



United Nations Security Council Debate

Maintenance of International Peace and Security:

The Role of Young Persons in Addressing Security Challenges in the Mediterranean

17 April 2024, 10:00am

Concept Note

I. Background

The Mediterranean serves as a microcosm of the multifaceted challenges that other regions around the world are facing. Like in other places, the Mediterranean faces security challenges such as political instability, socio-economic inequality, transnational threats, and maritime security. Collectively, these challenges further amplify fragility. They constitute a key obstacle to peace and security and sustainable development.

All too often, responses to security challenges are undertaken largely or solely through traditional security arrangements or ad hoc solutions. However, responding to these phenomena in a holistic manner must include joint efforts to promote security cooperation, address the root causes of these challenges, and mitigate their consequences.

These difficulties cannot be addressed by countries individually. While sound national policies have an important role to play, a more holistic and collaborative response is needed to deal with these threats in a timely and effective manner. These responses should encompass conflict resolution and prevention, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, climate action, and long-term sustainable solutions.

Such actions are crucial to protect citizens and give them the opportunity to fulfil their legitimate aspirations. We must seek to meet the needs of individual persons and invest in creating the right conditions for peace and stability. To do this, we need to build on the foundation of our societies: youth.

In addition, the Mediterranean is one of the regions most sensitive to climate change. It is experiencing higher temperatures, prolonged heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires. These increasingly frequent phenomena are threatening agriculture, water resources, and public health. Coastal communities are vulnerable to sea-level rise, erosion, and inundation, posing risks to infrastructure, tourism, and biodiversity. Intensified storms, floods, and desertification disrupt traditional livelihoods, exacerbate food insecurity, and trigger population displacement at a time of rapid population growth.



Moreover, young women and girls are disproportionately impacted. Women and girls are economically vulnerable, exacerbating food insecurity for them and their families, bearing the brunt of health risks, lacking access to clean water and sanitation facilities; disrupting educational opportunities and often marginalised in climate change decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels.

By placing additional strains on communities in the region, especially those already grappling with protracted conflict, transnational organised crime, and human rights violations, these phenomena interact with, and negatively compound efforts, towards the promotion of regional peace and security. Until now, responses have lacked the necessary level of ambition that such an existential challenge requires, relying primarily on traditional arrangements or ad hoc solutions.

Furthermore, there is often the tendency to overlook the potential and agency of young persons, despite them being among the most disproportionately affected in the face of these pressing challenges.

The Mediterranean region hosts a diverse and dynamic youth population, constituting one third of the population, who have the potential to be agents for positive change in peace and security in the region, including in conflict prevention reconciliation processes, peacebuilding, countering radicalisation and violent extremism, as well as promoting human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development. Young persons therefore have a central role to play in the fight against climate change. They have been at the forefront of efforts to demand urgent action on sustaining peace and addressing climate change. They have the potential, the knowledge, and the drive to devise adaptative measures and innovative solutions to this challenge that is especially consequential to their generation. Achieving the full, effective, inclusive, diverse, and meaningful participation of youth in decision-making is therefore paramount.

Nevertheless, young women and men continue to be marginalised, undervalued and unrecognised for their capacity to contribute to peace and security. Despite actively contributing to building peaceful and inclusive societies, young women remain insufficiently engaged in peace and security processes.

Overcoming these negative perceptions is crucial to harnessing the full potential of young persons in decision-making during peace processes and in other matters related to peace and security. Furthermore, challenges persist as young persons grapple with political exclusion, limited economic, educational, and employment opportunities and a shrinking civic space. Moreover, climate change further compounds these challenges, adding urgency to the need for comprehensive solutions.

This growing recognition of young persons as agents of positive change, particularly in peace and security, has gained momentum with the establishment of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015). The Security Council subsequently adopted two follow-up resolutions 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020), which urged Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of young persons in decision-making at all levels, including possible integrated mechanisms for young persons to participate meaningfully in peace processes and conflict resolution.



The YPS agenda also recognises the critical need to engage young persons as partners in decision-making processes on peace and security, including in political negotiations that have a direct impact on their lives and future. While progress has been made, a more systematic approach to implementing these resolutions is urgently required. Furthermore, despite the positive contributions of young persons around the world on climate action as well as peace and security, the intersection of peace and climate change has yet to be reflected in the YPS agenda.

The third report of the UN Secretary-General on YPS (S/2024/207) highlights advancements in institutionalising the youth and peace, and security agenda, with many Member States and regional organizations developing new strategies and initiatives to promote the inclusion and meaningful participation of young persons in peace and security affairs. Nevertheless, it also highlights gaps in the implementation of the YPS agenda, including in peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as lack of funding for youth-led peacebuilding.

Furthermore, in the 'Our Common Agenda' report the Secretary General issued recommendations for meaningful, diverse, and effective youth engagement both within and outside the UN, including through better political representation. The New Agenda for Peace underscores the active role young persons play in decision-making, including peace and security initiatives and advocates for the institutionalisation and funding of the youth, peace and security agenda.

II. Objective and Guiding Questions

At the pivotal juncture of the 2024 Summit of the Future and the implementation of the New Agenda for Peace, and as part of Malta's Presidency of the Security Council in April 2024, this high-level Debate aims at highlighting the multi-faceted challenges being faced in the Mediterranean, while exploring the role of young persons in peace and security in the region and how to integrate youth and peace and security principles including into climate action in order to foster a unified approach towards climate-responsive peace and security.

Member States are invited to address the following questions in their interventions:

- What can the UN Security Council do to effectively address security challenges in the region and advance the climate-security nexus, both of which poses a threat to young persons and future generations?
- How can the UN Security Council further advance the implementation of the YPS agenda and ensure the full, effective, inclusive, diverse, and meaningful participation of young persons in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, post-conflict and transitional justice, particularly in the Mediterranean? What lessons learnt and best practices found in other regions can further advance the YPS agenda?
- What role can the regional and sub-regional organisations play for the effective implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda?
- In what ways can the Security Council, UN peacekeeping missions, the recently established UN Youth Office and other entities effectively integrate the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda within the United Nations?
- How can we go about developing a holistic approach in addressing climate security which takes into account the regional challenges but also supports efforts at the global level?



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III. Format

The Ministerial Debate will be chaired by the Hon Dr Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta.

Briefers include:

- UN briefer (tbc)
- HE Nasser Kamel, Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean
- Civil Society Representative

For any questions, please contact the Permanent Mission of Malta at the following e-mail address:
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