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UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS ON YOUTHS AND PEACEBUILDING: AN APPRAISAL WITH FOCUS ON AFRICA

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Abstract

Youths refer to young persons whose age ranges from 15 to 35. That period in one's life represents energy and fruitfulness which can be translated into success. Although youths are often victims of and participants in armed conflicts, they also play very vital roles in both conflict prevention and management. That explains why the United Nations Security Council, in its Resolution 2250 of 2015 on Youth, Peace and Security and Sustainable Development; called upon the Organization's member-states to create the enabling environment to meaningfully tap the potentials of youth in peace building and conflict resolution. Adopting basically the qualitative analytical research methodology of content analysis, this paper observed that youth inclusion in peace building processes is central for ensuring an inclusive peace both in their home countries and in the global community. It concludes that for the youths to succeed in fulfilling the expectations of their national governments and the international community, they should be encouraged by including them in the decision making institutions and processes at both the local and international levels. This is an assignment for both the United Nations and the government of member states. Fortunately, the United Nations has not shied away from this responsibility despite other challenges. As part of the UN youth peacebuilding agenda, the paper finally saw the AU's work to domesticate the agenda in Africa as historic.

Keywords: Resolutions, Youth Peacebuilding, Violence, Conflict Resolution, Africa

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Introduction

Developing and empowering young people appear to be receiving the desired priority globally in contemporary conflict resolution and peacebuilding practices. The idea is to ensure their full participation in all phases of peace processes. The discourse and practices surrounding sustainable development, peace, and security are changing as a result of the rapid upsurge of violent extremism and the steady decline of world peace, combined with the rhetoric of narratives that portray young people as both perpetrators and victims of violence. Significantly, these changes have resulted in a positive paradigm shift in the way the United Nations (UN) coordinates its policy frameworks by recognizing youth as key players in conflict prevention and maintaining lasting peace (Kwesi and Lawal, 2021).

All around the world lately, more than 600 million youth live in highly fragile and conflict-afflicted environments (UNDP, 2014; Wilton, 2017). They suffer significant and lasting human, societal, and economic losses as a result of the various and frequently occurring and connected types of violence that plague their communities and nations, ranging from political violence and criminal gangs to organized crime and terror attacks (World Bank, 2011). Youth, particularly young women are constantly facing increased risk of physical and sexual abuse and exploitation. People aged 15 to 35 as defined by the African Youth Charter (AYC, 2006), make up the bulk of victims of deadly armed violence, although the UN pegged the youth age bracket between 15 and 24 years (Cursi,

2017). A vicious cycle of violence fueled by lack of possibilities for education and employment, injustices and widespread mistrust of the state's ability to protect and provide for its citizenry, resulting in abject poverty, hopelessness and frustration are some reasons for youth restiveness around the globe (Ismail & Olonisakin, 2018).

In all of these, the voice of young people are usually not heard nor included in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes for obvious reasons, despite being deeply affected by violence in a myriad of ways (Ozcelik, 2021). The reasons for this isolation is not far-fetched. Over the past decades, the involvement of some young people (primarily young men, but increasingly young women as well), in violence and extremist groups has led many to portray them as a threat to global peace, security and stability (UN, 2016). Due to this fact, young people are rather seen as drivers of violence and instability or considered potential 'spoilers' who must be 'contained' from radicalism and extremism (OECD, 2011). At other times, they are simply seen as instigators of conflict or beneficiaries of aid (Berents; Prelis, & Tibi, 2020). Worse still, youth are often demonized unjustly by the media (Hendrixen, 2004).

However, research shows that youth who actively participate in violence are a minority, while the vast majority are neither violent nor participate in violence, despite the injustices, deprivations, and traumatizing abuse they face in conflict situations (UN, 2016). Furthermore, a growing body of evidence

suggests that young people can and do play active and valuable roles as positive and constructive change agents (Coomaraswamy, 2015). Youth-led social and political movements and peacebuilding interventions at the local, national, and international levels all contribute to building peaceful societies and catalyse more democratically inclusive governance (UN, 2016). Sadly, the active role played by youngsters as peacemakers, mediators and peacebuilders at the various levels are under-mined as they are often sidelined in the official peace processes of their communities and nations. Thus, youth participation and contribution to effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding work, more often than not, received negligible attention and support from the appropriate authorities worldwide over the years.

This deliberate systemic exclusion of youth by both national, regional and international conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms and institutions is also considered part of the reasons some young people engage in violence to express their displeasure (Ismail & Olonisakin, 2018; PBSO, 2019). Therefore, the push for the official involvement and recognition of young people in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes has become highly necessary in recent years as a panacea for sustainable global peace. Thus, the advocacy by some organisations for youth participation in the settlement and prevention of extremism, conflicts, and violence began to take center stage and gained momentum on a global scale soon after the UNSC Resolution 1325 of 2000 on gender and women inclusion

in the global peace process (Cursi, 2017). The growing thinking was that, young people, despite being part of violent conflict; could still be significant agents of democratic change and, as such, should be purposefully sought out, empowered, and incorporated in the development of peaceful societies (Islamic Relief, 2021).

After a prolonged period of advocacy for youth official inclusion in peace processes by diverse groups; the UN on December 9, 2015, finally approved and recognized the importance of involving young people in shaping enduring peace in a ground-breaking Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS). Resolution 2250 urges member states to increase inclusive representation of youth in institutions and mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as countering violent extremism, and called for increased political, financial, technical, and logistical support for youth participation in peace efforts with reference to their peculiar needs (UNSCR, 2015). This historic resolution against all the negative narratives recognized young people as actors in the prevention of violence and the pursuit of peace in their communities and around the world (Islamic Relief, 2021).

Youth participation in peacebuilding processes according to the UNSCR 2250 on YPS and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is essential for achieving a sustainable and inclusive peace, because young people are frequently at the forefront of global movements and community-based efforts to advance peace, promote more

equitable societies, and demand greater participation in decision-making for themselves and others (Peace Direct, 2019). The twin UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions on Peacebuilding and Sustainable Peace adopted in 2016 also emphasized the importance of youth in promoting peace, and called on member nations and the UN itself to fashion ways to increase their meaningful participation by developing policies and, where appropriate, partnerships with the private sector that would improve youth capacity and skills to enhance their active involvement in the sustenance of global peace (UNSCR 2282 & GAR 70/262, 2016).

Based on the above, this paper seeks to examine the need for the youth to be actively involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding as recognised by the UNSC Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 and other related UN Resolutions. Therefore, the following section explores the evolution of these resolutions. The paper also examines the extent to which the UN promotes the youth peacebuilding agenda and how the resolutions have been consolidated and operationalised at the various levels. The paper finally narrows it down to the level of Africa's involvement in domesticating this agenda in the continent via several initiatives.

Evolution of UN Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

The unanimous adoption of Resolution 2250 on YPS by the UN Security Council represented a ground-breaking commitment to youth-inclusive peace approaches. This

accomplishment was the result of a great deal of work and dedication on the part of the leaders of youth peacebuilding, advocates, civil society groups, the academia, governments, and representatives of UN bodies collectively sought to bring about a paradigm shift in the way the world perceived and worked with young people on conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Cursi, R. 2017). The Resolution which was unanimously adopted in less than seven minutes during the Security Council's 7573rd meeting, was a product of years of dedicated work (UNSCR, 2015; Berents; Prelis, & Tibi, 2020). However, it is important to unveil the background events that necessitated the journey to this landmark resolution which gave birth to subsequent resolutions in 2018 and 2020.

Before the UN resolution 2250 of 2015, there was a worrisome revelation in the late 2000s that over four million people were killed in internal and regionalised types of conflicts since the end of the Cold War. More worrisome was the fact that an estimated one-third of the world's population was exposed to armed conflicts. This was due to the fact that lots of factors made the understanding of modern conflicts extremely difficult as every conflict has a unique social-economic, political, military, and cultural backdrop (Waldman, 2009). The majority of conflicts are internal, occurring between different identity groups within a State. However, this does not expunge the often regionalised nature of many contemporary conflicts, which cuts across national boundaries or are influenced by a plethora of external factors

and actors. These disputes typically arise as a result of issues of identity, economic and political marginalization, injustices, scarcity of resources (or their control), and ethnic discrimination. Such conflicts are often long-standing and are exacerbated by an environment of abject poverty and chronic underdevelopment (Waldman, 2009).

To address the threat posed by these deadly conflicts, there has been a massive upsurge in conflict management, and post-conflict peacebuilding activities over the last decade, often spearheaded by the UN, but involving a wide range of national and regional organizations, including NGOs. These have brought to the fore the idea of peacebuilding, which was developed in response to some of the worst acts of armed warfare and brutality in world history. Peacebuilding's main objectives include to prevent, lessen, change, and help in the healing of victims of violent conflicts. Additionally, it provides individuals with the means to foster healthy relationships at all societal levels. In 1995, the UN released the Agenda for Peace, which included a description of post-war peacebuilding, thereby introducing the concept to the conflict resolution lexicon for the first time (Waldman, 2009).

Peacebuilding involves activities that goes beyond crisis management or conflict resolution to include long-term development programmes that concentrate on creating social, governmental, nongovernmental and religious mechanisms that support peaceful and constructive means of settling disputes. Peacebuilding is essentially an approach for

post-conflict settings that acknowledges the need for reconciliation, build dispute settlement skills, and work to establish sustainable peace. It include the full spectrum of methods, procedures, and phases required for the transition to more peaceful social interactions and governance system. Because peacebuilding takes a proactive rather than reactive approach in resolving conflicts, it differs from both peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution are also distinct in that the former concentrates more on establishing a 'positive peace' based on justice and fairness (Waldman, 2009).

While other demography of world population got their fair share of recognition and inclusion in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives; youth were historically denied inclusion in institutional initiatives to address issues of peace and security. Instead, they were stereotyped, stigmatized, and alienated because they were simply perceived as part of the problem or threat that need to be contained. Youth, however, had long worked to resolve security challenges and promote peace, and they had campaigned for their work to be acknowledged by international actors and institutions. UNSCR 2250 was the outcome of such advocacy (majorly youth-led, in contrast to most UN resolutions), which came from member states (Berents; Prelis, & Tibi, 2020). The youth advocated for a worldwide policy framework that would hold governments and intergovernmental organizations responsible; recognise and institutionalise their role and specific needs,

potential and diverse identities in conflict and post-conflict situations (Amman Youth Declaration, 2015).

Advocacy towards UNSCR 2250 and the YPS agenda actively mobilized broad-based support through the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security (GC-YPS), which include UN agencies, adult-run NGOs, and youth-led organizations. The GC-YPS grew out of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding (WG-YPB), which was founded in 2012 by civil society groups and the UN to assist actors working on this issue advocate for a paradigm shift in supporting young people as a force in peacebuilding (UN, 2016; Cursi, 2017). The UN system-wide coordinating mechanism on youth, known as the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD), includes the GC-YPS. From 2012 through 2015, young people worked closely with civil society, UN, and intergovernmental entities to sponsor the resolution in a variety of significant ways. The creation of UNSCR 2250 proved that international institutions for the first time listened to youth advocacy by validating grassroots agitations to international policy framework (Berents; Prellis, & Tibi, 2020).

Meanwhile, a number of global initiatives with a broad focus on youth were involved, including the World Conference on Youth, which took place in Sri Lanka in May 2014. It was closely followed by the inaugural Global Forum on Youth Policies, which held in Azerbaijan in October 2014. Additionally, in April 2015, while holding the Security Council Presidency, the Hashemite Kingdom

of Jordan decided to increase attention on youth's contribution to peace and stability by hosting an open discussion on 'the Role of Young People in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace' (Cursi, 2017).

Next was the 'Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security' in August 2015, where more than 500 government representatives, academics, youth-led groups, and young peacebuilders from more than 100 nations gathered in Amman, Jordan. The Amman Youth Declaration on YPS was adopted by participants to prevent conflict, combat violent extremism, and create enduring peace (Amman Youth Declaration, 2015). Shortly again, at the 'Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism' in September 2015, which the US Department of State co-hosted in New York with 300 participants, including about 70 youth leaders and organizations from around the world, where a Youth Action Agenda to prevent violent extremism and promote Peace was adopted (Youth Action Agenda, 2015). The Amman Global Forum and the Youth Action Agenda both indicated a shift on how policymakers should view the role of young people in post-conflict environments. These initiatives culminated in the passage of Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security by the UN Security Council on December 9, 2015.

Assessing the UN Resolutions on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

Young persons' involvement in peace and security; have since been acknowledged at the level of international policy as stated above. Resolution 2250 is the foremost resolution

fully dedicated to the positive role young people could play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security. The resolution instructed the UN Secretary-General to undertake a status report on youth peacebuilding and conflict resolution in order to suggest effective modalities at local, national, regional, and international levels (UNFPA & PBSO, 2018). Since 2015, the UN has focused more on its role in furthering the YPS agenda. The agenda was further boosted by Security Council Resolutions 2419, (2018) and 2535, (2020), as well as other broader efforts that are meant to improve youth inclusion. The Sustaining Peace Resolutions (2016) and the Youth 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018) are also two of the UN's policy initiatives that supports the successful implementation of the YPS agenda (PBSO, 2019). Worthy of note is the fact that, the SCR 2250 appealed to the member states to consider creating a UN common approach to inclusive development as a key for preventing conflict and enabling sustainable peace. Ever since, the UN has taken a number of actions to deliberately evaluate its interaction with young people in peace and development (Smith, 2020). Resolution 2250 identified five action pillars to advance peace, which include participation, protection, prevention, partnership, disengagement, and reintegration (UNSCR 2250, 2015). These are briefly discussed below.

Participation

The resolution called on member states to involve youth in violence prevention, conflict resolution, and social cohesion promotion. Member states were urged to think of

strategies to improve the participation of young people in decision-making at all levels (UNYPSCG, 2020). Emphasis was laid on young people's involvement during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction; support for local youth peace initiatives and indigenous processes of conflict resolution as well as empower young peacebuilders (Cursi, 2017).

Protection

Resolution 2250 reminded member states of their duty to safeguard civilians, including youth, during armed conflict and in the post-conflict period, ensuring the non-violation of their human rights, and to protect them against all types of sexual and gender-based violence (UNYPSCG, 2020). The four Geneva Conventions, enacted in 1949 and adopted in 1977, formed the basis of international humanitarian law, a body of regulations intended to lessen the impact of armed conflict for humanitarian purposes. While several of the standards set by these Conventions expressly address the treatment and protection of women and children, youngsters are not specifically included in any of these standards. As a result, Resolution 2250 requests that all parties to armed conflict take young people into account and take specific measures in their favour when carrying out their legal obligations related to the protection of civilians, in accordance with the applicable provisions of international law (Thakur, 2017).

Prevention

The Resolution implores member states and important stakeholders to foster an enabling

environment, increase investments in socio-economic development and quality education for young people, and develop mechanisms to advance a culture of peace, tolerance, and intercultural and religious dialogue that involves young people ((UNFPA & PBSO, 2018). Resolution 2250 defines prevention as fostering an inclusive and enabling environment for youth to implement violence prevention activities, as well as developing policies that provide opportunities for the employment and vocational training of youth, support their educational needs, especially peace education, and encourage their entrepreneurial acumen and constructive political engagement that will nip conflict in the bud (Cursi, 2017).

Partnerships

On partnership, the Resolution implores UN organizations, global institutions, and civil society to aggressively boost the political, financial, technical, and logistical support for young people's involvement in peacebuilding. It also emphasises the value of collaboration with young people, local communities, and non-governmental organizations in tackling violent extremism (UNYPSCG, 2020).

Disengagement and Reintegration

For young people who have been directly involved in armed conflicts, disengagement and reintegration are necessary steps to lasting peace. This could be achieved by investing on youth affected by violent conflicts through employment opportunities, inclusive labour policies and education that enhance a culture of peace (UNFPA & PBSO, 2018). The Resolution encourages young

combatants in violent conflict to meaningfully reintegrate into society; urges all parties to make contributions toward developing young people's capacities and skills through appropriate educational opportunities. It urges planners of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to recognize that the youth must play a vital role in planning such processes (UNYPSCG, 2020).

As called for in Resolution 2250, 'The Missing Peace': Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security in one of its preparatory stages in 2018, organised a symposium on youth participation in peace processes held in Helsinki, Finland. Discussions at this global symposium was on how to give young people the opportunity and space to participate in and make impact on official peace and mediation procedures. A global policy paper on youth involvement in peace processes titled, "We Are Here: An Integrated Approach to Youth-inclusive Peace Processes", was released as part of the event, providing proof of the influence which the youthful population have had on both past and present peace processes (Altiok & Grizelj, 2019).

The Secretary-General's independent progress study (The Missing Peace) was first presented to the Security Council in March 2018, with the full version of it completed later in June 2018 (Smith, 2020); and it formed the basis for Resolution 2419 which became the second resolution by the UNSC on YPS, recognizing the positive role young people can play in negotiating and implementing peace

agreements and conflict prevention. The Resolution urged stakeholders to take young people's views seriously and facilitate their equal and full participation in peace and decision-making processes at all levels. Again, the Resolution asked the Secretary-General to deliver a report on the implementation of both Resolutions 2250 and 2419 latest May 2020 (UNSCR, 2018).

In March 2020, the second report from the Secretary-General to the Security Council was released. The report showed that despite growing recognition of the crucial role that youth play in maintaining peace and security, major problems still exist, including structural obstacles that prevent youth from participating in decision-making, the violations of their human rights, and a lack of funding for programs that support their inclusion and empowerment. To remedy this situation, UNSCR 2535 was adopted on July 14, 2020, emphasising meaningful inclusion of young people in peace processes and humanitarian activities, as well as the protection of young peacebuilders and the civic and political space in which they operate. It also reiterated the pledges contained in Resolutions 2250 and 2419. Part of Resolution 2535's novelty is the emphasis on the defense of human rights with the claim of close connection between peace, justice, and human rights (UN & FBA, 2021).

Security Council Resolution 2535 is the third on YPS. France and the Dominican Republic (DR) jointly co-sponsored the resolution, marking the first time a permanent and non-

permanent member of the SC doing so. One of the defining outcomes of this Resolution is that it required the UN Secretary-General to regularly submit a biennial report to the SC on the implementation of the YPS agenda, thereby solidifying the position of YPS in the Security Council's agenda (Simpson, & Altiok, 2020). UNSCR 2535 specifically acknowledged the United Nations Youth 2030 Strategy of the Secretary General, which offered a road map for the UN system and placed a focus on peacebuilding and resilience-building. This acknowledgment gave the "Youth 2030 Strategy" an extra weight in its efforts to advance youth-specific issues within the UN system (Simpson, & Altiok, 2020). Today, Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 together form the core of UN youth, peace and security; an agenda that seeks to position young people at the epic-center of global conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The UN using the instrumentality of these resolutions has always sought ways to consolidate, expand and operationalise the agenda.

Consolidating and Operationalizing the UN Youth Peacebuilding Agenda

This section attempts an exposition on the efforts of the UN in consolidating, expanding and even operationalising its resolutions in order to achieve youth inclusiveness in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The emergence of the youth peacebuilding agenda to global limelight via the adoption of the SCR 2250 in 2015 was the first milestone towards challenging the exclusionary narrative concerning youngsters in peace and security. This foremost adoption not only

recognized the positive role of youth in the maintenance and promotion of global peace and security, but the detrimental effects of their marginalization or total exclusion in peacebuilding (Berents, Prelis & Tibi, 2020). Therefore, in order to consolidate the agenda, the UN Security Council expanded it through further resolutions such as 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020). Besides the UN, the peacebuilding agenda required initiatives and frameworks to be created by member states, regional organizations, and civil society; initiatives led by youth and the global community to fast-track its implementation. In order to translate inclusive policies into practice, every region made an analysis on critical issues so that policies could be perfectly adapted to enable them adequately attend to unique local contexts (Ozcelik, et al 2021). Thus, the stage was set for the operationalization of the resolutions on youth peacebuilding.

The SCR 2250's independent progress study report published in 2018 despite analyzing the obstacles and difficulties youth encounter, also highlighted the contributions made by young people to establishing and maintaining peace. In addition, the Secretary-General asked his Youth Envoy to take the lead in creating a UN Youth Strategy with the goal of scaling up national, regional and international actions to meet the needs of young persons, realise their rights, and tap their potential as agents of change (Youth 2030, 2018). The study also provided recommendations for fostering young people's ownership and leadership in peace processes, and provided a roadmap for putting the Resolution 2419 into

practice. One other major finding of the report is the growing lack of trust between youth and their governments, multilateral and civil society organizations. This widespread mistrust has caused what the report termed "policy panic", which is the tendency of policymakers to enact discriminatory policies against young persons based on the pervasive and unfounded presumptions that they are either the perpetrators of violence or its passive victims (UN & FBA, 2021).

In keeping with the SCR 2250 and the Sustaining Peace Agenda's top priorities, 'The Missing Peace' exhorts governments and the multilateral system to jettison the strict security and reactive approach to violent conflict and embrace a comprehensive violence preventive diplomacy, in which youth play a central role. In order to ensure a shift from perceiving youth as 'troublemakers' to recognizing them as vital partners who are already significantly influencing social and political change, the progress study considered the following actions as imperative: (1) Investing in the ability, initiative, and leadership skills displayed by young peacebuilders; (2) addressing the structural impediments preventing young people from being meaningfully included and creating the enabling environment for the variety of youth-anchored and youth-centered organizations; and (3) joining forces with youth-led and youth-focused organizations and acknowledging them as equal and vital peace partners (UN & FBA, 2021).

According to the progress study, a significant shift in attitudes and practices toward youth in peace and security is needed to convert the demographic dividend youth represent to peace dividend. By fostering the mutual trust between young people, their communities, governments, and the multilateral system which is crucial to establishing and maintaining peace in order to address the ‘violence of exclusion’ (UNFPA & PBSO, 2018), by transforming political, social, and economic systems to substantially involve youth in the decisions and processes that affect them (UN & FBA, 2021). In fostering supportive networks among young peacebuilders locally and across thematic divides, the UN urged peacebuilding organizations to expand their dialogue space where they could conveniently interact young peacebuilders. An online consultation was introduced to close these policy and practice gaps by giving policymakers access to local peacebuilders all over the world and by providing young peacebuilders with a secure online forum for exchanging knowledge and best practices in response to issues relating to youth inclusion (Peace Direct, 2019). In another effort to add to the existing knowledge on the positive roles of youth in peacebuilding, UNOY published ‘Beyond Dividing Lines’ in October, 2018; a comparative case study that highlighted the challenges and opportunities faced by youth-led initiatives in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Colombia, and Libya. Like the “Missing Peace”, “Beyond Dividing Lines” also highlighted the trust deficit that exists between policymakers and young

peacebuilders, and advocated for increased capacity-building support for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives and to create inclusively safe environments for young peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders, 2018).

The demand placed on the Secretary-General by SCR 2535, to submit a report to Council twice a year as against the once a year requested for previous resolutions, attest to efforts of operationalising the agenda (Simpson, & Altiok, 2020). This ongoing exercise has made room for increased participation of youth active at all levels in the assessment and implementation of the YPS agenda. Additionally, in paragraph 18, it is promised that the UNSC will continue to receive regular updates from members of the civil society, particularly youth organizations and young peacebuilders, on issues pertaining to YPS (UNSCR, 2020). Resolution 2535 was clear on the role of National Action Plans (NAPs) at the country level for YPS implementation by encouraging member states and regional organizations to develop and implement policies and programs for the youth and to facilitate their constructive engagement, including through specialized local, national, and regional roadmaps on the agenda (Simpson & Altiok, 2020).

In line with the above, individual UN member states have kick-started the implementation process of their dedicated National Actions Plans, with Finland and Nigeria taking the lead as first and second respectively (UNSC, 2022). The Finnish Action Plan process began in 2018 but was officially launched in August, 2021. It is an example of a government-led

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initiative that seek to mainstream youth within relevant domestic and foreign policies in line with the commitments made under SCR 2250. This initiative was designed in line with the model used in implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (GC YPS, 2022).

The Nigerian National Action Plan on YPS was the first in Africa and second in the world (GC YPS, 2022). The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution under the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa (CSDEA) developed the initiative in November 1, 2021 known as Nigerian Coalition on YPS (NCYPS) with a multi-stakeholder and intergenerational space co-chaired by federal government representatives, civil society, and youth groups. It has since been part of the process of providing inputs and active engagements in YPS. Its cardinal objective is to domesticate the UNSCR 2250 and help coordinate and implement the agenda in Nigeria (GC YPS, 2022).

India, Jordan and the United States are among many other UN member states that have also kick-started their NAPs. In India, NAP is known as the Indian Coalition on YPS. The Jordan YPS 2250 National Coalition is a unique model of NAP, launched under the patronage of Jordan's Crown Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah, where joint government, civil society-led initiatives and youth groups seek to advance YPS nationwide; while the U.S. YPS Coalition

which consists of over 70 non-governmental youth-led and youth-serving organisations work to mobilize young Americans in the global YPS movement. The Coalition provides a platform for young peacebuilders to collaborate and learn from adult practitioners and policy-makers (GC YPS, 2022).

Apart from the NAPs, the UN youth peacebuilding agenda is operationalized via regional initiatives to achieve success. In Africa, the agenda is firmly anchored in the African Union's Work on YPS. African institutions at the continental and sub-regional levels have acknowledged the importance of youth to the socio-economic development, peace, and security of the continent since 2001 via the AU Constitutive Act. This is demonstrated by the development of normative frameworks centered on youth, such as the African Youth Charter, the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security (CFYPS), the Youth for Peace (Y4P), and the Africa Program and the Special Envoy on Youth appointed by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (GC YPS, 2022).

In Asia Pacific, the agenda is rooted in the thematic Working Group on YPS. This organization, which is part of the Asia-Pacific Interagency Network on Youth (APINY), strengthens the participation of youngsters via the sharing of information and opportunity. The Iberoamerica program created in 2018, worked with other UN agencies to support and advance the YPS throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, titled, "Building peace through cinema". The program enable

young filmmakers to address violence through film-production (GC YPS, 2022). In Europe, among many others, the European Youth Foundation (EYF) is one well-known organizations working on youth issues in Europe. Established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial and educational assistance to youth-led NGOs in Europe in the form of grants (GC YPS, 2022).

At the global level, the UN utilizes frameworks such as The Youth 360 Initiative, the Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF), Youth Promotion Initiative (YPI), among others, whose interest is to promote inclusive and peaceful societies. Most of these initiative provides funding and logistical support for youth-led peacebuilding efforts often created by Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) in partnership with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF).

Domesticating the UN Youth Peacebuilding Agenda in Africa

Institutions in Africa, including the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and their member states have long acknowledged the significance of youth to socio-economic development, peace, and security in the continent. In actuality, the AU and RECs have a history of policy action and commitment to supporting youth involvement in democratization, socio-economic development, peace, and security. Since the 1990s, the AU and RECs have adopted a

number of normative instruments, such as Charters, Protocols, Declarations, Policies, and Programs that speak to the needs of young people generally and to peace and security in particular (AUC, 2020). The justification for the African YPS agenda with a commendable track record can be found in the activities of some of the normative frameworks and policy initiatives either individually or collectively discussed below.

In Africa, the relevance of YPS issues dates back to May 26, 2001 with the African Union's adoption of the Constitutive Act. Given the deterioration of regional peace, security and development, the AU Constitutive Act expressly recognized and prioritize young people as indispensable partners in strengthening solidarity and cohesion among African people (Rhuks et al., 2020; Kwesi & Lawal, 2021). Beyond rhetoric, Africa has a huge and vibrant youth demography which deserve due recognition. Therefore, the role of youth in Africa's development agenda gained traction as the AU Constitutive Act explicitly gave cognisance to their unavailability ahead of the UNSCR 2250 in 2015.

Additionally, youth empowerment and development were given top priority in the African Union Commission's (AUC) strategic plan for 2004–2007. The African Youth Charter (AYC), adopted in 2006 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Banjul, The Gambia, crystallized the importance of young people in Africa's development by establishing a Continental Framework with provisions on youth rights, duties, freedoms, including guidelines and

obligations of member states to promote their empowerment for active participation and contribution in the continent's development at all levels (AU, 2020). In Africa, the AYC was the first policy expression that institutionalized the role of young people in promoting sustainable development, peace and security. While Article 11 of the AYC provided for youth participation in all aspects of society through active engagement in decision-making bodies and processes; article 17 specifically states the part that youth could play in advancing peace and security in Africa (AU, 2020). In accordance with the UNSCR 2250, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) launched the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Program in September, 2018 in Lagos, Nigeria. Its main goal is to mainstream African youth into all spectrums of peace and security and dissuade them from violence in tandem with Article 17 of the AYC and SCR 2250 and 2419. The Y4P Africa program also seeks to alter the negative perception of youth as harbingers of violence and see them as partners for peace (AUC, 2020).

The AU PSC, in a communique, required the Y4P to consult with youth organizations, RECs and other pertinent stakeholders in order to conduct a regional study on, "The Roles and Contributions of Youth to Peace and Security in Africa" (Kwesi & Lawal, 2021). This led to a review and validation of the draft AU YPS Continental Framework in 2020. The subsequent Continental Framework review came with a 10-year implementation strategy for the agenda (2020-2029), with clear-cut targets to be accomplished with timelines, following the consultative efforts of

Y4P with youth-led organizations and other relevant bodies (GC YPS, 2022). Furthermore, the following were the results of the Y4P consultations with youth networks; (1) to complete a continental framework on YPS to enable youth meaningfully participate in all aspects of peace and security; (2) to reframe the widely held but false and negative perception that youth mean trouble; (3) and to build their capacities and skills and make public their positive contributions to peace and security in the continent. Through a five-year strategic plan (2020–2024), the Youth for Peace (Y4P) Africa Program seek to make the YPS agenda easier to be implemented at the national, regional, and continental levels (AU, 2020).

Compared to the UN YPS agenda, the AU YPS policy framework has a similar layout. Participation, prevention, protection, partnership and coordination, disengagement and reintegration are among its specific goals. Generally, the main aim of the AU Continental Framework is to make it easier for African youth to participate meaningfully in all aspects of peace and security at all continental levels, thereby domesticating UN YPS agenda in the continent by emphasizing youngsters' rights, responsibilities, and freedom to governments, civil society, and international partners (Kwesi & Lawal, 2021). One other brave policy initiative aimed at inclusive youth participation in peacebuilding is the African Union Youth Envoy Action Plan 2019/2020 (AUC, 2019). The first Special Envoy on Youth was appointed on November 1, 2018 by H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the then Chairperson of the African

Union Commission, with the responsibility of representing and advancing the views and concerns of African youth before the relevant AU decision-making bodies and promoting the implementation of the AYC and Agenda 2063 (AUC, 2018). The 2019/2020 Action Plan by Youth for Youth was introduced by the AU Youth Envoy in October 2019, with innovation, advocacy and communication as its methods of action in promoting the youth, peace and development agenda (AUC, 2019). A further YPS framework in Africa is the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol wherein the promotion of peace, security, and stability is listed as a major goal in Article 3(a) in order to ensure the protection and preservation of life and property, the welfare of Africans and their environment, as well as the creation of conditions favourable for sustainable development. In line with Article 20, which empowers the PSC for wide-range consultation with relevant bodies, it held the first open session on YPS at its 807th meeting in November 2018, during which it urged member states to create national action plans and terminate any structural obstacles to youth involvement in peace and security (Etuhaire, 2019). In addition, the PSC requested the AU Commission to conduct a study on the role of youth in promoting peace and security in Africa and submit the findings to Council for consideration and necessary action (AU PSC, 2018).

The domestication of YPS in Africa is daily reinforced by the activities of the Continental Framework and other initiatives. Africa considers its youthful population as its greatest resource. In many ways, African

authorities have long seen youth as the present and future of the continent, particularly given the continent's projected youth population of 830 million by 2050 from its current 420 million young people between ages 15 and 35 (AUC, 2020). Therefore, the realization of Africa's dream of a conflict-free continent requires the massive participation of young Africans.

Conclusion

This paper has examined issues in UN resolutions on youth and peacebuilding with emphasis on the UN Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda through UNSC Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020), as well as other related resolutions. These resolutions are crucial policy frameworks that resulted from the negative socio-economic and political issues that youth faced globally, particularly in conflict resolution and prevention. Despite the efforts put in by the youth to ensure peace and security in their communities and nations over the years; many still perceived them as the embers that fan the flame of violent conflicts, or as passive victims and beneficiaries of aid. The youth have been stereotyped, stigmatized and alienated in peace and security circles. Thus, they have had little or no voice in the governance and decision-making process on conflict resolution, peacebuilding and other issues that impact them in myriad of ways. This systemic exclusion not only highlights why youth unemployment, poor education, and poverty rates are still high in many parts of the world; it is also a reason why most youth engage in violence to express their anger against what

they referred to as ‘violence of exclusion’ (Simpson, 2019).

Young people therefore, in conjunction with other sympathetic groups, demanded an end to their gross underrepresentation or outright exclusion not only in peace and security, but also in governance and decision-making on issues that adversely affect them at all levels. This paper has chronicled the emergence of UNSCR 2250 of 2015 as a youth-driven, adult-supported and UN agencies-assisted process that laid the foundation for youth inclusive peacebuilding. The momentum grew by the day between 2012 and 2015 as restless activism of adult and youth-led organisations and support groups brought about the increasing recognition of governments and the multilateral system to the imperative of meaningful youth involvement rather than seeing them as a threat to peace. This global synergy and advocacy overwhelmed the centrifugal forces of youth exclusion as the UNSC momentarily adopted Resolution 2250 on December 9, 2015, thereby ushering in a novel paradigm shift in the way the youth are treated in all relevant peacebuilding institutions and mechanisms all over the world.

Today, due to expansion, consolidation and the operationalization of the UNSC resolutions, the development and empowerment of youth is currently receiving the needed attention globally in contemporary conflict resolution and peacebuilding practices in order to ensure their full participation in all stages of peace processes. The discourse and practices surrounding sustainable development, peace, and security

have dramatically shifted in favour of recognizing young people as inevitable players at all levels of conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy. Implementation efforts at the various levels are making appreciable progress, especially in Africa where youth inclusion was part of the AU’s Constitutive Act. Nonetheless, achievements in this regard do not yet call for ‘uhuru’, rather the beginning of an emerging roadmap that need the nurturing of peacebuilding actors at all levels globally.

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