



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies

YOUTH AS PEACEBUILDERS

Final Report of
Youth as Peacebuilders
Forum & Consultations
as part of the
2017 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial
January 2018

LES JEUNES COMME ARTISANS DE LA PAIX

 Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada



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The United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) is an historic, national charity with a mandate to educate and engage Canadians on the United Nations (UN) and international issues that concern us all. UNA-Canada “grows global citizens”. For over seventy years, through a National Office in Ottawa, twenty volunteer Branches across the country, and over twenty thousand members, UNA-Canada works in partnership with the private sector, all levels of government, the United Nations, international organizations, diplomatic missions, and civil society on national and international issues including climate change, health, gender equality, education, diversity, social justice and innovation. UNA-Canada provides a leading policy voice in UN and international issues with Canadians.

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United Nations Association in Canada
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LES JEUNES
COMME
ARTISANS DE LA PAIX



YOUTH
AS PEACEBUILDERS



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the findings from the Youth as Peacebuilders Forum organized by the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) as part of the 2017 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial (UNPKDM) and its preceding 20 consultations. The report highlights key issues and recommendations identified by the consulted youth as priorities at in-person and virtual consultation meetings as well as the youth forum at the 2017 UNPKDM. As such, it reflects a diversity of viewpoints heard throughout this process.

This report has been drafted in close collaboration with the Peer Leaders selected to lead consultation sessions in British Columbia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the time of writing, the proportion of youth population is the largest the world has ever known. The priority to engage youth in peacebuilding is key. The Canadian Department of National Defence hosted the 2017 United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference and from the beginning of preparations insisted that youth voices were included. The Youth as Peacebuilders Forum and the consultations leading up to it were organized by the United Nations Association in Canada to:

- Elevate the Canadian youth perspective in peacebuilding;
- Showcase the positive role young people play in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security; and
- Review and validate the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security being undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat.

Analyzing the five pillars for action outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, the Youth Delegates' consensus was that Canada has much work to do on these five pillars. The Delegates identified obstacles to peace, particularly in the areas of participation, protection, and prevention. The youth felt that while the Government of Canada is performing well in certain areas, there remains much work to provide meaningful and equitable avenues and opportunities for youth engagement and adequately protecting youth from social harm – particularly those in marginalized, racialized and/or colonized communities.

The specific challenges to youth engagement, as well as key challenges to peace and security from the youth perspective are identified and outlined in this Report. The Youth Delegates worked diligently through the consultations and Youth as Peacebuilders Forum concluding with their call to action of the Government of Canada through the identification of 14 priorities for action and 26 recommendations.

The United Nations Association in Canada is proud to have hosted and facilitated this youth engagement with remarkable young citizens with the support of the Government of Canada.

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BACKGROUND

In December 2015, the historic United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security was unanimously adopted. The Security Council, for the first time, urged Member States to consider ways to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at local, national, regional and international levels. The Council also urged Member States to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes and dispute resolution, encouraging the engagement of local communities and non-governmental actors.

UNSCR 2250 requests that the Secretary-General “carry out a progress study on the youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution, in order to recommend effective responses at local, national, regional and international levels”. A global progress study was undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat through regional consultations to develop a strategy for inclusion through action-based research, to support the practical implantation of UNSCR 2250.

UNA-Canada, with the support of the Department of National Defence (DND), hosted the *Youth as Peacebuilders Forum* as a youth focus event of the 2017 UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial, which took place at the Vancouver Convention Centre on November 14-15, 2017.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Youth Delegates

The United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) engaged 130 young Canadians as youth delegates, prioritizing the engagement of diverse communities. Strategic outreach was undertaken in partnership with universities and colleges from across British Columbia. Emphasis on including individuals of diverse sexes, sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, races, abilities, religions or status as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or Indigenous peoples was encouraged. With this guidance, each university and college undertook its own selection process. Eight academic institutions from Castlegar, Prince George, Vancouver and Victoria nominated 67 youth delegates to participate in the Forum.

In addition, efforts were made to engage Vancouver-based national civil society organizations working with, or serving, a wide range of youth, including: differently-abled youth, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer and two-spirit (LGBTQ2S+) youth, immigrant youth, refugee youth, youth in and out of care, youth of colour, Indigenous youth, urban Indigenous youth, HIV-affected youth, survivors of sexual violence/exploitation, homeless and at-risk youth and youth with lived experience of conflict. Forty-five delegates were nominated through civil society organizations.

Strategic efforts were also made to engage a wide spectrum of actors in the peace and security discourse including artists, policy analysts, programme managers, members of the

police and armed forces, government workers, health workers and members of the Prime Minister's Youth Council. An additional 20 delegates were engaged through these sectors and organizations.

Peer Leaders

As a youth-led process, 17 Peer Leaders were selected from among the Youth Delegates to lead and facilitate consultations and discussions. Academic partners identified eight Peer Leaders and 9 Peer Leaders were selected from community organizations based on diversity, language ability, background, self-identified willingness to lead and experience with facilitation. Peer Leaders played an important role in moderating the consultations, drafting consultation reports and representing their groups.

Meet the Peer Leaders



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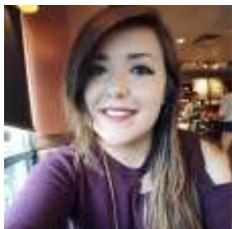
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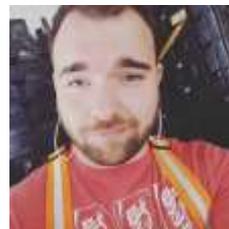
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Overview of Consultations



The 130 youth were divided into 7 Delegate Groups and took part in a total of 20 consultations throughout October and November. All consultations were led and facilitated by two to three Peer Leaders and supervised by UNA-Canada. Over 45 hours of discussions took place both in-person and via an online platform accessible by computer, smartphone and/or landline telephone – in order to minimize any barriers to engagement. Approximately 46% utilized the online platform to access the consultations.

Consultations were scheduled in various locations (Prince George, Vancouver, Victoria and online), at transit-accessible venues and at different times of the day, in order to accommodate as many youth as possible.

Consultation Process

The consultations addressed youth engagement in Canada as well as the five pillars for action outlined in UNSCR 2250 (2015): Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnership and Disengagement and Reintegration.

The guiding methodology of the discussions mirrored the framework of the Regional Consultations delivered by the UN Secretariat for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security, in order to maximize consistency, applicability, and practicality. The following themes were addressed:

1. UNSCR 2250 and the concepts of youth, peace, and security
2. Youth initiatives, engagement, and partnerships
3. Recommendations – challenges and solutions

The consultations varied in format and length, depending on the leadership of the Peer Leaders. Guiding questions were strategically broad and open-ended, in order to create space for the delegates to initiate priority topics and to ensure that the conversations were youth-directed.

The core questions that guided the consultations were:

- How do you contribute to peace and security? What are the peacebuilding and violence prevention activities, initiatives and projects being undertaken by you and/or your organization?
- What do the 5 pillars for action as outlined in UNSCR 2250 (2015) look like in Canada? What are Canada’s successes, challenges, priorities and/or opportunities?
- What does it mean to be a young person in Canada? Do you have adequate opportunities to engage and what are your barriers to engagement?
- What are the main peace and security challenges that you face and how do these impact your lives?
- What resources or partnerships do you need to address peace and security challenges?

Priority Pillars for Action



Of the five Pillars of Actions outlined on UNSCR2250, the Youth Delegates picked three Priority Pillars: Participation, Protection, and Prevention.

FINDINGS

Overview of Findings

The Consultations have demonstrated that Canadian youth are heavily invested in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. As outlined below, youth peacebuilders work in a myriad of fields through different methods of work and with various organizations.

Youth Delegates identified three key aspects missing from UNSCR 2250: an explicit mention of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer and Two-Spirited (LGBTQ2S+) violence, mental health, and judicial systems. There was a broad consensus on the lack of clarity regarding the definition of youth. Additionally, there was recognition that although direct active armed conflict does not exist in Canada, it is not a country in a state of peace.

Youth Delegates identified that there is a lack of opportunity and access to meaningful participation in politics and decision-making in Canada. They also stressed the importance of working and improving relations with Indigenous peoples and prioritizing sustainable and equitable economic development as important steps towards the prevention of conflict. Finally, the Delegates highlighted the inadequate protection of young people from social harm in Canada.

Comprehensive Findings

Canadian Youth Action in Peace and Security

Canadian youth contribute to peace and security through a wide variety of activities, organizations, and initiatives, both nationally and on the global scale.

Topics

Access to justice
Bullying and harassment
Climate change
Conflict resolution
Countering violent extremism
Disaster Relief
Domestic violence
Food security
Gender-based violence

Health and hygiene
Immigrant & refugee
integration and support

Methods of Work

Academia and research
Activism
Awareness raising
Call dispatch
Capacity building
Community organizing
Curricula design
Education
Education simulation

Event planning
Facilitation

Types of Organizations

Armed Forces
Band offices
Civil society organizations
Community centres
Consulting firms
Crisis lines
Foreign Governments
Government of Canada
Non-governmental
organizations
Non-profit organizations
Religious groups

LGBTQ2S+ protection	Filmmaking	United Nations
Mental health	Fundraising	Women's shelters
Opioid crisis	Grassroots action	Youth councils
Peace and human rights	Intercultural dialogue	Youth organizations
Peacebuilding	International volunteerism	
Policymaking	Language training	
Post-conflict peacebuilding	Legal advising	
Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples	Mentorship	
Refugee sponsorship	Microfinance	
Restorative justice	Photography	
Social integration	Policy analysis	
Suicide prevention	Political advocacy	
Sustainable Development Goals	Program development	
Water security	Religious leader engagement	
Women's health	Sponsorship	
Youth empowerment	Training	
	Utilization of tech and media	
	Youth engagement	

UN Security Council Resolution 2250

Youth delegates engaged in in-depth discussions on UNSCR 2250, including on the five pillars for action outlined in the resolution.

In analyzing the resolution, youth identified three key aspects missing from the text: an explicit mention of LGBTQ2S+ violence, mental health, and judicial systems. The delegates emphasized that these key aspects – particularly gender equality and the need to recognize all gender expressions – should be explicit in the Resolution.

There was thoughtful dialogue on the Resolution's categorization of youth as between the ages of 18 and 29. Some youth opined that, as the life course gaps and markers that have previously defined what it means to be a young person get increasingly longer, the way people are able to define themselves as youth is also changing. In addition, with the growing global preponderance of youth – the largest the world has ever known – and the increasing number of young people who are experiencing conflict, there is a need to account for lived experiences and to embrace "youth" as a much more fluid concept. It was suggested that "youth" be regarded as a stage of individual and mental development, rather than as restricted to a specific age. It was repeatedly emphasized that conversations around youth, peace, and security must include a much wider range of young people, including those under the age of 18. However, it is important to recognize the different priorities and perspectives in youth development and avoid a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 in Canada

Opinions on where Canada is providing adequate services varied significantly from person to person and group to group, based on lived experience. Examples of satisfactory Canadian services included: managing gun violence, creating a feeling of safety (i.e. street safety), access to education (particularly in providing access for girls), upholding freedom of speech, providing international aid, providing an avenue of protection through the legal system and encouraging community engagement and participation. It was also noted that Canada excels at promoting an “image of peace” on the global stage. In this regard, there was significant discourse around Canada’s “lip service” to peacebuilding and the nation’s utilization of the United States as a poor benchmark. It was suggested that a false sense of accomplishment is preventing Canada from taking a serious look at the issues that exist within its own borders. Many Youth Delegates asserted that it is vital for Canada to acknowledge its limitations and focus its efforts inwards, in order to hold any legitimacy internationally.

Overall, the youth delegates arrived at a consensus that Canada is not excelling in any of the five pillars for action. There was recognition that direct, active armed conflict does not exist in Canada; however, importantly, the absence of war does not equate to a state of peace. Youth cited considerable obstacles to peace, particularly in the areas of **participation, protection, and prevention**. There was an overarching recognition in various delegations of the importance of working towards peace at the individual, micro-level before it can be achieved at the macro-level (national and/or regional).

Participation

There was an overall consensus that there are two main barriers preventing young people from participating in peacebuilding. There is a perceived lack of opportunity for youth to meaningfully participate in politics and decision-making, at any level, in Canada. In addition, lack of access, or inequitable access, is a major barrier.

Recognizing that conflict emanates from inequality, the delegates emphasized the inextricable link between youth participation and socioeconomic and security. Youth highlighted that structural violence, socioeconomic inequality and systemic marginalization of minority groups (immigrants, refugees, LGTBO2S+, disabled and Indigenous peoples) are increasing vulnerability levels in young people and preventing their participation and engagement. It was emphasized that basic needs (water, food, and shelter) must be met as prerequisites to any kind of participation, particularly outside of urban areas.

In addition, it was suggested more targeted efforts must be made to ensure that opportunities for participation are extended to all marginalized and “hard-to-reach” groups, including lowering, or changing, the threshold for involvement and expanding the definition of youth. In this regard, the issue of being forced into unpaid internships was also repeatedly

raised. Taking on a second paid job, in addition to balancing school and family responsibilities, is a significant barrier to engagement.

Finally, youth emphasized the need for an institutionalized network or framework for consistent, sustained opportunities for engagement related to youth, peace, and security. When engaged, youth must be meaningfully involved in all levels of decision-making processes, beyond tokenism.

Prevention

Throughout the Consultations and Forum, the young Delegates placed great importance on the need to improve relations, and work with, Indigenous peoples as the fastest growing population in Canada. This is necessary not only to activate a process of decolonization but also in order to prevent potential schisms that could arise in the future.

Economic development was also highlighted as a crucial priority in prevention, particularly in relation to creating adequate employment opportunities for youth, providing young people with alternative options to joining extremist groups and ensuring adequate infrastructure for jobs and language learning for immigrants and refugees to promote integration and prevent violent extremism.

On the international scale, youth raised concerns regarding Canada's role in resource extraction leading to larger security issues and destabilization, including Indigenous security issues. Conflict prevention related to mass atrocity was also highlighted.

Protection

The Youth as Peacebuilders Delegates broadly agreed that young people are not being adequately protected from social harm in Canada. They identified that the protection of Indigenous communities and other marginalized or minority groups, particularly women, individuals identifying as LGBTQ2S+, immigrants, and refugees, should feature prominently in the security discourse. The suicide epidemic on reserves should be declared a state of emergency, while sexual and gender-based violence need to be addressed more explicitly. Canada's unlawful treatment of immigrant youth in detention centres was also raised as an important area for improvement.¹

Youth also suggested that Canada must reconsider the inadequate ways in which mental health issues, drug abuse, domestic violence, sexualization of women, cyberbullying and xenophobia are treated. Recommendations included capacity building and education as a

¹ Hanna Gros and Paloma Van Groll, "We Have No Rights" *Arbitrary imprisonment and cruel treatment of migrants with mental health issues in Canada*, report, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto, May 2015, https://www.law.utoronto.ca/utfl_file/count/media/ihrp_we_have_no_rights_report_web_version_final_170615.pdf.

way promote unity and integration in this regard, working to dispel biases and prejudices and support rehabilitation, rebuilding, and reintegration.

In terms of global issues, Youth Delegates prioritized the importance of protecting civilians, youth and first addressing young girls in conflict zones. A desire to see more women in peacekeeping missions was highlighted several times. The need for Canada to provide increased aid towards access to education and health services for girls was also emphasized, with general support for Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy. The issue of female genital mutilation was also raised as an important topic to be addressed.

Challenges to Youth Engagement

Key Themes

1. Lack of youth representation in politics	2. Rigid, limited definition of "youth"	3. Stigmatization & stereotyping of youth
4. Illegitimacy of the youth voice	5. Unequal access to resources	6. Tokenization of youth
7. Lack of engagement in policymaking	8. Social barriers, thresholds for participation	9. Socioeconomic insecurity & inequality

Key Messages

There are two barriers preventing young people from participating in peacebuilding: lack of opportunity for meaningful participation, and lack of access.

There is ongoing stigmatization and negative stereotyping of youth in Canada. Internalization of this discourse has led to a cyclical, self-fulfilling prophecy where youth feel disempowered, invalidated and underrepresented, particularly in the political sphere.

Structural violence, socioeconomic inequality and systemic marginalization of minority groups are preventing youth engagement. Basic needs must be met as preconditions to any kind of participation.

The understanding of “youth” needs to be re-evaluated to be more inclusive of age, culture, gender, religion, etc.



Challenges to Peace and Security

Key Themes

1. Colonization of Indigenous peoples	2. Marginalization of other minority groups	3. Lack of mental health awareness
4. Gender-based violence	5. Socioeconomic inequality	6. Misrepresentation by media
7. Inadequate education system	8. False sense of accomplishment in Canada	9. Lack of social cohesion/growing nationalism
10. Opioid epidemic	11. Cyber bullying & xenophobia	12. Lack of food & water security

Key Messages

Although Canada is often portrayed as a promoter of peace, peacekeeping, and human rights, it has failed to create a culture of peace by the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and systematic oppression of other marginalized groups.

Canada is not in a state of active armed conflict; however, an absence of war does not mean there is peace.

Young people are not being adequately protected from social harm in Canada. The protection of Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, refugee and immigrant communities should feature prominently in the security discourse. The protection of women, as well as youth in detention centres, is also a priority.

Without socioeconomic security and equality, there can be no peace.



YOUTH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Thematic Priorities for Action

1.
Political Engagement/
Participation

2.
Education

3.
Support of Indigenous
Peoples

4.
Economic Inequality &
Insecurity

5.
Funding

6.
Health & Safety

7.
Social Inclusion &
Integration

8.
Foreign Policy

9.
**Reconciliation & Conflict
Resolution**

10.
Media & Technology

11.
**Institutionalized
Engagement**

12.
Policy & Program Planning

13.
Intergenerationality

14.
Criminal Justice

Recommendations

After the Consultations and Forum, the Youth Delegates- largely from British Columbia- reached a broad consensus on the themes and recommendations listed below.

Political Engagement/Participation

There is a lack of opportunity for youth to meaningfully participate in politics and decision-making in Canada. It is important for the Government of Canada to acknowledge this and **increase youth visibility and involvement at all levels of political engagement.** This youth participation should be meaningful and not token in nature.

Recommendation #1

Remove barriers to participation in the Canadian voting system. **Lower the voting age to 16 and implement a system of proportional representation.**

Recommendation #2

Implement a Youth-Led Intergovernmental Committee Structure by 2020. Develop Youth Councils in each federal riding, across all regions in Canada, to engage in reciprocal dialogue with the Members of Parliament (MPs), both advising on, and implementing, policy.

Provide these councils with the agency to develop their own initiatives separate from, but in parallel with, their work with MPs. **Implement strategic outreach** into communities where youth are not normally politically active. Furthermore, recognizing that many young people have time constraints, **award a form of compensation** to the youth involved in these committees. Provide youth with the aid and support required to become a set of actors in close partnership with our elected officials. Engage young people as equals, and not as a token afterthought.

Education

Consulted Youth Delegates no longer feel that they have the opportunities to actively shape their educational experiences. For example, youth representation in the actual governance of schools, school districts and Ministries of Education is largely nonexistent. Furthermore, intentions in educational reform do not match outcomes. While provinces and territories should continue to have complete autonomy over education, the Federal Government should **take on a more active role in assisting or leading education decisions, decisions related to youth and the relationship between orders of government.**

Youth are particularly concerned on developing curricula that are inclusive of First Nations Studies; emphasize experiential learning and facilitates cultural exchange; and ensuring adequate programs and support services for special needs and LGBTQ2S+ students.

Recommendation #3

Through the Prime Minister's portfolio and the Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat, **create a network or task force of diverse cross-country liaisons** who will liaise with Ministries of Education across Canada.

The goals of the liaisons would be to mobilize knowledge sharing activities, ensure that youth needs/concerns actively shape education and lead a comprehensive effort (indicator-based agreement with goals and targets) that demonstrate to provinces/territories the objectives that their education systems should be meeting. This should be done in consultation with youth. There is no enforcement of this agreement, but like the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the impact could be transformative.

Support of Indigenous Peoples

Support for the indigenization of education, governmental services, and national resource development are important priorities. Youth Delegates call on the Government of Canada to **tangibly implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. It is important to utilize the human capital represented by Indigenous youth, which is the fastest growing population in Canada.

Youth are particularly concerned about the issues of infrastructure development, cultural support including language revitalization, services for youth aging out of care, overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in the prison system and trauma support.

Recommendation #4

Create a formalized program through a partnership between the United Nations and the Canadian government that supports Aboriginal youth leaders in their approaches to addressing the plethora of sociocultural disparities that exist in Canada. The Government of Canada should strengthen the **focus on prevention, remediation and driving forces** behind these disparities.

Recommendation #5

Create policies that **discourage litigation against Indigenous groups** and rather rely on mediation, appropriate and meaningful engagement and the actual implementation of ‘free, prior and informed consent’ when working with Indigenous groups. **Recognize and appropriately mitigate the realities of environmental racism**, i.e. industrial projects that directly impact Aboriginal communities – whether new projects or residual impacts of past projects.

Economic Inequality & Insecurity

Economic security and equality are fundamental prerequisites to peace and security. The Federal Government must **ensure access to basic services** across the nation and to all peoples with an emphasis on access to food, clean water, and housing. There must be a substantial improvement in both economic opportunity and economic security for youth.

Youth emphasize that resources and funding in economic development must promote understanding, acceptance, and integration of marginalized communities.

Recommendation #6

Design and implement youth quotas in government organizations and state-owned companies, modeled in part after Quebec’s Bill 693². **Focus on non-token-based quotas** but

² This bill amends the Act respecting the governance of state-owned enterprises to promote the presence of young people on the boards of directors of such enterprises. Bill 693 actively calls for promoting “the presence of young people on the boards of directors”. To that end, the Government must appoint at least one member

meaningfully engaged and skilled youth stewards who, through concerted action and representation, can meaningfully affect power dynamics and decision-making bodies within these organizations (as highlighted by LGen Romeo Dallaire at the Youth as Peacebuilders Forum of the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial). The engagement and inclusion of marginalized youth should be a priority in fulfilling the quotas.

Recommendation #7

Allocate 1% of national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), for at least the next four years, towards ensuring that all basic needs (water, shelter, food, transportation) are met, especially in rural areas and on Indigenous lands.

Recommendation #8

Implement an appreciative and sustainable analysis and a needs-based assessment on access to basic services. The Government should look to first invest in research to support and expand existing grassroots programs that are already working to meet the need for access to basic services. Transparency should continue to be emphasized in this process where grassroots organizations, Indigenous peoples, and other affected communities are respected players in the consultation and implementation processes.

Funding

Although the Canadian government has a strong youth and Sustainable Development Goals agenda, many youth programs targeting peace and tackling societal issues are missing key areas of support. It is recommended to **increase the diversity of organizations and projects receiving support, invest in a digital platform** for accessible and integrated information on youth programming and **build non-governmental capacity**. In addition, the Government should **update the current funding model**, which does not reflect the non-traditional formats increasingly being used by youth to approach solving community, national and global issues (e.g. for-profit social enterprises or not-for-profit models).

Recommendation #9

Establish a Youth Center – by youth, for youth. The Youth Center will evaluate project-based proposals connected to the SDGs, where youth leaders plan to tackle local, national and international issues. The Minister of Youth should oversee the Youth Center but **develop a Youth Committee that holds autonomy over budget management and decision-making** regarding investing in the various SDG projects proposed.

aged 35 years of age or under at the time of appointment to the board of directors of each state-owned enterprise.

Recommendation #10

Allocate funding for the Youth Centre. The Youth Centre should be predominantly government funded, as it aligns with the youth and SDG agendas; however, as the private sector becomes more autonomous in working towards the SDGs, private and large-scale private donors should be engaged and incorporated into the funding structure. As the Youth Committee will be evaluating proposals from youth of all backgrounds, representation should be cross-provincial, cross-sectoral and have very intentional minority representation.

Recommendation #11

In synergy with Recommendation #6, **position youth as key decision makers**, in order to enable youth action. This would greatly augment youth participation in initiatives related to peace and security and would enable innovation and leadership, where youth are able to implement projects on a large scale and be a leading force in building cross-sector trust.

Health & Safety

There are a number of challenges identified by Youth Delegates within Canada blocking people from accessing services. Context-specific barriers impact access to mental health resources, including the overall stigmatization of mental health, gendered norms, cultural barriers and geographic location. There is a lack of qualified health professionals, including psychiatrists and psychologists, while refugees are not eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance. Furthermore, mental health services such as psychotherapy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are not considered basic coverage under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) for resettled refugees or refugee claimants.

The Canadian Government should **provide resources to those who are otherwise not able to access services or support**. Mental health awareness plays a key role in the prevention of violence, conflict, and addiction and is an important part of protecting those who have been affected by violence and conflict. This includes new Canadians arriving from conflict-ridden countries, as well as the Canadian Armed Forces.

Recommendation #12

Implement a centralized mental health insurance policy for Health Canada. The Government should require all provinces and territories to **include mental health services under provincial and territorial insurance plans** and extend these services as basic coverage under IFHP. Including mental health within the broader health framework not only increases access for all Canadians but also works to destigmatize and de-marginalize mental health as being separate from other health issues.

Recommendation #13

Implement and fund mental health education programs to destigmatize mental health. These programs should take into consideration the diversity of Canada and thus the cultural

differences in understanding these issues. This includes **implementing counseling services at the primary school level** and providing mental health education for teachers.

Social Inclusion & Reintegration

The social inclusion and reintegration of newcomers to Canada, as well as marginalized groups already within Canada, remains a huge challenge. It is identified that these challenges are particularly due to PTSD, structural violence including inequitable and limited services and assistance, a lack of general awareness, racism and discrimination. The Government should **prioritize integration, equity, safety, social inclusion and diversity in action** to address these challenges.

Recommendation #14

Establish a centralized body of government (within an existing Ministry, or by creating a new Ministry) to be held accountable for ensuring safety and providing increased cultural/anti-oppression awareness within diverse communities and different societal institutions. This body will also serve to **ensure sanctuary and provide ongoing, centralized, institutionalized services and assistance** to all migrants, regardless of status or documents. This includes services such as funded English language training, job skills training and youth development/leadership training.

Recommendation #15

In alignment with recommendations #2 and #9, **Establish a Youth Council** to advise the centralized government body, made up of young people from migrant communities. Migrant communities must lead decision-making processes surrounding migrant youth.

Foreign Policy

Numerous global challenges remain a threat to peace and require action by the Canadian Government. Canadian youth are concerned with a multitude of international issues and urge the Government to **re-evaluate trade policies to promote ethical operating and manufacturing standards among economic partners, increase aid for nations experiencing mass migration** due to war or geopolitical conflict and **promote socio-economic empowerment opportunities for youth** in conflict-affected or fragile States.

Notably, despite Canada's intake of 40,000 refugees since 2015³, the international refugee crisis remains critical. The Canadian government can take further leadership in the international community in this regard and should **continue to protect and accept refugees**.

³ IRCC Canada. No date. #WelcomeRefugees: Key Figures. Last update January 29, 2017. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/key-figures.html> (accessed Decemebr 1, 2017).

Recommendation #16

Accept a further 40,000 refugees by 2019 and create a global coalition for the protection and proportional state distribution of refugees. This would create a collaborative burden and benefit-sharing framework for international refugee intake, with the goal of substantially increasing refugee acceptance.

Reconciliation & Conflict Resolution

Youth Delegates pointed out the lack of voices and participation in conflict resolution and reconciliation processes in Canada. However, when provided opportunities, young people are able to successfully participate in, and contribute to the implementation of, peacebuilding processes, as seen in Colombia, El Salvador, Iraq and the Republic of Korea.⁴ The Government of Canada must **empower youth to overcome the fear of retaliation by inviting them to share their voices at these tables.**

Recommendation #17

Develop an education program or curriculum designed to develop youth skills in conflict resolution and diplomacy. Targeted efforts should be made to deliver more educational programs that offer conflict resolution and mediation skills. The promotion or mainstreaming of these programs should also be a priority, in order to broaden the participation of young people in peacebuilding processes. The Government should also **develop a resource platform** that can help guide youth to learn the necessary skills required for work in peacebuilding.

Recommendation #18

Create safe spaces for conflict resolution by connecting prominent leaders in conflicted communities. As utilized in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the importance of storytelling in peacebuilding and reconciliation, especially after violent conflict, should be recognized.

Recommendation #19

Develop an accountability mechanism to build transparency in peacebuilding processes. Youth should be encouraged to pursue peacebuilding through the promotion and recognition of accomplishments of young people in this area.

Media & Technology

While peacekeeping efforts on the ground remain necessary and critical, conflict and violence are increasingly moving into digital and online spaces. This is seen with online recruitment and radicalization of youth into extremist or violent groups, online hate, hacking in elections, digital security vulnerabilities, alternative facts, polarization/echo chambers,

⁴ Youth4Peace. <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy/CountryFocusedResearch>

concerns about data centralization and ownership or control of data by a powerful few media giants. Youth Delegates call on the Canadian Government and Canadian youth to **pay attention to the effects of digital spaces and online narratives on peace and security, create a framework/forum to learn** and take meaningful action.

Recommendation #20

Recognize online communities as an equally complex ecosystem that is parallel to offline conflict realities where peace and security are impacted. By 2020, **dedicate resources to engaging youth in raising awareness, capacity building and peer learning on issues and best practices for cybersecurity**, including responding to online hate, identifying and combatting alternative facts, understanding digital data governance and protection and more.

This can be done through the integration of educational curriculum that prepares youth with literacy on digital security protection, or through intergenerational mentorship programs that build capacity for youth to create media that represents youth voices and policy concerns.

Recommendation #21

Allocate efforts and resources towards raising the visibility of existing youth initiatives and youth-led media. This includes multi-channel youth media, not only on television but also through public service announcements on social media, radio, and podcasts. Media that fosters the transparency of political processes for youth leads to increased political engagement.

Policy & Program Planning

There is a major lack of youth voices in policy and program planning. Canada is 1 of 31 countries, and 1 of 5 countries in the Americas, without a national youth policy.⁵ The tokenism of contemporary youth participation and lack of meaningful engagement of young people is a serious challenge. The absence of the Minister of Youth at the *Youth as Peacebuilders Forum* is an example of this.

Recommendation #22

Create a National Youth Strategy, mandating a youth-based analysis into policy and program planning for policies not only pertaining to youth but for all Government policies.

In addition to developing a strategic, streamlined approach for meaningfully engaging young people, youth urge the Government to increase funding and federal recognition to policy organizations already working with youth, implement gender equity in non-binary

⁵ Canada Factsheet. Retrieved from <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/canada/>

representation in policy and practice as well as integrate a human-focused lens on sustainability and energy-transition policies.

Institutionalized Engagement

The consulted Delegates repeatedly raised the need for a consistent, institutionalized opportunity to engage with the issues of peace and security. The Federal Government should **support the creation of opportunities for young people to interact meaningfully** with Canadian Government officials and/or other individuals in decision-making positions.

It is important that youth engagement opportunities **reduce or remove barriers to entry**, such as elitist or exclusive requirements for participation. Opportunities must be provided to diverse populations specifically minority populations and even younger youth.

Recommendation #23:

Develop and fund a national Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) Network by 2020 that allows youth to continue engaging with, and connecting to, people and organizations working on the topic of peace and security. It will serve to further facilitate youth engagement and pool resources so that actions can be more effective and wider in reach. It will also reduce redundancy while providing a wide range of opportunities for youth. The network will also include a centralized information platform for grants, scholarships, news and entrepreneurial funds. The YPS network will engage federal, provincial and municipal levels of government.

Intergenerationality

There is a growing level of misunderstanding between “youth” and “adults” that is leading to intergenerational discrimination. Youth Delegates would like to re-frame the notion that discrimination and prejudices, particularly pertaining to gender, culture, and sexuality, are passed on from one generation to the next. The Government of Canada should **support efforts to create intergenerational empathy and learning** that are mutually beneficial for young people and adults.

Recommendation #24:

Develop and support the implementation of a program in all educational outlets (Kindergarten to Grade 12, post-secondary and beyond) that will act as a supplement to educational curriculums across Canada. This will allow a bond of education to form between youth and adults, promoting reciprocal learning and creating open dialogue. This knowledge sharing mechanism recognizes the Indigenous process that involves storytelling in an informal setting in which generations can connect.

Criminal Justice

To the Delegates, the criminal justice system in Canada is failing to address the root cause of harm perpetuation and institutionalized inequality. The consulted Delegates believe the system, as it currently stands, increases stigma and isolation and fails to acknowledge mental health issues. A lack of accountability from police institutions, as well as a lack of training in restorative justice mechanisms, has led to distrust towards police, particularly among marginalized – especially racialized – communities. Mirroring approaches taken in New Zealand, the Government of Canada should **emphasize restorative justice and criminalize behaviours instead of people**, seeking to destigmatize formerly incarcerated individuals and assist with their re-integration. Prevention programs must be in place to deter individuals from committing crimes, while needs relating to systemic issues must simultaneously be met (e.g. social housing, living wages, mental health resources and healthcare).

Recommendation #25:

Provide resources, funding and training to integrate a restorative justice framework, guided and led by community stakeholders, as a component of the legal system. This would include hosting forums with community stakeholders to lead and guide the restorative justice process. The framework would aim to prevent conflict and crimes, reduce recidivism and counter violent extremism. It would elevate Indigenous- and community-led solutions for justice as well as provide incarcerated individuals with tangible ways (e.g. employment opportunities) to give back to their community to heal and transform.

Recommendation #26:

Implement democratic community control of local, provincial and federal law enforcement agencies.



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