



World Conference of Ministers  
Responsible for Youth 2019  
and Youth Forum



Conferência Mundial de Ministros  
Responsáveis pela Juventude 2019  
e Fórum da Juventude



## Lisboa+21 Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes 2019

Convened in the World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth 2019 and the Youth Forum Lisboa+21, organized by the Portuguese Government and the Portuguese National Youth Council, in cooperation with United Nations-system partners, in Lisboa, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2019,

**Reaffirming** the World Programme of Action for Youth adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995 and 62/126 of 18 December 2007, which provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people around the world, within fifteen youth priority areas;

**Recalling further** General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which for the first time the Assembly recognized children and youth as agents of change, and recognizing that the Sustainable Development Goals are integrated, indivisible and universal in nature, and therefore that all of them apply to youth;

**Reaffirming** the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all human rights instruments relevant, to protect promote and fulfil the human rights of all young people, as well as regional human rights instruments that particularly target youth or are relevant to young people;

**Affirming** the pioneer role of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (1998) and recalling the relevance of its commitments, and further recognizing the International Youth Years celebrated thereto,

**Welcoming** the establishment of the function of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth (2013) and underlining the Envoy’s important task, as Chair of the High-Level Steering Committee for the United Nations Youth Strategy “Youth 2030” (2018);

**Reiterating** the need to protect, promote and fulfil the human rights of all young people in all their diversity and recognizing that the human rights of all young people are not fully realized and further underlining the importance of addressing the specific needs of all young people, giving particular attention to young women and girls, marginalized groups and young people belonging to vulnerable groups or in vulnerable situations, including indigenous youth, youth in rural areas, youth with disabilities, young migrants or those who face discrimination based on any other ground or on multiple grounds, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commitment to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first;

**Express further** concern that adolescent girls and young women continue to encounter and be disproportionately affected by significant legal, cultural, social and economic barriers affecting their empowerment and equal opportunities to reach their full potential due to discriminatory laws, stereotypes and sexism from a young age, institutions, attitudes and harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, unequal pay for work of equal value, adolescent pregnancy, sexual and gender-based violence, lack of political inclusion, unpaid care work, legal impediments and restrictions and securing employment, lower wages, and further acknowledge that age and gender are characteristics that often intersect, add to and multiply discrimination based on other grounds;

**Acknowledging** that the current generation of youth is the largest one ever and reaffirming that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental, if inclusive and effective policies are in place;

**Recognizing** that the international community faces increasing challenges posed by today's rapidly changing environment and marked by evolving and mutually-reinforced shifts of geopolitical, demographic, climatic, technological, social and economic nature, creating unparalleled conditions for progress but, upending the established order, and creating new and interlinked challenges for youth and societies at large in ensuring respect for their human rights in all areas;

**Acknowledging** that meaningful youth participation, engagement and empowerment are instrumental in all stages of youth policymaking processes and decision-making processes that affect young people's lives at local, national, regional and international levels, and that youth remain largely excluded from formal decision-making and political participation, and recognizing further that new forms of political, economic, cultural and societal engagement and participation have emerged, based on specific issues and contexts, utilizing both online and offline methods;

**Acknowledging** the important link between migration and development, recognizing that migration brings both opportunities and challenges to countries of origin, transit and destination, to migrants and to the global community, and recognizing the responsibility to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants effectively, regardless of their migration status, especially those of women, young people and children;

**Expressing** concern that among civilians, youth account for many of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and that the disruption of youth's access to education, leisure time and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on durable peace and reconciliation;



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**Affirming** that generating decent work and quality employment for youth is one of the biggest challenges that needs to be tackled, and emphasizing the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth linked to the employability of youth, including education, health and access to information, while recognizing the rapidly changing future of work requires critical investments in foresight activities on the part of governments; adaptable social, economic, political and legal institutions; young people's capabilities and their opportunities for life-long learning and the provision of social protection;

**Noting** the variation of definition of the term youth that may exist at the national and international levels and underlining the importance of recognizing that young people go through different stages, from dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence, including adolescence, requiring explicit attention on the policies and programmes involving youth;

**WE, MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUTH AND YOUTH DELEGATES, WITHIN OUR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCES, COMMIT OURSELVES TO:**

**1. Promote, protect and fulfil** the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all young people in all their intersectional diversity, ensuring a human rights-based approach to youth policies and programmes and endeavour that their planning, design, implementation, monitoring and review are human-rights based, participatory, youth-centred, youth-driven, non-partisan, inclusive, gender-responsive, comprehensive, evidence and knowledge-based, adequately resourced, transparent and accountable;

**2. Develop** and strengthen existing evidence-based national policies for youth development and coherent cross-sectoral cooperation building off of the World Programme of Action for Youth and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while reiterating that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, climate change and inequalities are among the greatest global challenges facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries;

**3. Ensure** all necessary measures, including reviewing and, where appropriate, revising, amending or abolishing all laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that discriminate against all young people, to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against all young people, in particular girls and young women and to realize their human rights, to remove all obstacles to and to promote gender equality, and to promote affirmative action aiming at the empowerment of girls and young women, ensuring that the legal system complies with international human rights obligations, commitments and principles, including the principle of non-discrimination, and to encourage all young people, including boys and young men and girls and young women to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality, as well as to foster the social integration of vulnerable or marginalized groups, such as young persons with disabilities, young migrants, indigenous youth, youth belonging to ethnic minorities, and any other vulnerable or marginalized youth on an equal basis with others;

**4. Develop and implement existing** policies and programmes preventing and combating violence against all young people, especially young women and girls, or who have experienced or witnessed sexual, domestic or intimate partner violence or abuse, as well as to eradicate harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, and child, early and forced marriage, so as to reduce the risk of their possible revictimization or perpetration of violence and restore their mental and physical health and wellbeing;

**5. Promote** environmental policies and initiatives aimed at building the capacity of youth as driving force for action required to address the challenges posed by climate change, encouraging partnerships between governments, intergovernmental, non-governmental, private sector and youth-led organizations and **promote** the meaningful participation and engagement of youth in climate action in order to mitigate climate-related disasters, as well as integrate sustainable natural resource management, and human security into local, national, regional and international development strategies, while addressing the challenges related to demographic change, intensifying urbanization, overexploitation of natural resources, accelerating pollution, rise of sea levels, conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources and environmental degradation, aimed at ensuring a holistic approach to environmental, economic, and social sustainability for future generations;

**6. Ensure** the right to meaningful participation of young men and women, youth-led and youth-focused organizations at all levels (from local to global) and in all phases of decision making and implementation processes across all policies that directly and indirectly affect their lives, especially traditionally underrepresented youth, and, to that end, promote intergenerational partnerships that support youth inclusion in decision making as well as the social, economic and political integration of all youth;

**7. Address** legal, administrative, social, economic, digital and cultural barriers that limit young people's participation and representation, while enabling the capacities, resources, information, technology, support, space and skills needed to empower youth's free, active, independent, meaningful, systematic and effective participation, including of diverse youth groups, youth constituencies and those in situations of vulnerability;

**8. Promote** a youth-friendly enabling environment, by respecting public freedoms, including by promoting volunteering opportunities for all young people, in particular youth with disabilities, cross-border youth exchange programmes and encouraging and supporting the establishment of independent youth-led councils and organizations, movements and networks, as well as other forms of youth work and leisure time activities, fostering internal democratic and participatory principles and gender equality, to empower youth as agents of change;

**9. Promote** existing and new avenues for the full, effective, structured and sustainable participation of young people and youth-led organizations in relevant decision-making processes and monitoring mechanisms within the UN system, bearing in mind the principles of gender balance, geographical distribution and non-discrimination, such as the inclusion of youth representatives in national delegations at bodies such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review, the High Level Political Forum and other relevant United Nations Conferences, as well as, when appropriate, in commemorative events, in particular, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in 2020;

**10. Address** the social determinants of young people's health and well-being and **promote** a healthy environment and universal access to social protection, social services and health-care services, ensuring access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, including family planning, and the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights into youth policies and programmes, as well as ensuring awareness raising on mental health issues and access to youth-friendly mental health services, and services for prevention and treatment of substance abuse;

**11. Develop** policies and programmes to scale up evidence-based, scientifically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual education, that provides adolescent girls and boys and young women and men, in and out of school, consistent with their evolving capacities, with information on sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and the empowerment of women, human rights, physical, psychological and pubertal development, and power in relationships between women and men, to enable them to build self-esteem and informed decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills and to develop respectful relationships, in full partnership with young persons, parents, legal guardians, caregivers, educators and health-care providers, in line with UN guidelines on Education;



**12. Promote** the right to education and equal education opportunities for all young people, in particular for girls and young women, in accessing quality formal, technical, non-formal, informal and vocational education and training, including learning, literacy and life skills, soft skills and digital and media literacy, while addressing social and gender gaps in skills and ensuring a particular focus on young people in situations of vulnerability, enhancing learning and employability outcomes in order to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability, and promote and develop education programmes and curricula on human rights, gender equality, gender-based violence, culture of peace and non-violence and global citizenship needed for personal development and for the labour market of today and tomorrow, ensuring they can thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never stops;

**13. Promote** the economic empowerment of all young people, especially young women, through the promotion of productive employment and decent work, emphasizing the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development linked to the employability of youth, with particular focus on the quality of jobs for youth and while paying due attention to the creation of decent jobs in relation to both wages and sustainability, supporting opportunity-driven self-employment, enhancing the employability of youth, and providing equal access to social protection and social security provisions, while ensuring the application of international labour standards and the promotion of accountability systems across public and private sectors of equal pay for equal work of youth, fostering the acceleration of transition to green and climate-friendly economies;

**14. Take** concrete measures to further assist youth in armed conflict situations, and to encourage the involvement of youth, where appropriate, in activities concerning the protection of children and youth affected by armed conflict situations, while recognizing the importance of protecting schools and universities from military use in contravention of international humanitarian law, as well as young people's contribution to peace processes and conflict prevention and resolution, bearing in mind the recognition of the importance of youth as agents of change in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018);

**15. Ensure** young people's access to reliable, understandable youth-friendly information and to information and communications technologies, addressing the digital divide and inequalities including, but not limited to, geography, gender, economic status and language, by accelerating efforts to fully and appropriately integrate them into education and training at all levels, while also supporting young people's ability to be critical and responsible users and producers of Information and opening spaces for young people to engage in respectful, tolerant, participatory and constructive dialogue and actively contribute to the ongoing digital transformation, and support young people's initiatives towards developing innovative and sustainable solutions in the fields of science, technology and public policy;

**16. Strengthen** the capacity of national statistical offices and promote, research, collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex and age, statistical compilation, impact evaluations and wide implementation of those findings across all public policies and programmes that affect young people's lives, as well as data collection, analysis and dissemination, including but not limited to adolescents to fill in critical data gaps and inform effective policy formulation on this specific group;

**17. Foster** coordinated and cooperative multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder and inclusive implementation and monitoring systems among international, regional and national stakeholders and youth-led organisations, for the effective implementation and follow-up of the Lisboa+21 Declaration, as well as promote synergies between youth policies and broader national development policies, programmes and frameworks, including in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

**18. Develop** comprehensive national, regional and international review mechanisms for the implementation of the Lisboa+21 Declaration, and use or integrate existing review mechanisms where appropriate with the full and meaningful participation of young people, with the view to monitoring and evaluating its operationalization, and guide the way forward, including enhancing the understanding of the complex and multifaceted challenges facing youth, based on a set of national, regional and international standards for youth policies.

**19. We, Governments and Youth Delegates, hereby adopt and commit ourselves within the framework of our respective competences and responsibilities to implement the above-mentioned measures and to foster the further implementation of the integrated, human rights-based, human-centred and transformative global development agendas, with the active participation of and in collaboration with youth, ensuring that young people's unique perspectives and contributions are meaningfully incorporated.**