CALL TO ACTION

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH: THE DRIVING FORCE FOR THE SDGS

1 November 2016
New York

His Excellency
Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General Designate
United Nations

We, representatives of organizations and networks working with and for adolescents and youth, gathered at the Opening of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York, congratulate you on your appointment as the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Amidst unprecedented global challenges, last year, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, a historic, ambitious and universal agenda for people, planet and prosperity. Whether or not we are able to achieve these goals will depend on how we impact the life of a 10 year old adolescent girl today, who will become a 24 year old young woman by 2030, the target year for the goals. There are 1.2 billion adolescents aged 10-19 years in the world today, and how they navigate this crucial life-stage will determine not only their futures but also the success of the Sustainable Development Agenda. If they emerge as educated, healthy and productive adults, they will form the bedrock of resilient, prosperous and sustainable communities.

Yet, we lack effective policies and programmes that provide a quality education, access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, protection from discrimination and violence, promote gender equality, build their skills for decent livelihoods, and empower them to participate in political decision-making. There is an urgent need for an unprecedented investment of resources in adolescents, particularly girls, to build their capabilities, expand their opportunities and strengthen their participation in decision-making, in national development, humanitarian response, and peacebuilding.
As Secretary-General, you will be in a unique position to focus global political attention towards investments in adolescents, and the importance of respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights. Therefore, we call on you, within your first hundred days in office, to:

- **Make adolescents a top priority for your term as Secretary-General** of the United Nations, and advocate for adolescents to be at the centre of global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, as an effective strategy for achieving the goals and the moral imperative of investing in the next generation.

- **Establish a high-level UN commission on adolescents**, led by heads of state or government, and comprising of eminent persons, including adolescents and youth, to increase attention to adolescents and youth in the 2030 Agenda, galvanize national action and investments, increase availability of disaggregated data on adolescents, and recommend evidence based interventions needed to ensure adolescents reach their full potential, as recommended by the United Nations Secretary-General’s Independent Accountability Panel (IAP) for the *Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent's Health*.¹

- **Leverage your convening role** to strengthen platforms for partnership, advocacy and accountability, recognizing the positive contributions of young people, bringing together stakeholders, including member states, UN agencies, funds and programmes, donors, development partners, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, networks, organizations, and participatory structures, working across the Sustainable Development Goals.

This generation of adolescents is our best chance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, fulfilling human rights and achieving peace and security. They will determine whether this agenda succeeds, and in any case, they are the ones that will have to live with its consequences.

We count on your leadership and commitment, and stand ready to support your efforts every step of the way.

*The undersigned.*

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Active Voices, Nigeria
African Youth and Adolescent Network on Population and Development (AfriYAN)
American Jewish World Service
Curious Minds, Ghana
Dance4Life
Elige Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, A. C. Mexico
Hope for Children, Cameroon
Hope for Future Generations, Ghana
International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations
International Women’s Health Coalition
Liter of Light, Fundación Qohelet, Mexico
National Observatory of Children’s Rights (ONDE), Morocco
Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU)
Partnership on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health - Adolescent and Youth Constituency
Restless Development
RESURJ
Sanitation Africa Limited, Uganda
SheSays, India
Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum
United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth (MGCY)
Women Deliver
YouAct, European Youth Network on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
Young Americas Business Trust
Young Leaders for the Sustainable Development Goals - Class of 2016
Youth Advocacy Network, Pakistan
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR)
Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER)
YP Foundation, India

For more information, please contact youth@unfpa.org.