



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development**

## Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 8 October 2021

### 48/12. Human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people

*The Human Rights Council,*

*Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,*

*Recalling* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,

*Deeply concerned* about the loss of life and livelihoods and the disruption to economies and societies by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and its negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights around the world,

*Stressing* that States bear the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Recognizing* the serious and continuing threat to global health posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and that its consequences disproportionately affect the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by young people, in particular young women and girls, including with regard to their right to work, right to education and right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,

*Recalling* the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda”,<sup>1</sup> the report of the Secretary-General, entitled “Shared responsibility, global solidarity: responding to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19”, the statement of the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development on COVID-19 and youth and the global survey on youth and COVID-19, conducted by the International Labour Organization, which recognized that young people experienced practical difficulties in the exercise of their human rights, including the right to participate meaningfully in political and public affairs, the right to education, freedom of

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<sup>1</sup> A/75/982.



religion or belief, freedom of movement, as well as in living free from violence and gaining access to legal aid, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic,

*Recalling also* General Assembly resolutions 74/270 of 2 April 2020, 74/274 of 20 April 2020, 74/306 of 11 September 2020 and 74/307 of 11 September 2020, and Human Rights Council resolutions 44/2 of 16 July 2020 and 46/14 of 29 March 2021, and the statement by the President of the Council of 29 May 2020,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling further* its resolutions 32/1 of 30 June 2016, 35/14 of 22 June 2017 and 41/13 of 19 July 2019,

*Acknowledging* that the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond sets out a policy framework and provides practical guidelines for national action and international support for the advancement of youth,

*Recalling* the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in which it is stated that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that all human rights must be treated in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis,

*Recalling also* the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on universal health coverage, held in New York on 23 September 2019, and reaffirming its political declaration, entitled “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”,<sup>3</sup>

*Encouraging* States to effectively implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and reaffirming the need to develop and implement strategies that give young people real opportunities to enable their effective and meaningful participation in society, free from discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

*Taking note with appreciation* of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in which she provided an overview of the international and regional human rights framework applicable to young people and described the challenges and discrimination encountered by them,<sup>4</sup>

*Noting with appreciation* the launch by the Secretary-General, in September 2018, of the United Nations Youth Strategy, entitled “Youth 2030: working with and for young people”, to address the needs of young people and to fulfil their potential as agents of change,

*Taking note with appreciation* of Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) of 9 December 2015 on youth and peace and security, and 2535 (2020) of 14 July 2020, in which the Council underlined the important role that young people have had in the promotion of peace, sustainable development and human rights, and the importance of their active, full, meaningful and inclusive participation in relevant decision-making, in particular in the civic and political spheres, and of the implementation of the youth and peace and security agenda, including in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts,

*Recognizing* the important role of youth volunteer movements and communities around the world, which have made significant contributions in helping during the COVID-19 pandemic and in overcoming its consequences,

*Bearing in mind* that today’s generation of young people is the largest the world has ever witnessed and that young people participate in decision-making processes to ensure that their challenges and potential are addressed by policy, and therefore encouraging States to make further efforts to ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights for all young people, including all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, given that lack of participation and opportunity has adverse consequences for communities and societies,

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<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/PRST/43/1.

<sup>3</sup> General Assembly resolution 74/2.

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/39/33.

*Recognizing* that, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, young people experienced difficulties in the exercise of their human rights by virtue of being young, and that there are gaps in the protection and fulfilment of the human rights of young people,

*Reaffirming* that emergency measures taken by Governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be necessary, proportionate to the evaluated risk and applied in a non-discriminatory way, have a specific focus and duration and be in accordance with the State's obligations under applicable international human rights law,

*Taking note with appreciation* of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on human rights-compliant responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and on youth, and the report and recommendations of the High Commissioner on strengthening the promotion and protection of the rights of young people,

1. *Welcomes* the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on youth, and takes note of the report of the High Commissioner<sup>5</sup> and the recommendations therein on strengthening the promotion and protection of the rights of young people;

2. *Also welcomes* the holding of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth and Youth Forum Lisbon+21, in Lisbon on 22 and 23 June 2019, and notes with appreciation its Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, especially with regard to empowering young people and their representatives, the commitment to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all young people, protecting the most disadvantaged and those in vulnerable situations and contributing to the creation of indicators to assess the impact of youth policies and programmes;

3. *Calls upon* States to ensure that all human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled while combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and that their responses to the pandemic are in full compliance with their human rights obligations and commitments;

4. *Stresses* the fundamental importance of equal opportunities, 12 years of quality education and technical and vocational training, and the importance of continuous learning opportunities and guidance for young people and adolescents, including girls, for the enjoyment of all human rights by all young people, equal access for girls to quality education, and of eliminating discriminatory laws and practices that prevent them from having access to, completing and continuing their education, including the transition from primary to secondary education;

5. *Also stresses* the need to address all forms of discrimination, which place women and girls at greater risk of exploitation, violence and abuse, and to implement measures to prevent and eliminate stereotypes based on disability, gender, age, race and xenophobia, ableism, stigma, negative social norms, attitudes and behaviours that cause or perpetuate discrimination and violence against women and girls;

6. *Urges* States to address the challenges that girls and young women face, as well as gender stereotypes that perpetuate all forms of discrimination and violence against girls and young women, including harmful practices, and the stereotypical roles of men and women that hinder social development, by reaffirming the commitment to the empowerment of women and gender equality and the human rights of all women and girls, and to engage, educate, encourage and support men and boys to take responsibility for their behaviour in this regard, including their sexual and reproductive behaviour;

7. *Recognizes* that the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to combat its spread have exacerbated existing challenges of young people, in particular young women and girls, in exercising their human rights, including challenges in access to decent work and quality employment, social protection, quality education and health-care services, that the full and meaningful participation, leadership and representation of young people in relevant institutional processes and policymaking remain low compared with those of other age groups, and that young people are not proportionately represented in political institutions,

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/39/33.

such as parliaments, political parties and public administrations, and also recognizes the important role played by youth-led organizations in giving young people a voice;

8. *Encourages* all States to recognize and support young people's potential to advance the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and in this regard encourages States to conduct their coherent youth-related policies through inclusive and participatory consultations with youth organizations and relevant youth-led and youth-focused stakeholders and social development partners, in the interest of developing integrated, holistic and inclusive youth policies and programmes, and to promote new initiatives for the full, effective, structured and sustainable participation of young people in relevant decision-making processes and monitoring in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres, including in designing and implementing policies, programmes and initiatives, in particular those for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

9. *Calls upon* all States to partner, safely and effectively, with young people, during and after the pandemic, to understand further the specific impact that the pandemic has had and will have on young people, especially girls, while ensuring that COVID-19 response efforts are carried out in a manner that respects the enjoyment of human rights by young people and are inclusive of young people's specific needs;

10. *Urges* States to address, through the United Nations human rights mechanisms, issues pertaining to the enjoyment by young people of their human rights, and to share the best practices that they have developed in enabling young people to exercise their human rights during and after the pandemic;

11. *Encourages* States, United Nations bodies, especially mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, and the Office of the High Commissioner, to collaborate broadly with the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth in finding solutions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and any other relevant barriers for the accelerated implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy and the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond;

12. *Requests* the High Commissioner, in consultation with and taking into account the views of States and relevant stakeholders, including relevant United Nations agencies, the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, national human rights institutions, civil society and representatives of youth organizations, to conduct a detailed study on ways to mitigate the impact of the global pandemic on human rights with regard to young people, including the identification of cases of discrimination against young people in the exercise of their human rights, in particular young women and girls, highlighting the contribution of young people to the realization of human rights in society during the pandemic, and to submit the study to the Council for consideration at its fifty-first session;

13. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

*43rd meeting  
8 October 2021*

[Adopted without a vote.]

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