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

Written statement* submitted by the Jssor Youth Organization, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Overcoming youth marginalization in the UN process and mechanisms

There are currently 1.8 billion youth in the world, the largest number of youth ever to have existed.¹ The vast majority of these youth live in developing countries and face daunting challenges, living in poor economic, social and environmental conditions, with limited access to education, training and employment.

Nevertheless, young people still experiencing difficulties in exercising their rights by virtue of being young the following barriers which some might cause these difficulties: cultural norms, weak institutions that do not have youth friendly and specialised services; the absence of disaggregated data on youth; poverty among youth; lack of real engagement with youth; lack of intergenerational dialogue.

The age of access to political rights, including voting and standing for political office, is discriminatory against young people. There are several countries in which individuals must be of a minimum age (between 30 and 50) to be elected to political office.

There is an urgent need for youth participation and leadership, and ensuring the full involvement of youth organisations. Youth engagement must be not simply through traditional methods, but must also use social media and available communication technology.

There should be a move away from a youth definition focusing purely on biological age, because “youth” is a culturally loaded concept, and will differ according to different communities, as well as in rural and urban contexts. The transition from child to adult occurs at different times in relation to different rights – for example in the justice system, in the labour market, in education, and in the family. Despite this diversity, there is a need for a life-cycle approach to human rights, that provides comprehensive protection of a person from childhood to old age, and the protection of youth must be part of this.

The UN has long recognized the importance of investing in youth. With activities ranging from data collection and analysis to direct country support to governments, civil society, and other stakeholders, the United Nations is well positioned to provide comprehensive and specialized assistance in support of global youth development. Particular attention is given to areas such as health, education, and employment, and the special circumstances of girls and young women—persistent challenges to youth development in many parts of the world.

Participation in decision-making is a key priority area of the UN agenda on youth. In 1995, the UN called for an international strategy to more effectively address the youth problems and increase opportunities for participation in society, where the international community has reaffirmed its commitment to youth participation through UN General Assembly resolution 58/133, which reiterates the **“importance of the full and effective participation of youth and youth organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels in promoting and implementing the World Programme of Action and in evaluating the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in its implementation”**.² Subsequent resolutions have also dealt with policies and programmes involving youth as well as promoting youth participation in social and economic development.

Furthermore, the UN adopted the resolution 64/134, which confirmed the importance the international community places on integrating youth-related issues into global, regional, and national development agendas, which focused on three overarching objectives: (1) Increasing commitment and investment in youth; (2) Increasing youth participation and partnerships and (3) Increasing intercultural understanding among youth.

However, the Secretary General remarks to the General Assembly in 2011 stated that **“ Still, I do not think we have gone nearly far enough...”**³ In engaging youth with decision-making negotiation

¹ <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/04/10-things-didnt-know-worlds-population/>

² http://www.youthpolicy.org/basics/2004_UN_Resolution_Youth_Policies_Programmes.pdf

³ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-participation.pdf>

There is a need for a collective and better understanding of youth participation, how it can be implemented for all youth ages and review of youth policies strategies; and in-depth analysis of process including barriers, gaps, strength and weakness of existing mechanism for youth policies and strategy at national and international level.

Recommendations

International Level

- Mainstreaming youth rights into the work of the treaty bodies and the special procedures, this could take the form of a greater focus on youth in the reporting guidelines for treaty bodies and in the lists of issues sent to states, specific sections on youth in concluding observations and more General Comments that pay attention to youth rights and issue, for instance the Universal Periodic Review mechanism can be used to highlight issues concerning youth rights.
- Greater engagement with the Human Rights Council in particular to engage an interested sponsor to formulate a resolution at the Human Rights Council calling for the preparation of a report on the gaps and strengths of the current human rights framework in relation to youth.
- Further research in the area of youth rights, noting the lack of specific data at a global level. An in depth study is needed to identify the gaps that exist in the current legal framework.
- The need for a Special Rapporteur on Youth was proposed in 1998, and was discussed by the General Assembly, yet there has been no movement on such an initiative. The lack of sustained momentum on behalf of the United Nations in meaningfully engaging youth in its governance structures and policy discussions is evident; the Special Rapporteur on Youth could be a strong advocate, also for controversial issues, for youth engagement and development in the UN system and would be able to assess and monitor youth development based on reports directly from youth and youth agencies globally.
- Consider establishing a Commission on Youth, similar to the former Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission would reside within ECOSOC, but will have UNDESA's Youth Unit as its secretariat.

National level

- Promote dialogue with youth organizations regarding the drafting and evaluation of policy papers and programmes or questions on youth development;
- Consider for incorporation into relevant policies the recommendations of international, regional and local youth conferences and other forums that offer youth perspectives on social and economic development and resource management;
- Ensure access for all youth to all types of education, wherever appropriate, providing alternative learning structures, ensure that education reflects the economic and social needs of youth and incorporates the concepts of environmental awareness and sustainable development throughout the curricula; and expand vocational training, implementing innovative methods aimed at increasing practical skills, such as environmental scouting;
- Establish task forces that include youth and youth non-governmental organizations to develop educational and awareness programmes specifically targeted to the youth population on critical issues pertaining to youth. These task forces should use formal and non-formal educational methods to reach a maximum audience. National and local media, non-governmental organizations, businesses and other organizations should assist in these task forces;
- Promote national youth policies, national youth coordinating mechanisms, and national youth programs of action as integral parts of social and economic development, in cooperation with both governmental and nongovernmental organizations; and
- Enhance awareness of the global situation of youth and increase recognition of the rights and aspirations of youth;
- Educate and encourage the participation of youth in decision-making processes at all levels in order to increase their impact on national development and international cooperation.