employment, rights, etc.

We believe that a discussion on youth engagement in the UN, and raising the presence of youth issues, will require a number of ideas and structures to be advanced in parallel. Following up on the *A/RES/68/130 - 68th UNGA Resolution on Youth Policies and Programmes*, one mechanism will not capture all elements of youth empowerment. We need to move beyond our focus on the different tactics, and start a real discussion on a more comprehensive strategy.

And when we move to a more systematic approach, we would like to explore the implementation of some specific mechanisms:

- 1- A UN Permanent Forum on Youth – which could become a platform to gather the voices of youth, and youth-led and youth-focused organizations to discuss and agree on the issues that are relevant to young people, and to formulate related policy recommendations.
- 2- A UN Commission on the Status of Youth – which could become a platform to increase accountability and reporting mechanisms related to the implementation of WPAY, as well as allow Member States, representatives of youth-led organizations and other stakeholders to come together to promote the Commission's stated purpose.
- 3- A UN Youth Agency – which could become a real platform for the implementation of youth policies and programmes around the world.
- 4- A Multi-Partner Youth Trust Fund – which could become a resources pool from which we would be able to finance the design, implementation and the monitoring of youth policies and programmes.
- 5- Establishment of youth advisory boards as well as the creation of a coordination platform for the different youth advisory boards within the UN system, which can improve the collaboration among agencies and facilitate the mainstreaming of youth issues across the UN system.
- 6- UN inter-agency working groups on youth at national, regional and global levels, bringing together member states, UN agencies and youth from civil society to collaborate more meaningfully in the design, implementation and monitoring of youth policies.

We, the participants agree to:

1. Establish a *High Level Task Team for Youth 21* emerging from the Asker Conference that can move these the issues of youth and governance forward.
2. Galvanize greater support for said permanent structures by creating a broad coalition of Member States, UN agencies, youth and youth-led and focused agencies and other stakeholders with an interest in the meaningful participation of youth in UN governance mechanisms.
3. Hold regional meetings as a strategy to deepen the discussions at a regional level, and engage more Member States and other stakeholders to participate in shaping this agenda.
4. Increase support for the process of further exploring the mentioned scenarios at the level of UN permanent missions with, inter alia, a joint meeting in the sidelines the CSW, CSocD, on the Post-2015, etc. on this topic.
5. Continue the concept of Asker Conference on Youth and Governance as an annual forum from which to advance the above points and advocate for youth and governance issues.

The participants agree to actively work together to advance the above points.