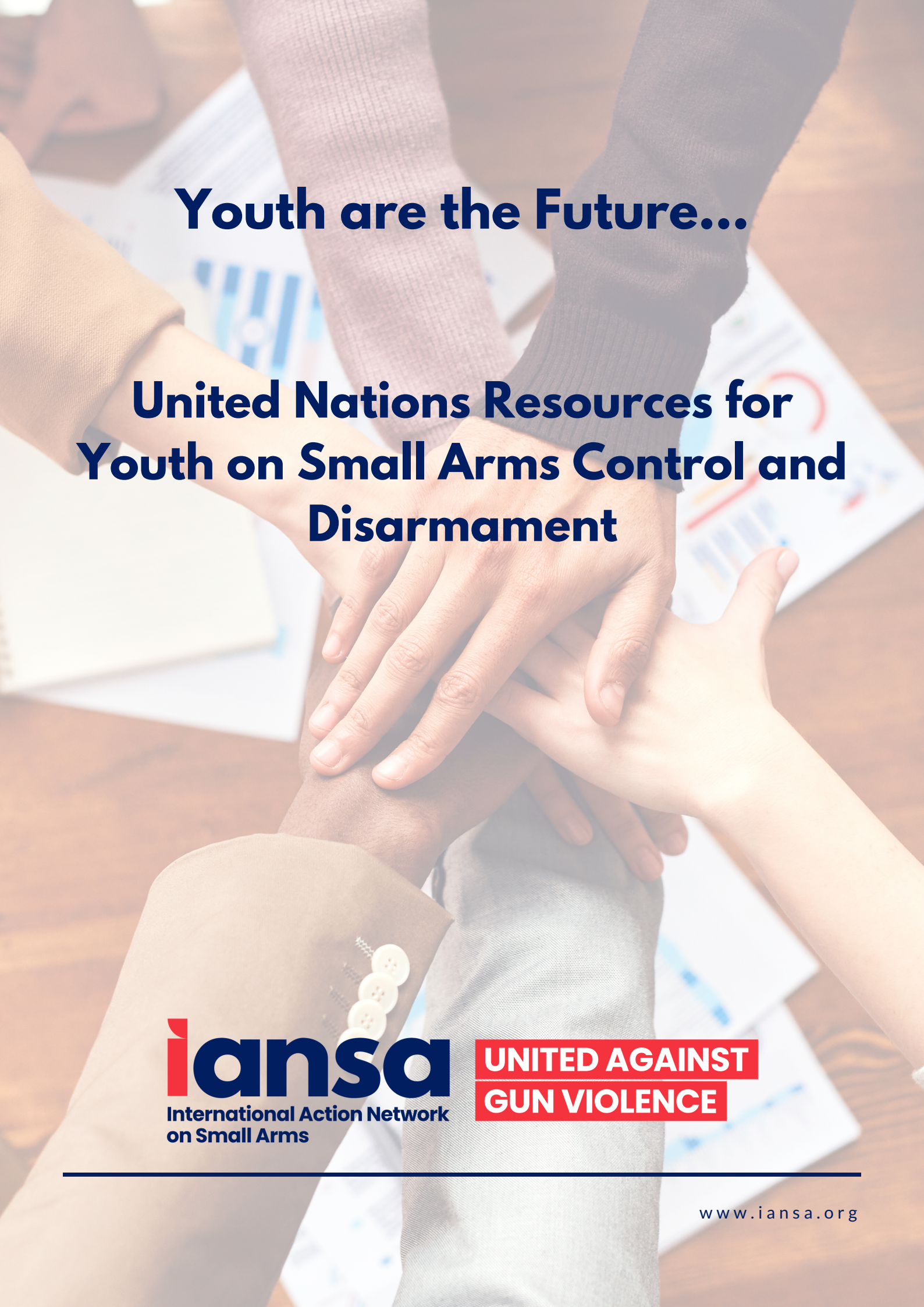




Youth are the Future...

**United Nations Resources for
Youth on Small Arms Control and
Disarmament**

iansa
International Action Network
on Small Arms

**UNITED AGAINST
GUN VIOLENCE**

www.iansa.org

August 2020

BACKGROUND

Today's generation of youth is the largest the world has known. More than half of the world's population is under 30, and these young people are inheriting a world with an arsenal of approximately one billion guns. The majority of these guns (also referred to as "small arms") are in civilian hands and are used within civilian populations. Despite this, civilian security, peacekeeping, and disarmament efforts by the international community have not traditionally included youth in their planning, decision-making, or implementation. The work of disarmament, which includes government actions to prohibit, reduce, and limit small arms and light weapons through laws, treaties, awareness, cooperation, and oversight — is imperative to the wellbeing of young people today and in the future. Young people can support these efforts. According to World Health Organization estimates, youth between the ages of 10 and 29 make up 42 percent of all global homicides. For every young person killed by violence, more sustain injuries that require hospital treatment. Firearm attacks end more often in fatal injuries than attacks involving other instruments.

All over the world, children, adolescents, and youth are exposed to the daily threat of injury, death, and psychosocial trauma inflicted by small arms. Moreover, the presence of a gun in the home significantly increases the risk of death in situations of domestic violence, and children in homes with unsecured firearms are at heightened risk of death or injury to themselves or others due to accidental discharge. Among civilians in areas of armed conflict, youth account for many of those adversely affected, including orphans, refugees and internally displaced persons. The scourges of crime and conflict can have multiple indirect social and economic effects, hindering youth access to meaningful education, employment, and other vital opportunities free of violence and abuse.



RECENT UNITED NATIONS COMMITMENTS TO YOUTH-RELATED DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY INITIATIVES

Fortunately, in recent years there has been a growing recognition by governments of the need to include youth in disarmament and civilian security processes. Below are nine international resolutions, initiatives, and resources fully or partially related to youth and disarmament that have emerged since 2015. They are listed in chronological order.

1. United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Youth4Disarmament Initiative

The UNODA has launched the Youth4Disarmament Initiative in recognition of the critical role youth have to play in raising awareness and developing new approaches and measures of disarmament. The initiative works to educate, engage and empower young people in "securing our common future" and connects geographically diverse young people with experts to learn about international security challenges, the work of the United Nations and how they can actively participate. Their Open Minds Project acts as a newsletter, a collection of materials produced by the UNODA to promote meaningful and inclusive participation and empowerment of youth on disarmament and non-proliferation issues, easily accessible on their website.

One of its most recent projects is the "What if - Speterra" Youth Video Challenge, a project that aims to stimulate young people's interest and knowledge in the vital way disarmament contributes to a safer, more secure and sustainable world for all. Young people around the globe are invited to showcase their vision of what the world would look like if more money were spent on peace and development and less on arms via a video.

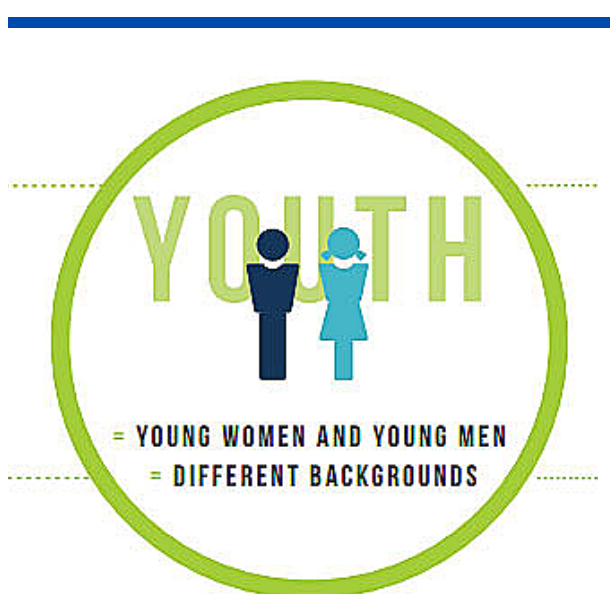
With an active social media presence on Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, @Youth4Disarmament is a great initiative for youth to follow and engage with to learn more and actively participate in arms control and disarmament measures!



WWW.YOUTH4DISARMAMENT.ORG

2. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (2015)

Unanimously adopted in 2015, UNSCR 2250 recognizes that young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It urges Member States to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels. The Resolution also urges Member States to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes. In the context of the UNSCR, young people are defined as between 18 and 29 years old. UNSCR 2250 identifies *Five Key Pillars for Action*:



1) Participation addresses the lack of voice afforded young people in peace and security and lays out forms in which youth participation is feasible and can support stability and security.

2) Protection urges Member States to consider specific measures, in conformity with international law while respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, that ensure the protection of youth and other civilians during armed conflict and post conflict.

3) Prevention urges Member States to facilitate inclusive and enabling environments in which youth from different backgrounds are provided with adequate support to implement violence prevention activities.

4) Partnership addresses the need for countries to work together in security-focused youth efforts, and increase support for existing youth groups engaging relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in the development of strategies to counter violent extremist narratives that can incite terrorist acts, and to increase political, financial, technical and logistical support as needed. These efforts include an increase in political, financial, technical, and logistical support.

5) Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration addresses the need to reintegrate youth into society with education and work opportunities in post-conflict situations. Additionally, it encourages “evidence-based and gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities.



3. United Nations Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2015)

Violent extremists require the support of a wide circle of sympathizers and often prey and depend on youth populations in communities for that support. This General Plan of Action recommends that Member States: *"Adopt community-oriented policing models and programs that seek to solve local issues in partnership with the community and are firmly based on human rights (...); Encourage civic and professional associations, unions and chambers of commerce to reach out through their own networks to marginalized groups so as to address challenges together through inclusive dialogue and consensual politics; (and) Support the establishment of regional and global networks for civil society, youth, women's organizations and religious leaders to enable them to share good practices and experience,"* among other [guidelines](#). The Plan of Action explicitly calls on Member States to pay particular attention to the 1.8 billion young women and men who constitute an invaluable partner in this work, noting that: *"The rapid advance of modern communications technology also means that today's youth form a global community of an unprecedented kind. This interconnectivity is already being exploited by violent extremists; we need to reclaim this space by helping to amplify the voices of young people already promoting the values of mutual respect and peace to their peers."* See the Secretary-Generals' full Plan of Action [here](#).

4. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review (A/RES/70/291, 2016)

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is a strategy plan addressing many facets of counter-terrorism efforts, one of which is geared towards youth involvement. Item 13 of the document calls on Member States to institute mechanisms to involve youth in establishing and promoting cultures of peace, tolerance, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue, rooted in human dignity, pluralism, and diversity in its Article 13. It also calls for direct educational programming that discourages participation in terrorism, violent extremism, acts of xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination. The Strategy advises Member States to promote media and information literacy that includes youth in decision-making processes and the development of relevant programs and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

The Strategy also urges Member States to take effective measures, in conformity with international law, to protect young people affected or exploited by terrorism or violent extremism. And, highlighting the important role of women, it calls upon Member States to *"integrate a gender analysis on the drivers of radicalization of women to terrorism into their relevant programmes, to consider, when appropriate, the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations and to seek greater consultations with women and women's organizations when developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism."* Find the full Strategy Review [here](#).

5. Securing Our Common Future – An Agenda for Disarmament (2018)

In an effort to prioritize and delineate disarmament efforts in peace and security initiatives, as well as to bring new perspectives to the table, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres released “[Securing Our Common Future- An Agenda for Disarmament](#)” in 2018. The Agenda outlines a set of practical measures across a wide range of disarmament issues—from weapons of mass destruction to conventional arms to future weapon technologies — and includes a section dedicated to “Empowering the Young Generation.”



The “Empowering the Young Generation” section of the Agenda addresses the imperative for young people to be directly involved in successful disarmament measures. The section, “Addressing the Gendered Impact of Arms”, explains that youth, particularly young men, are often forced into positions in which they themselves become the perpetrators of violence with small arms and light weapons (SALW), and notes that economic opportunities provided to youth can help to draw them away from violence. The Agenda also points out that economic inequality hinders many young people from entering highly specialized fields, such as disarmament. “Regional disparities in wealth and consequent inequalities can translate into insurmountable barriers for engagement by young peoples, especially from the Global South, in international disarmament meetings, training and networking opportunities,” it notes.

6. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2419 on Youth, Peace and Security (2018)

In June 2018, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2419, becoming the second major Security Council Resolution on youth, peace and security, and expanding the commitments made in Resolution 2250 in 2015. The resolution addresses the role of youth in promoting a “*culture of peace (and) tolerance*,” and emphasizes civil society participation to achieve those ends. UNSCR 2419 also focuses on youth involvement in conflict resolution and conflict scenarios, and the importance of “*equal and full participation of youth at decision-making levels*” as well as the importance of paying “*particular attention to the inclusion of young women*”). The resolution concludes with a request to the Secretary General’s Office to prepare a report on the implementation and effect of resolution 2419 as well as the previous resolution 2250. See the full resolution [here](#).



7. The Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) 6.20 on “Children, adolescents, youth and small arms and light weapons” (2018)

A major resource on the impact of gun violence on youth is the MOSAIC module 6.20 “Children, adolescents, youth and small arms and light weapons.” This module is not only a comprehensive resource for information and statistics, it also provides best practices and serves as a guidebook for how to protect youth and children from small arms and light weapons. The module addresses the major health and safety risks of SALW in childhood, from domestic violence and abuse, to the involvement of adolescents in armed groups or use as child soldiers.

It also addresses the impacts of these issues, highlighting the long-term psychosocial effects that exposure to SALW violence can have on youth, in addition to direct threats of death and injury. These effects are also addressed in connection with other topics such as education and healthcare, demonstrating the interrelation and interdependence of such issues, and the complex fundamental nature of solving such problems through comprehensive reform. Next, in a section dedicated to solutions, best practices for child protection are explored; such practices include explicit “child protection policies” for organizations, and directives to address underlying social issues often present in gun violence situations. The module also addresses the importance of bringing all groups to the table to address issues of gun violence, and advocates diversity as a fundamental facet to youth involvement in disarmament. See the full compendium [here](#).



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Risks of armed violence for young men versus young women

“By far the greatest risk of death and injury by gunshot, however, is borne by adolescents, youth and young adults, in particular young males aged 15-29. Most of the victims and perpetrators of illegal armed violence in almost every region of the world come from this cohort (...).

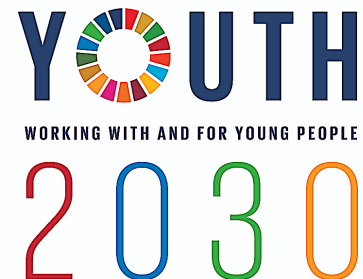
While adolescent boys and young men are at greater risk of engaging in and becoming victims of armed violence, adolescent girls and young women are at greater risk of becoming victims of gender-based and sexual violence. The manifold abuses committed at gunpoint reflect the coercive power and multiplier effect of small arms availability and misuse” (MOSAIC 6.20, 2018).

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8. Youth 2030: The United Nations Strategy on Youth (Secretary General's Office, 2018)

Youth 2030: The UN Youth Strategy puts forth 5 priorities for the mobilization of the world's 1.8 billion young people as agents of change in the global effort to promote a peaceful, just and sustainable world:

- 1) Engagement, Participation and Advocacy (to amplify youth voices)
- 2) Informed and Healthy Foundations (to support young people's greater access to quality education and health services)
- 3) Economic Empowerment through Decent Work (to support young people's greater access to decent work and productive employment)
- 4) Youth and Human Rights (to protect and promote the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement); and
- 5) Peace and Resilience Building (to support young people as catalysts for Peace and Security & Humanitarian Action).



Launched on September 24th, 2018, the strategy is intended to apply until year 2030. Full strategy: [here](#).

9. United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/C.1/74/L.48Y on Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation (2019)

This resolution, passed at the First Committee of the General Assembly in 2019, “encourages Member States, the United Nations, relevant specialized agencies, and regional and sub regional organizations, to promote the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in discussions of disarmament and non-proliferation, including through dialogue platforms, mentoring, internships, fellowships, scholarships, model events, and youth group activities. It calls on states, among other things, “to consider developing and implementing policies and programs for young people to increase and facilitate their constructive engagement in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation”, and “encourages Member States to continue efforts to raise awareness and strengthen coordination within the United Nations system and beyond on ongoing efforts to promote the role of youth”. Find the full resolution [here](#).

10. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2535 (2020)

In the Resolution 2535 on youth involvement, adopted on July 14 of 2020, the Security Council reiterated calls made in previous resolutions UNSCR 2250 and 2419, but further explored topics of “protection of youth, particularly young women, refugees and internally displaced youth and the imperative of diversity among youth for a truly global and comprehensive perspective on peace and security issues”. The Resolution also highlights that youth involvement should extend to “prepar[ing] for and responding to increasingly frequent severe weather and natural hazards, as well as public health crises that affect young people's life and their future, including the COVID-19 pandemic”. Finally, the Resolution also requests that the Secretary-General develop “*dedicated guidance on the protection of youth, including those who engage with the United Nations in the context of peace and security and as part of the new Common Agenda on Protection for the United Nations system.*” See the full resolution [here](#).

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2020 and was updated in April
2021 by Emily Callsen.



Funded by
the United Nations through
financial contributions received
from the European Union

This document was produced with the financial assistance of the United Nations through contributions received from the European Union.

The opinions expressed herein are those of the Implementing Partner and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations or the European Union.