



LDC5  
5TH UNITED NATIONS  
CONFERENCE ON THE  
LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES



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## **For All Generations**

### A Youth Declaration to the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

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## **Our Vision**

*A world in which young people in the Least Developed Countries are:  
Empowered to achieve their full potential.*

*Enjoying their human rights.*

*Contributing as agents of change for the benefit of everyone, everywhere.*

## **Our Commitment**

***We, the young people, meeting at the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Doha, Qatar on the 22nd of January 2022, commit to taking a proactive role in the implementation of the new Programme of Action for the LDCs.***

***As agents of change we come together to champion our vision for an equal, fair, resilient, and sustainable world in which young people in the Least Developed Countries are empowered to achieve their full potential, enjoy their human rights, and can contribute for positive change that benefits everyone, everywhere.***

## **Preamble**

In LDCs, approximately 60% of the population are under 25 years old. The number of adolescents and youth aged 15 to 24 years is projected to grow from 207 million in 2019 to 336 million in 2050. However, many LDCs are facing high youth unemployment and illiteracy rates, aggravating inequality and social discontent which ultimately exposes young people to poverty, further social exclusion and prevents them from fully developing their potential, access employment and education opportunities and positively engage in their communities. Furthermore, the growing challenges imposed by climate change, emerging conflicts and fast-paced technological advancements tend to disproportionately affect the younger generations which is why any

vision or development plan for LDC must include young people not just as beneficiaries but also as rights holders and agents of change.

Hence, the 5<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) must provide a platform for dialogue among LDCs, development partners and the global community on youth development in LDCs. The Conference should create space for engagement with youth in LDCs on targeted policies to empower young populations and enhance their role in implementing the new Programme of Action - as well as the 2030 Agenda.

We wish to welcome and thank the initiative by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed, Landlocked and Small Islands Developing States to create a Youth Engagement Track in the preparations of the LDC5, in a concrete effort to bring youth into the core of the discussions concerning the next programme of Action for LDC.

The present declaration builds upon the outcomes of the “#For all Generations” consultations - undertaken in 2021 with the support of the LDC5 Youth Engagement Group - in which young individuals, youth organisations, youth alliances and networks as well as informal groups of young people have contributed by participating in the online consultations, in the regional review meetings or by submitting reports and recommendations on specific topics addressed in this declaration.

The Youth Declaration aims to provide the vision and the commitment of young people towards the next programme of Action in order to ensure it addresses the fundamental development needs and challenges of young people in LDC. At the same time, it presents the expectations concerning youth engagement and empowerment in furthering progress towards the targets and goals of the next Programme of Action and in the LDC5 decision-making processes.

Acknowledging the role of the different stakeholders and partners in the implementation of the Programme of Action and in ensuring it is coherent and contributes to other relevant agendas, namely but not restricted to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development, this declaration is addressed primarily to the 46 UN Least Developed Countries.

Therefore, as overarching recommendations to approach youth policy in the Least Developing Countries, we call member states to:

1. Create sustainable coordination structures and long-term strategies (national and/or regional) with a clear mandate and dedicated financial and human resources to ensure that the necessary conditions are in place for an effective cross-sectorial, evidence-based, and participatory approach to youth policy. Such an approach should develop concrete pathways through which data collection, analysis and research can adequately inform policymaking, implementation, monitoring, feedback, and evaluation.
2. Recognise young people as rights-holders and key stakeholders in policymaking, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Thus, Member States should ensure that youth participation in policy is facilitated through purposeful, transparent, structured, and diversified mechanisms and spaces. This approach is particularly relevant when policy actions and measures impact vulnerable youth groups such as refugees, migrants, youth in Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs), religious or ethnic minorities, girls and women, young people with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ youth.
3. Create at global, regional, and national levels a meaningful space and mechanism for young people to engage at the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the new Programme of Action for the LDCs.

Furthermore, we the young people present at the 5th LDC Conference urge Member States to commit to implement the following thematic recommendations in close cooperation with young people in LDC, as well as development partners and the global community.

## OUR CALL

### 1. Investment in Youth

- a. Align national youth strategies and policies with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. They should be implemented with full participation of young people, with efforts to ensure representation of those marginalized, to ensure that all the targets are achieved with young people being part of the progress in their country.
- b. Youth, peace and security:
  - i. Implement UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 2250 and 1325 on Youth, Peace and Security. Secure the necessary finances and other resources, and develop long-term regional,

- national, local action plans, with the partnership of young people and youth organisations in their design, implementation, and evaluation.
- ii. Co-shape and co-implement with young people programmes that promote intra and inter-community social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and mutual understanding to prevent violent extremism in territories or communities where there are or might emerge violent conflicts.
  - iii. Foster and subsidize, through transparent and sustained mechanisms, community-based and civil society-led initiatives aiming to tackle multilayered social and economic problems affecting communities.
- c. Access to education:
- i. States should guarantee universal access to quality, gender transformative and inclusive education. This should be done recognizing the importance of the universal acquisition of foundational skills, advanced skills development (including transferable skills), Technical and Vocational Education and Training and, of life-long learning acquired through e-learning, non-formal and informal learning contexts, including learning supported by youth organisations.
  - ii. States should increase the funding for education and ensure necessary resources are available to secure quality education for all young people, especially those from marginalised groups, so they can fully develop through education and gain a wide range of skills, to prepare them for life and work.
  - iii. Secure international investment in quality education, ensuring a gender-responsive, diverse, and inclusive school system.
  - iv. Ensure that all school environments are safe and promote the health and wellbeing of all young people, including through promotion of SRHR and integration of comprehensive sexuality education through the curriculum.
  - v. Invest in ensuring that in-person and digital education is in languages that all young people understand and can participate in.
  - vi. Revise and adapt national curricula to ensure that young people in the education system are skilled and equipped with job-ready competencies, but are also prepared to face the challenges of the country they live in.
  - vii. Develop and encourage the use of an education system that allows the transfer of grade points across countries and regions. This will allow young people on the move to resume their studies once they are in a more permanent location.
  - viii. Work with Universities and institutions to drop the English Test examinations for students from LDCs that use English as the medium of instruction. The test lowers the chances for young deserving students to enroll for higher education in developed countries since they cannot afford the test.
- d. Access to decent employment and entrepreneurship:
- i. Guarantee that decent work options are available and accessible to young people by designing and implementing policies that foster decent work opportunities, including the demand for remote part-time work
  - ii. Ensure that young people, especially those in precarious work situations, have access to social protection schemes that provide support and lower the risk of cycles of poverty and social exclusion.
  - iii. Recognize the role young entrepreneurs and workers play in implementing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
  - iv. Recognize the marginalized populations that are not in education, employment, or training - e.g., worldwide, nearly one in four girls aged 15–19 years is neither employed nor in education or training compared to 1 in 10 boys of the same age - and implement targeted policies to address this complex problematic
  - v. Increase young people's access to finance through youth-lens investing by developing innovative financing mechanisms, including blended finance vehicles for youth-led MSMEs, social businesses, digital finance platforms, such as crowdfunding, peer-to-peer mechanisms and block-chain powered lending platforms.
  - vi. Enhance the scale and quality of entrepreneurship education. This should include skills development (both technical and soft skills), incubation, coaching and mentoring programmes for youth. Peer-to-peer learning and the use of technology should be encouraged to allow for scaling and replicability.
  - vii. Develop accessible programmes that can connect youth to a network of private sector companies so that young people can be placed into the industry building bridges between access to learning and placement opportunities in the job market - mindful of marginalized populations and need for addressing gender stereotyping – and recognizing that simply providing youth with employability and entrepreneurship skills will not suffice.
  - viii. Recognize that international trade and investment are engines of structural transformation and that removing barriers to young entrepreneurs' participation in national, regional, and international markets is vital.

## 2. Youth Participation

- a. Recognise young people as rights-holders and relevant stakeholders whose representation must be promoted.
- b. Create the necessary conditions to ensure a meaningful participation in policy and decision making through coordination structures and long-term strategies (local, national and/or regional) with a clear mandate and resources to ensure a cross-sectoral approach to youth policies. Such an approach should develop concrete pathways through which data collection, analysis and research can adequately inform policy making, implementation, monitoring, feedback, and evaluation.
- c. Support youth councils, youth movements and other types of youth organisations – including those with feminist mandates in the Global South, to self-organise by securing an enabling environment and legal framework at the local, national, and regional level. The functioning costs and activities of civil society at the local, national, and regional level should also be supported.
- d. Provide capacity-building, mentorship, and resources to young people and youth organisations to increase their ability to contribute to decision-making processes and implement youth-led policy and advocacy initiatives.

### **3. Human Rights**

- a. Fulfil and protect the rights of youth and Introduce sanctions for parties violating the human rights of all young people especially those more vulnerable in reason of sex, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic and religious background, social-economic situation, nationality, or other.
- b. Reduce legal aid fees charged by most courts of laws and establish pro bono services.
- c. Provide Human Rights and Global Citizenship education trainings, by encouraging governments to partner with CSOs and young people to create awareness and capacity-building at all levels of education. Integrate human rights' education at all levels of education.
- d. Undertake all the necessary measure to end corruption and abuse of power at all levels of governance.
- e. End all anti-democratic measures and practices that prevent young people from fully exercise their civic and political rights Ensure independence of media in documenting and exposing all forms of violence and violations of human rights
- f. Condemn negative gender and social norms that violate the rights of children, women, and men.
- g. Protect, and provide safe refuge for young human rights defenders and advocates that put their lives on the line to protect the rights of their communities.
- l. Ensure the enforcing of all legal mechanisms to call out LDCs that are persecuting young people for defending, and advocating for, human rights.

### **4. Tackle Climate Change**

- a. Governments should encourage and support climate-focused youth-led initiatives – that are inclusive of the most vulnerable - while establishing strong institutions and clear regulatory frameworks, for environmental accountability. This will counterbalance existing negative effects of the current economic systems that are heavily contributing to the climate crisis,
- b. Meaningfully involve young people in the development of long-term, strategic processes to solve the environmental, social, and economic impact of climate change at a national, regional, and global level.
- c. Plan and invest in the green circular economy with a strong emphasis on the capacity-building of young people to have the necessary skills to perform jobs in these new industries and sectors. Support skills and labour migration pathways to support young migrants to fill green jobs and help reduce emissions.
- d. Support and invest in youth-led climate action initiatives that seek to provide alternative and greener solutions to emerging problems.
- e. Incorporate child and youth-sensitive sectoral interventions in climate policy processes (i.e., Include health, nutrition, education, social protection, WASH, sustainable agriculture, disaster risk reduction, and other relevant social sectors and local governments in Climate and Environment policy development processes that are most relevant to the needs and priorities of the most vulnerable children and young people – ensuring their concerns and demands are incorporated).

- f. Set more ambitious targets to mitigate environmental degradation and climate change in advance of their revised submission due for COP27 (opportunity to engage with Governments around the call for updated NDCs ahead of COP27, as agreed at COP26 - bringing forward the next cycle deadline from 2025. I.e., increase ambition with a view to keeping 1.5°C in reach, but also, ensure Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) substantively consider children and young people and their rights, and the process for drawing up these NDCs should allow for the meaningful participation of children and young people.

#### **5. Combat and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and improve resilience to future pandemics**

- a. Invest in inclusive, accessible and youth and children-friendly and gender responsive health services including SRHR (sexual, reproductive, and mental health). This should be coupled with initiatives to promote health literacy among young people. Young people should directly contribute to co-shape and implement these services.
- b. Partner with community stakeholders and youth CSOs to produce innovative response mechanisms e.g., responses focused on different age and gender groups reflecting their particular needs.
- c. Invest in access to vaccination ensuring equity in vaccine distribution. Furthermore, invest time in raising awareness about the negative gender and social norms about pandemics through collaborating with local influencers e.g., traditional, religious leaders and youth groups.
- d. Prioritise the engagement of youth volunteers to address the effects of the pandemic.
- e. Promote public health responses that fully recognize and respond to youth, gender responsive needs in local contexts.
- f. Invest in health sector resilience and limit the adverse effects to service delivery. Preparation for future shocks should account for the different needs of adolescent populations, including married/unmarried adolescents; in-school/out-of-school adolescents; and adolescents with disabilities.
- g. Include a measurement framework (for example collection and analysis of population data that is disaggregated by age & sex) to track progress.
- h. Integrate mental health into pandemic responses. There is currently too little mental health support in LDCs, and it is too often seen as a form of disability.

#### **6. Gender equality**

- a. Youth programmes must promote gender equality within their objectives. Youth participation and empowerment strategies should be promoted and strengthened through gender-responsive and/or gender transformative approaches.
- b. Integrate in education from the earliest stages curriculum that challenges gender stereotypes and other oppressive social norms and promotes gender equality and human rights.
- c. Develop and implement legal frameworks that promote gender equality and youth empowerment, including marginalized social categories such as adolescent girls and young women. Cases of child marriage, human trafficking, labour exploitation exist with the existence of clear policies drafted and shelved by most LDCs. Almost all LDCs have ratified international treaties like the CEDAW, UDHR, ILO but less is done to implement and hold them into account. Ensure these laws and policies are implemented and monitored in partnership with youth organizations (including those with feminist mandates and led by young women) and initiatives in the LDCs
- d. Implement a gender responsive, if not gender transformative approach in responding to pandemics e.g., COVID-19 putting into consideration gendered vulnerabilities including those with different gender identities. Unemployment has disproportionately impacted women during the pandemic. For instance, women were thrice as much represented in unpaid care compared to men.
- e. Ensure equal representation of genders in leadership roles, supporting the empowerment of leaders from minority backgrounds and ensuring equal remuneration for equal work irrespective of gender and sex
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## **7. Food security and nutrition**

- a. Call on Governments to provide nutritious and naturally sourced food assistance to communities that are hit by hunger.
- b. Empower young people in LDCs with knowledge, expertise, and technology to foster young people's participation in sustainable agriculture to promote food security.
- c. Invest in farming through sustainable finance, mechanization, innovation, and subsidies for the next generation of farmers and fisherfolk.
- d. Develop and implement policies on food disposal, especially in urban centers reducing environmental degradation by reducing food waste.
- e. Promote indigenous foods that are nutritious and increase taxes on unhealthy foods.
- f. Design gender responsive social protection/welfare schemes for the most at-risk populations to foster access to food.
- g. Promote food security through the development of sustainable national food systems and improve national supply chain mechanisms to serve those most in need, learning from the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **8. Refugees, Internally Displaced and Migrants**

- a. Ensure the full recognition of the legal status of undocumented migrants and stateless youth and provide all migrant, refugee, and internally displaced youth access to services, including education, health, WASH, child protection and social protection/welfare, regardless of status.
- b. States should ensure firewalls are in place between service providers and immigration authorities to allow undocumented migrants to have access without fear of being detected, deported, or detained
- c. Provide access to birth registration to all children born to refugee, migrant, and internally displaced people.
- d. Guarantee the fundamental right to work and the rights at work for youth who are refugees, migrants, stateless, and internally displaced. Refugees, migrants, stateless and internally displaced workers need representation, meaningful participation, and legal frameworks that guard them against exploitation at work. Ensure work permits are granted and in time.
- e. Ensure programmes of social protection and amenities are extended to refugee, migrant, internally displaced workers. Social protection ensures that their working conditions are safe and well-compensated for their work, as well as accessing insurance or permits to obtain healthcare for their families.
- f. Recognize, and utilise the skills and capacities of the refugee, migrant, stateless, and internally displaced youth and empower them to be leaders in their communities. Refugees, internally displaced, migrants and stateless youth must be included in the national and local youth structures and development plans of their host countries and cities in the LDCs.
- g. Ensure refugee, internally displaced, migrant, and stateless youth are not left behind. Include them in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the national COVID-19 recovery programme. Support meaningful interaction between migrant and displaced youth and host community youth to help strengthen social cohesion.
- h. Ensure practices such as xenophobia, discrimination against refugees, migrants and stateless youth and human trafficking are severely punished to protect the well-being of refugees.
- i. Promote and increase age and gender-responsive and inclusive programmes that contribute to the protection, health and development of young women, young men, girls, and boys within humanitarian settings.
- j. Recognize and strengthen young people's capacities and capabilities to be effective humanitarian actors in prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery – including those on the move. Empower and support local migrant and displaced youth-led initiatives and organizations in humanitarian response.
- k. Increase resources to address the needs and priorities of adolescents and youth affected by humanitarian crises, including the pandemic, disasters, conflict, and displacement.

Identify ways to more accurately track and report on the resources allocated to young people in humanitarian contexts.

- I. Ensure the generation and use of age- and sex- disaggregated data pertaining to migrant and displaced adolescents and youth in humanitarian settings.

## 9. Digital Inclusion, Connecting the Unconnected

- a. Affordability of ICT devices and services:
  - i. Ensure that the costs of ICT devices and services remain affordable, innovative, and adaptable for youth living in LDCs, especially those marginalized by income, geography, sex, the disabled and other social categories.
  - ii. Establish ICT community centres to enable young people, especially those from marginalized groups (girls and young women, people with disabilities, young migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, or people from disadvantaged social-economic background) to have access to affordable ICT services for learning, research and skills development purposes, and digital hubs with free and stable Wi-Fi and computer hubs to enable access to different digital opportunities.
  - i. Member states should recognize the importance of education and skills training for youth in LDCs as a solution to improving digital inclusion. Therefore, they should invest in generating more job opportunities for youth to strengthen skills building and digital literacy of youth, including the next generation of digital nomads, secure more opportunities for young women and girls to access STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) education.
  - iii. Create more opportunities for young women and girls to access STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) education.
- b. ICT policy and legislation:
  - i. Create partnerships between the public and private sector to improve the mobilization of funds dedicated to developing ICT infrastructure and digital policies.
  - ii. Identify which communities face the most challenges towards digital inclusion. Create targeted strategies to work towards improving digital inclusion for youth in these communities.
  - iii. Enhance engagement of youth organizations with relevant government agencies and private sector companies.
- c. Member states should invest in stable, consistent, environmentally sustainable ICT infrastructures that are widely accessible in their territories and support the development of ICT infrastructure and systems that assist people with disabilities.
- d. Ensure stable electricity infrastructure is in place as part of plans to provide ICT infrastructure.
- e. Create more stable and consistent ICT infrastructure (I.e., infrastructure that is not climate-dependent). Establish digital hubs with free and stable Wi-Fi and computer hubs to enable the youth to have access to different digital opportunities ranging from online training programmes to online jobs.
- f. Emphasize the need for stable digital infrastructure in educational institutions.
- g. Support the development of ICT infrastructure and systems that assist people with disabilities.
- h. Ensure the cost of assistive technological devices is affordable to youth.
- i. Promote digital inclusion of youth groups (gender, persons with disabilities, ethnic groups, migrants) to address the divide within social structures.
- j. Create regional communities or knowledge-sharing platforms that promote continuous digital skills development through collaborative efforts between young people and ICT industries.
- k. Foster Safe online behaviour by building the capacity of youth to engage in online devices safely, equip them with the necessary digital safety skills and create enabling partnerships to train youth in cybersecurity and innovation.

## Signatures





## Support

This youth declaration was created with the involved support of the LDC5 Youth Engagement Group<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The LDC5 Youth Engagement Group includes experts from: the Office of the High-Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS); the International Committee Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the International Trade Center (ITC); the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY); the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY); the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF); the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).