



WorldYWCA

SUBMISSION BY WORLD YWCA

UN Forum on Human Rights,
Democracy and Rule of Law

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World YWCA submission

UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law:

“Widening the Democratic Space: the role of youth in public decision-making”

The World YWCA welcomes the decision of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in accordance with resolution 28/14 to bi-annually organise the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. The World YWCA is one of the largest women's rights organisations in the world working to promote the leadership of women, young women and girls in all sectors and at all levels worldwide. Working to enhance youth participation in public decision-making is therefore a core priority of the movement.

At present, the world's population consists of 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24.¹ Most of these young people see their potential hindered by extreme poverty, discrimination including lack of information. This reality calls on decision makers to urgently recognise the importance of young people especially young women in all aspects of life. Exclusion of young people poses the risk of losing them as drivers of social and economic prosperity. The World YWCA believes that with proper investment in their education and opportunities, these young people's ideas, ideals and innovations could transform the future. It is therefore imperative that young people become empowered to drive positive change and have a voice within public decision making processes.

The Human Rights Council constitutes one of the most important international mechanisms responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. It can be noted that there are few institutionalized processes in place that promote youth voice and participation in the democratic space. Young people have little guidance on how to engage with the regular sessions at the Human Rights Council and neither do they know how to use the systems and instruments to realize and promote human rights in their countries. It is therefore important to widen the democratic space for meaningful engagement and participation of young people.

The World YWCA successfully hosted the first ever pre-HRC Youth Forum on 10 June 2016 before the start of the 32nd session of the HRC.² The Pre-HRC Youth Forum brought together over 100 young people who developed and submitted a Youth Declaration to the HRC. The declaration was presented in an oral statement and handed over to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein during a side event on 16 June 2016. The declaration emphasizes issues on participation of young people especially young women, in political decision-making processes.

The World YWCA recommends that the UN Forum:

¹ UNFPA, The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the future, available on: http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf

² The World YWCA, together with UN Women and the UN Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development's Working Group on Youth and Gender Equality, also hosted the first ever Youth Forum to the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in March 2016.

1. Recognises the importance of amplifying the voice of **young women** in its efforts in widening the democratic space.
2. Creates a transparent accountability mechanism and clearly defined metrics specifically mandated to monitor and publish the Member States' commitments related to youth including a special focus on young women.
3. Ensures that every high-level panel, side and parallel event at every HRC includes a minimum of one Young Person.
4. Notes that as much as we recognize and appreciate resolution 28/14, institutionalize and adequately resource an annual Youth HRC Forum as an integrated component of the HRC, and ensure that a Youth Delegate presents the Youth Declaration to the Council.
5. Promotes ongoing support, resources and collaboration for efforts by youth organizations in:
 - a) The development of metrics used for tracking the progress and impact of the recommendations that come out of the UN Forums on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
 - b) Writing and publishing progress reports and case studies around the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Forums on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
 - c) Enabling initiatives, including research and development, of open source implementation strategies aimed at effectively and efficiently attaining the SDGs by youth experts on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
6. Develops recommendations that ensures and enables political participation of young people, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Accessible information about and easy access to voting.
 - b) Education around the right to run for political office at all levels.
 - c) Effective and Sustainable Mentorship during all stages of political participation.
 - d) Support and enable the formation of Youth Parliaments.
 - e) Ensuring support and resources for youth human rights advocates, defenders, and feminists to participate fully and equally in international forums like HRC for advocacy and policy-making, and remove the barriers to meaningful participation including, but not limited to: visa refusals, political detainment, lack of financial support, and lack of access to leadership skills development.
 - f) Sharing power and create space to ensure – beyond tokenism – full and meaningful participation of young people in all their diversities in leadership and decision-making at all levels and across all sectors, including in governments and parliaments.

- g) Recognising and respect that Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination and that by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (UNDRIP Article 3).

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