

CONVENE • ENGAGE • INFLUENCE

CONCEPT NOTE

Theme: “The road to a lasting peace: Leveraging the power of young women and girls for peace and security”

Virtual Panel Discussion ~12 August 2021

Time: 2:00pm – 4:00pm EAT

Background and Justification

The AU has committed to advance the Youth, Peace and Security agenda through the adoption of various legal and policy instruments including the AU Constitutive Act (2000); AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol; The African Youth Charter and its implementation roadmap the African Youth Decade and African Youth Decade Plan of Action (DPoA); African Governance Architecture; The Youth for Peace Africa (Y4P) Program; 1 Million by 2021 Initiative etc. The PSC at its 807th meeting in November 2018 convened the first open session on Youth, Peace and Security, wherein it called on Member States to develop national action plans and remove all structural barriers to youth participation in peace and security. The AU has also enhanced opportunities for participation and equal access to decision-making table to African youth in the development, implementation and monitoring of Youth Peace and Security (YPS) and the broader peace and security agenda including through the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and its 10-Year Implementation Plan.

In 2015, the UN Security Council adopted [resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security](#), which recognizes the contributions of young people to peacebuilding efforts and broadens the call for the inclusion of youth in planning, programme design, policy development, and decision-making processes for conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery.

Gender and age are important elements of the YPS and Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda respectively. The particular challenges facing young women peacebuilders who fall in the overlap, and sometimes gap, of the two agendas, was noted by the 2020 [report](#) of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on YPS. The report also noted the exclusion of young women exacerbates the potential violence they face. Paying attention to the heterogeneous experiences of young people strengthens the potential to respond to the structural issues that cause differentiated violence and insecurity for women, young women, and young men.¹

Normative frameworks have been used as advocacy tools to see some level of progress in young women’s participation in peace processes in Africa. Ample instances exist indicating the adoption of the National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the United Nations Resolution on women, peace, and security (UNSCR 1325) have led to increase in youth participation in various advocacy efforts and appointment of more women as Parliamentarians and leaders in various Ministries.

However, the progress is slow. Most initiatives targeting youth tend to benefit more young men than women due to different factors which vary from country to country. While young women play active roles in youth movements in their respective countries, women are often overlooked and are largely seen as passive victims. This approach is short-sighted and ignores the diverse and complex roles and experiences of young women in conflict-affected contexts. Similarly, young women tend to be excluded from initiatives aimed at engaging young leadership and participation in conflict prevention and resolution, as they may be

¹ <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/10/thinking-intergenerationally-wps-and-youth-peace-security-agenda/>

considered too young, underqualified or even unfit to occupy roles given to their male counterparts.

Despite normative and operational advancements, Africa is witnessing violent conflict that has continued to affect the lives of civilians, infringing the right to life and displacing people from their homes. Moreover, cases of violence against women have alarmingly increased despite the progressive normative instruments that call for protection of civilians and prohibit conflict related sexual violence. However, young women who constitute approximately 50% of the growing Africa's youth population are massively underrepresented in peace negotiation and transitional justice processes.

This double discrimination results in young women's exclusion from participation, protection, and access to funding and programmes because of their age and sex. Stereotypes around gender and age should not hinder young women's participation as partners in the development of policies, norms and standards related to peace and security.

In this regard, Africa's regional Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) stakeholder consultative processes, recognised the uneven and slow progress made to advance young women's role in governance, peace and security processes. Subsequently, Member States have committed to take actions to enhance meaningful engagement and participation of young women in political processes and decision making at national, regional, and continental levels.

Moreover, UN Women stands at the centre of mobilizing governments and civil societies to keep the promises of the Beijing Platform for Action to all of society. UN Women is bringing together the next generations of women's rights activists with gender equality advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action more than two decades ago.

Collectively, these change makers of all ages and genders can tackle the unfinished business of empowering women through a new, ground-breaking, multigenerational campaign: "**Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights for an equal future**". The [Generation Equality Forum](#) is a civil society centered, global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France,

In partnership with youth and civil society. The Forum kicked off in Mexico City from 29 to 31 March and will culminate in Paris from 30 June to 2 July 2021, launching a series of concrete, ambitious and transformative actions to achieve immediate and irreversible progress towards gender equality.

The Generation Equality Forum presents a defining opportunity to integrate an inter-generational approach to dismantle discriminatory barriers that prevent women's equal participation at the forefront of peace, security and humanitarian efforts, and to promote and protect women's human rights and the work of women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders, as well as ensure women's leadership in all peace and humanitarian decision-making processes.

The Forum will develop a new Compact for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action to drive action on the existing extensive normative frameworks and commitments and to strengthen coordination across existing mechanisms, systems, networks, partnerships and capacities. The Forum also presents a critical opportunity to strengthen the inclusion of young women peacebuilders and young women affected by crisis in peace, security and humanitarian processes and efforts, including in the context of the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda.

Furthermore, as the AU will celebrate the year 2021 with a theme, **Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want**, in line with Agenda 2063 (aspiration 5), it is vital to ensure that African arts, culture and heritage be leveraged for the promotion of sustainable peace and security. With this background, African Union, UN Women, UN Peacekeeping Operations Department and the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) network propose to roll out a month-long social media campaign that will culminate in a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. The initiative aims to document the work and efforts of youth, in particular young women in creating lasting peace in Africa.

Objective

The initiative aims to:

- Highlight the efforts made by young women and youth-led organizations to advance the women, peace and security agenda.
- Take stock of the role of young African women in the UN and AU led peacekeeping missions and their contributions to the implementation of the five pillars for action including participation, protection, prevention, partnership and disengagement and reintegration.
- Bring to the limelight specific challenges faced by young African women engaged in peace processes, the opportunities and promising practices on young women's engagement.
- Discuss key priority actions and identify strategies to enhance partnerships and collaboration among policy makers and young women working on peace and security at all levels in Africa.

Expected Outcomes

- A joint commitment of action defining the key priorities to enhance the role of young women in peace processes and initiatives adopted;
- Enhanced understanding of young women's role and contributions to peace processes in Africa;
- Concrete strategies for addressing barriers to young women's role in peace processes identified;
- Efforts of youth and in particular young women's role in peace and security is documented and disseminated in social media;
- A call for commitment defining the advocacy asks from AU, Member States, Regional Economic Communities and various organs of government.

Date and time

12 August 2021 from 2:00pm -4:00pm EAT

Language and format of event

English and French

Proposed Activities

- 4 podcasts on the 4 objectives identified for the policy dialogue
- Twitter Chat on the role of young women in peace and security
- Short video showcasing young women's voice in peace and security processes and key recommendations (5 minutes max) (proposed title- What does peace mean to you)
- An intergenerational policy dialogue that brings together young women working on peace and security issues, representatives of AU, Member States, UN system, development partners and other stakeholders.