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The challenges that we are facing can be addressed only through stronger international cooperation. The Summit of the Future in 2024 is an opportunity to agree on multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow, strengthening global governance for both present and future generations (General Assembly resolution [76/307](#)). In my capacity as Secretary-General, I have been invited to provide inputs to the preparations for the Summit in the form of action-oriented recommendations, building on the proposals contained in my report entitled “Our Common Agenda” ([A/75/982](#)), which was itself a response to the declaration on the commemoration of the

(General Assembly resolution [75/1](#)). The present policy brief is one such input. It elaborates on



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Meaningful youth engagement refers to how youth should be involved in decision-making and policymaking processes. Over the years, govern-

entities have developed a series of principles that, when implemented collectively, can help to ensure that youth engagement is more meaningful and effective – from the perspective both of youth constituencies and of policymakers.<sup>1</sup>

When youth engagement strays from these principles, it risks becoming tokenistic and can result in decision-making that is divorced from young people's lived realities, expertise and solutions.

tutions are eroded<sup>2</sup> and policymaking is rendered less effective.



Referred to as the “torchbearers” of the Sustainable Development Goals, youth played a major role in the process to secure agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With some 90 Sustainable Development Goal indicators deemed to be youth-related, youth have a vested interest in the realization of the Goals.<sup>7</sup> As

laid in Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) [269 BDC BT3\(C\) / P](#)

and, as outlined in subsequent sections, they are playing a major role as partners and participants in implementation.

Youth are also crucial actors in strengthening peace and security.<sup>8</sup> When engaged as partners for peace, they help to shift a widespread perception of mistrust of young people, to more accurately presenting youth as “positive and constructive social agents” who play an essential role in building sustainable peace.<sup>9</sup> The normative foundation for youth-led peacebuilding efforts was



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its Member States have repeatedly championed youth engagement.<sup>10</sup> In 1965, the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals

between Peoples<sup>11</sup> initiated discussions on youth

Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,<sup>12</sup> the General Assembly went one step further, calling for “the full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making”. This commitment has been reiterated in numerous subsequent resolutions.<sup>13</sup> As illustrated below, these pronouncements have helped to spur a series of actions at all levels to deliver on the commitment to secure meaningful youth engagement in decision-making. The effectiveness of these measures is also explored.

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An analysis of national reports on voluntary national reviews and other sources demonstrates that there have been slow but steady improvements in the engagement of young people in (national Sustainable Development Goal) follow-up and review efforts.<sup>16</sup> This takes many forms, including engagement through national youth councils, the participation of youth in technical working groups on voluntary national reviews, the inclusion of young people in national Sustainable Development Goal councils, the appointment of a Youth Ombudsperson for the Sustainable Development Goals and the participation of young people in national delegations attending the high-level political forum on sustainable development.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, youth are often engaged in thematic

Sustainable Development Goals, where they have a particularly strong interest. Many countries have moved to establish mechanisms for engaging students on education policy development,<sup>18</sup> on entrepreneurship, jobs and skills for the future,<sup>19</sup> on adolescent health<sup>20</sup> and in tackling the climate crisis.<sup>21</sup>

Another critical area in which youth participation in decision-making is on the rise is peace and security. In the 2022 report of the Secretary-General

to the Security Council on youth and peace and security,<sup>22</sup> several examples were highlighted of national and regional coalitions on youth and peace and security that have been established to include young people in national and regional



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Young people have been actively engaged in

ably during the past 20 years, yet major gaps in coverage remain.

Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, Member States called upon “each country

and creation of mechanisms to involve youth

to this and other similar pronouncements, there has been a steady, if uneven, expansion of arrangements to enable young people to actively engage in intergovernmental decision-making processes.

Formal youth engagement in the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is carried out through the Major Group for Children and Youth, one of the major groups and other stakeholder constituencies.<sup>26</sup> The Major Group for Children and Youth is a self-organized mechanism for young people to

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present and future that works for all, then meaningful youth engagement must become the norm rather than the exception. We must take existing youth arrangements to the next level, create new opportunities and arrangements where they do not yet exist and ensure that youth participation is effectively resourced.

I propose, therefore, that Member States:

Take a decision to ensure the systematic integration of meaningful youth partic-

ipational mechanisms and processes at the global and regional levels;

Put in place clear arrangements for youth engagement across the work of the General Assembly as a complement to those under the remit of the major groups;

Grant formal status and a stronger mandate to the Economic and Social Council youth forum so that it serves as the

central mechanism for youth engagement across the Economic and Social Council cycle;

Review the working methods of the Security Council and its relevant subsidiary

bodies to ensure meaningful youth engagement in its work;

Delegate Programme through wider participation by Member States and by expanding its application across a wider

range of inter-governmen-  
tal processes;

Ensure the effective resourcing of youth engagement in inter-governmental processes with a particular focus on boosting participation of young people from developing countries.





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The proposals put forth in the present policy brief draw on:

The global listening exercise conducted as part of the commemoration of the seven-

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in which 1.5 million young people from all countries participated in surveys and dialogues;

<sup>37</sup> in which almost 10 million young people from 194 countries voted;

The MY World 2030 survey,<sup>38</sup> in which almost 600,000 young people voted;

The series of discussions with 600 youth

programme<sup>39</sup> -  
dation and its outcome report entitled *Our Future Agenda: A Vision and Plan for Next and Future Generations*,<sup>40</sup> which served as a formal contribution to shaping of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda";

The recommendations made by youth to the Human Rights Council,<sup>41</sup> the Economic and Social Council youth forum and the Security Council open debates;

A focused discussion with Member States on 30 August 2022 on identifying ways and means for more meaningful engagement of youth in the work of the General As-

sembly,<sup>42</sup> convened by the President of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly;

Informal dialogues with youth delegates on 4 October 2022 and 6 February 2023,<sup>43</sup> convened by the President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly;

Thematic consultations with Member States on the topic of meaningful youth engagement were held through focused regional group consultations throughout February and March 2023.







