



YOUTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE COMMON GOOD

Calling for Action and Partnership
to Empower Youth

July 2017

IIMA
Human Rights Office
Istituto Internazionale
Maria Ausiliatrice

IN COLLABORATION WITH



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**IIMA****Human Rights Office**Istituto Internazionale
Maria Ausiliatrice

IIMA (ISTITUTO INTERNAZIONALE MARIA AUSILIATRICE) or Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, is a religious association born from the principles of St. John Bosco which require the dedication of oneself to the service of young people and children, in particular, the poorest and those living in difficult situations.

IIMA promotes and defends **HUMAN RIGHTS**, especially those of **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE** and **WOMEN**.

Education, understood as integral development, is at the center of our commitment, and we believe that our total dedication to children and young people is the best gift we can give to humanity.

IIMA **WORKS** in **1455 CENTERS** in **94 COUNTRIES** on **FIVE CONTINENTS**.

IIMA obtained **SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS** with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2008. It contributes to the work of the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review and Treaty Bodies through the IIMA Human Rights Office in Geneva (Switzerland).

We would like to extend a special thank you to Misesan Cara for supporting IIMA's initiatives on youth human rights, especially in regards to our March 2017 side event, "Youth for Human Rights and the Common Good."



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INTRODUCTION

From 2014 to Now

In the past few years, IIMA and VIDES have been instrumental in an awareness raising campaign within the United Nations to ensure that the rights of youth are placed high on the list of priorities.

Since 2011, IIMA and VIDES Human Rights Office has been working through various side events to bring attention to the realities facing youth and the key importance of empowering youth to be defenders and promoters of human rights on the local and international level. Notably, on Tuesday, March 11th, 2014, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Uruguay, a **side event titled “Youth Empowerment: a Human Rights Perspective”** was hosted in Palais des Nations (Geneva). The goal of the event was to encourage reflection on the situation of youth and envisage possible initiative of the Human Rights Council on the topics. It was co-sponsored by twenty-five States and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Since that time, there has been progress made in bringing the situation of youth to the attention of the United Nations and its Member States.

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 was adopted on 9 December 2015. In it, the Security Council affirmed “the important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.” It also urged Member States to “facilitate an inclusive and enabling environment in which youth actors, including youth from different backgrounds, are recognized and provided with adequate support to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion.”

Afterwards, through the adoption of **HRC resolution 32/1 “Youth and human rights”** in June 2016, the Human Rights Council recognized that “young people face specific chal-

lenges that require integrated responses by States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders.” In fact, “today’s generation of youth is the largest the world has ever witnessed, and [...] the ways in which the challenges and the potential of young people are addressed by policy will influence the well-being and livelihood of future generations.”

Following this resolution, the **33rd session of the Human Rights Council** in September 2016 featured a **panel discussion** to identify challenges, best practices and lessons learned in the exercise of human rights by young people, and relevant opportunities for the empowerment of youth in the exercise of their rights. Panelists brought attention to the common challenges that affected youth worldwide, including the disproportionately high rates of youth unemployment, insufficient vocational education and on-the-job training, and the importance of the involvement of youth in the realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Maria D’Onofrio represented VIDES on the panel and made several recommendations which included: a report being requested by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee; establishing a mandate for a Special Procedure on youth rights; issuing a joint General Comment of joint Statement by Treaty bodies on youth rights; and systematically mainstreaming in implementation of the human rights of youth into Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review.¹

In November of 2016, in accordance with HRC resolution 28/14, the **Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law** featured the theme “Widening the Democratic Space: the role of youth in public decision-making.” It aimed to “to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to the relationship between these areas” and to “identify and analyze best practices, challenges and

MARCH
2014

IIMA
SIDE EVENT

DEC.
2015

JUNE
2016

SEPT.
2016

NOV.
2016

¹ For further information please refer to the Summary of the panel discussion on youth and human rights – Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Doc. A/HRC/35/7.

opportunities for States in their efforts to secure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.” Some recommendations that came from the event were: provide teachers, trainers, and youth leaders with the necessary initial and continuing training in citizenship education and human rights; establish or strengthen accessible and inclusive structures to foster youth participation in all institutions; youth-led initiatives that have proven to contribute to peace building should be recognized, promoted and supported; and Governments and civil society organizations should regularly submit information and make recommendations about youth rights to the Human Rights Council.²

JUNE
2017

IIMA
SIDE EVENT

Finally, the most recent achievement consisted in the adoption in June 2017 of **HRC resolution 35/14 “Youth and human rights”**, through which the Human Rights Council requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights to “to conduct, a **detailed study** on the implementation of human rights with regard to young people, identification of cases of discrimination against young people in the exercise of their human rights, and best practices on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by young people, highlighting the contribution of empowered youth to the realization of human rights in society, to be submitted to the Council prior to its thirty-ninth session”.

In order to keep the dialogue on youth issues alive, IIMA and VIDES continue their efforts to achieve full recognition and implementation of youth rights through its most recent **side event “Youth for Human Rights and the Common Good.”**

The empowerment of young people, through the full exercise of their human rights, is necessary to adequately prepare them to assume their role of leadership and responsibility in society.

Bearing in mind also that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever witnessed, and that the ways in which the challenges and the potential of young people are addressed by policy will influence the well-being and livelihood of future generations

HRC Resolution 32/1

YOUTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE COMMON GOOD

On March 16, 2017, IIMA and VIDES, together with the Permanent Mission of El Salvador, organized a side event titled “Youth for Human Rights and the Common Good” during the 34th session of the Human Rights Council.

Cosponsored by twenty-two States and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the event panel featured H.E. Carmen Elena Castillo from the Permanent Mission of El Salvador; Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur of the situation of human rights defenders; and five young speakers from Uruguay, the Syrian Arab Republic, Philippines, the Republic of Congo, and Slovakia. Mr. Nuno Cabral from the Permanent Mission of Portugal was the moderator.



This event aimed to: a) **identify conditions allowing young people to fulfill their potential as human rights defenders and promoters**; b) **value the role of young people as privileged partners in the realization of the common good, through the protection and respect of human rights**; c) **encourage Governments and Civil Society actors to engage in a constructive dialogue to move the youth rights agenda forward**.

Young people deserve special attention and the challenges they face have been strongly recognized from the global community. They are often **portrayed as problematic** rather than being viewed as the key resource and **driving force for positive growth**. As stated in HRC Resolution 32/1, “the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by young people empowers them to contribute to the political, civil, economic, social, and cultural development of their countries.”

Youth are called to be **initiators of change in society**. They can play a fundamental role in the promotion of peace, sustainable development and human rights. Accordingly, youth participation is **the key to unlock youth's potential**. However, true and transformative youth participation cannot be achieved without the full realization of their human rights. **The support of governments, in partnership with young people, is crucial to create new spaces for youth as key actors for the promotion of human rights for all.**

During this side event, the young panelists offered their own experiences working for human rights education and promotion, showing a wide range of activities and initiatives. In doing so, States were made aware of **cur-**

rent actions being taken by young people to promote human rights and the common good around the world, particularly actions geared towards the improvement of children's situations and access to rights. Perhaps most importantly, it demonstrated **the desire and willingness of young people to collaborate with their governments** so as to improve the human rights situation for all. Ultimately, it offered a stronger opportunity for States to hear from young people about **practical and replicable ways to empower youth** in their own countries.

This side event represented a significant step within a larger project of IIMA and VIDES. After years of working to increase the visibility and attention given to young people at the United Nations, strides forward have been made. With continued support of States and organizations, the global community can continue moving forward to improve youth participation and initiative in decision-making and social change.



Co-Organized by:
IIMA, VIDES INTERNATIONAL and THE PERMANENT MISSION OF EL SALVADOR

YOUTH FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE COMMON GOOD

THURSDAY
16.03.2017
1PM-3PM, ROOM XXIII
Palais des Nations

Co-sponsored by
UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
and the Permanent
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Sierra Leone
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HOPE
VOLUNTEER
COOPERATION
KNOWLEDGE
CHANGE
HELP
DEMOCRACY
LEARN
POTENTIAL
POSSIBLE
ORGANIZE
VISION
MISSION
SOLIDARITY
LOVE
GIVE
INSPIRE
DISCOVER

RIGHTS
CREATE
SPIRIT
TRUST
WE
ASSIST
RESPONSIBILITY
FUTURE
POSITIVITY
GROWTH
PEACE
FREEDOM
IMPLEMENT
UNDERSTAND
DEVELOP
HUMAN
TOGETHER
CAREING
WORK
NEW
YOUTH
BUILD
FIND
AIM
PLAN
IMPROVE
LEAD
PROTECT

Young Speakers
Prencce Bazabana, Congo
Zareh Bedros, Syria
Marian Belarmino, Philippines
Peter Farbár, Slovakia
Guillermo Andrés Gutiérrez Mercado, Uruguay

Opening Remarks: H.E. Ms. Carmen Elena Castillo,
Permanent Mission of El Salvador

Keynote Speaker: Mr. Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on
the situation of human rights defenders

Moderator: Mr. Nuno Gabriel Lopes Cabral,
Permanent Mission of Portugal

Light Refreshments will be provided courtesy of Spain. Interpretation in Ara, Eng, Fre, Spa.

Underlining the important role that youth can play in the promotion of peace, sustainable development and human rights, and the importance of active and wide participation of youth in decision-making

HRC Resolution 32/1



OPENING REMARKS



CARMEN ELENA CASTILLO, AMBASSADOR OF EL SALVADOR

Good morning, I wish to thank all of you for being here with us at this Side Event. I will take this opportunity to give special thanks to the International Institute of Mary Help of Christians of the Salesians of Don Bosco (IIMA) and VIDES International who organized this event with El Salvador. It is they who have done all the work to make this event possible. I would also like to thank you and congratulate you for all the work that both organizations have done for children and young people.

This side event is part of the process to raise awareness about the importance of the issues facing young people from a human rights perspective. Currently, the demographic statistics clearly demonstrate that young people occupy a very important part of the world's population, and therefore they have the potential to transform society and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for which all countries are working. It is a very ambitious goal to achieve and that is reason why the contribution of young people is indispensable.

For El Salvador, the issue of youth is of special importance. We believe that young people have a lot of potential to work and collaborate in the development of our societies. For this reason, we brought the issue of Youth to the Human Rights Council, and we created a Core group of States in which different countries from all regions of the world participate. This initiative was transformed into a resolution adopted by consensus,

Resolution 32/1 in June 2016, in which the Council recognizes the importance of addressing the issue of youth and the need to address the rights of young people.

The attention to this topic within the Council is also in line with what was approved in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, where States reaffirmed the need to develop and implement strategies that provide young people around the world with real opportunities to participate in society in a full, effective and constructive manner.

This first resolution adopted by the Council on this subject is directly connected to the efforts being made in New York and opens a path for the reflection, not only about the existing challenges to the full realization of the human rights of young people, but also and above all about the role young people play in the promotion of the human rights for all.

For this reason we chose to put in the title and in the content of this side event a reference to the **Common Good**, understanding it as **the achievement or continuous construction of a society in which everyone can enjoy the respect and guarantee of all the human rights on equal footing without any kind of discrimination.**

YOUNG SPEAKERS



 **GUILLERMO ANDRÉS
GUTIÉRREZ MERCADO**

 **AGE: 27**

 **URUGUAY**

Since 2014, Mr. Gutiérrez has served as coordinator in a school administration team for primary and secondary education, focusing on how to systematically introduce Human Rights Education in the school curricula as well as in youth detention facilities. Since 2015, he has been part of an educational project which helps detainees (most younger than 30 years old) reflect on and understand their rights inside and outside the detention facilities, as well as the values of equality, respect for diversity and non-discrimination, solidarity, justice, and education.

My name is Guillermo Gutiérrez and I am studying for a degree in History with the specialty of University Teaching at the “Universidad de la República”. I worked as a member of the principal’s work team in a school in my city. My duty in this area is to create places for the holistic development of our students.

I would like to share with you my experience working for the promotion of human rights with a group of people deprived of liberty in the detention unit of “Punta de Rieles” in Montevideo. This project was carried out during my second semester in 2015, together with a group of interdisciplinary young people, university classmates, and accompanied by teachers.

Because we received the proposal to carry out this activity in “Punta de Rieles” as part of our teaching studies, we first visited the unit of detention to learn about the reality there and reflect on what we could contribute according to their needs.

We needed to generate educational proposals while acknowledging certain coexistence problems and the lack of knowledge about their position as rights’ holders that many people deprived of liberty suffered from because the context in which they lived in the past and in which they live now. We also had to address the rights of others and the need to respect those rights holistically. This led us to create a non-formal educational project. We called for the recognition that the right to education is an inalienable right for everyone, a right that does not depend of the particular situation of the people.

Our intervention was centered on human rights education. We worked with a voluntary group of 25 people deprived of liberty, 20 of whom were under 30 years old. We addressed issues such as coexistence, tolerance, equality, respect for diversity and non-discrimination, solidarity, justice, and education.

The workshops created a space to provide a human rights education to the people deprived of liberty, a perfect opportunity for them to recognize themselves as rights’ holders beyond their situation as prisoners, while also understanding how rights help them understand their current situation.

For two and a half months, we worked using a weekly workshop in which we discussed one or two specific rights. Each right was introduced in a dynamic way, trying to make the participants reflect about the previous experiences that each one of them had with this right and how they lived it in their current situation. In doing so, they were able to analyze their daily life in the detention unit and develop a new interpretation of their previous experiences so to, in words of one of the participants, “generate new tools for the second opportunity that I will have”.

From the first meeting, the workshops became a listening place, a place of dialogue, exchange, reflection and debate, where each of the participants could share his opinion in an atmosphere of respect. With great joy and expectation they waited for the next meeting. The participants took this project as their own, and on more than one occasion they participated in the organization of it. For that reason they became the real protagonists of this project. We built this experience together.

The most important thing is to be engaged in an active citizenship, committed to the most needy sectors of society.

Many times, in my country, voices are raised demanding the hardening of penalties and greater repressive measures because of feared insecurity and the increase of violence. For example, in the last election there was the possibility of a plebiscite for lowering the age of criminal liability to the age of 16. Although it was not accepted, it shows the presence of distrust in children and young people by some society sectors. This still happens despite the large efforts carried out by the Uruguayan government to empower youth.

After reflecting on this experience, I understand that it became an opportunity to our team to understand and give a new meaning to our projects and ways of thinking. This experience increased our willingness to share and learn. This educative experience became a life experience, with a very liberating sense, bringing us above prejudices and misconceptions.

It generated the encounter of two communities, initially very different, unknown to each other, but living an experience of reciprocal recognition of each other one as equals. It allowed to welcome differences, to accept individualities and to build bonds of union. It allowed me to approach young people who, until that time, were “the others” for me, to create a new concept of “us” and giving a new meaning of the word “together”. Thanks to this experience I grew as a person.

I believe that it is very important to generate opportunities to meet among young people from different realities and backgrounds, which can be carried out by involving in all the processes of human rights promotion. Young people interacting with other young people can generate many positive things. That is the reason why is very important to have recognition and support of the government for these kinds of projects. In my experience, the support provided by government to my university and the support of the administration of the detention unit were of paramount importance for the realization of this project.

In response to the question previously submitted by the States, I want to say that is possible to create new participation spaces for the promotion of the active citizenship of young people, involving them in the conception and development of activities such as projects like this one.

It is possible to truly construct of the sense of “we” as young people, respecting differences and diversity, and this sense becomes a guarantee of the human rights of all and a culture of peace that makes possible a better coexistence. Believing and trusting in young people as tools for human rights promotion is to recognize that we are able to work together, youth and the State for the common good.

Thank you so much.



ZAREH BEDROS



AGE: 23



SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Currently completing his degree in Medicine, Mr. Bedros has been volunteering for the promotion of children's rights since 2008. Despite the conflict, he made the choice to remain in Aleppo with his family, working to continue and finish his studies. He is responsible for the initiative “Samaan Srui” for children in 6th grade. Due to the difficult situation

currently happening in Syria, his participation in the project represents a great opportunity to witness the potential of youth in promoting human rights in the context of a major humanitarian crisis.

Hello, my name is Zareh Bedros, I am 23 years old, from Syria. I was born in Aleppo and still live with my family in Aleppo. Now, I'm studying human medicine in my 5th year. I chose to study medicine because it is not just a job, but through it I can help children and people in need. For that and because of what is happening in Syria in general and Aleppo specifically, I have decided to continue my studies in Aleppo.

Eight years ago, I became involved in voluntary work, but after the war started I decided to commit more to as a volunteer to help children and youth in need.

In our center in Aleppo, there is about 50 volunteers and about 700 children age from 7 to 18. Because of the situation in Aleppo and through living there, together with the other young volunteers, we tried to identify what the children need the most. Therefore, we took the initiative to create for them a space of hope and joy, by organizing for the children and youth a variety of activities to make them more positive and live their rights, for example, through games and group discussions and exchanges on several topics, such as peaceful conflict resolution and respect for diversity.

In response to a question asked in advance by the states: We hope this could be a best practice showing how young people can indeed be partners in the implementation of inclusive policies and programs to foster respect for diversity. We suggest that this good practice can be replicated also in other contexts, with the support of concerned governments.

I am also responsible for a 'brotherhood' project for chil-

dren (11-12 years old) called 'Samaan Sruji.' Through it, we try to listen to the children's problems, the fears that surround them and their life stories, trying to make a change in these children and youth – a good change so that they can be good citizens in the society.

While hoping for peace to soon be restored, I would like to stress that it is possible to live in this critical situation in Aleppo and still live with dignity. As young people, we are committed to helping the children to live their lives by enjoying their rights.



 **MARIAN BELARMINO**
 **AGE: 20**
 **PHILIPPINES**

Ms. Belarmino has participated in various advocacy activities in the Philippines. She was a youth leader of a mobile education project, aiming to promote children's rights and human rights education among vulnerable children in remote and marginalized areas. She advocated for environmental sustainability and for the promotion of positive discipline rather than corporal punishment in schools and domestic settings. She also assisted the project of adult literacy education and human rights advocacy among the Aetas (indigenous peoples of Pampanga in the Philippines).

Peace starts in the individual before it becomes the general culture.

Thank you for giving me the floor, and good afternoon. I am Marian Belarmino, from the Philippines, I am 20 years old, and a graduate of Business Administration.

I grew up without the knowledge of the rights that humans and children have until VIDES started to visit our community in an urban depressed area when I was 11 years old. Through their mobile education program, I learned about the rights and responsibilities of children in the society, and it made me aware of the child-related issues that are present in our country.

As I became more active, my awareness also expanded. The mobile education program empowered me and opened my eyes to the realities in our community and our country. At 15 years old, I became part of a group of volunteers from different urban depressed areas. Since then I continued my commitment as a young volunteer. We share our own experiences together and assess the needs of the children and youth in our own communities and we work together to create more interesting programs that encourage other young people to join us.

As empowered young volunteers, we continue the cycle of teaching the young what their rights are, their responsibilities, and the role they play in society. Now, we go to the mobile education program, not as recipients, but as educators and promoters of children's rights. Our engagement includes participation in advocacy activities for the promotion of children's rights in the Philippines such as anti-bullying, anti-corporal punishment, and being against the lowering of minimum age of criminal liability. At the international level, we contribute to the drafting of UPR submission on children's rights and are now considering how to address youth-related issues to be submitted to UN human rights bodies.

At 17 years old, I lived with the indigenous people in Pampanga for two months. This indigenous group, called Aetas, are prone to being taken advantage of because the adults cannot read nor write. To address this problem, we created the adult literacy program, where we teach basic writing and reading, and their rights as minority. In my time there, I did not only learn their culture and daily life, but more importantly, I saw how important education is for them. This opportunity inspired them to rekindle their passion for knowledge and learning, and to value their own dignity and rights.

This experience introduced me to the other programs that our organization has in promoting human rights and how these programs are aligned with the sustainable development goals. We further promote quality educa-

tion by giving scholarship programs to the children and youth in marginalized areas, and also through mission camps, where we bring the mobile education and other programs to other parts of the country. We also believe in the empowerment of children through empowerment of their families. We help promote the eradication of poverty by giving livelihood programs that can help the parents with their daily finances. These programs include hog and goat-raising in the provinces, sewing machine distribution for mothers in urban depressed areas, the microcredit program, which promotes small business for the families, and, the newly started bakery in Cavite where people in the community can work at.

Communities in depressed areas, and even the indigenous communities, rarely get medical check-ups because of having not enough finances so we help promote for the good health and well-being of people in the community through our medical missions, which brings to them lectures on proper hygiene, free medical check-ups, medicines, and haircuts.

As active youth volunteers, we also take measures that help not just the community but also the environment. After the great floods from supertyphoon Ondoy and supertyphoon Yolanda (Haiyan), we saw the need to have more trees that will prevent flooding, and will also nurture and create homes for life under water. The solution was the mangrove-planting project, a reforestation program, where we were able to plant thousands of seedlings for the people in Mindoro and Negros Occidental.

A small help can make a huge difference to my country, and to the world. That is the beauty of volunteering and committing for the common good.

These projects reflect how youth can play a big role in the promotion of human rights and the common good. As active participants, we are able to help other children, other youth, families, and even communities. We are also capable of collaborating with the youth not just in the Philippines, but even from other countries such as Japan and South Korea. Challenged by the socio-political situations right now in the Philippines, we intensify education and promotion of human rights for active and constructive engagement, especially among youth and children.

What helps me most is patience, a sense of openness, and a great desire to help and offer my time and experience in the service of my country.



 **PRENCE BAZABANA**
 **AGE: 30**
 **REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Mr. Bazabana is a computer skills teacher and the founder and coordinator of the local volunteers group “VIDES Pointe-Noire”. Together with other volunteers, he works locally in the Republic of Congo in order to guarantee the right to education for the most vulnerable children. He organizes mission camps in remote villages to provide practical assistance for children’s health and education and to raise awareness in the community about children’s rights. He feels it is important to listen to young people and, through his service, motivate them to become human rights promoters in their own communities.

From my personal experience, I can testify that it is possible to escape from unfavorable situations, from vulnerability and aggression when we understand the importance of human rights. Then, by observing the children and young people who are in this situation of vulnerability, one feels directly invited to become an educator and promoter of human rights.

In trying to find a way to accomplish this mission that it is close to my heart, I joined a group of young volunteers between 16 and 36 years old. Most of us are students and some are already in the professional world. Our group aims to educate and promote human rights.

Public schools are almost free in my country, but the working and learning conditions are sometimes very difficult and school curricula often needs updating.

Not having many ways to address some of the major educational problems in the larger cities, our group of volunteers took the initiative to organize camps and recreational days in rural areas. In fact, in many villages, particularly in the large Mayombe forest, pupils do not benefit from a sufficient number of hours in school per year, which is necessary to ensure quality education. This lack in the educational system has a major impact on children. Many of them commit themselves to working early in their lives, while others end up in gangs in the city. In the worst cases, girls turn to prostitution.

To remedy this lack of education, our group of volunteers offers to children and adolescents during the camps: French classes, arithmetic, human rights education, and some lessons about respect and protection for the environment. We are often obliged to offer these groups of children food (breakfast and lunch) because we cannot make them work with empty belly. In the afternoons, we organize socio-cultural workshops (handcrafting, draw-

ing, theater); after the workshops we offer them leisure time (free games or as a team to make them understand the importance of living in community).

To young people aged 18 and over we offer human rights education and guidance ... so we discuss the opportunities they can have in town in order to leave the village with a good purpose. In this kind of situation, we list the possibilities of free or low cost training in town.

Regarding the financing of our activities, we count only on the contribution of the volunteers, the help of the friends, the volunteers' parents and some companies which often give us the means to travel.

To conclude, I answer one of the questions sent in advance by one of the attending States: "What should be done to make more young people become human rights defenders?"

I suggest that States keep a close watch over the groups of young people already involved in society and promote spaces where young people can come together and mobilize themselves, especially in schools ... and then make available to these young people all the possible means for good practices to be carried out.

I often say that we do not need many things to start changing our world. You will agree with me if you observe the attitude that these communities develop as a result of these activities.

Thank you!



 **PETER FARBÁR**
 **AGE: 25**
 **SLOVAKIA**

Mr. Farbár is currently studying for a degree in special needs education. He lives in Kosice (Slovakia) where he is particularly committed to the promotion of human rights for Roma children through peer support, club activities, English classes, and drama/ theatre performances. He worked in Luník IX - a Roma ghetto - where he spent eleven months in 2015, and thirteen months in 2012-2013. Together with other volunteers, he strives to find concrete ways to realize the full development of children at risk, especially those belonging to marginalized Roma communities. He works to eradicate discrimination and integrate Roma children into society while continuing to value their own cultural identity.

My name is Peter, I am 25 years old and I am from Slovakia. Since 2008, I have been working with Roma children, children at risk, and marginalized communities. I would like to say something about my volunteering experience with Roma people at Lunik IX.

Lunik IX is the city district of Kosice in Slovak Republic. There, more than 5 000 Roma people live on one square kilometer.

In my country, Roma people are a national minority and they are segregated from the rest of the society, living in social exclusion. In my country, there are lots of young people who work with Roma children and they try to help them improve their education and their living conditions. Other Slovak young people and I collaborate with Roma young people and together we organize summer camps and other events for Roma children.

In reply to the question from states on how we can better promote diversity and inclusion of youth at domestic level,



We must help children and youth to bring something special to the world, something for a better world.

I would like to underline that collaboration between Slovak and Roma young people is the essential part of all our activities. In fact, through this collaboration they manage to be accepted and integrated by the Slovak society.

I participate in activities for Roma children. I meet with them and we do together their homework, and I try to help them to improve their reading and writing skills. Moreover, we help them to acquire the abilities which are fundamental for them in order to be successful in their studies; as a consequence of a better education, they can find a better employment and they can be included in the society. Inclusion is the key point of my work! We teach them how to fruitfully use their knowledge in everyday life.

My work with Roma children is about relationships with them. I meet with them on the street, during free-times activities, sports activities and peer-group meetings. I play games with them and sports. I talk with them about their lives, problems and struggles, and I answer their questions.

Through simple activities and interactive games, we teach them many different things, for instance how to cope with issues in their daily lives and how to cooperate with other people. We share our lives with each other and we try to learn and take the best from each other's cultures. We share our cultural and national diversity for a better life and for our personal improvement.

For me, I believe that good education is education for life. Better education means better employment and better life in society. That is the goal of my work.



UN EXPERT

Summary of the intervention of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst

Mr. Forst opened his statement by noting the number of States present at the event, stating that it showed the importance of giving space to youth to speak to the international community. The role of youth is very important right now for international issues. His participation in this panel was decided by the esteem he holds for IIMA's work, having seen it firsthand when he was Independent Expert for human rights in Haiti and due to the relevance of the topic addressed within his current mandate. In fact, since the beginning of his mandate in 2014, he has engaged in a number of thematic discussions and is always impressed to see the number of young people taking part in the consultations. Young people are moving forward for the common good and becoming human rights defenders in their own rights.

During his mandate, Mr. Forst has seen many young human rights defenders subject to violence and other discriminatory acts. Despite their age, youth, adolescents, and even children, fighting for human rights still face the same dangers as their adult counterparts, worse so due to the fact that these youth should be better safeguarded by the system. Mr. Forst stated that he is always astonished to see how aware young people are of the threats they face. Through the global explosion of social media, they are always looking for information, some of which might be forbidden to them. Then they are attacked by people who want to stop the flow of this information, often States and governments.

He reported a case of a young person being arrested simply for posting something on Twitter. This made Mr. Forst reflect on all the youths who fight for their rights globally, whether that be through social media, protests, or other means. They are fighting for their freedom of

expression, their freedom of assembly, and for their stance they suffer at the hands of the governments and other social actors.

As a result, he stressed the need to consult more young human rights defenders and establish a mechanism in the future to help protect young human rights defenders.

In his concluding statement, Mr. Forst noted that while the international community adopts the 2030 Agenda, States and other stakeholders forget that it is today's youth who will in turn implement it. With this in mind we must fully promote youth rights through the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.



REFLECTIONS FROM STATES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The attending States and organizations were given the opportunity to comment and ask questions relating to youth and human rights. During this segment, several States spoke about their current encouragement of youth as social and governmental change makers, but inquired about more effective ways to promote the inclusion of youth through policies and good practices.

Another common theme that was raised by States was the promotion of youth rights through existing UN mechanisms, particularly the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and also the Human Rights Council (HRC).

Along with these themes were inquiries about how to better integrate migrant youth, how to effectively include Human Rights education in school curriculum, and how to remove barriers in order to enable youth to work more efficiently. The true question being, how can the United Nations assist the world's youth population as they strive to access their rights. Finally, a consensus was acknowledged that none of these goals can be reached outside of the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Stressing that the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by young people empowers them to contribute to the political, civil, economic, social, and cultural development of their countries

HRC Resolution 32/1



A GLOBAL YOUTH AGENDA

The Way Forward

Young people are untapped source of potential with the ability to positively change the world. Full enjoyment of their rights and recognition of their challenges is necessary for the realization of their roles as leaders and human rights protectors in society.

The Empowerment of young people through the full exercise of their rights allows for active political and civil engagement. Empowered youth can and will find ways to make these rights a reality for the rest of the society. The support of governments is crucial in order to create new spaces for youth as key actors for the promotion of human rights.

As the UN and larger global community proceed to recognize the specific challenges that youth face, we must react accordingly. We must continue to find ways to give young people a voice; we must keep this topic alive.

Young people need an opportunity for their voices to be heard and to initiate positive societal changes. Youth are not just the future of our society – they are the present. Enable them to fulfill their potential.

OUR PRIORITIES TO MOVE THE YOUTH AGENDA FORWARD:

1. Take concrete actions at local and international levels to empower young people and promote their human rights.
2. Systematically mainstream the implementation of the human rights of youth into Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review.
3. Institute the position of Special Rapporteur for youth issues so as to give dedicated attention to the challenges facing youth today.
4. Call for a joint General Comment or joint Statement by Treaty bodies on youth rights.
5. Undertake all possible measures to implement the SDGs, especially regarding the empowerment of young people in the exercise of their right to a quality education and to decent work.



ANNEXES

35th Regular Session of the HRC – Geneva
ITEM 3 General Debate (following thematic reports by the High Commissioner)
12th June 2017
Speaker: Katherine Webber

Oral Statement submitted by
 IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice

Co-sponsored by
 VIDES International
 and
 European Youth Forum

Thank you Mr. President,

IIMA [on behalf of co-signing NGOs] welcomes the summary report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the panel discussion on youth and human rights, requested through Human Rights Council resolution 32/1. The importance of addressing the issue of youth and human rights was clearly stated during the panel discussion and we look forward to further discussion on the matter.

We note with concern the serious obstacles youth are currently facing which impedes the full enjoyment of their human rights, including inadequate political and social participation, challenges in accessing quality education, and the lack of decent employment opportunities available to young people.

Noting that the world is currently experiencing the highest number of youths in history¹, we draw attention to the fact that empowerment and encouragement of youth, on both local and international levels, as human rights promoters is essential for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

In light of this, and in compliance with the Human Rights Council resolution 32/1 we make the following recommendations to the member states:

- Ensure that the Human Rights Council continues to address this issue through an added analytical report and by the establishment of a mandate for a Special Procedure on the rights of youth.
- Call for a joint General Comment or General Statement by Treaty Bodies on youth rights.
- Systematically mainstream the implementation of the human rights of youth into Treaty Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review.
- Take all possible measures to implement the SDGs with special regards to the empowerment of youth through quality education and the right to decent work.

Thank you Mr. President.

¹ See Executive Summary of the Panel Discussion on Youth and Human Rights A/HRC/35/7



General Assembly

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27 June 2016

Original: English

Human Rights Council

Thirty-second session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Albania, Algeria, Andorra,* Armenia,* Australia,* Austria,* Azerbaijan,* Belgium,
Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina,* Botswana, Bulgaria,*
Canada,* Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia,* Cuba, Cyprus,* Ecuador, Egypt,* El
Salvador, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece,* Haiti,* Honduras,* Italy,* Lithuania,*
Luxembourg,* Maldives, Monaco,* Montenegro,* Morocco, Nicaragua,* Nigeria,
Pakistan,*† Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar,* Republic of Moldova,* Romania,*
Serbia,* South Africa,§ Spain,* Sudan,* Suriname,* Thailand,* the former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia, Tonga,* Tunisia,* Turkey,* Uganda,* Ukraine,* United States
of America,* Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam: draft resolution

32/... Youth and human rights

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international human rights instruments, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

Recalling also all previous relevant resolutions, including the most recent, namely, General Assembly resolution 70/127 of 17 December 2015 on policies and programmes involving youth, as well as Assembly resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995, by which the Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,

Recalling further the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which states that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually

* State not a member of the Human Rights Council.

† On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

‡ On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of Arab States.

§ On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States.

GE.16-10767(E)



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reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis,

Welcoming the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and reaffirming the need to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere real opportunities for full, effective and constructive participation in society,

Welcoming also the high-level event held by the General Assembly on 29 May 2015 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, which offered an important opportunity for Member States and other relevant stakeholders to take stock of progress made in its implementation, as well as to identify gaps and challenges and the way forward for its full, effective and accelerated implementation,

Looking forward to further contributions by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the special procedures and the treaty bodies, as well as the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, and other relevant international and regional human rights mechanisms in identifying and addressing obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights by youth,

Bearing in mind that young people face specific challenges that require integrated responses by States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders,

Bearing in mind also that today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever witnessed, and that the ways in which the challenges and the potential of young people are addressed by policy will influence the well-being and livelihood of future generations,

Underlining the important role that youth can play in the promotion of peace, sustainable development and human rights, and the importance of active and wide participation of youth in decision-making,

Stressing that the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by young people empowers them to contribute to the political, civil, economic, social, and cultural development of their countries,

Recalling the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, and recognizing that human rights education and training for youth can contribute to the promotion of inclusive and tolerant societies, thereby favouring the progressive realization of all human rights,

1. *Decides* to convene at its thirty-third session a panel discussion on the theme, "Youth and human rights", the objective of which will be to identify challenges, best practices and lessons learned in the exercise of human rights by young people, as well as relevant opportunities for the empowerment of youth in the exercise of their rights, and requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to liaise with States and all stakeholders, including relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, national human rights institutions and civil society, including representatives of youth organizations, with a view to ensuring their participation in the panel discussion;

2. *Requests* the High Commissioner to prepare a report on the panel discussion in the format of a summary, and to submit the report to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fifth session;

3. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

United Nations

A/HRC/35/L.22



General Assembly

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Human Rights Council

Thirty-fifth session

6–23 June 2017

Agenda item 3

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Albania, Algeria,* Andorra,* Australia,* Austria,* Belarus,* Belgium, Bolivia
(Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina,* Botswana, Bulgaria,* Chile,*
Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus,* Ecuador, Egypt,† El Salvador, France,*
Germany, Greece,* Haiti,* Honduras,* Italy,* Luxembourg,* Madagascar,*
Maldives,* Monaco,* Montenegro,* Morocco,* Panama, Paraguay, Philippines,
Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova,* Saint Kitts and Nevis,*
Spain,* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,* Tunisia, Turkey,* Ukraine:*
draft resolution

35/... Youth and human rights

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

*Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international
human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political
Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,*

*Recalling also Human Rights Council resolution 32/1 of 30 June 2016 on youth and
human rights,*

*Recalling further all previous relevant resolutions, including the most recent, namely
General Assembly resolution 70/127 of 17 December 2015 on policies and programmes
involving youth, as well as Assembly resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995, by which the
Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and
Beyond,*

*Recalling the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in which it is stated
that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually*

* State not a member of the Human Rights Council.

† On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of Arab States.

GE.17-10082(E)

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reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis,

Welcoming the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ and reaffirming the need to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere real opportunities to enable their full, effective and meaningful participation in society,

Welcoming also the high-level event held by the General Assembly on 29 May 2015 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, which offered an important opportunity for Member States and other relevant stakeholders to take stock of progress made in its implementation, as well as to identify gaps and challenges and the way forward for its full, effective and accelerated implementation,

Taking note of the report of the expert meeting organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in July 2013, which recognized that young people do experience difficulties in the exercise of their rights by virtue of being young and that there are gaps in the protection and fulfilment of the human rights of youth,

Welcoming the convening at the thirty-third session of the Human Rights Council of the panel discussion on youth and human rights, at which challenges were identified for the empowerment of young people in the exercise of their rights,

Noting the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law convened by the Human Rights Council on 21 and 22 November 2016, with the theme “Widening the democratic space: the role of youth in public decision-making”,

Encouraging contributions by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the special procedures and the treaty bodies, as well as the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and other relevant international and regional human rights mechanisms in identifying and addressing obstacles to the enjoyment of all human rights by youth,

Underlining the important role that youth can play in the promotion of peace, sustainable development and human rights, and the importance of the active and wide participation of youth in decision-making,

Conscious that today’s generation of youth is the largest that the world has ever witnessed, and therefore encouraging States to exert further efforts to ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights for young people, including all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, given that lack of participation and opportunity has adverse consequences for communities and societies,

Concerned that young people face specific challenges that require integrated responses by States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the summary report of the panel discussion on youth and human rights prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,² which summarizes the growing challenges that disproportionately affect the current generation of young people, and nonetheless draws attention to the crucial role that young people play in realizing human rights, peace and sustainable development;

2. *Calls upon* all States to promote and ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for youth, including, where appropriate, by taking measures to combat age discrimination, neglect, abuse and violence, and to address issues

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² A/HRC/35/7.

related to barriers to social integration and adequate participation, bearing in mind that the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by young people empowers them to contribute as active members of society to the political, civil, economic, social, and cultural development of their countries;

3. *Encourages* all States to conduct their coherent youth-related policies through inclusive and participatory consultations with relevant stakeholders and social development partners in the interest of developing effective and comprehensive policies, as well in the development of their national action plans to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;¹

4. *Urges* Member States to consider addressing, through the universal periodic review and the treaty bodies, issues pertaining to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights for youth, and to share the best practices that they have developed in dealing with the realization of human rights for young people;

5. *Requests* the High Commissioner, in consultation with and taking into account the views of States and relevant stakeholders, including relevant United Nations agencies, the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, national human rights institutions, civil society, and representatives of youth organizations, to conduct a detailed study on the implementation of human rights with regard to young people, identification of cases of discrimination against young people in the exercise of their human rights, and best practices on the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by young people, highlighting the contribution of empowered youth to the realization of human rights in society, to be submitted to the Council prior to its thirty-ninth session;

6. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.





IIMA

Human Rights Office

Istituto Internazionale
Maria Ausiliatrice



IIMA

Human Rights Office

Istituto Internazionale
Maria Ausiliatrice

CONTACT US

Tel: +41 22 784 18 14 | Email 1: droits.humains@salesienne.ch
Email 2: secretariatdroitshumains@salesienne.ch
Address: IIMA Human Rights Office, 243 Route de Veyrier,
1255 Veyrier – Geneva (CH)

www.iimageneva.org