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## FINAL REPORT OF THE 7th UNESCO YOUTH FORUM (2011)

17-20 October 2011, Paris, France

### Introduction

We, the 210 youth delegates of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum, representing 127 Member States met at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, from 17 to 20 October 2011, to discuss “How YOUTH drive change”.

*Because youth represent a significant proportion of the world's population they heavily influence and, equally, are affected by social, political and economic conditions and the well-being and livelihood of current and future generations,*

*we are resolved to ensure that youth is included as one of UNESCO's global priorities.*

We, the participants of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum:

- applaud and support the decision of the General Conference of UNESCO at its 35th session to include the Youth Forum as a separate item on its agenda and appreciate that it will be discussed for the first time in its Programme Commissions;
- reaffirm the previous commitments made during the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum and welcome the positive contributions that followed;
- recognize that education is a basic human right;
- recognize the importance of gender equality for peace and sustainable development;

- acknowledge the important role that youth play in positively transforming society, especially through their public and political participation towards a more inclusive and democratic society;
- acknowledge that climate change endangers all young people's futures and that sustainable development, solutions and opportunities engaging youth must be embraced, especially as we move towards Rio+20;
- implore Member States to fully implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all internationally agreed development goals with a view to ensuring the eradication of poverty and all forms of violence, discrimination and intolerance, including those based on gender identity and sexual orientation as well as problems faced by persons living with a disability.

The delegates of the 7th UNESCO Youth Forum have elaborated the following recommendations:

### **Education**

1. We urge Member States to ensure access to equal quality public education as a basic human right and to ensure free, universal and mandatory education to secondary level, especially in rural areas;
2. We call upon Member States to eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially against the most vulnerable segments of society, and to promote human rights-based education;
3. We strongly request Member States to ensure women's and girls' empowerment, and also encourage gender equality in acquiring essential life skills, as well as including literacy and sexuality education;
4. We strongly urge Member States to ensure access to quality formal and non-formal education, including informal education, intercultural education, values-based education and civic education, as equal parts of general education;
5. We call upon Member States to ensure a fair educational system, taking into consideration refugee children or children with migration backgrounds and creating possibilities that these children could also succeed in school;
6. We request Member States to recognize sport and arts education as key elements to prevent violence and to promote a culture of peace;
7. We urge Member States to include disaster-risk prevention, management and rehabilitation and environmental protection in education systems;
8. In response to employment challenges, we strongly encourage Member States to expand the scope of education by including entrepreneurial skills and training opportunities, and intergenerational partnerships for youth aligned to rapidly changing labour market needs, particularly in non-traditional fields, such as e-learning.

### **Sustainable Development**

9. We call upon Member States to provide training and encourage youth-led initiatives promoting green societies, to engage youth in policy development and strategies on mitigation and adaptation, emphasizing the importance of green jobs, reducing fossil fuel dependency and disaster-risk management;

10. We recommend that Member States raise awareness amongst youth on better preservation of tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage;
11. We recommend that Member States prevent the exploitation of children and youth within heritage sites;
12. We call upon Member States to provide technical, human and financial support to youth, especially those who are marginalized and vulnerable, to empower them in order to address their own needs and interests towards social, political and economic development;
13. We strongly request to transform the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development into an institutionalized process beyond 2014, under the auspices of UNESCO.

### **Youth participation**

14. We request Member States to enhance youth participation in decision-making by:
  - (i) including youth representatives in their delegations to the General Conference, bearing in mind the principles of gender balance and non-discrimination and emphasizing that such youth representatives should be selected through a transparent process that ensures they have a suitable mandate to represent young people in their countries;
  - (ii) requesting the full support of all Member States for the delegates to work together towards writing an International Convention on Youth Rights which describes and protects youth in a time of change;
  - (iii) ensuring that all students at all ages can participate in youth-led student democracy at both local and national levels;
  - (iv) establishing and reinforcing permanent youth representation in all UNESCO National Commissions;
  - (v) creating a youth sub-commission to guarantee the engagement of UNESCO Member States with youth;
  - (vi) promoting awareness of UNESCO's Participation Programme and ensuring that National Commissions prioritize youth access to it;
  - (vii) encouraging and expanding opportunities to volunteer and to join mentorship programmes for young people;
  - (viii) improving coordination amongst youth-led organizations and UNESCO, especially through the Joint Programmatic Commission on Youth;
  - (ix) noting that youth should be an integral part of UNESCO's participation in Rio+20 through innovative ideas towards sustainable lifestyles, policies and programmes.

### **Improvements to the Youth Forum**

Mindful of the evolving nature of the UNESCO Youth Forum and cognizant of the need to continue to improve it, we request the General Conference to ensure:

15. the full participation of all delegates, in setting the agenda, by focusing on increased interaction and open debates, through greater involvement of specialized youth NGOs;

16. the full engagement by, and meaningful consultation with, all youth delegates in the drafting of the final report as well as a democratic, transparent, youth-driven and clearly defined adoption process of the document;
17. adequate support to National Commissions to finance the participation of youth delegates to future Youth Forums;
18. representation of all States in conflict as a means to promote a culture of peace amongst youth, especially in the case of Palestine, bearing in mind Article II, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of UNESCO and the recent decision by the Executive Board (187 EX/Decision 40).