

Global Youth Dialogue

4-5 April 2024 -
Cotonou, Benin



Cotonou Youth Action Agenda

30 Years Strong: Youth-built Futures
for Population and Development

Preamble: The ICPD Programme of Action and Our Common Futures

We, the 400 delegates of the Global Youth Dialogue on ICPD30, held in Cotonou, Benin from 4 to 5 April 2024, reaffirm the pivotal and active role young people in every corner of the world have played in promoting, protecting and delivering the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA).

As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the ICPD PoA, we, the largest generation of young people in human history, state that we are impatient and want to see swifter change.

We recognize that the realisation of the ICPD PoA is core to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, and urge for accelerated action. We emphasise the importance of intergenerational justice and accountability as a guiding framework for meaningful and inclusive youth participation and

for upholding the rights of present and future generations.

We acknowledge that important achievements have been made, and we remain fully aware that the realisation of the ICPD PoA still faces urgent and alarming challenges. We look back on our call for action and commitments presented in the ICPD20 Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration and note that they have not yet been fully realised.

We build from the regional ICPD30 review conferences, that reflect the voices of over 600 young people from around the world, as well as consultations that have occurred at the national, regional and global levels. We reiterate our vision, as summarised in the ICPD30 Global Youth Synthesis Report: a sustainable, climate resilient, peaceful, healthy, inclusive, age and gender responsive, democratic, and transparent



society where all young people are equal partners in global efforts for sustainable development and peace.

We urge all United Nations Member States, duty bearers, and stakeholders to immediately implement the following key strategic actions. We also request that they take them into account in the context of their national and regional preparations for

the 57th United Nations Commission on Population and Development, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and the Summit of the Future. We also call for leaders to highlight them in relevant forums and policy processes to deliver the commitments in the Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.

My Body, My Life: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Well-Being

Young people cannot fully enjoy a happy and healthy life if their right to sexual and reproductive health is not realised. We consider the denial of youth and adolescents' access to SRHR and bodily autonomy as a violation of their human rights. Among these rights denials, some of the most urgent issues to address include preventing sexual and gender-based violence, fulfilling unmet needs for contraceptives, addressing unwanted and teenage pregnancies, and the increasing prevalence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections. We emphasise the need to take concrete measures to guarantee the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health and wellbeing for all young people, by ensuring Universal Health Coverage and comprehensive SRHR as a prerequisite for achieving the Agenda 2030 goals for gender equality, education, health, and inclusive and peaceful societies, leaving no one behind.

We urge all United Nations Member States, duty bearers, and stakeholders to:

- Provide youth-centred, accessible, safe, gender-responsive, quality SRH services and supplies within universal health coverage programmes, including: menstrual health management, the full range of modern contraceptives, comprehensive abortion care services, HIV services and self-managed care. Ensure access in all types of human settlements, especially informal urban areas, rural settings, conflict and humanitarian areas, and communities affected by natural and human-induced disasters. This includes urgently eliminating all legal, structural, financial and systemic barriers, such as out-of-pocket expenditures, third-party consent, criminalization of abortion, mandatory waiting periods, and barriers to domestic production and regional supply chains for commodity security.



- Develop and responsibly implement legal frameworks that promote sexual and reproductive justice and counter and prevent gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage and unions, female genital mutilation, son preference, and conversion therapy. Ensure age of consent laws do not deprive adolescents and youth of access to essential SRH services and information.
- Share evidence and scientific information that combats discrimination, fear, stigma and misconceptions related to SRHR, gender-based violence, gender stereotypes and negative social norms. This includes using public campaigns and

training health care providers, fostering collaboration with Indigenous, traditional and faith-based communities, as well as community leaders. This also includes responsibly using digital technologies and artificial intelligence, guaranteeing the protection of young people's personal well-being, privacy and digital rights.

- Ensure that mental health, psychosocial support, and wellness services are readily available within public primary health care systems; are seamlessly integrated with SRH services; and include trauma-informed care and community integration approaches. Ensure the inclusion of tailored mental health support for marginalised youth groups.

Protecting Human Rights and Advancing Gender Equality for Youth in All Their Diversity

We recognize that gender equality and human rights are at the core of sustainable development. We expect our leaders to heed the call for change and ensure their decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of young people. Maintaining the status quo is not an option - we must be radical. We must address the root causes of power dynamics, including challenging ageism, sexism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, classism and all forms of intersectional discrimination and exclusion. We raise the alarm on the spread and intensification of the anti-rights and anti-gender movements, which are threatening progress on gender

equality, SRHR, human rights, democracy and multilateralism. We stress that the critical and courageous work of human rights defenders and activists is key to realising a just, democratic, and inclusive society for all.

We urge all United Nations Member States, duty bearers, and stakeholders to:

- Promote and adopt adequately funded policies, programmes and affirmative initiatives in education, social protection and justice to address the intersectional discrimination faced by young people in all their diversity, particularly historically marginalised youth groups.¹

¹ Marginalised youth groups include young women, adolescent girls, LGBTQI+ youth, young people from indigenous, ethnic minority, and, traditional communities, Afro-descendant/black youth, young people living with disabilities, those residing in war

- Advance gender equality through gender-transformative programming that empowers adolescent girls, prevents gender-based violence and harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and promotes positive masculinities for boys and young men.
- Adopt human rights-based regulatory frameworks to prevent stereotyping, intersectional discrimination, oppression, violence, and harmful practices against young people.
- Regulate the technology and digital space to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, hate speech, digital harassment and the promotion of misinformation about gender equality, human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.
- Ensure the protection of young human rights, environmental and land defenders, including condemning attacks against them and preventing their criminalization. Protection for young women, adolescent girls, and young people among them, from indigenous, Afro-descendant, ethnic minorities, and traditional communities, is urgently needed.
- Counter the interference of the anti-rights and anti-gender movements and narratives in human rights mechanisms, in population and development spaces and policies, and more broadly within United Nations and regional multilateral spaces.

Transforming Education, Transforming Lives: Expanding Opportunities for Young People

Young people have the right to quality, accessible, safe and affordable education. Yet millions are still deprived of this basic human right, particularly young women and girls. We demand that access to quality gender-transformative education and decent work become a reality for all, as these issues are essential to eliminating structural inequalities. We recognize the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work that young women

and girls bear, which undermines their access to education.

We urge all United Nations Member States, duty bearers, and stakeholders to:

- Ensure compulsory free education for adolescents and youth, especially in remote areas, while providing funding and economic support for marginalised young people to remain in school.

zones, young migrants, internally displaced people youth, young refugees, stateless youth, youth without parental care, and young people living with HIV.

- Ensure the universal provision of curriculum-based comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in and out of schools, guaranteeing education is scientifically accurate, evidence-based, culturally relevant, gender-transformative, and age and developmentally responsive. CSE should be consistently monitored and evaluated to establish data to inform the learning experience. Investment is needed to continuously train educators in effective CSE.
- Apply a gender-transformative approach to education systems planning, processes, and funding, recognizing specific inequalities which limit young people's ability to fulfil their potential, in particular by addressing school-related gender based violence, gender stereotypes and harmful practices; ensuring that no one is left behind, including young mothers and people in humanitarian crises.
- Recognize and invest in non-formal education programmes and organizations, particularly those that are youth-led, as a key approach to promoting the development of personal and collective values and civic engagement of young people.
- Invest to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need for their economic empowerment and self-determination. Fund and support youth employment, youth entrepreneurship, and youth projects which advance economic empowerment, including financial education initiatives. Strengthen ecosystems that nurture the growth and success of young innovators, especially those designed by, with, and for marginalised groups.
- Address gender disparities in employment, caregiving responsibilities, and unpaid care work encouraging the equal sharing of responsibilities within households, including by providing accessible, affordable and quality social services, childcare, and care and support services; offering paid parental leave; family-friendly and breastfeeding-friendly workplaces; and safe and accessible infrastructure.

Adapting, Thriving and Inspiring: Crafting Resilient Futures in a World in Crisis

We acknowledge that young peacebuilders, humanitarians, climate activists, and environmental defenders - particularly young women - are crucial in building, promoting and sustaining peace. They have been on the frontlines responding to the world's crises at

the local, national, regional and global levels. Investing in leadership and recognizing the unique contributions of young people across the peace-humanitarian-development-climate nexus is pivotal for fostering inclusive youth-led action.



We urge all United Nations Member States, duty bearers, and stakeholders to:

- Implement, resource and institutionalise global commitments such as the Youth, Peace & Security (YPS) and Women, Peace & Security (WPS) agendas, notably through the development of dedicated frameworks at local, regional and national levels and their integration in existing policy instruments to guarantee the meaningful participation of youth in decision-making processes.
 - Take decisive action to combat the effects of climate crisis and ecological dysfunction inherited by current generations, which disproportionately impacts youth, urgently implementing adaptation and mitigation measures, and scaling up investments in the loss and damage fund and youth-led climate justice initiatives, in order to protect young people living in climate-vulnerable areas, particularly those with heightened levels of pollution, contamination and toxic waste. Promote formal and non-formal climate education that incorporates the best available science and principles of climate justice.
 - Take urgent action to provide better solutions to the migration crisis. Enhance the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration by immediately recognizing legal protection for young migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, including those forcibly displaced by climate emergencies. Depoliticize migration issues and facilitate regular, safe, orderly and legal migration pathways by ensuring mutual benefits for both sending and receiving countries.
 - Implement the five key actions outlined in the Global Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises, in order to ensure humanitarian efforts are inclusive of youth and better equipped to respond to young people's unique needs in times of crisis.
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Rising Voices: The Power of 1.9 Billion

The ICPD PoA and Agenda 2030 can only be achieved with the meaningful participation of adolescents and young people in all their diversity at all levels of political and international decision-making. Young people bring unique insights, experiences, and innovative approaches to policies, programmes and international agreements.

They already play a significant advocacy role in their own capacity-building and in shaping decision-making, and this role must be recognized. They are already driving positive change and inspiring the next generation of leaders. It is vitally important to champion youth leadership for a progressive present and future.

We urge all United Nations Member States, duty bearers, and stakeholders to:

- Guard against instrumentalization and tokenization of youth movements, and instead, create opportunities for full active, equal, and meaningful participation of young people in all their diversity in international, regional, national, and local decision-making processes related to human rights, sustainable development, SRHR, gender equality, climate change, peace and security, and those related to funding and financing.
- Ensure the capacity building and engagement of young people, civil society organizations, and UN Major Groups in the annual CPD and other global agendas related to the ICPD PoA. Promote and invest in the ICPD Youth Platform, recognising the importance of youth-led spaces to advance the ICPD agenda.
- Fully implement regional protocols and consensuses, such as the Maputo Protocol, the Montevideo Consensus, and the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development, and ensure they are meaningfully incorporated into the monitoring of the ICPD commitments.
- Prioritise the collection and dissemination of quality, timely, open-sourced and high-quality disaggregated² data on population and SRHR, including censuses, vital statistics, gender-based violence statistics, maternal mortality statistics, and demographic health surveys, while ensuring data privacy and protection. Embrace a sexual and reproductive rights and justice framework for data beyond maternal health and pregnancy, including data on abortion, period poverty, and sex work.
- Provide simplified, flexible, unrestricted, and sustainable funding and in-kind resources for adolescent and youth-led organizations, networks, and coalitions, with a focus on movement-building, facilitating South-South and cross-regional learning, and grassroots-level initiatives. Support organizations working on counter-narratives to the backlash on human rights and gender equality; as well as supporting young innovators, including those working with non-digital innovation.

We, young people, commit to holding office bearers accountable to deliver on all of the Youth Action Agenda. We call on Member States and duty-bearers to report on their progress by issuing national reports and universal periodic reviews, through budget tracking on youth initiatives and community scorecards, and investing in shadow reports led by youth.

² Disaggregation should encompass markers such as age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, education, as well as urban and rural divide.

