



**CIVIL SOCIETY
PLATFORM**
FOR PEACEBUILDING
AND STATEBUILDING

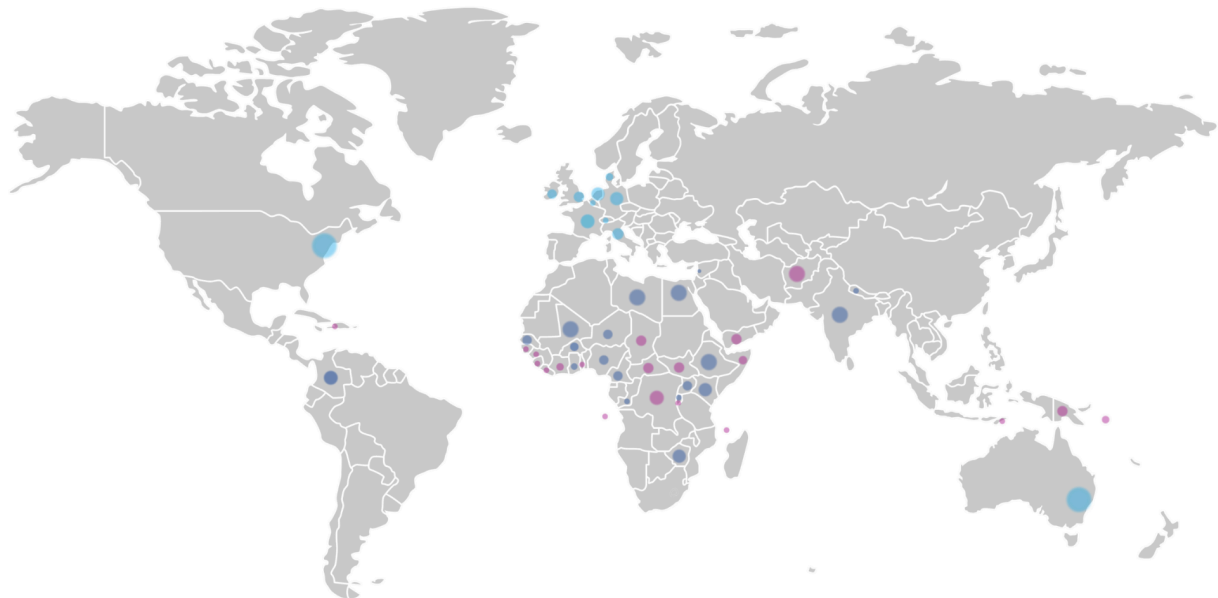
FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: TEN YEARS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE YPS AGENDA

CSPPS BRIEFING PAPER
AUGUST 2025

ABOUT CSPPS

The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) is a global network of civil society organisations supporting peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts in fragile and conflict-affected settings. CSPPS brings together a diverse representation of civil society globally from countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and international civil society organisations working on the issues of peacebuilding, statebuilding, conflict prevention and development. CSPPS supports in-country interventions to amplify the voice of civil society in political dialogues and relevant policy processes.

At the global level, CSPPS represents civil society in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), a unique strategic tripartite partnership for political dialogue gathering civil society actors, governments from the g7+ group of countries, and donors represented by the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF).



ABOUT THE CSPPS BRIEFING PAPERS

As part of a grant from the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), CSPPS is developing a series of briefing papers on various themes interlinked with peacebuilding and conflict prevention. These include Gender Equality, Climate Change, Migration and Forced Displacement, Digitalisation, Health and the persistent consequences of COVID-19, Food Security and Poverty, in addition to Health, Civic Space, and Inclusion. The briefing papers are written in collaboration and based on consultations led by the secretariat with the CSPPS membership.

On this basis, the briefing papers aim to give a general introduction to how peacebuilding and conflict prevention are interconnected and interlinked with the various themes aforementioned. Most importantly, they present, illustrate and highlight the multifaceted and diverse work of various CSPPS members, their expertise and insights on how these interlinkages play out in practice.



ABOUT THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY BRIEFING PAPER

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, this briefing paper aims to give an overview of the agenda and ways in which the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) interacts and engages with the agenda, either through its individual members or collectively as a platform.

It begins with exploring the rationale and what led to the adoption of the agenda, as well as the technicalities and specificities of resolution 2250 of the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The heart of the paper lies in the concrete examples and testimonies of CSPPS members of how they engage with and implement the agenda. Indeed, a key aspect of CSPPS's work lies in the successful implementation of the YPS agenda, either through support to member organisations or through wider partnerships. This paper is a celebration of CSPPS members across the globe, and a testimony to the hard work they are doing everyday towards more inclusive, just and long-lasting peace.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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It was edited by Eugénie Hirsch (CSPPS) with the support of Elise Granlie and Peter van Sluijs (CSPPS-Cordaid).

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1. THE ADOPTION OF THE YPS AGENDA

Young people account for 16% of the global population, with 1.2 billion aged 15 to 24 in the world today.¹ While this is a never-before-seen proportion of young people, they have historically been excluded from all forms of decision- and policy-making. Their substantive contributions to sustainable peace have been overshadowed by some discourses portraying them as either:

- A population “at” risk, such as young women being helpless victims;
- A population constituting “a” risk, such as young men being potential violent spoilers to peace processes.

Despite this marginalisation, youth has been active in peace and security work. Therefore, a body of advocates and academics argued in favour of the recognition of this contribution of youth to peacebuilding.² Institutionally recognising that young people have a crucial role to play in this field would help shift the narratives from youth being part of the problem to youth being part of the solution.³

Strong support was needed for this institutional endorsement to happen. Representatives from Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office came together as a working group, to change the narratives about youth and peacebuilding.

The country presiding the UNSC at the time (Jordan) was convinced by the working group to make the Youth, Peace and Security agenda one of its presidency’s priorities. On 9 December 2015, resolution 2250 on YPS was adopted unanimously.

What are UN resolutions? Not defined as such by the UN Charter, resolutions are decisions made by a UN body - in the case of the YPS agenda, this UN body is the UNSC - to express an opinion or will on a specific issue.⁴

Are UNSC resolutions binding? A resolution will be considered binding if it has the capacity to create obligations on the entities it is addressed. It has been considered that UNSC resolutions are binding. However, this binding nature can be challenged by the wording of the resolution itself. Thus, it is important to keep in mind two aspects: first, while UNSC resolutions are binding instruments, it does not ultimately mean that the clauses within the document are binding; second, certain clauses can be considered binding while others are not.⁵

1. UN website, 'Youth' (<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>)

2. Helen Berents, Caitlin Mollica, 'Reciprocal institutional visibility: Youth, peace and security and 'inclusive' agendas at the United Nations'

3. *ibid*

4. UN website, 'Decisions and Outcomes' (<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/decisions-and-outcomes>)

5. Marko Divac Öberg, 'The Legal Effects of Resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly in the Jurisprudence of the ICJ'

2. THE CONTENT OF RESOLUTION 2250

The Five Pillars

The global aim of resolution 2250 was to help change the persistent negative framing of youth, by portraying them as positive agents of peace. It establishes five key pillars for action regarding youth's involvement in the promotion of international peace and security.⁶

Participation: To better prevent but also resolve conflict, youth should be more inclusively represented. Young people's participation in decision-making should be increased at all levels. This first pillar is at the core of the YPS agenda.

Protection: International humanitarian and human rights laws should be respected at all times. All parties to conflicts must take the necessary measures to protect civilians, including youth. Respect of everyone's human rights should also be ensured, including those of young people.

Prevention: An inclusive and enabling environment should be created to facilitate youth's contribution to peacebuilding efforts. Also, education should be supported, to equip youth with the ability to engage constructively in peacebuilding issues.

Partnerships: UN bodies should improve their coordination. Member States should increase their support to local efforts and civil society to counter violent extremism.

Disengagement & Reintegration: Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) activities should consider and take into account the needs of youth affected by armed conflict, and provide appropriate economic and educational opportunities.

6. DCAF, 'The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and Security Sector Governance and Reform'

The importance of resolution 2250

Resolution 2250 is groundbreaking in nature. It marked a milestone in successfully establishing a normative agenda on youth participation in peace processes. As highlighted by Gizem Kiling, the previous UNOY Co-Chair of the Global Coalition, the YPS agenda “exists now as a thing that can be held and used, and that is a good place to be.”⁷

The importance of resolution 2250 is evident not only from its existence, but also from the adoption of subsequent resolutions on the same topic.

In 2018, resolution 2419 was also unanimously adopted, and reaffirms the important role that youth and youth-led CSOs can play in peacebuilding and sustainable peace.

In the same vein, in July 2020, resolution 2535 reinforced political commitment to the implementation of the YPS agenda. While challenges persist (increasing mistrust between young people and governments, discriminatory age-based laws, increasing digital threats, armed conflicts and shrinking civic spaces...),⁸ the UN Secretary General notes several substantive advancements at national, regional and global levels.⁹

The adoption of resolution 2535 led to the acceleration in the institutionalisation of the YPS agenda, with States taking more and more steps to ensure its implementation:¹⁰

- Finland and Nigeria launched their first dedicated National Action Plans (NAPs) in 2021
- YPS was integrated into national policies and laws in Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Jordan and Mexico.
- In 2022 and in 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Philippines, respectively, adopted two dedicated NAPs for YPS.
- There was an increase of 10% in the number of UNSC resolutions mentioning young people, between 2016-2019 and 2020-2021
- In 2021, the Peacebuilding Commission adopted a strategic action plan to strengthen its support for meaningful youth participation, resulting in young peacebuilders participating in nearly half of the commission’s meetings that same year.

The limitations of the resolutions

Even if resolution 2250 is binding (it is a UNSC resolution), it constitutes more of a thematic resolution, rather than a resolution mandating specific enforcement actions for states. The Security Council ‘encourages’, ‘invites’ or ‘calls upon’ Member States to act on the YPS topic. Rather than using strong mandatory language, the UNSC is therefore only using weak instruction phrases.

7. Helen Berents, ‘Power, Partnership, and Youth as Norm Entrepreneurs: Getting to UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security’

8. UN Secretary General, 2024 Report of Youth, Peace and Security (S/2024/207)

9. *ibid*

10. *ibid*

The strongest instructive word used in the resolution is 'urges'. Out of 22 operative clauses, only 5 of them are 'urging' Member States to act on specific topics. The UNSC urges Member States to:

- To consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth
- To consider measures that ensure the protection of civilians, including youth, during and post armed conflicts
- To facilitate violence prevention activities and support social cohesion
- To support qualitative education
- To increase political, financial, technical and logistical support, taking into account the needs and participation efforts of youth

Although resolution 2250 is not directly enforceable, its binding power could have been increased by 'urging' States on other topics that are, in our opinion, also important:

- Taking into account the views and participation of youth in negotiating and implementing peace agreements (the UNSC only "calls on relevant actors" to do so)
- Complying strictly with international law obligations relevant to the protection of civilians (parties are only 'called upon' to do so)
- Considering the needs of youth affected by armed conflict, for all involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (parties are 'encouraged' to do so in resolution 2250)

Also, while resolution 2535 has improved the engagement with the YPS agenda, some limitations have to be noted. For instance, the number of young people briefing the UNSC has decreased in 2022 and 2023 compared to 2020 and 2021. This is partly explained by the fewer online meetings after the pandemic, and challenges such as visa limitations and increasing geopolitical tensions.¹¹ A similar decrease is to be noted in the briefings by young people to the Peacebuilding Commission, which declined between 2021 and 2023.¹²

Limitations and challenges to a full institutionalisation of the YPS agenda thus remain. It would be interesting to look at what non-State entities, such as (I)NGOs and CSOs, are doing in their everyday work to engage with and help implement the agenda, to increase youth involvement in political decision-making and peace processes.

11. *ibid*

12. *ibid*

3. CSPPS AND THE YPS AGENDA

CSPPS represents civil society in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). The constituency members of IDPS include CSPPS and its members, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and the g7+ - a group of fragile and conflict-affected states.

Continuously calling for concerted action against the shrinking of civic space, the IDPS focuses some of its lobbying and advocacy efforts on YPS. After collective lobbying for a specific mention of YPS in the 2016 Stockholm Declaration, the International Dialogue committed to “recognising and harnessing the positive potential of youth for peacebuilding and statebuilding by aligning the implementation of the New Deal with UNSCR 2250.”¹³ The Declaration was adopted by the three IDPS constituencies.

This led to an IDPS Youth, Peace and Security Exchange organised in 2024 in Amman (Jordan), where constituency members of the Dialogue came together. The aim was to foster innovative approaches as well as local initiatives in implementing the agenda.¹⁴ It was an opportunity to hear and reflect on YPS-related issues: local and regional initiatives, financing of projects, and lessons learned. Participants were able to bring in their own knowledge and experience, which led to inclusive and meaningful discussions.

CSPPS is also the networking partner of the Just Future Alliance (JFA). This partnership is aimed at improving security, justice and inclusivity in decision-making processes. The programme covers six countries, namely Afghanistan, Burundi, the DRC, South Sudan, Niger and Mali. The partners and members of the alliance, by lobbying, advocating and networking, focus their efforts on a range of issues, including the YPS agenda. JFA supports youth to engage with and influence the development of the agenda. It also supports key bodies in developing their approaches to working with youth, thus creating the necessary environment for youth voice and agency at the international level.¹⁵

CSPPS is currently involved in the “YPS consultations for big impact” project. Supported by the German government, the goal of the consultations is to take stock of the advancement of the YPS agenda and its implementation at the national level. The youth-led consultations will serve as a means to ensure inclusive participation and meaningful engagement of youth in peacebuilding activities. The implementation of the project is in partnership with Interpeace and selected YPS practitioners.

Finally, the Peace Corner Podcast is a youth-driven initiative in partnership between the CSPPS and UNOY. In the episodes, interns from both organisations share stories about peacebuilding. The theme of the ninth season was “YPS Turning 10 and Still Figuring it Out!”. The different episodes explore peacebuilding in the context of the 10th anniversary of resolution 2250, and reflect on its impact since its adoption in 2015.

13. IDPS, Stockholm Declaration (5 April 2016)

14. UN Secretary General, 2024 Report of Youth, Peace and Security (S/2024/207)

15. Just Future, Full narrative proposal (p 73)

4. CSPPS MEMBERS AND THE YPS AGENDA



Belun

Who are they?

Belun focuses on preventing conflict with integrity and innovation. Their vision is rooted in the idea that society has the ability, creativity and critical thinking to strengthen peace for development.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

Belun focuses on conflict prevention and promotion of peace. To do so, it develops inclusive community capacity, research and advocacy. Youth engagement is at the core of its actions. It is for example implementing a project to facilitate mediation processes at the community level. Mediation training is provided to local authorities, women and youth groups. Its research focuses not only on conflict resolution and prevention globally, but it also collects data on education in senior and pre-secondary schools.



Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa (CSDEA)

Who are they?

The CSDEA builds and promotes new and creative approaches towards sustainable development in Africa. It advocates for policies leading to peacebuilding, environment sustainability and good governance.

Their work at the international level in line with YPS

As a core member of the Global Coalition on YPS, the CSDEA has shared Nigeria's YPS implementation experiences globally. This has been done through CSYPS knowledge cafes, exchanges with stakeholders in the Philippines and DRC, but also via publications on platforms like ConnexUs.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

By working with the African Union, as well as different regional organisations to promote youth engagement in peacebuilding, the CSDEA advances the YPS agenda regionally. It also shares Nigeria's experience with countries currently in the process of developing their NAPs.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

At the local level, the CSDEA advances youth participation in peacebuilding and supports the protection and reintegration of at-risk youth. It also developed NAPs and co-chairs the Nigerian Coalition on YPS, which consists of more than a thousand member groups.



Working Group on Peace and Development (FriEnt)

Who are they?

FriEnt is an association of governmental organisations, church development agencies, civil society networks and political foundations, formed in 2001. They advocate for cooperative, sustainable, and inclusive peacebuilding.

Their work at the international level in line with YPS

FriEnt mostly focuses on exchanging and networking on the topic. The working group also contributes to international processes and monitors international developments on YPS. They then reflect on these developments with German decision-makers and youth organisations.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

FriEnt supports the German YPS Coalition, which is in contact with actors at the regional level, especially at the EU level.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

The working group helps raise more (political) attention for the YPS agenda, by emphasising the importance of young people in peacebuilding. They also discuss with member organisations to share knowledge on the topic and raise awareness.



Interpeace

Who are they?

Interpeace's goal is to prevent violence and build lasting peace. To do so, they reinforce societies' capabilities. They believe in participation rooted in local realities and in the strength of informed dialogue to build understanding and trust.

Their work at the international level in line with YPS

Interpeace advances the YPS agenda through country-based programmes and global policy work. This includes PBAR 2025 and CSO-UN dialogue, but also the Youth Peace Mediation Programme. This programme intends to strengthen global youth participation by bringing together 15 mediators from across the globe.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

Interpeace runs cross-border programmes, including in the Great Lakes region. They specifically target young people to be catalysts. This is done through training, mentorship, shadowing as well as advocacy at every level.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

The organisation implements country-based YPS programmes. In doing so, they ensure that this work goes beyond pure symbolism, by guaranteeing young people's participation in the processes directly affecting and shaping their lives.



Peace 1st Ethiopia

Who are they?

Created in 2021 and run by a national team, Peace1stEthiopia is an NGO that aims at showing people in Ethiopia that alternatives to war, conflict, and violence are possible. For them, sustainable development is the best way of ensuring peace.

Their work at the international level in line with YPS

The organisation's work focuses mainly on peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as the development of advocacy around YPS.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

Peace 1st Ethiopia creates programmes around youth empowerment and peace education for young people. They also develop community projects aligned with Peace

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

Peace1stEthiopia is focused on empowering youth as key agents of peacebuilding and social transformation in Ethiopia specifically.



Youth Partnership for Peace and Development (YYPD)

Who are they?

YYPD's goal is to empower young people with their communities, in overcoming exclusion and poverty. They believe that young people, regardless of their social status, are capable enough to lead, participate and influence change.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

YYPD facilitates cross-border youth dialogue in the Mano River Union. This involves Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

YYPD works on empowering youth to engage in peacebuilding, governance, and social cohesion. They implement the YPS agenda and support youth councils to ensure young people's participation. Finally, YYPD provides prevention training for youth, and sub-grant youth-led projects.



Search for Common Ground (SFCG)

Who are they?

Founded in 1982, SFCG is today one of the largest peacebuilding INGO. Their mission is centered on transforming conflicts to be able to offer people lives free from violence, and rooted in durable peace.

Their work at the international level in line with YPS

“SFCG is at the forefront of this agenda” From creating the global coalition to advocate for the normative frameworks, SFCG also works with various institutions to understand and act on this agenda.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

SFCG works with regional institutions to understand and develop strategies in order to implement the UN YPS agenda. They also build NAPs and innovative financing models.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

SFCG manages the global community of practice to support governments and national youth coalitions to learn from each other on YPS NAPs.



United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY)

Who are they?

UNOY is a network of youth-led peacebuilding organisations. They are working towards building and sustaining peace. They also work for the inclusion of young people in building peace and security in the world.

Their work at the international level in line with YPS

UNOY co-chairs the GCYPS. They advance policy and practice by working with the UN and organising events and trainings. Their thematic focuses include: meaningful youth engagement, climate, technology but also gender questions.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

UNOY coordinates regional Youth Advocacy teams in Asia, Africa and America for advocacy at the regional level and towards regional institutions. They also organise regional in-person and online events to gather UNOY members for capacity-building.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

At the local level, the organisation supports its members who carry out important work for peace in their communities. This includes organising training and capacity building activities and subgranting programmes to financially support their projects.



Voz di Paz - Iniciativa para a Consolidação da Paz

Who are they?

Voz di Paz has been an independent NGO since 2010, dedicated to 'rooting a culture of peace in Guinea-Bissau'. Focused on the most vulnerable groups, the NGO encourages citizen engagement and the consolidation of peace.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

Voz di Paz works with concrete actions to implement the UN YPS agenda in its work. They for instance organise training for young people, on issues relating to peace and security. They also support most youth initiatives that promote peace and security at the local level. The NGO serves as a network tool for youth, to facilitate communication and collaboration amongst them. Finally, the organisation trains local leaders on how to work directly with young people (non-violent communication, awareness-raising and conflict mediation).



West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

Who are they?

As a leading NGO in the field, WANEP's missions focus on collaborative peacebuilding efforts, which engage both state and non-state actors. The network wants to enable and facilitate cooperation amongst civil-society organisations and practitioners. Their goal is to build sustainable peace in West Africa.

Their work at the regional level in line with YPS

The network develops action plans to implement the YPS agenda better. They also create spaces for Youth4Peace networks, in order to push regional policy makers to dialogue and share views on the inclusion of young people in regional and continental peace processes.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

WANEP enhances the capacity of youth groups and it supports their networking. The organisation facilitates processes for young people to be able to advocate for inclusion in peacebuilding and governance processes. That also includes the development of NAPs alongside youth.



Floraïson

Who are they?

Floraïson's mission is the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly the right to food and land. Their target groups are mostly women and grassroot communities.

Their work at the local level in line with YPS

The organisation includes youth in the concrete programmes and actions implemented in the country. Young people participate and are involved in activities that recognise and incorporate their active contributions as essential parts of the peacebuilding processes



ORGANISATIONS LINKS

- Belun: <https://www.belun.tl/en/>
- CSDEA: <https://csdea-africa.org/>
- FriEnt: <https://frient.de/en/>
- Interpeace: <https://www.interpeace.org/>
- Peace 1st Ethiopia: <https://ipb.org/members/peace-1st-ethiopia/>
- YPPD: <https://www.yppdatwork.org/>
- SFCG: <https://www.sfcg.org/>
- UNOY: <https://unoy.org/>
- Voz di Paz: <https://www.vozdipaz.org/>
- WANEP: <https://wanep.org/wanep/>
- Floraïson: <https://www.cspps.org/where-we-work/togo>

5. TEN YEARS LATER: LESSONS LEARNED AND THE PATH FORWARD

From the adoption of UNSC res2250 in 2015, CSOs have engaged with the agenda and worked towards its implementation. Not even a year after the resolution, 2016 marked the adoption of the Stockholm declaration by the three IDPS constituencies. Efforts have then been followed by concrete work on the ground.

However, considering the remaining challenges and hurdles to a proper institutionalisation of the YPS agenda, CSOs could

Collaborate and partner in their actions towards implementation of the agenda. Indeed, as seen with the testimonies from CSPPS members, some activities undertaken by the organisations are similar in nature: support to NAPs, work with regional and international institutions, training of youth and other concerned actors... CSPPS could be the bridge between the organisations, by facilitating their communication and therefore their collaboration.

More than collaboration and partnership in action, it seems important for CSOs to **group their advocacy efforts**. Indeed, united advocacy is stronger advocacy. This might help push governments to act more towards implementation of the YPS agenda, and thus creating more support to already-ongoing work of CSOs.

Seeing the decrease in direct engagement of the youth at the UN level due to resources constraints, it seems important to reengage with young people at this high level. Allowing more online discussions and exchanges, which proved efficient during the pandemic, will allow a comeback of youth in UN discussions. **Taking into account the special needs of young people** (financial resources limited, visa restrictions, or increasing geopolitical tensions in their home country) will allow them to be more engaged in peace and security decision-making, like it was wanted by the UNSC when first adopting resolution 2250.

It is important to continue promoting youth-led initiatives. Organisations must continue to give space to young people, trust them and believe that they can be agents of change.

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