

# DECLARATION TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHING OF A UN PERMANENT FORUM ON YOUTH

## YOUTH 21: BUILDING FOR CHANGE - A HIGH LEVEL PANEL AT

Rio+20 at United National Conference on Sustainable Development

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We reaffirm youth's strategic role in sustainable development, their engagement in global governance and their role in the post-2015 agenda. Upon this basis, we decided to promote the implementation of commitments on youth participation, inclusion, autonomy and emancipation.

We remind and validate support for the Braga Youth Action Plan and its call for the promotion of youth participation for human development; convinced that youth participation is a prerequisite for human development as a whole.

We recognise there are 1.8 billion youth in the world, the largest number of youth ever to have existed. The vast majority of these youth live in developing countries and face daunting challenges, living in poor economic, social and environmental conditions, with limited access to education, training and employment. Yet, youth have been recognized as agents for positive change globally, whether it be as the drivers of economic growth, or the inducers of democratic reforms.

We welcome the United Nations Secretary-General's steps to prioritise youth in his second term. We reinforce his affirmation that youth must demand their rights and have a greater voice in economic and political life and that the UN will do all it can to meet youth's needs and create opportunities for them.

We recognise that World Programme of Action for Youth and other policies and frameworks, still do not have accompanying mechanisms which allow youth full and meaningful participation in decision-making. Too often, youth are still viewed as clients rather than partners and stakeholders. We recommend that the World Programme of Action for Youth be used as a guide to national and international action to create an environment in which young people can grow and develop their potential to the fullest.

We make reference to the groundbreaking Youth 21 Report<sup>1</sup> by UN-HABITAT that recommends the establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on Youth. Furthermore, we value the outcomes

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/Youth21\\_Building\\_an\\_Architecture\\_for\\_Youth\\_Engagement\\_in\\_the\\_UN\\_System.pdf](http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/Youth21_Building_an_Architecture_for_Youth_Engagement_in_the_UN_System.pdf)

from Oslo Meeting in December 2011, the Nairobi Meeting in March 2012 (Youth 21 Building for Change)<sup>2</sup>, held with the participation of youth representatives, youth-led organizations and movements from across the globe, as well as, Member States, members of parliaments, private sector, civil society organizations, researchers and UN Agencies.

**We back the proposal of youth in Nairobi on the establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on Youth, an accelerated process should be put in place to establish the Forum.** The Forum should be developed in collaboration with youth experts and researchers should promote studies and recommendations on youth issues; raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN system and prepare and disseminate information on youth issues. The main focus of the Forum should be the promotion of the full development and active participation of youth.

We call for an incremental and progressive youth-led process for developing a mechanism to increase youth engagement in the UN system. Such a Forum needs to discuss issues that affect young women and young men at the local, national regional and global levels, focusing in the promotion of youth rights. This Forum should promote active participation, intergenerational dialogues, multi-stakeholder partnership and continuous communication to harness youth potential as active global citizens.

1. The Governments acknowledge the importance of the UN Secretary-General's commitment to appoint the first Special Advisor on Youth, but strongly feel that more should be done to really enhance youth participation in the UN.
2. The Governments strongly recommend the creation of a UN Permanent Forum on Youth, in order to promote full and effective participation of youth into decision making and works of the United Nations.
3. The Governments support the Secretary-General in his exploration of opportunities and possibilities of updating the already established Inter-Agencies Network for the Development of United Nations Youth and also include non-UN actors, particularly young and representatives from youth-led organizations and movements.
4. The Governments strongly encouraged the Secretary-General to start the process to set up a Forum.
5. The Forum must have political and operational conditions and also have legitimacy with youth organizations, movements and official bodies of the member states in order to steer youth global policies and international cooperation on youth in a global level. In this regard, the Forum must also contribute with the articulation and systematization of the numerous initiatives of the UN on youth issues.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Youth 21 global initiative was co-organized by UN HABITAT and UNDP. It gathered over two-hundred and twenty (220) youth representing youth-led organizations and movements from across the globe, as well as UN Member States, members of parliament, private sector, civil society organizations, researchers and UN Agencies.*

6. The Governments envision the UN Permanent Forum on Youth with the following characteristics:
  - a. The Forum should have formal advisory status in the UN system, and the UN Agencies working on youth-related issues; the Forum should work closely with the Human Rights Commission, the Security Council, the General Assembly and other regional Intergovernmental platforms;
  - b. Youth representatives and government representatives should have equal status in the Forum;
  - c. The member states and the youth-led civil society should jointly co-chair the Forum;
  - d. The Forum should meet twice a year and one of these meetings should be open to the participation of representatives of youth organizations and movements that are not formally in the Forum and should be preceded by regional meetings.
  - e. The Forum should be equally composed by both government and representatives of youth movements and organizations.
  - f. The Forum should have regional and gender balance, making sure that diversity of youth population has been represented accordingly;
  - g. Experts on youth issues may also be invited to collaborate in the discussions.