



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



HUMAN RIGHTS 75 YOUTH DECLARATION



Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration

Our Vision

A new agenda that can fulfill our vision of building a world in which “human beings shall enjoy freedom from fear and want.” A world where human rights are not an abstract aspiration but an everyday obligation that must be upheld; a world without discrimination, where diversity is embraced, and everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources; a world where human dignity, human rights, and our planet are not sacrificed for the profit of a few in power.

Our Call

We call on governments, businesses, civil society, international organizations, the United Nations, other decision and policymakers, and those in positions of power to step up for a just, inclusive, and sustainable future for human rights for present and future generations.

Our Commitment

While governments are the primary duty-bearers of human rights with the responsibility to respect, protect, and promote human rights, we, young people, nevertheless commit to sustaining hope and action to advance human rights and to speak up against human rights violations, injustice, abuse of power, prejudice, and discrimination.

Preamble

We, young people from around the world in all our diversities, in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; in acknowledgment of our shared and intergenerational responsibility to protect, secure, promote, and claim human rights for the present and future generations, express through this declaration, our concerns, demands and commitments for the advancement of human rights.

This declaration is grounded in the views and recommendations from young people highlighted during a global youth consultation, online survey, and inputs received from youth-led and youth-focused organizations.

Over the past 75 years, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has served as a compass in addressing emerging human rights issues and global challenges;

We honor the predecessors who paved the way toward the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights amidst the ruins of war, economic desperation, and totalitarian regimes;

We acknowledge that significant progress has been made in human rights normative frameworks, institutions, and movements and that the advancement of human rights is an ongoing struggle and with each step forward, new challenges emerge;

Today, the world has the largest population of young people in history; 1.8 billion. Youth have been at the forefront of human rights movements all over the world, advocating for the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Young human rights defenders even in the face of adversity, have emerged in various parts of the world. We have taken leadership roles to challenge oppressive regimes, discriminatory practices, and systematic inequalities;

We build on the international consensus on the rights of youth and their role in advancing human rights, affirmed through international human rights treaties, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, the Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security, the Human Rights Council Resolutions on Youth and Human Rights, the biennial General Assembly Resolution on Policies and Programmes Involving Youth, the Secretary General's Call to Action on Human Rights, and Our Common Agenda, as well as the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations;

We recognize the importance of reflecting on past shortcomings and strengthening the current human rights system, while we caution against pervasive pessimism that could undermine the aspirations of the human rights system;

This reflection is imperative to develop a new agenda that can fulfill our vision of building a world in which "human beings shall enjoy freedom from fear and want." A world where human rights are not an abstract aspiration but an everyday obligation that must be upheld; a world without discrimination, where diversity is embraced, and everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources; a world where human dignity, human rights, and our planet are not sacrificed for the profit of a few in power.

We recognize that we are at the crossroads of longstanding and emerging **challenges**:

- **Poverty and Economic Disparities:** The structural violence, economic disparities, growing poverty, and social exclusion, deeply ingrained in the current international order, prevent individuals from fully enjoying their human rights;
- **Conflict:** As many tragic events and conflicts in the world show, the global collective security system has again failed to maintain peace and security, a prerequisite for the enjoyment of human rights by everyone. Arms manufacture, the arms race, and nuclear threats remain unabated, and armed conflicts and other situations of violence continue to claim countless lives;
- **Impunity:** The systemic shortcomings of human rights institutions and mechanisms pose challenges in fully ensuring governments' compliance with their obligations and accountability for human rights violations;
- **Inequality:** The fundamental principle of universality of human rights is under attack by systemic identity-based inequities on different grounds, including age, class, gender, gender identity and expression, ethnicity, disability, language, nationality, immigration or refugee status, indigenous status, racial identities, religion, sex characteristics, and sexual orientation and other grounds;
- **Climate Change and Environmental Degradation:** Despite the global acknowledgment of the urgent need to combat climate change and environmental degradation, the actions are neither sufficient nor timely to reduce their devastating impacts on both present and future generations and the survival of planet Earth;
- **Crackdown on Civil Society:** In the absence of rule of law and accountability, authoritarian Governments have intensified crackdown on democratic spaces and civil society, including human rights defenders, media, academic institutions, and student activists in many parts of the world;
- **Social Division:** The rise of populism, xenophobic ideologies, and political polarization threatens inclusion and diversity and jeopardizes trust in democratic institutions and the rule of law;
- **New Technologies:** Human rights and democracy are threatened by the misuse of new technologies, including internet shutdowns, excessive data collection, cybercrimes, sexual abuse, online violence and hate speech, the spread of disinformation, and unlawful and arbitrary surveillance;
- **Youth Exclusion:** The effect of these challenges on young people's human rights is disproportionate, in particular for those who experience intersecting forms of discrimination. Yet youth remain excluded from meaningful decision-making around human rights, development, and peace and security. If included and prioritized, youth can catalyze important political, economic, social, and technological progress.

We believe that the actions being taken are not commensurate with the urgency and gravity of these challenges. We call on States to heed our calls at the Summit of the Future to pave the way for a breakthrough in human rights in the next 25 years, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Our Call

We call on governments, civil society, international organizations, the United Nations, and other decision and policymakers to:

- **Solidarity:** Reaffirm their commitment to inclusive multilateral cooperation, as guided by international solidarity, inclusivity, shared responsibility, and the centrality of human dignity;
- **Economic Justice:** Reform the international financial architecture to ensure a more equitable economic order and adopt human rights-based fiscal policies and redistributive measures that are designed to eliminate inequality, social exclusion, and poverty;
- **Just and Lasting Peace:** Prioritize peacebuilding, commit to peaceful resolution of conflicts and a preventative approach to sustaining peace, including tackling the root causes of conflicts, ending apartheid regimes, occupations, and annexations of territories, establishing a global binding commitment to redirect military expenditure toward economic, social, and environmental advancements, and dismantling nuclear weapons;
- **Collective Security System:** Revise the existing collective security system, including the Security Council, to ensure an accountable, democratic, effective, representative, and transparent structure that does not replicate unjust colonial legacies and unequal power structures;
- **Justice and Accountability:** Tackle the abuses of sovereignty, including by strengthening international justice mechanisms and enhancing the authority of existing human rights mechanisms;
- **Equality:** Dismantle harmful stereotypes and discrimination on all grounds in norms, practices, legislation, and institutional structures, ensuring meaningful and effective participation of marginalized groups, including those facing intersectional discrimination in all aspects of life. In particular:
 - Prevent, prohibit, and eradicate all forms of human segregation such as racism, apartheid policy, and xenophobia;
 - Strengthen gender policies, including those aimed to empower women and girls in all their diversities; prevent and tackle sexual and gender-based violence;
 - Prioritize accessibility as a fundamental right, ensuring that assistive technologies are available and affordable, enabling persons with disabilities to live independently;
 - Combat anti-migrant and anti-refugee discourse and policies and address the citizenship gap where the full recognition of human rights still remains dependant on the requisites of citizenship;
 - Combat stigma and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender intersex, and queer persons, adopt domestic anti-discrimination laws and binding international instruments to protect their rights, and decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts and diverse gender expressions;

- Protect and promote the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities, and their identities;
- Ensure the rights to autonomy, self-governance, and self-determination of indigenous people and safeguard their bond with ancestral lands;
- **Sustainable Development:** Accelerate action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while ensuring that strategies and policies to implement the 2030 Agenda are anchored in human rights and engaging young people as a driving force for supporting sustainable development;
- **Environmental Justice:** Accelerate efforts toward climate action and environmental justice, including by codifying the right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment in national laws; adopting and fulfilling more ambitious environmental commitments; increasing investments in climate finance; mobilizing resources, sharing knowledge and technology for transition to green economies; whilst ensuring that climate change responses do not result in human rights violations and that indigenous communities participate meaningfully in relevant decision-making processes;
- **Climate Resilience:** Pursue strategies to strengthen resilience for those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including by providing financial support to those most affected; promote the rights of people from indigenous and coastal communities that protect native lands from extractive industries, deforestation or future authoritarian actions; and acknowledge the legal status in international law of asylum seekers, migrants, and individuals displaced due to the impacts of environmental degradation, including climate change;
- **Good Governance:** Enhance accountability, good governance, rule of law, and access to justice for all by ratifying international human rights treaties, ensuring compliance of national legislation with international human rights standards, combating corruption, and creating inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making processes;
- **Right to Life:** Take all measures to respect and ensure the right to life, physical and mental integrity, and protection from torture, including through the universal abolition of the death penalty, prohibition of excessive use of force by law enforcement, and prevention of violence by state and non-state actors;
- **Freedom and Democracy:** Promote and protect civic space, reform all legal provisions and practices that restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and media; and ensure accountability for any acts of reprisal against human rights defenders and journalists;
- **Digital Rights:** Guarantee the right to internet connectivity at all times, promote equitable access to the Internet, and bridge different forms of the digital divide;
- **Right to Social Protection:** Ensure a universal social protection system to guarantee the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, including the rights to an adequate standard of living, universal health coverage, education, and decent work;

- **Right to Education:** Take a global response to address the rising threats to the right to education, in particular for women and girls; ensure availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability, and sustainability of education for all by eliminating legal, financial, cultural, and structural barriers; and creating inclusive education systems that provide safe spaces for everyone;
- **Human Rights Education:** Integrate education “about”, “through” and “for” human rights, including civic education, as an integral part of education systems from early childhood to adult education, to foster a culture of human rights and social responsibility and empower the present and future generations with the knowledge, skills, and values to exercise, claim and defend their human rights;
- **Human Rights-Based Approach to Technology:** Take a human rights-based approach to the development, deployment, and regulation of technology, including artificial intelligence, in compliance with human rights obligations and for the protection of children and youth from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation in the digital environment;
- **Protection of Children:** Strengthen the protection of children from a multitude of challenges that disproportionately affect them, including conflict, the effects of climate change, and forced migration, and commit to protecting the rights of future generations.

In particular, on youth:

- **Diversity:** Acknowledge that youth are not homogenous, and their diverse and intersectional identities and perspectives should be respected and represented in all policy and decision-making processes impacting their rights;
- **Protection:** Adopt specific protection measures for youth affected by armed conflict, natural disasters, and the effects of climate change; asylum-seeking and refugee youth; youth with disabilities; indigenous youth; youth victims of trafficking; youth in alternative care; youth in conflict with the law; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer youth; and invest in building their capacities to enable the realization of their full potential in all spheres of life;
- **Mainstreaming Youth Rights:** Mainstream the rights of youth in the work of human rights mechanisms, and consider the creation of a special procedure mandate led by youth and/or an international legally binding instrument on youth rights;
- **Meaningful Participation:** Make the United Nations more accessible for young people, mandate rights-based procedures and mechanisms for youth engagement in decision-making at regional and global levels, especially in intergovernmental decision-making processes, and ensure necessary financial resources to guarantee their sustainability;
- **Capacity-Building:** Invest in youth capacities, empowerment, and leadership to ensure that youth can fulfill their right to participate in public and political affairs, including by addressing the structural barriers limiting youth participation, financing youth-led initiatives, and lowering the minimum age required to compete as a candidate in elections and political processes as well as the minimum voting age;

- **Student Activism:** Establish protection mechanisms for student activism, academic freedom, and the institutional autonomy of educational institutions, including by adopting a Universal Student Rights Charter to promote and protect the rights of students to freedom of expression, association, and assembly;
- **Youth Employment:** Address the issue of youth unemployment by adopting action plans for decent job creation, youth entrepreneurship, and training and internship schemes that are fairly remunerated and ensure the right to just and favorable conditions of work;
- **Sexual and Reproductive Rights:** Make comprehensive, age-appropriate, and evidence-based sexuality education a mandatory component of educational curriculums at all levels of education to empower adolescents and youth with knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- **Conscientious Objection to Military Service:** Acknowledge and protect the right of youth to refuse on grounds of conscience to perform military service or, as appropriate, to seek release from such service without discrimination as to the nature of their religious or non-religious beliefs on which the conscientious objection is based.

Our Commitment

While governments are the primary duty-bearers of human rights with the responsibility to respect, protect, and promote human rights, we, young people, nevertheless commit to:

- Sustain hope and action to advance human rights and to speak up against human rights violations, injustice, abuse of power, prejudice, and discrimination;
- Promote tolerance and cultivate empathy, and enable cross-cultural dialogue to foster international solidarity in addressing inequality and discrimination;
- Embrace inclusivity, center intersectionality, and advocate for equal rights and opportunities for all by amplifying the voices of marginalized and vulnerable groups and creating spaces that honor the diversity of human experiences;
- Ensure that youth movements are free from discrimination or marginalization on any grounds, and value the diversity of knowledge, experiences, and contributions from different groups of young people;
- Strive to eliminate hostility and violence and promote international peace and security by contributing to peace efforts in conflict and post-conflict situations;
- Combat impunity by using and enhancing different accountability mechanisms to hold perpetrators of human rights violations, both in times of peace and times of war, accountable;
- Advocate for climate justice, and pioneer sustainable practices in our daily lives in harmony with nature without selfish exploitation of resources;
- Participate in public affairs to build inclusive, peaceful, and democratic societies;

- Raise social awareness in our communities about human rights concerns at national, regional, and international levels, including through innovative tools and platforms, art, culture, media, and sport;
- Establish and expand mobilization through collaboration with regional and international youth networks as well as intergenerational spaces to benchmark experiences, garner support, and jointly address human rights challenges;
- Establish community-led initiatives that provide safe spaces, mentorship, and skill-building opportunities for all those who feel excluded from the system;
- Utilize the transformative potential of art activism by creating or supporting artwork, performance, and creative initiatives that promote human rights and challenge social injustices;
- Responsibly leverage the power of new technologies and social media to create and amplify our voices, share information, and mobilize communities for collective action to support human rights.