



MORE THAN A MILESTONE:

THE ROAD TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2250 ON YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY



the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security¹, marking a ground-breaking commitment to youth inclusive peace practices. This success was the culmination of immense effort and commitment of youth peacebuilding leaders and advocates, civil society, governments and representatives of UN bodies to shift how the UN engaged with young people in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Years of dedicated work led to the unanimous adoption of the Resolution in less than seven minutes.

Today there are more than 1.85 billion young people around the world. Globally, many of them work tirelessly, creatively, and productively to build peace and respond to violence. Yet, young people have often been marginal to peace and security solutions on the international stage; seen problematically simply as a “problem to be solved or a threat to be contained.”²

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR2250) fundamentally challenged this framework. The current UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, describes the resolution as “a road map, a tool for enhanced impact and a shield for protection to continue the life-saving work young peacebuilders are doing around the world”³

The story of how UNSCR 2250 came to life is the story of a youth-driven, adult-supported process; the story of people and organizations coming together around shared principles and common goals to achieve a collective impact. Drawing on desk research and interviews conducted with young people and practitioners from the United Nations (UN), adult-led non-governmental organizations, and youth-led organizations, *The Road to 2250* outlines fundamental approaches that led to this critical policy shift. Key lessons from this process highlight the importance of collaboration and inclusive inter-agency coordination. They also show that the multilateral system can greatly benefit from adopting new ways of working, in which partnership with civil society and young people truly serve its objectives.

Ahmed Alhendawi and Ambassador Dina Kavar surrounded by members of the global coalition and holding UNSCR 2250 after adoption on Dec. 9, 2015



GROUND-BREAKING RESOLUTION

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (UNSCR 2250) is ground-breaking, as it is the first international policy framework to recognise the important and positive role young women and men play in preventing and resolving conflict, countering violent extremism, and building peace.

Submitted by eleven Member States⁴ and adopted unanimously by the Security Council⁵, UNSCR 2250 officially acknowledges the difficult work of youth leaders who have been leading peacebuilding efforts in their countries and cultivating the global youth, peace and security agenda for years. For the first time, it codifies a framework for government leaders to engage their youthful populations as partners in preventing violence and sustaining peace.

It unequivocally recognises that

“young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,”⁶. The resolution identifies five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration. Crucially, it urges actors to include youth in decision making at all levels and establish mechanisms for youth’s meaningful participation. The resolution creates a paradigm shift away from the idea of young people being seen as a threat to security towards the very real notion that they have the power to transform violent conflict.

Increased concern about the rise of violent extremism and global security threats in the lead up to the resolution saw more attention being paid to a small number of young people who participate in violence. However, the majority of young people in the world are peaceful and do not participate in

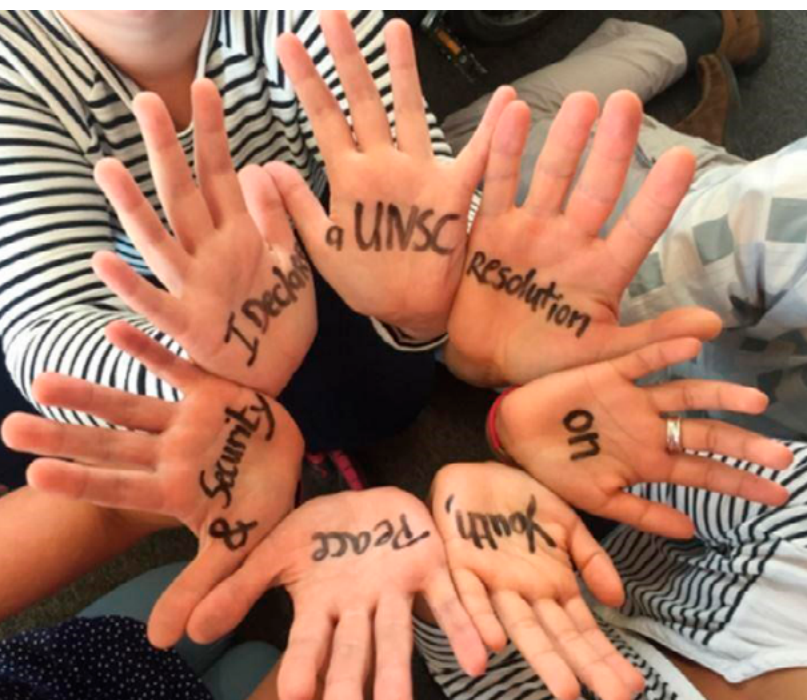
violence. UNSCR 2250 provokes the international community to ask a new question: *why are most youth peaceful?*

Although it had seemed unlikely when advocates first started speaking of a resolution, hard work by youth leaders, civil society, and UN representatives paid off in less than five years. At its heart, the process towards UNSCR 2250 involved *people power*, *planning*, and a *paradigm shift* in how youth were seen and engaged in peace and security.

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PEOPLE POWER: COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP

A YOUTH-DRIVEN RESOLUTION WITH A BROAD COALITION OF SUPPORT



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UNSCR 2250 provokes the international community to ask a new question: why are most youth peaceful?

Young people have historically not been included as participants in formal efforts to solve peace and security challenges. Often seen only as “a problem to be solved or a threat to be contained”, youth are stereotyped, stigmatised and excluded. However, youth have long been working to address security issues and build peace; and advocating to have this work recognised by international actors and institutions.

While UN resolutions tend to stem from Member States and are the result of processes in which young people are seldom included, UNSCR 2250 came from the advocacy of young people. Youth championed a global policy framework that would not only recognise and institutionalize the role of young people in general, but also address “the specific needs, assets, potential and diverse identities of youth in conflict and post-conflict scenarios”⁷ and hold governments and intergovernmental organisations accountable.

Advocacy surrounding UNSCR 2250 and the YPS agenda actively engaged broad support through the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security (GC-YPS) which includes UN agencies, adult-run NGOs, and youth-led organisations.

The GC-YPS developed out of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding (WG-YPB) which was established in 2012 by civil society collaborating with the UN to help actors working in this field “advocate together for a paradigm shift in supporting young people as a force for peacebuilding.”⁸ The GC-YPS is part of the broader UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), which is the UN system-wide coordination mechanism on youth.⁹

From 2012 to 2015, young people, in collaboration with civil society, UN, and inter-governmental actors, advo-

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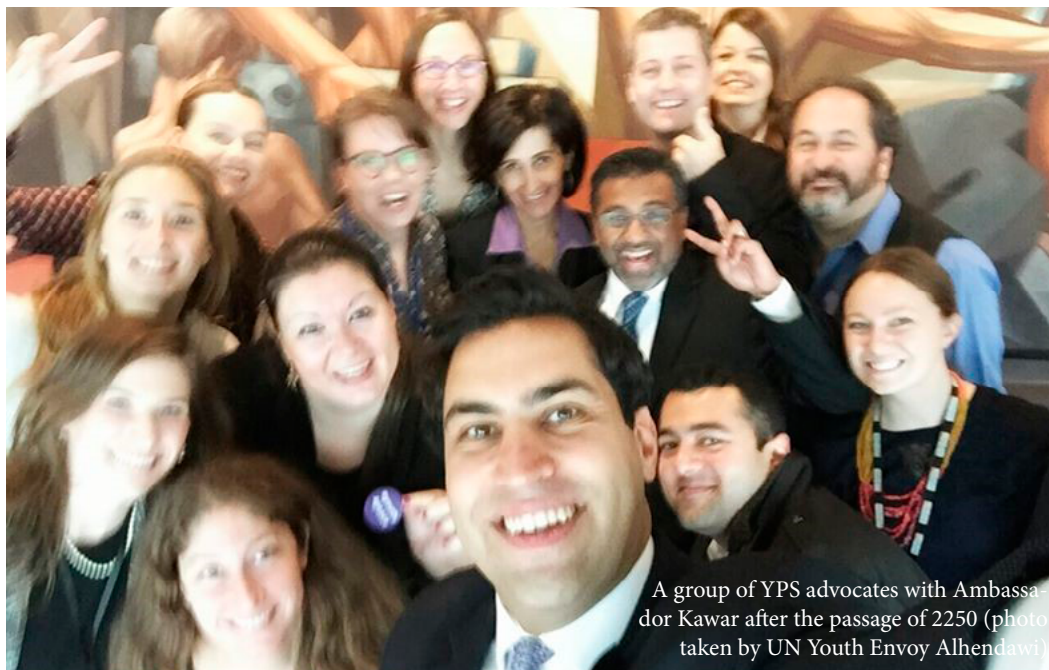
cated for the resolution in many important ways (see Fig 1), working together to great effect. The development process of UNSCR 2250 validated local grassroots work at the policy level, showing that international organizations had “started to listen to youth movements and [their] requests.”¹⁰ For others, joint advocacy was critical to gain credibility and garner Member State support for the resolution: “It would not have worked if the message had come only from UN agencies, or NGOs, or only from young people. The fact that it was relevant to many partners and that we all relayed the same message was important.”¹¹

The GC-YPS continues to play a key role in shaping the agenda, and today it forms the largest community of practice on youth, peace and security. It embraces a collaborative approach by bringing together diverse stakeholders that would enrich and guide its work: UN agencies, INGOs, youth-led organizations, academia, multilateral and intergovernmental organizations, and donors. The group’s spirit of inclusivity in-

creases ownership and relevance of the agenda through open discussion of different perspectives and approaches. In this spirit and with principles of youth participation, the group is co-chaired by the INGO Search for Common Ground (Search), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and United Network of Youth Peacebuilders (UNOY)— a global network of youth-led peace organizations.

The founding members recognized from the very beginning the field shaping nature to this work means the approach and process needed to be different. They committed to the principle of *nothing about youth without youth*.





A group of YPS advocates with Ambassador Kavar after the passage of 2250 (photo taken by UN Youth Envoy Alhendawi)



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 working hand-in-hand
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INCLUSIVITY, COORDINATION, AND PARTNERSHIP

The GC-YPS shared a desire to collaboratively create meaningful cultural shifts related to youth and their participation in peacebuilding. One member reflected, “when people come together across various agencies and are part of something greater than themselves we are able to do things unimaginable before. This notion inspired the urgency for collaboration.”¹² According to another member, people involved in this process discovered mutual passions for elevating young peacebuilders¹³ and a sense of common purpose.

The success of UNSCR 2250 was made possible through the joint work of multiple stakeholders. The process was characterised by collaboration, commitment, transparency, flexibility, and trust building. It also required making the case that *all* needed to be present and represented – youth, civil society, the UN, and Member States. “When you organize and collaborate effectively and openly, from a values-based perspective, you can accomplish a lot,”¹⁴ shared a member of the advocacy coalition.

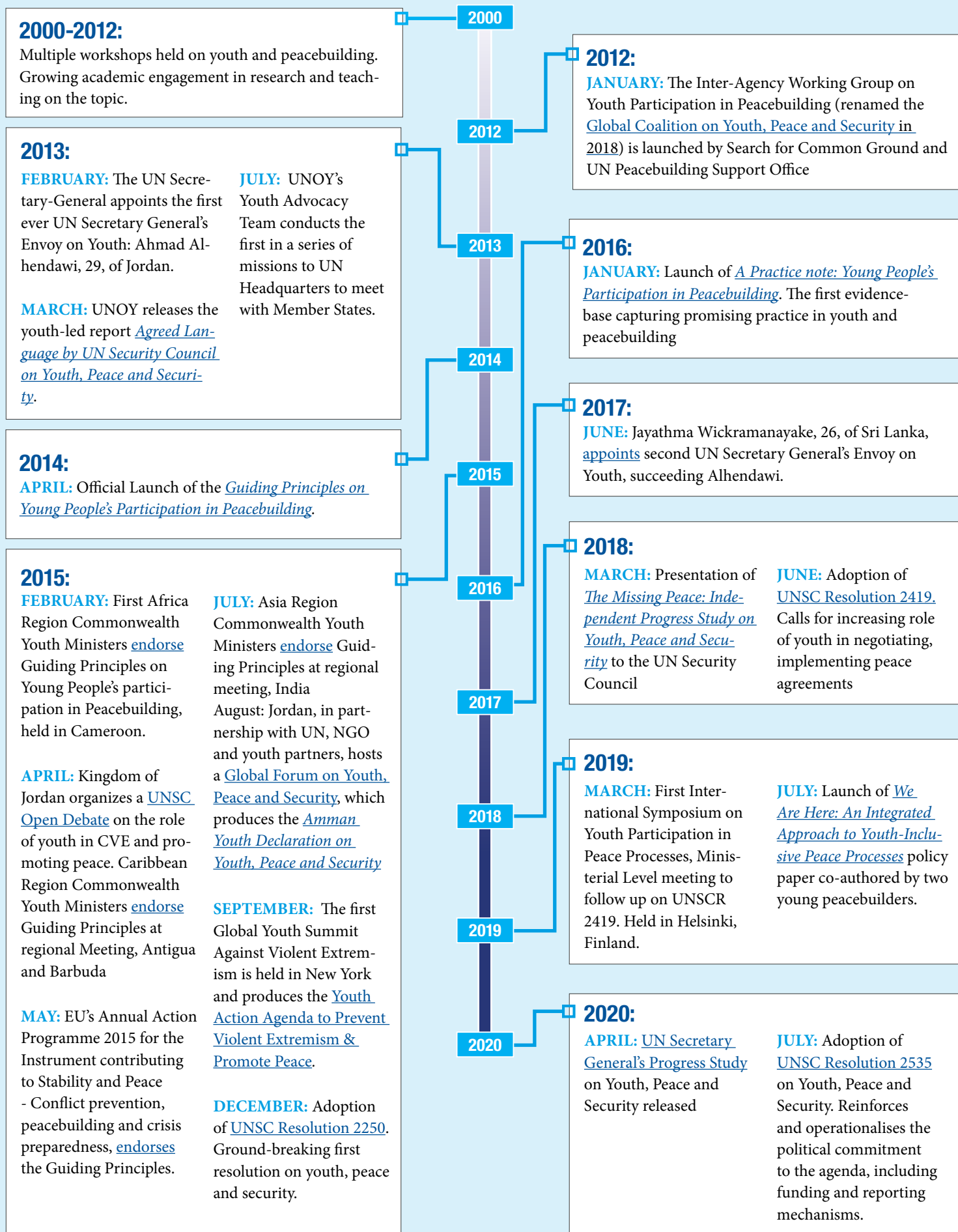
A common aim held by all members was to promote youth as equal partners in peace and security. “Youth, and youth participation in peacebuilding in particular, is not an agenda led by a single UN agency. Some of us lead on youth participation in

decision-making and governance, others on education and health. We all come together, beyond our entities, working hand-in-hand amongst ourselves and with civil society and youth organisations, towards a common goal”¹⁵ explained one member. The GC-YPS was “an opportunity for [everyone] to come together and push in the same direction rather than everybody working on their own.”¹⁶

The group also embraced many of the methods of civil society organizations to advance its work, rather than relying on more formal structures and processes.¹⁷ Through this process, the UN was able to adopt new ways of working, allowing it to truly collaborate in equal partnership with civil society and youth, while still meeting its goals.

The GC-YPS engaged in a range of strategies to advance the issues of youth inclusion in peace and security. Along with other stakeholders, these efforts helped create the enabling environment in the lead up to UNSCR 2250. Since the adoption of the resolution the YPS agenda has continued to grow and develop. Figure 1 provides the timeline for the development and adoption of UNSCR 2250 and further policy agenda success.

Figure 1: Youth, Peace and Security Agenda Milestones



PLANNING: STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT & TIMELINE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES, SHARED LANGUAGE & TRUST

Recognizing the challenge posed by the lack of a policy framework on youth, peace and security, the GC-YPS developed the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding* (2014), which defined nine overarching principles “designed to inform participative, inclusive and intergenerational peacebuilding strategies and programmes that systematically promote and ensure participation and contributions of young people.”¹⁸ The group also developed a *Practice Note on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding* (2016) to complement the *Guiding Principles* and provide concrete guidance informing policymakers and donors of programmatic considerations for supporting youth participation in peacebuilding.¹⁹

On April 2014, the *Guiding Principles* were launched publicly in New York.²⁰ Public launches were also held in Burundi, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Yemen by Search²¹ in partnership with youth and local civil society groups and UN country teams. The GC-YPS promoted these principles to different actors to gradually shift policy discussions and garner support.²²

As well as external advocacy, these processes had an additional benefit. They enabled the various actors to come together, listen to one another, debate about each principle and agree on a common language. As a result, it led to a greater trust among coalition members. This trust helped shape the critical efforts leading up to UNSCR 2250. Participants didn't feel like one agency or one

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Launch of the *Practice Note on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding* at the International Peace Institute in New York City



Launch of the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding, held at the International Peace Institute in New York City

Figure 2: Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding

1. Promote Young People's Participation as an Essential Condition for Successful Peacebuilding
2. Value and Build Upon Young People's Diversity and Experiences
3. Be Sensitive to Gender Dynamics
4. Enable Young People's Ownership, Leadership and Accountability in Peacebuilding
5. Do No Harm
6. Involve Young People in all Stages of Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Programming
7. Enhance the Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Competencies of Young People for Peacebuilding
8. Invest in Inter-Generational Partnerships in Young People's Communities
9. Introduce and Support Policies that Address the Full needs of Young People

individual was more important than any other, instead they all felt part of a team collaborating to make something much bigger a reality.

"The *Principles* were a process; we gathered around a common objective, [and] it forced us to clarify our ideas and what we wanted to promote,"²³ explained a GC-YPS member. The group embedded these principles in its own approach; as one member put it, "if one of the objectives was to create the conditions for youth empowerment, we certainly needed youth-led organizations on board."²⁴ Many of these principles, such as transparency and diversity, came from youth themselves. The impact of the *Principles* is evident in that an increased number of organizations now use open calls for applications when they convene events and have a diversified pool of people with whom they collaborate.

Young people also played a pivotal role in the advocacy process leading up to UNSCR 2250. In 2013, UNOY published the report, *Agreed Language on Youth, Peace and Security* (March 2013), which analysed language in UN General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions²⁵ and was the first comprehensive mapping of how the UNSC has viewed and articulated

the roles of young people in conflict and peace efforts. It highlighted that youth were spoken about infrequently and mostly in negative terms, but that language had been slowly shifting to recognise the need for youth participation in peace and security. The analysis helped support the idea that a space could exist for a thematic resolution on youth, peace and security. This youth-led effort, supported by the GC-YPS and shared at the Inter-Agency level, provided clear evidence to lobby Member States.

Members of the GC-YPS identified common elements of success that could be utilized as lessons for future advocates undertaking similar initiatives (see Fig 3).

The GC-YPS strategically decided to reshape the discussion beyond "youth and peacebuilding" to "youth, peace and security." This solidified the core message of advocates: that young people are not only associated with insecurity, but also contribute to security. It demonstrated the relevancy of the agenda for the UNSC.



PARADIGM SHIFT: CHAMPIONING & CONSOLIDATING YOUTH, PEACE & SECURITY

The goal of advocates for a UNSC resolution was to create systemic change in peace and security practices, making them more inclusive, and enhancing their sustainability through youth participation and ownership. The intent to create such a paradigm shift required a clear focus on articulating and modelling the transformation needed. UNSCR 2250 was the result of nearly five years of data gathering, coalition building, and advocacy.

GC-YPS members cultivated a positive approach to the agenda rather than a reactionary one based on policy panic and promoted these ideas by leveraging their presence in different policy spaces.

CHAMPIONING THE YPS AGENDA

A critical step in getting to a resolution was encouraging policymakers' support and working with Member States. 2015 was a landmark year for advocacy, championing, and success in establishing a Youth, Peace and Security agenda. Many champions emerged through the year, but the Kingdom of Jordan, as President of the UNSC, played a key role. Describing the country's motivation, former Permanent Representative of Jordan to the UN, Ambassador Dina Kawar, explained that Jordan "felt that youth issues should not be stigmatized as negative" and wanted to use its UNSC presidency to discuss the positive aspects of youth and their role in peacebuilding.²⁶

Figure 3: Common Elements for Success

- Take time to build trust
- Establish a common language
- Ensure that diversity is embraced
- Make people feel part of something greater than themselves
- Commit to a process of learning and iterating
- Utilize a movement mind-set, not a project with a short timeline
- Be cautious of how money can disrupt the process

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Ahmad Alhendawi, the UN Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth at the time, also played a key role in championing the agenda. Alhendawi helped encourage Jordanian leadership to advocate for UNSCR 2250. Jordan’s public, whole-of-government commitment to the agenda and its political will as a UNSC member helped increase momentum towards a youth-focused resolution.

The UNSC ‘Open Debate on the Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace’ on 23 April 2015, chaired by the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Jordan, focused on empowering young people to contribute to countering and preventing violent extremism and promote peace.²⁷ In chairing the Open Debate, the Crown Prince became the youngest person ever to chair a UNSC meeting.

Building on the Open Debate, the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security, was held in Amman in August 2015, and was hosted by the Kingdom

of Jordan and co-organized by UN entities (OSGEY, PBSO, UNDP and UNFPA), and civil society and youth partners (Search and UNOY). The multi-stakeholder approach brought together young people, donors, practitioners, governments, policymakers, and academics to share best practices and evidence.

The Amman Youth Forum marked a turning point in formalizing a new international agenda on YPS. Participants agreed, through the Amman Youth Declaration, on a common vision and roadmap to partner with young people to prevent conflict, counter violent extremism and build lasting peace.²⁸ Commitments by Jordan’s Foreign Minister and the Crown Prince to bring to life the Amman Youth Declaration’s recommendations at the UNSC gave further confidence to young people that their voice was being heard and their work validated.



The 2015 Global Forum on YPS in Amman, Jordan, which featured the Youth Declaration for a global policy framework on positive contributions of youth



The international community can and should do more with youth, not just for them.

The first Global Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes, held in March, 2019 in Helsinki, Finland, in response to UNSCR 2419

CONSOLIDATING THE SUCCESS OF UNSCR 2250

UNSCR 2250's development was intensive, collaborative and deliberate. Its success is due to recognition, support and collaboration and highlights the importance for different stakeholders to 'come together to envision the implementation...and align their efforts to advance the agenda globally'²⁹.

Adoption of UNSCR 2250 was an important success in a longer process. Young people have been involved in peace and security before UNSCR 2250's existence; however, the resolution helped shed light on their activities at a global level and gives them leverage to claim their rights and hold their governments accountable.³⁰

Alongside institutional and formal efforts for the agenda, the #Youth4Peace hashtag and multimedia campaign, launched in 2015, has provided a valuable platform for youth peacebuilders globally to contribute to conversa-

tions and the direction of the agenda. One key strength of #Youth4Peace is its important role in showcasing the positive role that youth play in peace, disrupting the common narrative that focuses on youth simply as instigators of conflict or beneficiaries of aid.

Since UNSCR 2250, there have been further formal successes for the YPS agenda. In 2018, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*³¹, mandated by UNSCR 2250, was presented to the UNSC. The *Progress Study* demonstrates young people's positive role in sustaining peace, and was developed through a uniquely participatory research process.³²

In 2018, the UNSC also passed Resolution 2419³³ which recognises the positive role young people play in negotiating and implementing peace agreements and conflict prevention, and in 2020 the UNSC passed Resolution 2535³⁴ which calls for increased resources to support youth, creation of an accountability mechanism by reporting on the progress of the agenda and strengthening protection mecha-

nisms for youth peacebuilders.

Advocates continue to build relationships and partnerships that connect and enhance the YPS Agenda's aims in relation to other agendas including Agenda 2030 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Leadership roles for youth have been established, such as the African Union Youth Envoy;³⁵ commitments have been made by regional bodies such as the European Union and the Commonwealth Ministers and Heads of Government; and funding streams and support have been created, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund's Youth Promotion Initiative that has allocated approximately \$50M in the past five years. Despite these achievements, much more work remains to be done to ensure peace and security practices benefit from experience and expertise of youth.

Promoting youth-driven processes, inter-agency coordination, collaboration, adaptability and new ways of working continues to be critical going forward, and so does the need to keep measuring and defining the work and



Unanimous adoption of UNSCR 2250

engaging with a constantly evolving policy environment. While the resolution is a great accomplishment, there is now a need to guarantee the spirit and intent of UNSCR 2250 is translated into meaningful action through domestic policy in Member States and designated youth, peace and security funds to generate a steady revenue stream for youth peacebuilding initiatives.

The field of youth, peace and security was strategically shaped by the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders, including young people. Their efforts to mobilize, advocate and apply youth-inclusive principles contributed to the creation of a new UNSC agenda, and has gone on to gain traction with many stakeholders. The international community can and should do more *with* youth, not just *for* them. UNSCR 2250 is a significant step towards building more inclusive, sustainable peace, with the voices and experiences of youth at the center.

Figure 4: Strategies for Successful Advocacy and Implementation of Youth Inclusive Peacebuilding

For successful advocacy and coalition-building:

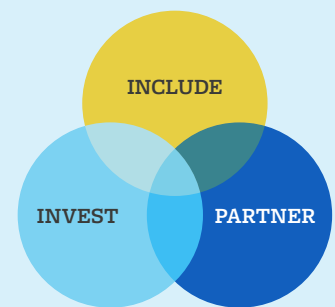
Through the advocacy process for UNSCR 2250, advocates of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda identified common elements of success that could be utilized as lessons for future advocates undertaking similar work.

1. Youth-led collaborative partnerships for collective impact;
2. Knowledge, data, evidence and funding for accountability to improve capacities, measure progress and articulate impact;
3. Results-based programming and capacity strengthening of young people and key stakeholders for greater impact;
4. Thoughtful and targeted communication strategies to change attitudes and influence policy.

For successful implementation:

The independent progress study *The Missing Peace* articulates a three-pronged strategy for societies and countries to fully harness and support the innovation of young people's contributions to peace and to begin to work towards the seismic changes set out in the global YPS agenda. The three mutually reinforcing strategies are:

1. **Include:** The systems that reinforce exclusion must be transformed to address the structural barriers limiting meaningful youth inclusion and participation in peace and security.
2. **Partner:** Partnerships and collaborative action, where young people are viewed as equal and essential partners for peace, must be prioritized
3. **Invest:** Invest in young people's capacities, agency and leadership, and facilitate an enabling environment for youth organizations and initiatives through substantial funding support, network-building and capacity-strengthening. This approach needs to recognize the full diversity of youth and the ways young people organize (including the fact that many youth initiatives are not formal or part of a registered organization).



AUTHORS:

Lead Authors: Helen Berents and Saji Prelis

Contributing Author: Isabelle Tibi

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS:

Achaleke Christian Leke, Local Youth Corner, Cameroon
Cécile Mazzacurati, United Nations Population Fund
Christina Voigt Leblanc, World Vision International
Dilshan Annaraj, World Vision International
Hajer Sharief, Together We Build it, Libya, and Advisory Committee Member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security
Jayathma Wickramanayake, United Nations Secretary General's Envoy on Youth 2017-current
Kobi Skolnick, Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity (AC4), Columbia University
Saji Prelis, Search for Common Ground
Matilda Flemming, Search for Common Ground (former Leading Coordinator, United Network of Young Peacebuilders), and Advisory Committee Member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security
Matthew Scott, World Vision International
Meg Villanueva, Co-Facilitator, Global Youth Summit on Youth, Peace and Security, Jordan
Mridul Upadhyay, Co-founder Youth for Peace International, India, and current Asia Regional Coordinator United Network of Young Peacebuilders
Noella Richard, United Nations Development Programme
Prateek Awasthi, Engineers Without Borders Canada (formerly with the United Nations Population Fund)
Saumya Aggarwal, Co-founder Youth for Peace International, India.
Solvi Karlsson, Search for Common Ground (former Leading Coordinator, United Network of Young Peacebuilders)
Victor Ochen, African Youth Initiative Network, and Nobel Peace Prize Nominee 2015

ACRONYMS:

GC-YPS: Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security
IANYD: United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development
INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization
PBSO: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
P/CVE: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
Search: Search for Common Ground
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
UNOY: United Network of Young Peacebuilders
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
UNSCR 2250: United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250
WG-YPB: Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding
YPS: Youth, Peace and Security

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Helen Berents is a Senior Research Fellow at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia; her work is supported by an Australian Research Council DECRA Fellowship (DE200100937).

Saji Prelis is Director for the Children & Youth Programs at Search for Common Ground (Search) and the co-chair of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security

ENDNOTES

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- 8 IANYD WG-YPB, Practice Note on Young People’s Participation in Peacebuilding, 2016. https://www.youth4peace.info/PracticeNote_YPS
- 9 IANYD aims to increase the effectiveness of UN work in youth development by strengthening collaboration and exchange. Through joint advocacy and initiatives, it promotes and advances youth development within and beyond the UN. It also facilitates youth involvement and participation in the UN System at all levels.
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- 11 Interview with Cécile Mazzacurati of PBSO/UNFPA.
- 12 Interview with Saji Prelis of Search for Common Ground.
- 13 Interview with Christina Voigt Leblanc of World Vision.
- 14 Interview with Noella Richard of UNDP.
- 15 Interview with Noella Richard of UNDP.
- 16 Interview with Solvi Karlsson, former leading coordinator of UNOY
- 17 Interview with Cécile Mazzacurati, PBSO/UNFPA.
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- 29 Saumya Aggarwal and Mridul Upadhyay, co-founders Youth for Peace International, India. Inspired by this resolution, they started their own organization in India on December 10, 2015 the day after the adoption of the resolution.
- 30 Interview with Matilda Flemming, former leading coordinator of UNOY and Progress Study Advisory Group Member
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- 32 The Progress Study consulted over 4200 young people from around the world. It was guided by an Advisory Group, more than half of which were young people <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy/AdvisoryGroup>
- 33 [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2419\(2018\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2419(2018))
- 34 [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2535\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2535(2020))
- 35 Aya Chebbi, appointed in 2018 as the first African Union Special Envoy on Youth <https://auyouthenvoy.org/youth-envoy/>



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