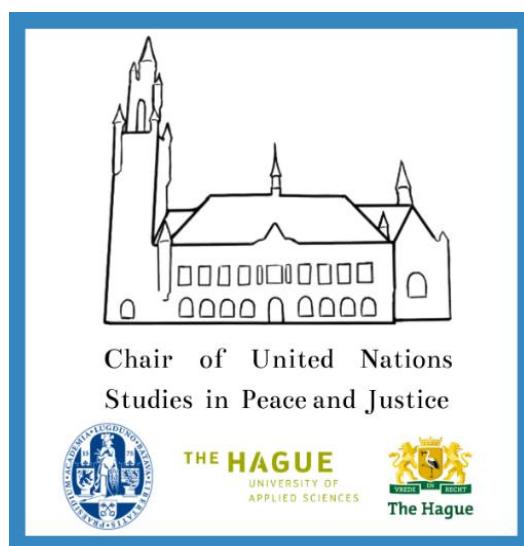


# Future of the UN: A Youth Perspective



## Background

As we mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations on 24 October 2020, it is apparent that we need to revisit important questions about the functioning of the UN and change the way we act as a global community. To join the global conversation launched by the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres in January 2020, Professor Alanna O’Malley, the [Chair of UN Studies](#) Peace and Justice at [Leiden University/The Hague University](#) worked together with students to create a youth activism group, [UN Youth Impact](#) and thereafter jointly hosted a series of [UN75 dialogues](#) in the Netherlands. The underlying theme of each event was the Future We Want, the United Nations We Need.



UN Youth Impact discussion group,  
May 2019

To gather diverse perspectives and creative ideas on what is needed to address the threats we face due to climate change, inequality, gender inequality, and conflict, our team brought together academics, practitioners, UN representatives, policy-makers, university and school students to discuss how we can improve the UN going forward. The [UN75 activities](#) in the Netherlands were forward-looking and attendees were encouraged to think about the future. Specifically, we generated discussions around what the world should look like in 25 years, reflected on the role of the UN in achieving our visions for 2045, and deliberated over what needs to be done now to achieve the visions we have of our collective futures.

The Dialogues were structured around questions and topics outlined in the UN75 toolkit provided by the UN Secretariat. While Goal 16 was the guiding theme for our dialogues, we asked our participants to look beyond the targets of Goal 16 and discuss four interdependent yet separate issues that have an impact on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To focus group discussions and generate concrete proposals that could be presented in this report as well as to the UN through the UN75 feedback mechanism, we focused on the following themes:

- [A New Era of Conflict and Violence](#)
- [The Climate Crisis – A Race we Can Win](#)
- [Women and Girls – Closing the Gender Gap](#)
- [Inequality – Bridging the divide](#)

The UN75 Dialogues were organized to inspire action, bring together actors working on similar issues, and in the process increase the visibility and relevance of the UN. The proposals outlined below arose in response to three main questions raised under each of the four themes:

- What are the main obstacles and challenges to overcoming the challenge your group identified?
- What role do young people play in addressing the obstacles your group identified?
- How can the UN assist in addressing these obstacles?

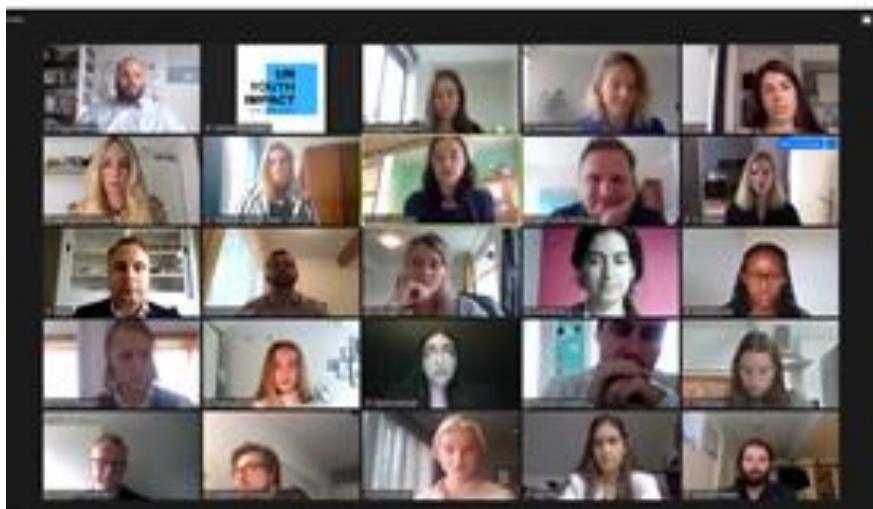
## About the event and report

This report summarizes the discussions that took place during an [online event](#) in September 2020 with over 70 young people across The Netherlands. At the event, an expert researcher or policymaker from our partner institutions facilitated one of the four group discussions on conflict, gender inequality, the climate crisis, and inequality. Students were challenged to provide creative and plausible ideas that could improve the current international efforts around the four themes above.

The following report presents a summary of the ideas and proposals discussed during the virtual UN75 dialogues organized by The Chair of UN Studies in Peace and Justice with the support of Leiden University, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, the United Nations University - MERIT, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch Association for the Netherlands (NVVN), RNW media, United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC), and UN Youth Impact. It also contains policy recommendations from an event organized by RNW and its global partners as part of the build-up to UN day celebrations in The Hague on October 24th.

We would like to thank our facilitators for our September event;

- Leonie van der Stijl – Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Prof Neil Foster-McGregor - United Nations University - MERIT
- Christine Tremblay - The Hague University of Applied Sciences
- David den Dunnen - The Hague University of Applied Sciences



UN75 Virtual Dialogue, The Hague, September 2020

Finally, the Chair would like to thank everyone who participated in UN75 dialogues that took place in The Hague and online in the past year.

## Authors

This report was curated by Professor Alanna O'Malley (holder of the Chair of UN Studies at Leiden University/De Haagse Hogeschool), Diego Salama (PhD Candidate, Leiden University) and Isi Madojemu (Research Assistant, Chair of UN Studies). Their efforts were supported by volunteers from the UN Youth Impact initiative.

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WORKING WITH AND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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PART  
OF IT

## Introduction

The [2020 World Youth Report](#) underlined that there are today 1.2 billion people aged between 15-24 years around the world, making up 16% of the global population.<sup>1</sup> The essential role of global youth in achieving the SDGs is a theme that the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has emphasized throughout the UN75 dialogues campaign. Significant efforts have been made by the UN in recent years to harness this new constituency of global leaders through such initiatives as the Youth Climate Summit in 2019, the Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security, and the International Youth Day Disarmament Initiative (2020). However, many of these initiatives are still aimed at the top-level of student leaders, those with access to resources and networks of influence, and usually, pre-existing knowledge of the UN. Therefore, the question becomes, how can youth who fall outside these parameters have their voices heard at the UN level?

## The Hague, A UN City

As a UN city, The Hague is home to an estimated 30,000 students across a range of second and third level educational institutions.<sup>2</sup> Since the creation of the Special Chair in UN Studies in Peace and Justice shared between Leiden University and The Hague University of Applied Sciences by the City of The Hague in 2018, we have sought to engage a diverse group of students in the UN and its processes. Crucially, we have specifically aimed our initiatives and activities towards attracting a wide variety of students, many of whom have not previously learned about the UN, may not have had exposure to international affairs and are pursuing traineeships and careers that are typically quite distant from the UN. Thereby, **we seek to go beyond social and economic limitations which tend to disenfranchise large swathes of the youth population of their potential international voice** and role. This Special Chair has been created by the City of the Hague to honour the work of former Mayor and Dutch Foreign Minister Jozias Van Aartsen.



UN Photo/ICJ/Capital Photos/Gerald van Daalen -  
Peace Palace, the Hague

<sup>1</sup> ‘Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda, World Youth Report 2020, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations: New York, 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-youth-report/wyr2020.html>

<sup>2</sup> Staistic provided by the City of the Hague. <https://www.denhaag.nl/en/in-the-city/education-and-childcare/international-students-welcome-in-the-hague.htm#:~:text=About%2030%2C000%20students%20live%2C%20study,journalists%20and%20researchers%20every%20day.>

## Our Dialogue



Participants at the launch of UN Youth Impact, The Hague, May 2019

In engaging these voices we utilized the UN75 Dialogues format to host a dialogue with our wide-ranging youth group on the four key themes outlined above. Over 70 students attended online, drawn from a range of schools, universities and institutions of higher education not just in The Hague but across The Netherlands. Among the main outcomes are a series of inventive proposals such as the creation of a **Special Envoy on Youth Inequality**, the development of a **gender toolkit** to help promote gender equality in schools and workplaces, and improving avenues of access to higher education.

These key outcomes will be presented to the President of the International Court of Justice Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, the Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok and the Mayor of the Hague Jan van Zanen in an event on 24th October 2020 to mark UN Day. Further, these recommendations will be communicated directly to the UN through the online mechanism for the UN75 dialogues.

## Significance of Outcomes

These events, and the outcomes that follow below, signify that youth have an essential role in achieving the SDGs by 2030. It is clear that youth are not just an important new constituency of actors who need to be included in global discussions, but that their recommendations and insights need to be realized. More than a mere source of aspiration for constructing the UN we need, the dialogue demonstrates that the agency of disparate youth working together represents a productive source of inspiration for the different possible futures of the UN. Bringing to fruition some of these insights will not just advance the SDG agenda, but will improve the image and the relevance of the UN as a whole to the general public. Facilitating the further empowerment of youth agency emerges as the best route towards building the future we want and the UN we need.



Two UN Youth Impact Members at an SDG event, March 2020.

## Women and Girls - Closing the Gender Gap

Facilitated by Ms. Christine Trembly, The Hague University of Applied Sciences



An event on the UN and Brexit, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, September 2019.

Gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. Despite the progress made in the last 75 years we are still [100 years away from gender parity](#). As the Secretary-General warned, “change is coming at a pace that is too slow for the women and girls whose lives depend on it.” This reflects the call for urgent change by [UN Women](#) who remind us that women and girls have less access to education and healthcare, too often lack economic autonomy, and are underrepresented in decision making processes at all levels of society.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security and mark 40 years since the Convention on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), it is important to reaffirm our commitment to the empowerment of all women and girls. Here are three proposals from the attendees on how the UN could help close the gender gap.

### 1. Empowering Women and closing the gap in the labor force

Women face enormous structural barriers when it comes to participating in the work force or as entrepreneurs. These barriers include the lack of access to productive assets like financial savings which generate profit, limited opportunity for professional advancement, and the burden of unpaid care work.

To close the gender gap in the labor force it was agreed that the UN needs to encourage governments to invest more in empowering women, so they have the tools needed to reach their full potential. To deepen national efforts the participants suggested that the UN continue to expand its [Flagship Programs Initiatives](#) that focus on removing the structural barriers that prevent women’s participation in the economy as laborers and entrepreneurs. To achieve this goal, the groups recommended that the **UN should conduct more Global Policy Support Projects** that look into tools and methods that could improve women’s access to domestic and international markets.

At a country level, UN Women could utilize the findings from the [Global Policy Projects](#) to deliver context specific high-impact initiatives that address the barriers women face when trying to enter the workforce or as entrepreneurs. To ensure that micro-financing projects encourage local ownerships it was advised that local UN offices work closely with local NGO’s and civil society groups already working on these issues.

The idea behind this proposal is for the UN to **expand the use of the Flagship Program Initiatives** created by UN Women and support national efforts that [improve women’s economic security](#). The plan is to encourage and advise governments on how they can improve income security and work opportunities through policy and legal actions.

Educate a woman and she’ll uplift her community

Empower a woman she’ll empower a nation

The cycle continues, it’s only sustainable.

**Rita Bakunda, Student**



## 2. Increased representation in political, social, and legal decision-making process



Alanna O'Malley, asking "Where are the Women in Global Governance", International Womens Day, 2019.

To overcome the structural constraints that prevent women from participating in political and electoral processes. The groups suggested that the UN system make more effort to provide civil society organizations and governments with technical support in the form of a **gender toolkit to monitor levels of women's participation in political and electoral processes but also across all educational and employment sectors**. An action they emphasized that should take place alongside efforts already ongoing to address the wider logistical and legal obstacles that women face. The idea is for the UN to provide resources for [Policy Support Units](#) to work closely with local civil society organizations to do two things. 1) Develop and implement robust legal frameworks and administrative arrangements that ensure women's participation. 2) Expand and diversify the pool of qualified and capable women able to run for elections.

Despite improvement in the number of female political representatives in national governing institutions around the world. Women remain under-represented as voters, candidates, elected representatives, and are largely excluded from the most senior decision-making positions within executive governments. The lack of representation and participation is due to the combined effect of institutional and structural constraints, as well as cultural and attitudinal barriers that suggest women should not have a role in public life.

### Obstacles to political and electoral participation:

#### *Structural Constraints*

- Women lack access to financial resources to run electoral campaigns
- High incidence of violence which preclude women from registering, nominating, and voting

Source: UN Women

### Obstacles to political and electoral participation:

#### *Cultural constraints:*

- Social norms that limit women's ability to participate
- Gender-based stereotypes about women roles in society
- Social cues which suggest that women should not have a role in public life

Source: UN Women

For the cultural and attitudinal barriers, it was suggested that the UN use its networks to host more dialogues and develop campaigns to transform gender norms so that women are more readily accepted as legitimate and effective leaders. The groups advised that the UN should design international and context specific social campaigns that encourage women to participate in political and electoral processes, sensitize the media and electorate on the need of women in public life at all levels, and tackle negative gender-based stereotypes perpetuated in the media. They also suggested that the **appropriate UN bodies should provide toolkits for academic and corporate institutions so they can host discussions that work to break down gender barriers and stereotypes.**

### 3. Citizens assembly and Youth participation

#### Three Areas for the UN to Focus on for the next 25 years

- Promote the implementation of institutional and legal reforms that facilitate women's participation in political and electoral processes.
- Support efforts to tackle negative gender norms and stereotypes so that women are accepted as legitimate and effective leaders
- Improve support mechanisms for women leaders

Source: UN Women

When asked what the role of the youth is, the groups agreed that the perspectives of young people are important and should play a role in discussions about closing the gender gap. The groups identified two ways young people could contribute to debates about the gender gap at a national and international level. 1) Young people should focus on local politics, grassroots campaigns, and local activism. As one participant suggested, young people should focus on local efforts that address the specific issues in their communities that lead to violence against women and economic insecurity. The idea behind this participant's plan was to find ways to engage with culturally specific issues from within the community rather than from outside it. 2) Young people could and should play a more active role in decision making processes at an international level. To that end they believed that if the **UN created a citizen's assembly** upon turning 18 individuals should be able to run for a seat and represent their country. Until then, they suggested that the UN and local UN offices make more effort in sharing the opportunities available to young people who want to get involved with the UN as a volunteer or youth representative.

To close the gender gap, the group identified three things the UN needs to do now, if we are to speed up the current rate of change. The first is representation, it is important that women and girls are represented in all areas of society. The second is education, if we want to eradicate the negative stereotypes about women and girls, we must provide the tools for communities to engage and break down those ideas. Finally, the UN should lead by example. From the participants point of view if the UN wants national governments to do what it recommends, the organization must practice what it preaches. On that point, all the groups agreed that they would like to see more women in positions of leadership in the UN.



Alanna O'Malley and the inaugural group of school students from the newly created 'UN and I' program, on a visit to the UN Headquarters in New York, July 2019.

## The Climate Crisis - A race we can win

Facilitated by Ms. Leonie van der Stijl, Climate Department- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Climate change is the defining challenge of our time, and we are facing an uphill battle. While the Paris



A UN Youth Impact volunteer at an event on the SDGs, May 2019.

Agreement is a historic landmark in our collective ambition to curtail the negative effects of climate change, considerable work remains and the window of opportunity to get it done is getting smaller. In the coming “Decade of Action” the UN, its member states, civil society – particularly youth – will have to design and implement innovative ideas. In the words of the UN Secretary-General “the climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win.”

Out of this thematic discussion, we offer three concrete ideas for the UN to implement in order to win this race.

### 1. Fighting misinformation

An important and difficult challenge we are facing when it comes to climate action derives from misinformation and fake news. Around the world, many high-level politicians, news outlets and individuals continue to support the statement that either climate change is not an existential threat to humanity and, worst of all, some deny its existence altogether. This threat warrants a response from the UN.

The UN System should respond to fake news and misinformation through an overarching global effort which is then implemented nationally. This should be achieved in two ways. First, the **UN System should expand its “Verified” campaign** to cover both the COVID-19 pandemic *and* climate change. The positive results it has had over the last few months addressing the pandemic should be used as a framework to fight fake news. It is fundamental to translate evidence-based research and science into content which can be understood by civil society and policymakers. Bringing scientific findings to civil society is a complex challenge which requires the UN to partner with various stakeholders such as universities, NGO's and youth organizations. In the end, citizens should feel empowered to make a positive change and help win this race.

### Decade of Action

The Decade of Action calls for accelerating sustainable solutions to all the world’s biggest challenges – ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, and inequality.

The Decade of Action will:

- Mobilize everyone, everywhere
- Demand urgency and ambition
- Supercharge ideas to solution



### 2. Global actions and local ownership

Alongside fighting fake news, there needs to be a greater dialogue between the polluter states and those countries which are now suffering the most from the negative effects of climate change such as Small Island Developing States, especially the islands in the Pacific. The space for engagement should go beyond governments. To ensure fruitful engagement between these states it was suggested that the UN helps build bridges between them at a social level. These discussions should focus on sharing best practices, raising awareness of the impact climate change is already having around the world, and fostering technical cooperation.

“My speech at the Peace Palace is a call to arms to galvanise support among young people in The Netherlands to work together on a local and international level to win the climate race”

Thijmen Zuiderwijk,  
Student



The idea is to instill more local ownership in efforts to tackle the climate crisis and support already on-going efforts at a political level between states. The UN should serve as the facilitator and coordinator of this engagement. The **different Resident Coordinators working in the countries most affected by climate change should directly engage with their counterparts from around the world** and create a space for dialogue which includes scientists, youth leaders, policymakers and civil society as a whole.

### 3. Youth Leadership

There was one proposal in the discussion about the role of young people in addressing climate change that everyone agreed with. It was that young people should take action in a political sense. The current problem is that the climate crisis is not a political priority for national governments and that protesting will only get you so far. To make the climate crisis a political priority they suggested young people need to get more involved in local politics and grassroots campaigns for political parties with a green agenda. The aim behind this group's strategy is to utilize the desire for change among young people who can vote and put in power politicians with an agenda to address the climate crisis. Young people are passionate about the climate crisis as it concerns their future, and they are willing and ready to do what is necessary to ensure a livable planet for themselves and future generations.



## Inequality: Bridging the Divide

Facilitated by Prof. Neil Foster-McGregor, United Nations University



A group from the 'UN and I' school program on a visit  
to the UN Headquarters in New York, July 2019

It is undeniable that over the last decades the world has made significant gains when it comes to inequality. However, the downturn in the current economic climate, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, risks losing all the ground we have gained in the last thirty years. Without a doubt, youth will bear the short and long-term consequences of the current situation. Therefore, youth inequality which continues to be a challenge globally, is set to rise. Many countries have very young populations which expect to have access to education, healthcare, jobs, and long-term prosperity.

In the sections below, we offer some recommendations for the UN to consider when dealing with inequality between states.

### 1. Youth Envoys

Alongside the Secretary-General's Envoy for Youth, we propose the appointment of a Special Envoy for Youth Inequality. This position should have the mandate to examine the challenges of inequality and report its findings and policy recommendations to the UN Sustainable Development Group. This role ought to be complemented by young leaders appointed at the national level by the respective UN Country Teams. The global youth envoy and his/her national counterparts should have a strong mandate to examine how challenges such as climate change, gender inequality, lack of access to education and the job market are particularly affecting the youth. The leaders must consult with stakeholders, give them a forum to co-create imaginative solutions. To achieve these goals, the envoys must develop partnerships with youth organizations, NGO's, various levels of government and, of course, all UN agencies working in their respective countries. This position should be financed by the Secretariat and holders should be given a full-time contract within the Office of the Resident Coordinator. However, they ought to be given enough autonomy to design their priorities and ways of working. At the end of each year, the envoy should present a report which outlines the activities completed and propose solutions to the challenges.

#### SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

What: To reduce inequalities within and among countries.

Why: Inequalities based on income, sex, age, disability, race, class, and religion continue around the world and threaten long term social and economic development, harms poverty reduction, and destroys people's sense of fulfilment and self-worth.

What can we do?

Invest more in health, education, social protection, and decent jobs especially for young people, migrants, and other vulnerable members of your community.

Every year, the two global envoys should convene a summit whereby all national leaders are invited to present their findings and co-create global policy recommendations to be presented to the Deputy-Secretary-General in her capacity as chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group.

## 2. Regions and cities: The challenges of multi-level governance

The UN System should work closer together with all levels of governance – local, municipal and provincial – to find better-suited, unique solutions to the regional realities inside countries. This can be achieved by **creating a framework for dialogue between the UN Country Teams and the different regional and city leaders inside their countries**.

This framework can assist regions and cities to align their priorities with the SDGs through the development of local regulations, the establishment of joint programs and projects with relevant UN agencies, sharing best practices, etc. Co-creating local solutions to local challenges must remain a key pillar in the work of the UN Country Teams.

## 3. From GDP to Economic security: A Paradigm Shift?

For the last decade, the UN has been using the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) to gauge a country's record in health, education and income. While it is unlikely the global economy will stop using Growth Domestic Product (GDP), its place as the primary measurement of a country's success should be positively challenged in global discussions.

In partnership with non-state actors like the World Economic Forum, the members of the UN Global Compact, youth organizations, and government agencies such as finance ministries, the UN ought to **develop a new set of guiding principles whereby the member states agree to ensure the Human Development Index becomes a priority in their agendas**.

"At the event I asked the president of the ICJ about the role of the Court and international law in advancing the UN agenda on human rights. My dream is to serve as a judge of the ICJ in the future and by that time I hope the court will have more than just 2 other female judges out of the total of 15.'



Ella Riise McLeod, The Hague University of Applied Sciences



A group from the 'UN and I' schools project present their essays to Mr. Karel Van Oosterom, Dutch Ambassador to the UN and Former Mayor and Dutch Foreign Minister Jozias Van Aartsen, July 2019

## A New Era of Conflict and Violence

Facilitated by Mr. David den Dunnen, The Hague University of Applied Sciences

The next ten years will be critical for the achievement of the SDGs and we will not achieve them unless we ensure international peace and security. As the Decade of Action begins, the UN System, in partnership with its members and civil society, must redouble its efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict through creative solutions. The quest for peace was difficult even before the COVID-19 pandemic and now, the entire world is under severe stress and there is no clear end in sight. While the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on international peace and security are not clear, the pandemic is greatly exacerbating humanitarian crises. Despite the Secretary-General's global call for a ceasefire in March 2020, there are still multiple conflicts taking place around the world.

This thematic discussion produced three main proposals to provide a creative and innovative avenue through which the UN can advance its quest for global peace.

**Indispensable Allies For Peace & Security**  
Even in the face of legitimate social, political and economic grievances, the vast majority of young people remain resilient and peaceful. Young people...



Infographic from the Progress Report on Youth, Peace, and Security "The Missing Peace"



A group from the 'UN and I' school program on a visit to the UN Headquarters in New York, July 2019.

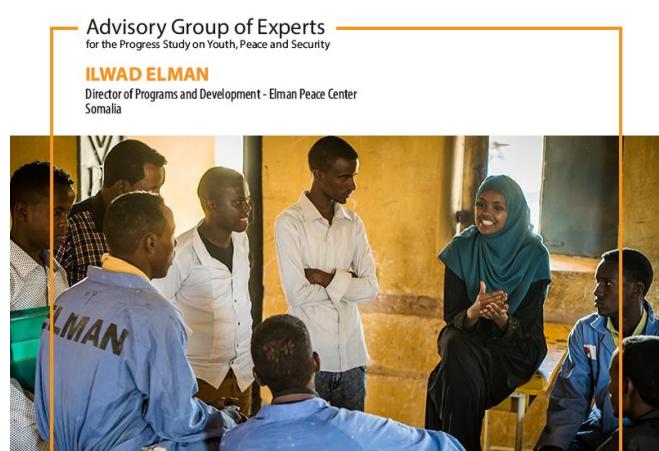
## 1. Coordination & Partnerships: Solidifying Gains

Over the last decade, the UN System has gone through a reform period that aims to break down the internal silos. In the field, through the establishment of the Resident Coordinator System, things have improved significantly. Directly or indirectly, conflict touches upon the mandate of almost every single agency, fund and program deployed in the field. Therefore, the **UN Country Teams must develop a framework for holistic responses to crisis**, which bring all relevant agencies together.

Moreover, the list of stakeholders with which the UN works, has to continuously grow and evolve. Conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon that require both actors who have a general view of the problem and, at the same time, actors who focus on specific areas. It is paramount to establish long-term working relations with NGOs and civil society organizations in order to have a sharper early warning system, a solid crisis management group and, after the conflict is finished, a coalition willing to rebuild peace.

One particular group of stakeholders with lots of mostly untapped, potential is the private sector. While the UN will always remain primarily an inter-governmental organization, it needs to enhance relations with the private sector as a reliable partner in the quest for sustainable development. Peacebuilding must become an integral and crucial item on the agenda of the UN Global Compact. While this body has been primarily used to ensure companies achieve their corporate social responsibilities, it must now also be an active participant in peacebuilding processes.

## 2. More Flexibility: Adapting to New Challenges



Advisory Group of Experts  
for the Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security

**ILWAD ELMAN**  
Director of Programs and Development - Elman Peace Center  
Somalia

Young people who want to be engaged are systematically excluded. Despite this exclusion, they create their own strategy to enhance their participation.



Over the last few decades, the nature of conflict has profoundly changed. The UN's reactions must be flexible and creative. The UN has deployed a number of tools to manage conflict, chief among them are peace operations and special political missions. In the coming decade, there are three key areas for improvement.



First, peace operations and Special Political Missions must become more flexible and dynamic. In the next few years, the UN needs to ensure that these two tools are suited to the demands of the 21st century. In practical terms, this means making sure their mandate takes national challenges into consideration, has ample flexibility to manage unexpected crises and assists their host countries in rebuilding peace. For peace operations already deployed, the challenge is even greater given budgetary pressures, criticisms due to some operations becoming an almost permanent fixture and a mixed record of protecting civilians. The next decade requires operations and missions to embed themselves in the country, build

partnerships with civil society organizations, and respond to crises even if they are beyond the scope of their original mandate.

### 3. Understanding interdependencies

Conflict does not happen in a vacuum and the root causes are diverse. Managing the conflicts of the next decade requires an acknowledgement of the importance of going beyond state-centric approaches to human security. The root causes of conflict stem from a severe absence of opportunities. If the UN and its members work towards ensuring their people have access to healthcare, education and economic opportunities, they will eradicate some of the underlying reasons why people resort to violence.

A key constituency which needs to be placed center stage is youth. While the UN has taken steps towards ensuring the voice of the youth becomes prominent, there is still work to be done. At the global level the Secretary-General has appointed an Envoy on Youth and they, jointly, recognize 17 young leaders who are leading the way to achieve the SDGs. In the coming years, this practice should be replicated at the national level.

The Office of the Resident Coordinator should, in partnership with youth organizations appoint 17 change-makers who are working within their own borders to achieve the goals and they should be given a platform to present and implement creative solutions. Recognizing young leaders as key stakeholders at the national and provincial level will allow the UN to be much more embedded within the local communities.



## Conclusion



UNDP Peru

This dialogue demonstrated that across four key thematic areas; conflict, climate, gender and inequality, youth can play an important role in helping to expand agendas, set priorities, improve functionality and meet targets. One criticism that was shared across these issue areas was that the UN needs to communicate better both its achievements and its challenges in addressing these pressing problems in the context of the SDGs.

Participants highlighted that the UN needs to communicate its efforts on these issues more clearly, highlighting more explicitly and more

often what advances have been made and what challenges have been encountered. This is important in order to demystify the political processes which underpin and sometimes undermine multilateral cooperation to achieve the goals.

Each group also stressed the importance of tackling misinformation, especially in the area of climate change and women and gender. In order to tackle this, better access to higher education is required, especially in the most affected regions. Lack of access to global networks, challenges to mobility and unequal distribution of resources were identified as inhibiting factors undercutting the agency of youth across the issue areas. To address this, many participants embraced the toolbox and feedback mechanism created by the UN75 dialogues as a way to talk directly with the UN, improving channels of communication between the UN and local communities and actors. Many voiced the opinion that they hope some form of this open channel will be retained even after the 75th anniversary.

What has emerged from our UN75 Dialogue in The Hague are three key findings:

1. We have outlined a set of **workable solutions** for each of the four themes that may be implemented immediately at very little cost.
2. We have demonstrated the agency and power of **youth as a ready constituency of actors** who are demanding more attention, rather than sitting on the side-lines waiting for inspiration or an audience.
3. This dialogue has revealed a **new generation of the ‘peoples’ of the UN**. A highly-motivated, disparate and determined populace who imbue the UN with a new demographic, an enhanced image and an improved readiness to face the challenges of the 21st century.



**Let us draw on the activist spirit of the Beijing Conference and... ensure we seize this opportunity for deep, systemic change for women and for the world.**

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka  
UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Photo: UN Women/Amanda Uprichard

