About MGCY

The Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY) is the UN General Assembly-mandated and self-organized mechanism for children and young people to meaningfully engage in certain UN processes. We act as a bridge between young people and the UN system in order to ensure that their right to meaningful participation is realized. We do so by engaging formal and informal communities of young people, in the design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up, and review of sustainable development policies at all levels.

MGCY is part of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) mechanism, which gets its mandate from Agenda 21 and was adopted at the Earth Summit in 1992. The role and mandate of MGCY have been further strengthened through successive GA resolutions, bilateral agreements, and/or terms of reference with specific UN entities - ensuring that children and youth are recognized as rights-holders in intergovernmental processes ranging from central avenues such as HLPF through to UNFCC COP, ECOSOC HAS, CSW etc. - spanning over 50+ intergovernmental and 200+ multistakeholder processes.

Background and Development Process of the Paper

The Global Youth Policy Paper sets out young people's expectations and desired priorities for the Summit of Future (SOTF). From October 2022 onwards, youth organizations and constituencies have undertaken a range of youth-led consultative activities to capture the views, perspectives, and opinions of youth groups in what is their vision for the Pact for the Future. This has included:

- In-person & virtual consultation sessions
- Intersession working group discussions
- Policy submissions
- Interventions at intergovernmental meetings

These activities were all carried out voluntarily and engaged youth across different regions, countries, and communities - including reaching out directly to young people at the grassroots and from marginalized communities. Additionally, a dedicated Youth Hub for the summit was created to share important updates and engagement opportunities for young people globally.

This first iteration of the Global Youth Policy Paper for Summit of the Future draws together these ideas and inputs - and also builds on our SDG Summit Youth Policy Paper which was launched in September 2023.

Over the coming months, as intergovernmental negotiations proceed, we will continue to engage with this process - publishing further updates on our collective youth policy priorities - as well as working directly with young people in all their diversity to raise awareness of the Pact, undertake local community consultations and activities, and build their capacity to advocate and engage from national to global level.

Context of Youth Engagement in SOTF

The youth constituency has been an active partner and ally in the lead-up to Summit of the Future. Our engagement started with UN75 and Our Common Agenda, where MGCY convened youth-led organizations and youth advocates around the world to engage in agenda-setting discussions around the future of multilateralism and UN reforms. Since then, we have continued to mobilize and convene youth voices towards the SDG Summit in 2023 and then the Summit of the Future in 2024. A summary of some of our key engagements since 2020 on youth engagement towards the Summit is included in the Annex.

Youth Policy Priorities - A Pact for OUR Future

This policy brief summarises the key priorities for the children & youth constituency for the Summit of the Future and its intergovernmental negotiated outcome - the Pact for the Future. Our inputs are structured across the different elements of the Pact: a chapeau and five chapters on sustainable development and financing for development; international peace and security; science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; youth and future generations; and transforming global governance.

Chapeau

The chapeau provides an important introduction and framing for the Pact for the Future. We believe that this section should highlight the importance of strengthened multilateralism for a better world and reaffirm the core principles and values of the UN.

Policy Recommendations:

- The Summit of the Future and the Pact should build on and provide a framework for accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.
- Reaffirm the core principles of the UN Charter and uphold the three pillars of the UN (development, peace and security, and human rights).
- Reaffirm the importance of multilateralism in an interconnected world.
- A strong focus on gender equality and human rights must underpin the Pact and be mainstreamed across to all chapters.
- Commit to addressing poverty and reaching those most at risk of being left behind.

- Ensure alignment between the Summit of the Future and other intergovernmental processes and agreements.
- Reaffirm the role of MGoS and commit to ensuring the participation of MGoS and diverse CSOs, including youth-led and youth-serving groups, in all sustainable development processes.

Chapter 1: Sustainable Development and Financing for Development

As we move towards the development of the 'Pact for the Future,' it is essential that our commitments to underrepresented communities are not just tokenistic but explicit and action-oriented. This means undertaking global solidarity actions that not only protect but actively promote human rights, fostering an environment that nurtures the well-being of both current and future generations. Chapter 1, which focuses on sustainable development and financing for development, must capitalise on existing progress while addressing crucial deficits in financing and accountability.

As well as reaffirming commitments to Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, an integral part of this endeavour is reforming the international financial architecture, ensuring equitable and effective delivery, particularly for the Global South. A more inclusive and effective approach to sustainable development is crucial - this inclusion must go beyond mere representation; it demands the active participation of diverse voices, especially youth, women, LGBTI+ persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities.

Policy Recommendations:

- Commit to a renewed focus on addressing poverty and inequalities - highlighting the role of the UN in ensuring that sustainable development delivers for the most vulnerable countries and communities across the world.
- Reaffirm and strengthen the 2030 Agenda, while demonstrating a greater level of ambition on issues that still limit progress.
- Ensure fiscal space and scale up international cooperation for decent job creation in line with the SDGs.
- Uphold and support the extension of social protection systems in line with ILO standards and ensure that the Pact creates a strong foundation for the World Social Summit in 2025.
- Reform international financial architecture to ensure a rights-based and people-centered approach to global economic governance. This must include MDBs and international financial institutions themselves and we call for a UN intergovernmental process on MDBs reform to address urgent governance deficits.
- Reaffirm the centrality of public investments to support sustainable development and provide public goods and services.

Chapter 2: International Peace and Security

The Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) Agenda recognizes the role of young people and their pivotal contributions to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. First formalized by the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 in 2015 and then strengthened by the UNSCR 2419 (2018) and UNSCR 2535 (2020), the YPS Agenda seeks to treat young people as stakeholders in preventing and resolving conflicts and maintaining sustainable peace. The 2015 resolution identifies five key Pillars for Action: (1) participation, (2) protection, (3) prevention, (4) partnerships, and (5) disengagement and reintegration. The youth population today is the largest it has ever been in history, with young people increasingly entangled in and affected by the changing dynamics of long-lasting, violent, and armed conflicts. As such, young people need to be at the forefront of peacebuilding and security affairs not only because they are disproportionately affected but because they can also make a significant impact in the present and for the future.

Key Youth Priorities

Inclusive Participation

It is often said that there can be no peace without justice. In this regard, there can be no realistic prospect of peace without a Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) Agenda which sufficiently encompasses the views of the broad and diverse youth constituency. Youth are not a homogenous group and as the MGCY, we recognize and acknowledge the challenges of those facing intersectional barriers to participation.

In tandem, the Participation Pillar is rendered futile without efforts to promote inclusion. To this end, we wish to recall and emphasize that:

(1) Inclusion of Conflict-Affected Youth is Paramount
- The voices of youth who live in active conflict zones must be heard. Peacebuilders who originate from closed and transitioning societies take considerable risks to advocate for the YPS Agenda. We have a moral and ethical responsibility to support them in their endeavors.
- Considerable efforts and investments are required to ensure that as an international constituency, this is done with due care and attention for the Protection Pillar and regard for both physical and digital security.
- In this regard, we recall the expertise of refugee youth and their ability to discuss significant issues from a peace and security standpoint.

(2) Decolonising the YPS Agenda

- As a constituency, we reiterate our commitment to a YPS Agenda that gives equal weight to the actions and perspectives of all peacebuilders, no matter their context.
- It should be understood that local youth organizations know the context in which they operate best and should be considered 'experts' in this sense. We should be mindful and ensure that any suggestions take into account local realities. What may be feasible in one locality, country or region may not be fitting or appropriate in another context.

- We further seek to transition away from approaches in which the Global North speaks on behalf of the Global South. Indeed, we would consider it hypocritical and insensitive to discuss peace-building without consultation and input from those who are on the ground.

Policy Recommendations

- Establish an enabling, inclusive environment in which all young people are able to access and advocate within the YPS Framework.
- Take necessary measures in consultation with the youth constituency to ensure that youth facing intersectional barriers are able to participate on an equal footing with their peers, considering gender parity.
- Acknowledge the benefits and proven potential of intergenerational approaches for sustainable outcomes and ultimately, peace and development.
- Promote young people as a key stakeholder for the New Agenda for Peace (NAfP).
- Finance youth-led peacebuilding initiatives and the wider YPS Agenda at different levels.
- Engage youth in mediation and negotiation processes within the UN Political Mission.
- Enhance tailored programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of youth in post-conflict societies.

Chapter 3: Science, Technology, Innovation, and Digital Cooperation

In an era where technological advancement shapes nearly every facet of human existence, our discourse on emerging technology teeters between visions of a utopian future and fears of dystopian outcomes. This narrative dichotomy becomes more pronounced against the backdrop of current global crises, including pandemics, climate emergencies, and armed conflicts. As we navigate the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, the role of technology in these challenges is not just a matter of utility and innovation but raises profound ethical, social, and existential questions, particularly in the context of intergenerational justice and future generations.

Key Youth Priorities

Empowering Youth in Science
Young minds bring fresh perspectives and are often more open to exploring novel approaches to development challenges. By nurturing their scientific curiosity and providing platforms for their ideas, we can foster a generation of innovators who can contribute significantly to sustainable development goals.

- Develop local science clubs in schools and communities, encouraging young individuals to engage in sustainable development projects, and advancing a hands-on understanding of science in addressing real-world challenges.

- Implement regional science fairs and competitions that focus on sustainable development solutions, encouraging group collaboration among youth and providing national platforms for showcasing their innovations.
- Create a UN-supported global funding initiative for youth-led research projects in sustainable development, promoting institutional backing for innovative ideas from young scientists.
- Initiate local mentorship programs in scientific fields, connecting young individuals with experienced scientists and researchers for personal and professional development.
- Implement national policies to support youth participation in scientific research and development, to foster group involvement and representation in national science agendas.

Strengthening Application of Science for Diplomacy and Peace

The intersection of science and peace is a less explored but vital area where youth can make a significant impact. Young scientists have the potential to contribute to peace and security through their innovative thinking and problem-solving skills. By engaging them in scientific programs that promote peace, we can cultivate a culture of non-violence and collaboration.

- Offer workshops and seminars on the role of science in peacebuilding at the community level, encouraging young individuals to explore the intersection of science and peace.
- Facilitate regional youth summits focused on science and peace, allowing groups of young people to collaborate on projects that promote peace through scientific innovation.
- Establish a UN-led program for international youth exchanges in scientific fields related to peace and security, fostering institutional collaborations and cross-cultural understanding among young scientists.

Upskilling Youth in Digital Technologies

In the digital age, fostering youth engagement in science, technology, and innovation is paramount. Young people are inherently adept at adapting to new technologies, and their involvement can accelerate the development of innovative solutions to global challenges.

- Support the establishment of local digital literacy and coding workshops for youth, emphasising individual skills development in the digital realm.
- Promote regional initiatives to integrate science and technology education into national curriculums, focusing on group learning and collaboration in scientific innovation.
- Support the efforts of the MGCY Science-Policy Interface (SPI) Platform, a global constituency for youth in science, through UN agency funding, providing institutional support for international collaborations, research opportunities, and knowledge-sharing in science and technology.

- Advocate for youth-driven international partnerships in science and technology, focusing on inclusivity and mutual benefits to bridge generational and geographical gaps for promoting Inclusive Scientific Cooperation.
- Emphasise supporting technology transfer to developing countries through youth-led initiatives and collaborations, enhancing their technological empowerment and capacity-building for Facilitating Responsible Technology Transfer.
- Support the creation of a youth-inclusive Global Digital Compact at the UN General Assembly, ensuring principles of digital cooperation and Digital Public Goods are shaped by young voices for inclusivity and fairness.
- Support youth-led actions to improve global digital connectivity and affordability, particularly targeting disparities affecting young people across various regions and demographics addressing global and regional Digital Divides.
- Enhance Digital Governance through a call for the involvement of young innovators and policymakers in regulating and managing digital technologies, enhancing institutions' capabilities to address digital challenges with fresh perspectives.
- Prioritise Online Safety and Human Rights through youth-centric strategies to address online risks like disinformation and cybercrime, ensuring safer internet usage and the protection of digital human rights for all, especially vulnerable youth groups.
- Ethically Governing AI and Emerging Technologies by encouraging the involvement of young technologists in tackling AI governance challenges, advocating for responsible and ethical AI use that aligns with the preservation and promotion of human rights and ethical values of younger generations.

Policy Recommendations

Involving youth in the transformation of global governance, especially in scientific policymaking, is essential for creating inclusive and forward-thinking governance structures. Young scientists can offer unique insights and innovative approaches to global governance issues.

- Encourage governments to involve young scientists in policy development, promoting individual youth participation in science-related governance.
- Facilitate regional policy dialogues focused on integrating youth perspectives in science and technology governance, ensuring group representation in decision-making processes.
- Advocate for the establishment of a UN advisory panel on youth in science, setting global standards for the inclusion of young scientists in governance structures at all levels.

Chapter 4: Youth and Future Generations

The youth commend the continued support accorded to our evolving needs and welcome the tremendous efforts to safeguard our future by formulating mechanisms that address current and ensuing challenges, bringing forth intergenerational justice and accountability.

We acknowledge the significance of youth within the UN system and underwrite the recommendations of promoting meaningful, inclusive, and effective engagement of youth, youth-led and youth-focused organizations in the work of the United Nations as well as the proposal of negotiating the Declaration on Future Generations intergovernmentally, with the possibility of annexing the Declaration to the Pact for the Future.

To think and act in the interest of future generations, there is a need for the UN to facilitate negotiations that will call for UN member states to align government branches with youth-centric policies for better governance and resource distribution.

Policy Recommendations

- That the possibility of annexing the Declaration of Future Generations to the Pact for the Future be made mandatory, making this inclusion the first bold step to safeguarding the youth's future.
- Reaffirm the importance of open, rights-based and self-organised youth engagement in the work of the UN.
- Establish youth quotas for UN member states to increase the number of youth hired across various sectors.
- Establish regional interagency networks on youth to increase the effectiveness of youth development efforts.
- Allocate adequate resources to youth engagement mechanisms to facilitate meaningful and inclusive engagement that would avail safe spaces that encourage collective youth action.
- Call for global leaders to attend youth-led forums such as the ECOSOC Youth Forum where member states can formally account for their actions to the youth.
- Develop comprehensive monitoring and evaluation criteria for UN-funded projects to ensure the interests and involvement of youth are included in the projects.
- Emphasize the need for inclusive and equitable education systems that cater to the diverse needs of children and youth, fostering skill development relevant to the evolving job market.

Chapter 5: Transforming Global Governance

Global governance is at a critical juncture - being reshaped by changing global power dynamics, the impacts of new technologies, and dwindling public and political support for multilateral solutions. Rising conflict, global pandemics, and the worsening climate crisis all present a challenge to existing global governance structures and call for a reimagining of global cooperation and accountability.

The Summit of the Future aims to reinforce the UN and global governance structures to better address current challenges and respond to new and emerging threats. Young people believe that more needs to be done to ensure that global governance is truly effective - with agile and inclusive structures that are able to respond quickly to complex crises. At the same time, the Summit of the Future provides an opportunity to strengthen mechanisms of rights-based participation, counteract shrinking space for civil society, and address young people's systematic exclusion from global governance structures.

Strengthened global governance must include comprehensive reforms to the international financial architecture - addressing the ways in which current financial institutions and structures have amplified structural inequalities and failed both people and the planet. These reforms must be underpinned by principles of economic justice and prioritize equity and transparency - as well as provide direct modalities for the meaningful participation of Global South countries, civil society, and young people.

Policy Recommendations

- Strengthen modalities for open, rights-based civil society and youth engagement in multilateral global governance bodies and institutions.
- Affirm and strengthen the role of regional institutions and arrangements to enhance global governance and ensure that it is responsive to the needs and demands of different countries - especially those in the Global South.
- Ensure effectiveness through the creation and strengthening of multistakeholder accountability mechanisms to ensure that global governance structures are effectively delivering for people and the planet.
- Reform international financial architecture to ensure a rights-based and people-centered approach to global economic governance. This should include strengthening the voice and representation of developing countries in international financial institutions and taking further measures to expand the fiscal space of national governments.
- Establish a progressive global tax governance framework to ensure distributive justice and provide a mandate for a sovereign debt workout mechanism for debt crises.
- Provide a mandate for a process that develops the beyond-GDP metrics.
- Finally, commitments to reform global governance must be fully aligned with the existing human rights framework and seek to further protect and strengthen international human rights architecture.

List of contributors

We would like to thank all the young people who took part in our consultations and shared their challenges, hopes and priorities for the Summit of the Future and the Pact. Click here to see the **list of contributors**.

How to join us?

If you're a young person who is interested in engaging further on Summit of the Future, **click to register** and join our mailing list for more ways to engage.

You can also access more youth-friendly resources at **www.linktree.com/youth_for_sotf**.

Contact Information

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MGCY Website

Annex - 1

Quick Snapshot from 2020 & Ongoing Youth Activities towards the Summit

More details here.

- Early 2020 - convened the UN75 Youth Focus Group bringing together youth organisations and youth advocates worldwide to engage in UN75 commemoration
- September 2020 - youth co organised the UN75 Youth Plenary of UNGA
- September 2020 - youth participation and keynote speech at the UN75 plenary
- Feb/March 2021 - MGCY convened the Our Common Agenda Partners Group that supported the youth report for OCA, among other aspects
- November 2021 - Public launch of the Stockholm+50 Youth Task Force
- April 2022 - Co-organised ECOSOC Youth Forum, with a dedicated session on youth hopes towards multilateralism
- March & June 2022 - Delivery of the Stockholm+50 Youth Assembly and overall engagement of youth in the process
- July 2022 - Bilaterals at the HLPF on the SDG Summit and the UN Summit of the Future
- August 2022 - Youth Intervention at the OCA progress event
- September 2022 - Youth Blast for UNGA with capacity building focussed on twin Summits (SDG Summit and Summit of the Future)
- 6 October 2022 - Consultation at UNON in parallel with the first meeting of the OEWG on Chemicals and Waste on the SDG Summit and Summit of the Future
- 17 October 2022 - In Person consultation in the lead-up to the meeting of the HLAB to provide inputs
- 20 October 2022 - Consultation session at the One Planet Network Board Meeting
- 12 December 2022 - Youth event at the Restoration Day on CBD - with inputs to SOTF as one of the main objectives
- 5th January 2022 - In-person Meeting with Co-facilitator Namibia at the mission in NY
- 31st January 2023 - Informal consultation with youth delegates at the ECOSOC Partnership Forum
- Mid-Feb 2023 - Interventions at the informal consultation by the co facilitators
- 29th March 2023 - Online Global Consultation with UN partners (more than 500+ youth)
- 22 March 2023 - SoTF Consultation at the Water Conference
- 30 March 2023 - Zero Waste Day Youth Event on road to twin summits
- April 2023 - ECOSOC Youth Forum, with focus on SDG Summit & Summit of the Future
- 10-15 July 2023 - Training sessions, bilaterals and dialogues during HLPF 2023
- 20th September 2023 - Youth Prep Meeting for Summit of the Future at UNGA
- 17th November 2023 - SoTF Youth Consultation @ INC-3 Plastics Negotiations, Nairobi
- 12-28th December 2023 - SOTF Global Youth Consultations - Policy paper V1