

## **Communiqué / Official Report**

### **Misk-UNDP Youth Forum Roundtable Working Group**

**16 September 2017**

Further to the Misk-UNDP Youth Forum (the Forum), on the theme of “Promoting Tolerance for Peace and Sustainable Development: A Dialogue with Youth”, held in New York City, USA, on 15 September, co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Misk Foundation, a Roundtable Working Group (the Group) was convened by the Misk Foundation and the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations. It met at the United Nations headquarters on 16 September 2017.

The Group comprised youth representatives from a number of countries alongside Misk Foundation leaders, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the UN, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) leaders, all of whom had previously attended the Forum.

Noting UN Security Council Resolution 2250 calling Member States to increase youth representation in decision-making at all levels, the Group’s mission was to move from dialogue to action by using the ideas and challenges identified at the Forum as the basis for discussion between young people and senior officials, focused on articulating practical initiatives to achieve tangible impacts.

The Group intends these initiatives to be taken forward for consideration by the UN General Assembly, UN organizations, other multilateral institutions, governments, NGOs, private companies and individuals to aid in the development of solutions that give young people a central role in building more tolerant and peaceful societies and achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **The challenges addressed at the roundtable meeting included:**

- A lack of trust between people due to religious differences.
- The need to create mechanisms to build bridges, talk about shared values and collaborate on reaching shared goals.
- Gender inequality.
- Violent extremism.
- Limited access to technology.
- Utilising social media as a tool to enable youth to have a positive social impact.
- Overcoming indifference and inaction among some young people.
- International organizations and governments working in silos.

#### **The Working Group called for:**

- The development of a “marketplace” that would facilitate the exchange of knowledge, solutions, and best practices by young people around the world. This could include a moderated, internet-based “solutions exchange” through which young people could discuss ideas and proposals.

- The development of a “Social Media Action Center” that enables citizens, particularly young people who are more active on social media, to raise concerns and draw attention to important issues. The community would moderate the system, identify the acuteness of the issues and escalate where necessary so that governments can take the appropriate action.
- The UN Youth Envoy to continue to encourage Member States to send Youth Delegates to the UN Youth Delegate Programme and for Member States to do more to encourage youth involvement in the UN and other multilateral institutions, given that only 50 Member States currently send Youth Delegates.
- The development of peer-to-peer solutions that enable young people to connect with and make a difference to other young people.
- The adoption of holistic approaches that ensure that youth groups, governments and international organizations work more closely together.
- Young people to be regarded as integral to all phases of problem resolution: initiation, consultation, decision making and implementation.
- Young people’s access to institutional networks to be widened in order to achieve systematic change.

### **Maintaining impact**

It was resolved that in order to maximize practical impact and positive change, members of the Group will form the nucleus of a continuing network that may reconvene in the future and take actions such as assessing progress, commissioning research, and developing new policy and implementation recommendations.

**ENDS**

## **APPENDIX**

### **During the roundtable discussion, the following was said:**

#### **Young representatives:**

- “The challenge of violent extremism is one that youth uniquely face. We are working in silos. Peer to peer engagement must be part of the solution. This is a generational issue. Governments and multilaterals need to listen to youth and give them access to enable them to participate in the process.”
- “Sustainable development will come from sustained trust and sustained funding. We need to be asking ourselves, ‘how can we work towards creating opportunities?’”
- “Sometimes we don’t make our voices heard, but at other times, many of our governments hinder us from creating something sustainable. In many countries, environments that favor one particular audience through policy do not lend themselves to youth solutions.”
- “Social media is a powerful tool if you know how to use it the right way. Countries that are serious about youth engagement will be engaging with them online. This is usually just on an individual basis, this could be scaled to an institutional level.”
- “We need more promotion and partnership from the UN to give us the scale and resources we need to deliver even more impact. We don’t always need new platforms, just scale. Promotion and access is what youth organizations need. It’s a bridge that could be created through the UN network”.
- “Don’t think of us as an optional second. Consult us, ask us, let us be part of the initiation, creation and decision phase [of solutions]. And when it is time to roll out, let us be part of the implementation phase.”
- “There are only 50 countries participating in the Youth Delegates Programme. We need the UN to say to Member States, ‘You need to have a youth delegate’, so that all countries have a young person that can report back to their foreign ministries.”
- “The concept of social media action center is one that really works. The community can help moderate it, escalate it, and identify the acuteness of the issues, and government can take action.”
- “The UN doesn’t lack for ideas. Perhaps if we could change the way we market the UN, we would feel more engaged with it. I come from Africa. My community does not have access to the internet. My community only sees the UN when there has been a disaster. How do we remarket the UN to not just be a relief agency, but a catalyst for positivity and opportunity?”

#### **Misk Foundation leaders:**

- “We’re here in the UNDP under their roof. The message to UNDP is that, in the Misk Foundation, you have true partners.”
- “Misk is committed to opening our learnings and experiences to the globe.”
- “At the Misk Foundation we very much believe in the power of youth. Today, the innovators and change makers are all youth. If you want to solve 21st century problems with 21st century solutions, you need the youth.”

#### **UNDP leaders:**

- “Results are achieved on the ground, not at the big table. Youth must take the initiative and take responsibility. The ‘trickle down’ effect in policy and economics is not what we need today. When we need a change, it’s usually a change in mindset that we need.”

- “In terms of being present at the table, there is a lot of youth dialogue and discussion for this Forum, so I urge our young people to try and channel those conversations through the youth delegates. Channel ideas through social media to identify problems and solutions.”
- “When youth get together from different parts of the world, you get great ideas. You need to channel them. Use a marketplace to germinate some ideas on the SDGs, to get involved in that change but also get recognition for your work. It’s a virtuous circle of ideas, impact and recognition.”
- “Three years ago, the UN launched its Global Dialogue and a platform called the World We Want. This was a moderated conversation, with millions of contributed ideas. Gradually data was organized and the outcome was the Sustainable Development Goals.”
- “From a Big Data point of view, cell phones have been very valuable. We monitor rainfall, etc through individuals sending in data on mobiles. What we are trying to do now is give cash instead of physical donations of food, etc delivered on cargo planes to people in need, and we’re doing that on mobiles.”
- “Social media is extremely important but you can’t go through every message every day. We also have to think about those people in communities that don’t have internet access and how to engage them.”
- “We need to improve access to education to ensure people are not left behind, we need to ensure all segments of society have the opportunity of education. Power of mind comes with education. It also helps reduce inequality. Young people should focus on how they can improve education. Young people aren’t just competing with their neighbors, they are competing globally.”

**H.E. Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations:**

- “Youth is never a threat. Youth is energy. We might not be able to take full advantage of youth, but it is never a threat. But as youth, don’t wait for us to give you a chance. Youth today are much better educated than any generation before you. You are better informed. You are better connected, with the world, with each other. Use that opportunity and those advantages to bring energy to the causes you are passionate about.”
- “You have channels like Misk. You have UN agencies. You have the National Centre for Dialogue in KSA. All that you need to do is organize your thoughts, gather together like-minded individuals to develop something well-thought out, and communicate it to the right authority. From our point of view, if we receive something that sounds reasonable, we will jump on it and try to implement it.”
- “I am superbly impressed by the openness of the debate and dialogue of the past two days. It bodes well for the future of the world. I will remind you of a statement from Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed: ‘you have 17 goals that are worldwide goals. You don’t have to do them all yourself. Pick one, and see what you can do in your own community. Push yourself onto the decision-making table. Everyone has the ability to scream if necessary.’”

###

## **Attendees at the Misk-UNDP Youth Forum Roundtable Working Group**

**Moderator:** Zain Verjee, founder and CEO, aKoma Media

### **Youth representatives**

- Razan Alaqil, Founder & CEO, ATAM for Sustainable Development (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
- Ahmed Badr, Founder, Narratio (Iraq)
- George Batah, Co-Founder, Syrian Youth Empowerment (Syria)
- Callie Chamberlain, Co-Founder, Harmoni (USA)
- Mallak Husban, Student, Barnard College of Columbia University (Jordan)
- Arizza Ann S. Nocum, Overall Head, KRIS Library (Philippines)
- Dominic Mathew, Graduate Student, Cornell University (India)
- Abdullah Naif, Founder, Saudis for Peace (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
- Jonah Obajeun, Founder, Tolerance Academy, Extremely Together Young Leader, Kofi Annan Foundation (Nigeria)
- Victor Ochen, Founder & Executive Director, African Youth Initiative Network (Uganda)
- Fatima Zaman, Countering Violent Extremism Advocate, Kofi Annan Foundation and the Extremely Together Programme (UK)
- Shaden Nassief, Adviser, Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia to the UN (Saudi Arabia)

### **Misk Foundation**

- H.E. Bader Al Asaker, Secretary-General
- Fahd Hamidaddin, Adviser
- Mohamed El Abbouri, Adviser

### **Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the UN**

- H.E. Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations
- Mr. Abdullah Alghunaim
- Mr. Mohammed Khashan

### **United Nations Development Programme**

- Mourad Wahba, UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator, Regional Director for Arab States
- Dr. Ashok Nigam, UN Resident Coordinator & UNDP Resident Representative for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Adel Abdellatif, Senior Strategic Advisor - UNDP

###

**About the Misk Foundation**

The Misk Foundation is a non-profit philanthropic foundation established by HRH Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman to discover, develop and empower Saudi youth to become active participants in the knowledge economy. It specifically focuses on four key areas: education, creative and digital media, technology, and culture and the arts. Misk pursues this agenda both through its own programs, and through partnerships with local and global organizations.

**About UNDP**

UNDP is the UN's global development network that works on the ground in 170 countries and territories, supporting their own solutions to development challenges and developing national and local capacities to help them achieve human development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**ENDS**